

READ PRAY GROW

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“Church History Heroes (Part 1): The Early Church”

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About the Author



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

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1

DEUTERONOMY 8:2

PSALM 78:5-6

*“That the generation to come
might know them...”*

WHY IS CHURCH HISTORY IMPORTANT FOR CHRISTIANS?

Many Christians today suffer from what Bruce L. Shelley called *“historical amnesia,”* i.e. the time between the Apostles and our own day often feels like one giant blank. Yet, this is hardly what God intends. Earle Cairns reminded us that Christians should have a special interest in history because the very foundations of our faith are rooted in history: God became man and lived in time and space in the person of Jesus Christ.

History began in Holy Scripture, and church history continues the story of God’s faithful dealings with His people. It records the ongoing life and work of Christ in the world. It connects the factual events of the Gospel in the past with its proclamation and application in the present, showing the Spirit of God at work through the church across the ages. Studying church history helps us understand and clarify what we believe, providing a context for evaluating our faith and practices in light of the teaching of the church throughout the centuries.

Church history is also a safeguard against error. There are no new heresies, only old ones dressed in new clothes. By studying the past, we see patterns and parallels that shed light on present-day challenges. This knowledge equips us to correct existing evils within the church and avoid false practices.

Beyond correction, church history offers edification and inspiration. Paul wrote that *“whatever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope”* (Rom 15:4). In the same way, the lives of faithful believers throughout history provide mentors and heroes, i.e. guides who followed Christ and encourage us to do the same. Their witness promotes spiritual maturity and stirs us to heartfelt prayers for God to reform and revive His church.

THOUGHT: Do I delight in knowing how God has dealt with His church through the ages?

PRAYER: Father, impress upon my heart the importance of church history. May its lessons deepen my faith, guard me from error, and inspire me to walk faithfully with Christ.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2

1 CORINTHIANS 10:6-11

ROMANS 15:4

*“For whatsoever things were
written aforetime were
written for our learning...”*

WHY SHOULD WE MEDITATE ON THE HEROES OF CHURCH HISTORY?

Philip Schaff (1819-93) wisely asked, “How shall we labor with any effect to build up the Church, if we have no thorough knowledge of her history, or fail to apprehend it from the proper point of observation? History is, and must ever continue to be, next to God’s Word, the richest foundation of wisdom, and the surest guide to all successful practical activity.”

Church history is not a mere record of dates and events. It is a testimony of God’s faithfulness through the ages. The Apostle Paul reminds us that *“these things were our examples”* (1 Cor 10:6, 11). The past is both the seed of the future and the lens through which we understand the present. Ignorance of Scripture and the history of the Church has often led to false theologies and harmful practices, as Earle Cairns observed in *“Christianity Through the Centuries.”*

The lives of faithful men and women throughout history serve as a storehouse of warning, encouragement, consolation, and counsel. Their witness reminds us that theology cannot be separated from history; for every time we open the Bible, we are reading history. Martyn Lloyd-Jones cautioned that church history is essential for preachers to guard against the subtle danger of slipping into heresy or error without realising it. Indeed, history shows us how often this has happened, and how desperately we need vigilance and humility.

Meditating on the heroes of church history is not about glorifying human achievements, but about seeing the grace of God at work in frail vessels. Their endurance in faith points us to Christ, the true Hero of history. By reflecting on their lives, we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, learning to persevere as they did, always for the glory of God.

THOUGHT: Am I tempted to see my position or work as greater than others, rather than as service to Christ?

PRAYER: Father, teach me through the lives of faithful saints that whether my work is great or small, what matters most is Thy glory and honour. May their examples lead me to humility, perseverance, and deeper devotion to Thee.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3

ACTS 2:14-40

ACTS 2:41-47

*“The Lord added to the church daily
such as should be saved.”*

PETER

– THE FIRST CHURCH PREACHER

The first church history hero we will consider is the Apostle Peter. On the Day of Pentecost, the promise of the Father was fulfilled just as the Lord Jesus Christ had declared. The disciples were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages. The crowd was astonished, though some mocked, saying they were drunk with new wine.

Then Peter, standing with the eleven, boldly proclaimed the Word. He preached the prophecies of the Old Testament and showed how they were fulfilled in Christ. He declared not only the sinfulness and rebellion of mankind, but also the grace and mercy of God offered to all. He warned of the condemnation of sinners, while pointing to salvation through calling upon the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

This is the divine pattern God set for His church:

- Preaching the written Word and the Living Word is essential.
- Preaching repentance and faith in Jesus Christ is central.
- Preaching new life in Christ and the hope of eternal life is vital.

This is the kind of preaching we must pray for in our churches today. Throughout history, the Lord has required the faithful proclamation of His Holy Word.

The church must never forget this fundamental ministry. The neglect of Scripture-centred preaching has produced immature believers, wayward lives, and declining churches in our generation. There is a famine of the Word. Too often, pulpits are filled with mere stories that entertain rather than truth that transforms. The exposition of Scripture, the proclamation of the Gospel, and the teaching of Christ's commands are tragically absent. Yet, Scripture reminds us: *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom 10:17). Every believer must pray earnestly for faithful, Spirit-filled preaching of the Scriptures.

THOUGHT: Am I part of a church where the Word of God is faithfully preached?

PRAYER: Father, grant our churches faithful preachers who proclaim Thy Word with truth and power.

LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 4

MATTHEW 16:13-23

JOHN 1:41-43

*"...thou shalt be called Cephas,
which is by interpretation,
A stone."*

**PETER
– AN APOSTLE TO
THE CIRCUMCISION**

Let us continue to learn from the life of Apostle Peter. The Lord entrusted the keys of the kingdom to him, saying: *"And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"* (Matt 16:19).

Peter's ministry was directed primarily toward the Jews. His preaching at Pentecost and his leadership among Jewish believers in Jerusalem confirmed this calling. As Paul testified, *"the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter"* (Gal 2:7).

Yet, Peter did not exalt himself or compete with the other Apostles. He did not claim superiority or headship over the church. Instead, he faithfully fulfilled the divine appointment given to him. Each servant of God has a unique assignment, but the Gospel remains one, whether to the circumcision or the uncircumcision.

Our calling is not about prominence or competition. If we belong to a larger church, we should strengthen the smaller ones. If our ministry seems hidden, we should remember that faithfulness, not fame, is what God values. We are not racing against one another, but running together to finish the course set before us by the Lord. All must end well. All must be winners. Each must fulfil the work God has assigned. Let us serve not for our own glory, but for His honour. The strength we use is His, not ours. The success we experience belongs to Him, not us.

Therefore, let us not boast in our tasks but rejoice in the privilege of serving. Let us bear one another's burdens, so that together we may receive commendation from our Lord. *"Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord"* (Matt 25:21).

THOUGHT: Do I view my position as greater than others, or as a humble assignment from God?

PRAYER: Father, teach me that whether the work is great or small, what matters most is Thy glory and honour. Help me to serve Thee faithfully, humbly, and joyfully, giving all praise to Thee.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5

MARK 1:14-20

MARK 16:7

*“...tell his disciples and Peter that
he goeth before you into Galilee...”*

PETER: HIS GOSPEL THROUGH MARK

Another aspect in the life of Peter was his supervision on the Gospel of Mark. Early church fathers, such as Papias, affirmed that John Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark by recording the preaching and memories of Peter. Though Peter was not the direct author, Mark served as his interpreter, faithfully preserving Peter's testimony, even if it was not always recorded in strict chronological order. This gave the early church confidence to receive the Gospel of Mark, knowing it carried the authority of Peter's eyewitness accounts.

Peter did not demand recognition or insist that his name be attached to the Gospel. His concern was not for personal honour but for the life and deeds of Jesus Christ to be recorded. His desire was that believers would see and follow the humility of the Lord. For Peter, the testimony of Christ mattered far more than his own reputation.

In our ministries, the same principle must guide us. Let the name of Christ be magnified. Let His work be understood in our service. Let His glory be the aim of all we do. He alone deserves praise, He alone is worthy of honour, and He alone belongs on the pedestal. Every success is ordained by Him, every provision comes from Him, and every outcome is energised by Him. To Him belongs all glory.

The guidance that Peter gave to Mark was exemplary. As an eyewitness, Peter testified what he had seen, and Mark faithfully recorded the words given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is God's marvellous provision for His children. He gave us the written Word that we may know and believe the Living Word.

Together they laboured, not for their own names, but for the name of Jesus Christ alone. May we likewise labour, with our co-labourers, always for His praise, not ours. May we devote our lives for His glory alone!

THOUGHT: Am I labouring for God's glory, or am I seeking recognition for myself?

PRAYER: Father, remind me that in everything I do, the result must be the glory of Thy name. Keep me humble, faithful, and focused on Christ alone.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6

1 PETER 1:1-2

1 PETER 2:21

*“...Christ also suffered for us,
leaving us an example...”*

PETER: HIS LETTER TO THE SCATTERED STRANGERS

Peter was one of the most prominent apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wrote to the scattered saints to strengthen their faith in the midst of persecution. In the early church, many believers were displaced into distant lands. He reminded them that they were “*strangers and pilgrims*,” not citizens of this world, but citizens of the Kingdom of God, where suffering and death will one day be no more. “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*” (1 Pet 1:3-5).

Today, communication is far easier. With social media, messages can reach across the globe in an instant. Yet, with this privilege comes responsibility. The digital world is flooded with both truth and falsehood, and it is often difficult to discern what is trustworthy. In such a climate, believers must be intentional about how they use these tools.

Are we using social media to encourage fellow believers? Do our words bring comfort to those who suffer? Do our posts strengthen and edify the body of Christ? Or are we merely promoting ourselves, showing off places we have visited, meals we have enjoyed, or possessions we have acquired?

God has given us this technology as an open door for ministry. Let us not waste it. Instead, let us use it to share hope, to remind others that they are not alone, to assure them of our prayers, and to point them to the providential care of the Lord. Just as Peter wrote to encourage the scattered brethren, so we too can encourage one another, even across great distances.

THOUGHT: Am I using my words and platforms to be an encouragement to others?

PRAYER: Father, grant me wisdom in every message I send. May my words be a source of blessing, comfort, and strength to others, always directing others to Thee, and bringing glory to Thy name.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7

2 PETER 1:1-2

2 PETER 1:14

*“Knowing that shortly
I must put off this my tabernacle...”*

PETER: HIS LETTERS OF WARNINGS

Another contribution Peter made to the history of the Church was his epistles. Peter wrote to warn believers of the rise of false teachers with their unbiblical doctrines and immoral lifestyles. The Spirit of God prompted him to alert the church of this impending danger, which could deceive many and jeopardise the faith of the saints. He urged believers to guard themselves by making every effort to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Safety from the snares and traps of the enemy lies in walking the path God has set for His children. This path is safe and secure, where Satan has no power to prevail. It is straight and narrow, requiring courage to walk faithfully. It is sufficient and gracious, for God's provision never fails. Stay on this path, do not wander, lest you be led astray.

Peter knew that with the imminency of the Lord's return, the minds of believers would be seduced into thinking His return was far off. The unbelieving world would poison Christians with doubt. Modernists would twist the truth, claiming Christ's return is merely human imagination.

Take heed of Peter's warnings. He heard them directly from the Master, who prophesied of His return. He witnessed opposition from Jews and Romans alike, and foresaw greater trials ahead. Yet, he affirmed that the Lord's return is certain. Therefore, let every Christian be circumspect, viewing the world through the lens of God's Word. Let every believer discern teachings with the Spirit's guidance. Let every child of God be cautious, testing every message that introduces worldly ways.

Dear reader, have you pondered the warnings of the Apostle Peter, warnings he first heard from the very mouth of the Lord Jesus? Be warned, and be watchful! (Read 2 Peter 3:18.)

THOUGHT: Have I truly considered the prophetic warnings, especially concerning the second coming of Christ?

PRAYER: Father, help me to grow in the knowledge of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8

JOHN 1:1-4

JOHN 1:14

*“And the Word was made flesh,
and dwelt among us...”*

JOHN: HIS GOSPEL OF JESUS' DEITY

Another significant hero of the early church is John the Apostle. The Gospel of John stands unique among the four Gospels. Not because it teaches a different truth, for all Scripture has one Author and one message, but because John highlighted with particular clarity the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. From the very opening words, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”* (John 1:1), John revealed the eternal existence and divine nature of Christ.

While Matthew, Mark, and Luke emphasise the humanity and earthly ministry of Jesus, John drew our attention to His eternal generation and His identity as the only begotten Son of God. Jesus of Nazareth, born of the virgin Mary, is not merely a man. He is the God-Man, the *Theanthropos* (Greek). He is fully God and fully man, no more, no less. He is one Person of the Triune God: distinct from the Father and the Spirit, yet equally God with them. Throughout history, heresies have sought to deny or distort this truth. Yet, John's Gospel leaves no room for doubt. Jesus is the eternal Creator, the Almighty, the One whose wisdom and power surpass all human understanding. He is with His people always, even to the end of the age. He came down into this world to redeem sinners, and He reigns forever and ever.

Do you truly believe in the deity of Christ? Do you acknowledge Him as the eternal Son of God, the Creator of all things? Do you trust Him as the Redeemer who transforms sinful lives into new creations? If so, why hesitate to proclaim Him? Why hold back from declaring His name before others? Why be ashamed of the One who bore shame for you?

John was willing to suffer persecution because he was convinced of the divine Christ. His testimony calls us to boldness: if we believe Jesus is truly God, then let us live and speak as those who belong to Him.

THOUGHT: Am I truly a believer of the Jesus Christ of the Bible, the eternal Son of God?

PRAYER: Father, convict me to believe deeply in the deity of Jesus Christ. Not only in my heart, but in the way I live. May my words and actions testify to His glory.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9

1 JOHN 4:7-12

1 JOHN 4:19

*“We love him,
because he first loved us.”*

JOHN: HIS LOVE LETTERS

Aside from the fourth Gospel, John also wrote epistles. As he was known as the disciple whom Jesus loved, he experienced the love of God in Christ Jesus, his Lord and Saviour, and longed to share that love with others. The central theme of his letters is clear: *“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love”* (1 John 4:7-8).

But, brethren, do we see this love in our churches today? Do we live out this command in our communities of faith? Do we truly experience the love of fellow believers who claim to be Bible-following Christians? Do we feel compassion, care, and comfort from those who profess to be born-again children of God? Sadly, the answer is often negative.

Many accuse Christians of hypocrisy because we proclaim love yet fail to show it. We declare ourselves recipients of God’s grace, yet we are often ungracious. Through God’s abundant mercy, we rejoice as sinners forgiven, yet we remain unforgiving and unmerciful toward others.

If this is not true of you, praise the Lord! You have received God’s unconditional love in Christ Jesus, and you are able to love even your enemies. You are filled with gratitude for God’s sovereign choice: that He loved you and chose you before the foundation of the world, not because of who you are or what you can do, but simply because He loves you. This love enables you to extend kindness to the unkind, generosity to the undeserving, and forgiveness to those who wrong you. You recognise your unworthiness, yet Christ has washed you, clothed you in righteousness, and justified you before a holy God. All because of His love for you.

This love transforms you. It is not shallow or superficial, but deep and genuine, flowing from the heart. Brethren, John wrote his love letters because he truly understood what it means to be loved by God. May we also live out that love, so the world can see Christ in us.

THOUGHT: Have I truly understood that I am saved because of God’s love? Does it overflow to others?

PRAYER: Father, let me be certain of Thy love in Christ Jesus, that I may express it sincerely to others.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10

REVELATION 1:1-6

REVELATION 22:12-14

*“And, behold, I come quickly;
and my reward is with me...”*

JOHN: RECEIVES JESUS’ REVELATION

Another important contribution of John is the Book of Revelation. The Apostle John, exiled on the Isle of Patmos, received from the resurrected and glorified Jesus Christ the revelation of the end times. This unveiling concerns “*him which is, and which was, and which is to come*” (Rev 1:4). John faithfully recorded these visions for our sake, that we might be watchful as the world draws nearer to the events foretold.

Many considered the Book of Revelation to be false because its prophecies have not been fulfilled after more than 2,000 years. But is delay a valid reason to deny its truthfulness? Unbelievers may use this logic. Sceptics may cast doubt. Atheists may reject these words. But not the followers of Christ who have confessed Him as their Lord and Saviour, and are heaven-bound.

The believer receives not only Christ’s promise of salvation but also the certainty of His prophetic Word. Those who are heaven-bound look forward not only to eternal life, but also to the premillennial return of Jesus Christ and His thousand-year reign on earth. Those who confess Him as Lord anticipate not only the Kingdom of God established forever, but also the destruction of Satan’s kingdom. Our confidence must be: “The Lord says it, that settles it, and I believe it!”

We must remain watchful. These prophecies are not human imaginations, scientific predictions, or economic forecasts. They are revelations from the Omniscient God who knows all things before creation itself. They will surely come to pass, for He is unchanging, and His Word has proven faithful throughout history.

Therefore, let not the lies of fickle-minded men sway your heart. Let not the foolishness of the world deceive you. Let not the evidence of depraved minds turn you toward vanity. Instead, let the Word of Christ dwell richly in you as you study the Revelation given to John.

THOUGHT: Have I read, believed, and embraced the truth of the Book of Revelation?

PRAYER: Father, open my mind to Thy Word. Help me to receive it with faith and to live watchfully in light of Thy promises.

LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 11

JAMES 2:14-20

JAMES 2:21-26

*"...as the body without the spirit is dead,
so faith without works is dead also."*

JAMES: FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

Another important personality in church history is James, the brother of John and son of Zebedee, who wrote one of the earliest epistles to believers scattered by persecution during Saul's time. As these scattered Christians gathered in new places, problems arose: some claimed to have faith, yet their lives did not reflect it. Is oral confession enough? Can true belief in Jesus exist without a change in heart, mind, and character?

History shows that many professed Christ with words, but lacked transformation. They could eloquently describe their conversion, testify with passion, and even preach deep doctrines of Scripture. Yet without a life changed by God's Word, such claims are empty, like *"a tinkling cymbal"* (1 Cor 13:1), that makes noise but is not pleasing to God.

Brethren, genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ always brings about transformation. Repentance frees us from sin and Satan's dominion. A new hunger and thirst for God's Word arises. A yearning to see others saved grows within us. A desire to live by the Spirit through the Word takes root. Our lives begin to shine as lights in this dark world, drawing others to Christ.

Faith must be more than words; it must be lived out in deeds. Verbal claims of salvation without evidence of change should cause us to examine ourselves. To deceive our own hearts is a fearful thing. True assurance comes when the Holy Spirit indwells us, testifying that we have been justified by Christ. Then we know our faith is alive. *"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"* (James 2:17-20).

THOUGHT: Do I have the Holy Spirit dwelling within me, confirming that my faith is living and true?

PRAYER: Father, make me a true worshipper of Thee. Renew my life so that my faith is not only confessed with words but manifested in deeds, showing the reality of Thy Spirit within me.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12

ACTS 12:1-2

JAMES 5:6

*“Ye have condemned and killed the just;
and he doth not resist you.”*

JAMES: THE FIRST APOSTOLIC MARTYR

James, the Apostle, is significant in early church history because he was executed by Herod, becoming the first martyr among the Apostles of Christ. Yet his death was not in vain, for “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church” (Tertullian). The Lord was pleased to take James home to heaven, but before doing so, He used him to write an epistle that reminds us of the importance of practical Christian living.

James was killed only a few years after Christ’s ascension; Peter followed decades later, while John lived till he was nearly a century old before his passing. Each servant of God has a different span of service. Some are appointed to live longer for there is still work to be done; others are taken earlier when their task is complete. It is the Lord’s decision. He knows the distance each servant must travel, the strength each one possesses, and the measure of ability He has given. He will never demand beyond what He has supplied, nor permit us to go beyond what we can bear according to His purpose.

Brethren, let us trust our gracious and merciful Master in heaven. He is mindful of our service. Let us give Him our best, for He strengthens us the moment we labour for Him. He is our Father who loves His children more than anyone else. Once, He asked James, “...*Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?...*” (Matt 20:22). This signified the affliction and suffering He had to face.

Some may serve only a few years, others much longer—but let it not be said that we had never served at all. What a tragedy it is for those who claim salvation and yet have no heart to serve! It is better to serve in small matters than not at all. Better to serve quietly than to remain indifferent. Better to serve in the remotest places than to sit idly in the comfort of mega churches. James may not have lived to see his epistle included in Scripture, but his life itself became part of God’s Word.

THOUGHT: Am I serving God faithfully according to His perfect will?

PRAYER: Father, help me to understand that it is not the length of service that matters, but the faithfulness of it. May I serve Thee wholeheartedly, in whatever way Thou appointed.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13

JUDE 1:1-3

JUDE 1:24-25

*“Now unto him that is able
to keep you from falling...”*

JUDE: CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

The next hero in church history is the Apostle Jude. His epistle is short, but its message is powerful. He warned believers of the imminent danger they will face before the Lord's return: a flood of false and deceitful doctrines. His urgent call is that Christians *“should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”* (Jude 1:3).

The whole body of doctrine in God's Word will be under attack. These deceivers will creep in unnoticed, appearing as angels of light. They will disguise themselves in sheep's clothing, seemingly harmless, speaking soothing and comforting words. They will counsel with phrases people love to hear, offering warmth and sympathy in times of trial. Outwardly, they seem like the best companions.

But in truth, they are heretics. They twist and distort Scripture, adding to it here, removing from it there. They lead people astray into destructive paths. They encourage the following of one's own heart, pleasing oneself, and rejecting the narrow way of Christ. They deny the sufficiency of His perfect work, urging others to add their own efforts or sacrifices to complete salvation. They reduce Christ to a mere example to imitate, rather than the Saviour who redeems.

Brethren, we live in the very age Jude described. The faith once delivered to the saints is under constant attack. The antidote is clear: we must know the Word of God deeply, with the Spirit of God as our teacher and guide. We need Spirit-filled teachers to instruct us, and we must devote ourselves to studying, understanding, and hiding God's Word in our minds and hearts.

Jude's warning, given two thousand years ago, remains urgent today. Let us cling to God, who alone is faithful to preserve His people. He is able to keep us from falling and to present us blameless before the Father. Let us earnestly contend for the faith, standing firm in His truth.

THOUGHT: Do I truly love God's Word and guard it in my life?

PRAYER: Father, help me to know Thee more through Thy Word. Strengthen me to contend earnestly for the faith and to remain steadfast in Christ.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14

ACTS 9:15-16

GALATIANS 2:7

*“...the gospel of the uncircumcision
was committed unto me...”*

PAUL: APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES

Probably the most influential in the New Testament church is the Apostle Paul. He was entrusted with the sacred mission of evangelising the Gentiles. The Lord Himself ordained him as the Apostle to the uncircumcision. What an extraordinary favour from the Almighty God: to extend His loving arms of salvation toward us, undeserving Gentiles.

To many Jews of Paul's time, Gentiles were seen as fuel for hell, unworthy of the Lord's favour. The heathens were destined for eternal torment, or so they believed. Indeed, our sins against God make us deserving of judgment. There is nothing within us that makes us worthy of His grace. As Gentiles, we are idolaters, worshipping false gods instead of the One Living and True God. Left to ourselves, we will never seek the God of Israel. There is no hope for us, for how can a Just and Righteous God overlook our wretchedness?

But the mercies of God are greater than our sin! In His perfect justice, He sent His only begotten Son into the world to live a flawless life and offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice. Through Christ, salvation was extended not only to the Jews (God's chosen people) from the beginning, but also to Gentiles like us. This is the great mystery Paul revealed: we who were once outsiders are now welcomed into God's family. We who were strangers and aliens have been made citizens of His Kingdom. We who were wild branches have been grafted into the chosen tree. What amazing love from the Father!

Now that we have been included, let us not be proud. We have no merit to claim, no goodness to boast of, no reason to think we deserve His favour. Instead, let us be thankful. With hearts full of gratitude, let us praise and honour Him. Let us serve Him faithfully! He has given us the privilege of belonging to His Kingdom when we had no hope. He spared us from eternal anguish and suffering in hell. Let us never forget that we stand only by His perfect righteousness.

THOUGHT: Am I truly thankful for the salvation I have received?

PRAYER: Father, help me never to forget the great favour Thou hast extended to me. Though unworthy, Thou hast made me part of Thy Kingdom.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15

ACTS 13:1-3

ACTS 13:4-5

*“...they preached the word of God
in the synagogues of the Jews...”*

PAUL: HIS FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Paul's contribution to the history of the early church was primarily his missions outreaches. The Holy Spirit set apart Paul and Barnabas for the work of missions. Their journey began in Cyprus and continued into the province of Galatia in Asia Minor. Along the way, they faced hostility, especially from the Jews who grew envious and spoke against them. Yet Paul and Barnabas pressed on, moving from place to place, proclaiming the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even after Paul was stoned and left for dead, they returned to strengthen the disciples before going back to Antioch, the church that sent them forth.

This first missionary journey was marked by great opposition, but Paul and Barnabas were undeterred. They knew their labour carried eternal value. They understood the desperate need of the people to hear the truth. The world was shrouded in darkness, and only the light of Christ could bring hope and comfort. Trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they pressed forward, journeying to many places with unwavering faith.

Missionaries are God's servants who persist in preaching the Gospel even in the face of danger and threats. They are not easily silenced by harassment or persecution. They endure poverty and infirmity because the Lord is their provider and strength. They remain steadfast because they know their work glorifies the One who saved them and set them apart for ministry. They are God's soldiers, willing to sacrifice their lives for the cause of Christ.

Yet, such missionaries are few and far between today. Many in today's generation hold themselves back from the path of Paul and Barnabas. They prefer comfort and convenience, unwilling to endure hardship for the sake of the Gospel. They are content to remain in cozy rooms, pursuing pleasure rather than sacrifice. What about you? Do you carry a burden for lost souls? Do you long to share the grace of God through Jesus Christ? Has the Lord placed a calling upon your life? May your heart echo the words in Isaiah 6:8: *“...I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.”*

THOUGHT: Am I truly called to lead others to believe in Jesus?

PRAYER: Father, if it pleases Thee, send me to do Thy work.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16

ACTS 15:36-41

ACTS 16:6-9

*“...and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost
to preach the word in Asia...”*

PAUL: HIS SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Paul's second missionary journey was not without challenges. From the very beginning, contention arose between Paul and Barnabas. What seemed to be an obstacle was turned by the Lord into an opportunity for greater good: two missionary teams were formed instead of one, reaching more places with the Gospel. For Paul, he chose Silas as his companion and revisited the churches established during the first journey. Yet another obstacle appeared when the Spirit redirected them from their intended path. Instead of preaching in Asia, Paul and Silas obeyed the Lord's leading after receiving the Macedonian call.

Missionaries and servants of the Lord must remain submissive to the Spirit of God, who alone knows best what to do, where to go, and when to act. When the Spirit prevented Paul from preaching in Asia, He was not halting the work, but guiding them to the place where God intended His Word to be proclaimed.

We too must be obedient to the Lord's direction, even when we have our own plans. The Lord knows the work, the place, and the timing. He is powerful to accomplish His saving plan, and He enables us to take part in it when we walk according to His will. God must be the Director of missions, and our duty is to obey Him.

When we submit to His perfect plan, the work will be perfectly accomplished. He knows where His elect (those who will believe) are. He knows how they can be reached, and so we must rely on His ways rather than the dictates of our finite minds or this world. He knows the timing of their salvation, and so we must trust His perfect schedule in proclaiming the Gospel. For this reason, missionaries and preachers must continually seek the leading of God through prayer and the reading of His Word. These are the avenues by which the Holy Spirit reveals His direction. Paul learned well that it was not his own wisdom or zeal that made missions fruitful. Success in the work of God comes only when His servants are submissive to His will. Then only will missions bring glory to God.

THOUGHT: Am I truly seeking the will of God in order to obey it?

PRAYER: Father, grant me the humility to submit to Thy will.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17

ACTS 18:22-23

ACTS 19:9-10

*“...separated the disciples,
disputing daily in the school...”*

PAUL: HIS THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Paul's missionary work was met with intense opposition which grew during his third missionary journey. This was expected, for Satan sought to hinder the spread of the Gospel and the growth of the churches. Attacks came in many forms, from false believers to public riots. Yet, none of these could stop Paul and his companions from pressing forward, proclaiming the Word of God in as many places as possible.

Threats to life are fearful, and the natural tendency of servants is to retreat from such spiritual warfare. But let us remember: we are on the Lord's side. When we fight the Lord's battles, we do not fight with the weapons of flesh. The Lord Himself is with us, and the battle belongs to Him. Horses and chariots of the enemy are nothing compared to the power of God. Even the most advanced arsenal of modern nations is nothing against the omnipotence of the Almighty. Victory is assured, for He who is with us is greater than any force in the universe. The Scriptures are filled with promises and prophecies that confirm this truth.

Do you face threats because of your witness for Christ? Are you falsely accused because you proclaim His grace? Are you rejected because you declare the hope of eternal life in Jesus Christ? Fear not, for God is with you, even to the ends of the earth. The all-powerful God will never fail to help you. The all-knowing God will never forget you. The ever-present God will never leave you nor forsake you.

The end is near; we must lift up our eyes, for our redemption draws close. In His perfect plan, the Lord has appointed times and seasons for His servants to be victorious in ministry. He has foreordained all things according to His purposes. Let every heart be comforted, for God is trustworthy and faithful. Whatever trials or tribulations we face, the Lord is able to deliver us. Nothing should draw us away from Him, for with the Almighty we are assured of victory over Satan and his hosts.

THOUGHT: The Lord has revealed Himself in the Holy Scriptures. Do I trust Him?

PRAYER: Father, grant me sensitivity to Thy voice, that I may be assured of Thy perfect will for Thy servant.

LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 18

ACTS 25:10-12

ACTS 19:21

*"After I have been there,
I must also see Rome."*

PAUL: HIS JOURNEY TO ROME

Further study of the life of Paul is vital in understanding the spread of Christianity. Paul was given the opportunity to defend himself against the false accusations of the Jews in Jerusalem. Knowing their murderous intent, he wisely avoided returning there and invoked his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar. In this, Paul discerned the hardness of the hearts of the Jews who were determined to destroy the church. When darkness prevails in religious circles, God can shine His light even through secular authorities. We recall how the religious leaders in Jesus' days were resolute in crucifying the sinless Son of God, yet Pilate, the Roman governor, unwittingly declared His innocence. The Lord can open the eyes of those who are blind to see what the self-righteous refuse to acknowledge.

The Lord, who knows the end from the beginning, fulfilled His plan in Paul's life, though not in an easy or convenient way. Paul endured imprisonment in Caesarea and faced a perilous journey to Rome. Human eyes could not perceive the significance of these hardships. Human minds could not grasp the divine purpose behind them. Human hearts could not appreciate the fears and fatigue Paul endured. Only the inspired record of Scripture reveals why God ordained it so.

O, how marvellous are the Lord's plans for our lives! He who arranges all things never changes, even when man complains or resists. His counsel stands firm. He does not redirect His purposes because of human defiance. He does not pause when man turns back. He may send a storm to guide the path, a great fish to carry His servant, or a Nebuchadnezzar to halt false worship. His ways are perfect, and His purposes and will cannot be thwarted. Therefore, let us seek God's justice according to His will. Though some may falsely accuse, let us ensure we remain blameless before God and man. The Lord Himself will vindicate His own. His light is pure, and His judgment is perfect. When we make Him the Judge of our lives, we can rest assured that His verdict is just and His reward is certain.

THOUGHT: Am I justified before the Thrice-Holy God?

PRAYER: Father, let the Holy Spirit convict me swiftly whenever I sin against Thee, that I may walk in Thy righteousness.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 19

GALATIANS 1:1-5

GALATIANS 3:1

*“O foolish Galatians,
who hath bewitched you...”*

PAUL: HIS LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

Paul's important contributions to the New Testament church were his epistles. During his first missionary journey, Paul travelled to the province of Galatia, preaching in Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Later, with Barnabas, he revisited Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch before returning to Antioch of Syria, the church that sent them forth. It was during these visits that Paul discovered how quickly his teachings were being distorted by the Judaisers. Without delay, he wrote a letter to the Galatians, exposing the errors and calling them back to the truth of the Gospel.

O, how easily can man be deceived by the lies of the enemy! How swiftly we embrace falsehood without hesitation. How gullible we are to accept error without pausing to discern whether it is right or wrong. We swallow deception whole, unaware that it leads to death. How prone are we to follow the principles of the wicked rather than remain steadfast in the teachings of the righteous. How inclined are we to walk the path of destruction rather than the way of life.

Is it because we are far from the light that we cannot distinguish good from evil? Is it because we are deaf to the Word of God that we fail to recognise His voice? Is it because our hearts are hardened, unable to sense the heartbeat of our Saviour and His instructions? Or perhaps some remain blinded, still depraved, unable to discern the way that leads to heaven and the way that leads to hell.

Beloved brethren, we shall see clearly if we walk in the light that shows us the right way. Though we may stumble, we can rise again and continue onward. We will remain on the right path when we continually hear the voice of the Shepherd, guiding us in His truth. We will enter the straight and narrow way that leads to life if we steadfastly rely on the guide map God has given us: His perfectly inspired and preserved Word. There is no other truth than what Scripture declares. It is our lamp, our voice of guidance, and our map to the way of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THOUGHT: Am I reading my Bible daily to guard myself against lies and deception?

PRAYER: Father, grant me steadfastness to remain in Thy Word.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20

ROMANS 1:1-7

ROMANS 1:16-17

“The just shall live by faith.”

PAUL: HIS LETTER TO THE ROMANS

Paul also wrote to the Christians in Rome even before meeting them face to face. Though he had encountered some during his missionary journeys, his desire was to impart to them a spiritual gift that they might be established in the faith. Chief among these gifts was the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, which secures eternal salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone.

There is no other message but the Gospel of Christ, the power of God unto salvation for both Jew and Gentile. This Gospel proclaims Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came into the world to live a perfect life and to obtain the righteousness that no man could earn through religion or piety. He suffered greatly, shed His precious blood, and died under the cruelty of Roman crucifixion. He was buried, yet He rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven. This is the only Gospel by which man may be saved.

How thankful Christians ought to be that Jesus accomplished it all for us! How our hearts should overflow with gratitude for the great sacrifice He offered on our behalf. How diligently we should give ourselves in service to Him, for the wonderful plan He fulfilled for us. Though we were unworthy of His favour, yet by His great love He extended grace even to believe. How amazing to know that we were chosen by Him before the foundation of the world. How sweet to realise that not only are we saved from eternal death, but we are also foreordained to live forever with Him.

Believer, have you discovered the depth, width and height of what the Gospel of Christ has accomplished for you? If not, immerse yourself in this epistle, for within it are the immeasurable riches of God's grace. And if you have even a glimpse of its glory, will you not give your life in service to Him? Millions of souls have yet to hear this Gospel and are marching toward eternal destruction. Offer yourself as a living sacrifice to the Lord, that others too may be saved.

THOUGHT: Do I truly believe the Gospel of Christ?

PRAYER: Father, fill me with Thy Spirit that I may fully understand what Jesus Christ has done for me, and that I may serve Him with all my strength.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21

1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-11

2 CORINTHIANS 1:1-7

*“...by the comfort wherewith
we ourselves are comforted of God.”*

PAUL: HIS LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS

Paul also wrote three letters to the saints in Corinth because of the many concerns that arose within the Corinthian church. One of these letters was not preserved in the biblical canon, perhaps because its content was too weighty for us even today. The Lord knows the reason. What remains clear is that these letters reveal the many struggles of a local church of Jesus Christ, reminding us of one simple truth: there is no such thing as a perfect church on earth.

How evident are divisions and factions in our churches today! Many place their loyalty in favoured leaders rather than in the Lord. The world esteems eloquence and logic, and so believers often follow leaders who impress with words rather than those who faithfully proclaim the truth of God. Too often, people submit to personalities instead of submitting to the Word.

The Christians in Corinth boasted of their spiritual gifts, especially the ability to speak in other languages. They abused these gifts, turning them into tools of pride and hypocrisy. Charity, faith, and hope were set aside for personal gain. They sought miraculous signs rather than the greatest miracle of all: the saving work of Jesus Christ.

Even the Lord's Supper was corrupted. Many came not to partake reverently of the Bread and the Cup, but to feast upon their own food. Because of this careless attitude, Paul warned that many were weak and even dying, having dishonoured the sacred remembrance of Christ's sacrifice.

These are but a few of the concerns Paul addressed. We must not follow the Corinthian example. Instead, let us enjoy fellowship in unity, encouraging one another to labour together for Christ's sake. Let us use the gifts God has given us rightly, not to compete or exalt ourselves, but to glorify Him who gave Himself for us. Let us prepare our hearts spiritually when we partake of the Lord's Supper, remembering with reverence the One who died for our salvation.

THOUGHT: Am I sincerely living for my Lord?

PRAYER: Father, grant me the humility to submit to Thy will, not mine.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22

EPHESIANS 1:1-14

EPHESIANS 2:8-10

*“For by grace are ye saved
through faith...”*

PAUL: HIS LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

Another one of Paul's epistles is the letter to the Ephesians. The Apostle Paul, while imprisoned in Rome, wrote this letter to the saints in Ephesus with a clear purpose: to magnify the sovereign grace of God. In this epistle, Paul revealed how God extended His grace both to rebellious Jews and to ignorant Gentiles, uniting them into one body in Christ Jesus, saved only by grace through faith.

How deep is the love of God, that He elected His people for salvation even before the foundation of the world! How wondrous it is that He predestined His chosen ones to be adopted as His children through Jesus Christ. How immeasurable is His grace, that we should become partakers of His glory through the shed blood of Christ, by which our sins are forgiven.

Let us thank Him for His grace, which opened our blind eyes and granted us faith to believe in Christ. Let us thank Him that salvation is not by works of the law, for we could never earn the perfect righteousness God requires. Let us thank Him that though we were sinful by nature and unable to please Him, He has restored us in Christ Jesus, creating us anew for good works to serve and glorify Him.

As Gentiles, we must be especially grateful for being included in His marvellous plan of redemption. Though unworthy and undeserving, we have been given the privilege of salvation in Christ. Once despised by the Jews as fuel for hell, we have now, by His mercy, been made fellow heirs with Christ, not only in this present world but in the world to come. *“According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him”* (Eph 3:11-12).

What joy should fill our hearts at the certainty of salvation in Christ! What blessed assurance should fill our minds, knowing we are part of His eternal Kingdom. What zeal should stir our souls to reconsecrate our lives to Him who chose us and saved us for His glory!

THOUGHT: Am I truly living as one of God's elect?

PRAYER: Father, help me to serve Thee faithfully, as I ought.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-19

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

PAUL: HIS LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Paul's ministry even in prison made him an important person in the annals of church history. Paul first preached the Gospel in Europe in the city of Philippi. His first convert was a woman named Lydia, and from that beginning, a ministry was established on the European continent. Many other churches were planted because Paul obeyed the Macedonian call, choosing God's direction over his own desire to go eastward.

The church at Philippi was mindful of Paul's needs, sending their care through Epaphroditus. Yet, along with their gift, came troubling news of contention within the congregation. Two women, likely with followers behind them, were striving against each other, creating a division in the church (cf. Phil 4:2-3).

Churches are not immune to such conflicts. Instead of loving one another as Christ loves us, envy and pride often arise. Some desire to be exalted as leaders, demanding others to follow them. Others resist, forming cliques and pursuing their own agendas.

But this is not the Lord's design for His family. Christ is the Head, and all must submit to Him. He alone is the rightful Authority in the church. Leaders and members alike must be subject to the headship of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *“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 2:10-11).

This does not mean members should disregard their pastors and elders. On the contrary, when we submit to Christ and His Word, we will also submit to the leaders He has ordained to shepherd His church. Divisions and factions arise when members fail to acknowledge Christ as the true Leader and neglect the authority He has entrusted to His servants.

Therefore, let us read and obey the Word of God. Let us listen to our God-ordained leaders and follow them as they follow Christ. Let us worship our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and serve Him faithfully.

THOUGHT: Am I obedient to the God-ordained leaders in my church?

PRAYER: Father, keep me subject unto Thee and to Thy Word.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24

COLOSSIANS 1:1-17

COLOSSIANS 1:18-20

*“...that in all things
he might have the preeminence”*

PAUL: HIS LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS

Paul's blessing to church history is great. Through his epistles, it is revealed that the church in Colosse was not planted by Paul. The Book of Acts also does not record him visiting this city. Instead, God established the church through Epaphras, one of Paul's students from the school of Tyrannus in Ephesus, where Paul taught for two years. These students became missionaries and evangelists in the surrounding regions, and Colosse was one of the places reached.

Like many churches, Colosse soon came under attack from false teachings. Subtle errors crept in, early forms of what would later develop into Gnosticism. Epaphras likely sought Paul's counsel regarding this heresy. In response, Paul warned them against any teaching that diminished the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ. He cautioned them not to entertain worldly philosophies, for such ideas corrupt the pure doctrines of Scripture. Instead, Paul exhorted them to live as God's people. Those who are risen with Christ must manifest renewed lives worthy of eternal glory.

Professing to be a Christian does not save a person if his life shows no change by the Spirit. Merely assembling with believers does not save one whose heart pursues worldliness and materialism. Even serving alongside full-time ministers does not save if the motive is self-promotion or self-gratification.

The life of a true Christian is a renewed life. He is no longer the same person he once was. His life is ruled by the Spirit and guided by the Word. He demonstrates love toward his family and those around him. He depends fully on God, serving Him faithfully through prayer.

You who claim to be a Christian, has your life been changed by the power of the Gospel of Christ? Do you see a clear difference between your life before and now, as a follower of the living and true God? Have your dreams and ambitions shifted, now inclined toward the things above rather than the things of earth?

THOUGHT: Am I truly a new person in Christ?

PRAYER: Father, as Thou hast saved me, help me to live a life worthy of witnessing for Thee.

LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 25

1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-4

*"...that day shall not come,
except there come a falling away first..."*

PAUL: HIS LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS

Paul preached in Thessalonica for only three Sabbath days, yet many believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of the envy of the Jews, Paul and his companions were forced to leave the city. When Paul moved on to Athens, his heart remained concerned for the Thessalonian believers. He sent Timothy to encourage them. Upon hearing Timothy's good report, Paul wrote letters to strengthen them in the midst of persecution.

Hardships and threats can shake the hearts of believers. Doubts may arise when trials are prolonged and circumstances worsen. Some may abandon the faith and deny Christ. Others may betray fellow believers to escape the attacks of the enemy. How then can Christians be strengthened in such battles?

Paul assured them of the promised resurrection for the dead and the rapture for the living. This truth is a source of deep comfort. In the midst of devastation, genuine children of God have a secure place in His kingdom, whether in death or in life. This is no illusion, no deception, no false assurance. The promises of God are true and faithful. Scripture declares that there will indeed be a resurrection of the dead and a rapture of the living when Christ comes in the air to gather His people before the Great Tribulation.

The signs of the times are clear before us. Are we prepared? Do we have the assurance that when Christ comes to rapture the living, we will meet Him in the air? Or are we distracted by worldly pursuits, deceived by the fleeting pleasures of this life? The Lord Jesus may come at any moment. Let us be watchful and ready.

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2 Thess 2:3-4).

THOUGHT: Am I prepared to meet Jesus when He returns?

PRAYER: Father, prepare my life to meet the Lord Jesus when He returns. Help me to serve faithfully while there is still time.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 26

HEBREWS 1:1-14

HEBREWS 12:1-2

*“Looking unto Jesus the author
and finisher of our faith...”*

PAUL: HIS LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

Another of Paul’s wonderful epistle is the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Hebrew believers were among the first Christians in the early church. In the beginning, they faced persecution from their own people, and later from the Romans. Paul met some who had been expelled from Italy because of their faith, accused of being the cause of the Empire’s troubles for worshiping what was considered a “strange God.” Under such pressure, many were tempted to return to their former Judaistic faith to escape treatment.

Paul urged them not to waver but to endure. Their trials were not reflective of the hatred of men, but the chastening hand of the Lord. Instead of pressing forward in God’s promises, some had grown weary and were found wanting. Discipline was necessary, for those who endure prove themselves to be true children of God, while those who fall away reveal unbelief and prove themselves illegitimate.

Brethren, if we have truly been born again (regenerated by the Spirit, renewed in mind, and revived to live for God), let us not grow weary. If we have received His grace, tasted His goodness, and experienced His provision, let us not be lazy. If we are secure in His eternal Kingdom, assured of everlasting life and anticipating His eternal abode, let us not cling to temporal things but pursue heavenly rewards.

The persecutions we endure on earth are but for a moment. God’s chastening restores us to a right relationship with Him. Trials and testing strengthen our faith and draw us closer to Him. Therefore, let us run with patience the race set before us, knowing God has planned it for our good. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, encouraging one another unto love and good works. Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find help in time of need.

Christ is our great High Priest, Prophet, and King. Look to no other. Look unto Him alone, the Author and Finisher of our faith!

THOUGHT: Do I truly consider the supremacy of Christ above all?

PRAYER: Father, help me to endure to the end, trusting and believing in my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27

1 TIMOTHY 1:1-11

2 TIMOTHY 1:1-7

*“...I call to remembrance the
unfeigned faith that is in thee...”*

TIMOTHY

Another hero is Timothy. He came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ through the ministry of the Apostle Paul. His grandmother Lois and mother Eunice, devout Jewesses, were also converted to Christ, though his father was a Greek. Timothy probably first heard Paul preach the Gospel in Lystra during Paul's first missionary journey. From the second journey onward, Timothy joined Paul and remained a faithful companion in the work of the Lord. Paul described Timothy as having *“unfeigned faith”* (2 Tim 1:5). From childhood, he had known the Scriptures, and he followed Paul, as Paul followed Christ. In order to accompany Paul even into the synagogues of the Jews, Timothy submitted to circumcision. He was ordained by Paul and the presbytery through the laying on of hands, that he might minister to the churches of Christ.

What a blessing Paul received from the Lord in having such a faithful co-labourer! What encouragement to have a companion whose zeal and fervour blazed like fire in every situation, whether in peace or persecution. What comfort to know that when it was time for Paul to be taken home to glory, Timothy took the baton and continued the work God had entrusted to them. Truly, the prayer of every church should be not only for a Paul, but also for a Timothy, one who will press on to fulfil the Great Commission.

Timothy was always submissive to Paul's instruction. When there was a need to go to Thessalonica, Timothy went. When Paul remained in Corinth for one year six months and in Ephesus for more than two years, Timothy was there by his side. When the troubled church in Corinth required attention, Timothy was willing to visit, assess the situation, and report to Paul. Even during Paul's imprisonment in Rome, Timothy remained faithfully by his side.

May we not only desire to be like Paul, but also to serve as Timothy, standing alongside faithful pastors and ministers whom God has called, supporting them in the work of the Gospel.

THOUGHT: Am I willing to serve as a Timothy?

PRAYER: Father, grant me humility to serve as a support and encouragement to those whom Thou hast appointed to lead.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28

PHILEMON 1:1-7

PHILEMON 1:20-22

*“Having confidence in thy obedience
I wrote unto thee...”*

PHILEMON

The next important personality is Philemon. He was one of Paul's disciples during his ministry in Ephesus. The Apostle was close to him, as seen in the intimate letter Paul wrote to him. Philemon was known for his hospitality and was a leader in the church at Colosse. It is believed that the church there gathered in his home for worship each Lord's Day. His wife, Apphia, and their son, Archippus, were also devoted to the ministry, serving alongside Epaphras in the work of the Gospel.

Brethren, when others hear our names, will they think of God's love? Will they remember our faith in the Lord? Will they see Christ in us when they meet us and fellowship with us? Let us earnestly desire to be living examples of our Lord and Saviour, who is full of grace and mercy. As born-again children of God, we are indwelt by the Spirit, who enables us to do what pleases Him. The Spirit reminds us of God's truth so that we may live godly lives, manifesting Christlikeness in all we do.

A fellow labourer is essential in the work of the ministry. A Christian is not an island, nor a lone ranger, nor a one-man show. He needs companions to labour with him. A fellow soldier is even more needful in our daily battle against the enemy and the world. We need someone to lift us when we are wounded, to strengthen us when we faint. Above all, we need dearly beloved brethren whose faith, hope and love are as fervent as our own; those who remind us of Christ's promises, bear our burdens, and are willing even to suffer with us for His sake.

Brethren, are we like Philemon? Stedfast, trustworthy and commended by the Apostle? Paul had such confidence in Philemon's character that he entrusted him to mediate on behalf of Onesimus. Can the same be said of us?

“Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord. Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say” (Philem 1:20-21).

THOUGHT: Am I truly a fellow labourer and soldier to my brethren?

PRAYER: Father, give me the heart's desire to co-labour with others in Thy work.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29

PHILEMON 1:10-19

COLOSSIANS 4:9

“With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you.”

ONESIMUS

Another famous person in the history of the church is Onesimus. He was a runaway slave of Philemon who encountered the Apostle Paul in Rome. Through Paul's ministry, he became a Christian and was sent back to his master with Paul's letter, the Epistle to Philemon. In it, Paul urged Philemon to receive Onesimus not as a slave, but as a beloved brother in Christ. Once *“unprofitable”* (Philem 1:11), Onesimus was then *“profitable,”* transformed by the grace of God. Paul even promised to repay any debt Onesimus owed, asking Philemon to treat him as he would treat Paul himself.

How can one who is unfaithful become faithful? How can one who is despised become beloved? How can one who is unprofitable become profitable? Is it through education and training in universities? Through the counsel of psychologists and psychiatrists? Through the teachings of gurus and priests? Not at all!

It is only by the transforming power of God through regeneration when one believes in Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Saviour. He becomes a new creation. Old things pass away, and all things become new. His life is freed from the bondage of sin, self and Satan. He is conformed to the Word, not to the world. He is bound for heaven, not for hell. O, what a glorious and miraculous work of renewal in the life of one who was once dead, depraved and doomed! Are you restored and forgiven by the mercies of God through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus? Are you reformed and renewed by grace through faith in Christ? Are you revived and ready for service by the power of the Gospel you have received? Make every moment count as you serve the Lord. Let each day be a blessing to Him as you witness for Him. Let every year be a milestone for Him as you proclaim His Word.

Do not let your past hinder you from engaging in the ministry of the Word. Do not let others' judgments of who you once were prevent you from faithfully serving Christ. Do not let self-condemnation keep you from devoting your life to your Lord.

THOUGHT: Am I truly a faithful servant of God?

PRAYER: Father, transform me powerfully that I may serve Thee.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30

TITUS 1:1-5

TITUS 3:3-7

*“Not by works of righteousness
which we have done...”*

TITUS

One of Paul's trusted disciples was Titus. He was saved under Paul's ministry. He became one of Paul's closest assistants, accompanying him on several missionary journeys. Paul regarded Titus as his own son in the faith. Though a Greek believer, Titus was entrusted with the responsibility of ministering in Crete, to set the church in order. He was not subjected to circumcision, demonstrating that salvation is not by works of righteousness, but by the washing through regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

Titus greatly assisted Paul in Corinth, a church plagued by divisions and strife. In such a troubled congregation, a trusted servant of God who could restore peace and order was invaluable. Where factions arise, someone sent by God can bring unity and reconciliation. Where fear and fighting prevail, a faithful minister can bring comfort and stability. Praise God that He does not abandon His churches to destruction, but raises up servants to preserve and strengthen them. Let those who leave for personal convenience reflect on what it means to be used of God for the good of His people and the glory of the Father.

We must not be passive bystanders in our churches. We must not be pew warmers who attend services without lifting prayers for the church. We must not be strangers to our own congregations, uninvolved in ministry and unaware of its needs. Such attitudes destroy the church. They are like weeds that drain the soil yet bear no fruit, hindering the work of the Lord. They are selfish, caring only for themselves, and unworthy of the eternal communion of saints. Brethren, let us not be among them!

Instead, let us be like Titus: faithful, supportive, and willing to serve alongside pastors and leaders whom God has ordained. Let us labour together for the sake of Christ and His church. *“And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful. All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all. Amen”* (Titus 3:14-15).

THOUGHT: Am I assisting my pastor and leaders in my church?

PRAYER: Father, open my eyes to see where I can best serve Thee with the gifts Thou hast given me.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31

LUKE 5:27-39

MATTHEW 9:9

*“...Matthew, sitting at the receipt
of custom: and he saith unto him,
Follow me...”*

MATTHEW: THE GOSPEL OF JESUS' KINGSHIP

Matthew is one of the Gospel writers. Roger Baxter, in his “Meditations,” wrote of Matthew’s call: “Great was the force of this call, which was able to withdraw a man from his riches: and yet the same call, perhaps, would not be forcible enough to withdraw you from smaller impediments. Who can despair of salvation, when he sees public sinners taken out of a custom house, assumed not only to the friendship of God, but raised to the highest dignity of the apostleship.” Truly, *“his tender mercies are over all his works”* (Ps 145:9).

Matthew, whose name in Hebrew means “the gift of Jehovah,” was also known as Levi. A tax collector by profession, despised by his own people and branded a traitor by the Pharisees, he was nevertheless chosen by the Lord Jesus to be an apostle. His call was a striking display of God’s irresistible grace. Though educated and employed in a position of wealth, Matthew immediately responded to the highest call, leaving behind worldly gain for an eternal reward.

At the time of his calling, Matthew believed and loved his Messiah and King. He would have counted the cost of losing his occupation, but considered the blessedness of belonging to Christ far greater than the fleeting pleasures of this world. Hearing the sweet yet commanding voice of the King, he had no other thought but to submit to His rule. Thus, he quoted a prophecy, *“All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee...”* (Matt 21:4-5).

Matthew’s burden for his people was evident. Responding to his calling, he gathered fellow tax collectors and sinners, and hosted a feast so they too might hear the good news of salvation. His concern was no longer to collect money, but to gather souls for blessing. He wasted no time in proclaiming the Messiah, the Son of David, the King who will reign on earth for a thousand years, and forever in His eternal Kingdom.

THOUGHT: Am I truly a follower of Jesus Christ, my King?

PRAYER: Father, may Thy irresistible grace upon me be the same grace imparted to others as I share Thy Word.

LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 1

ACTS 16:10-13

COLOSSIANS 4:14

*"Luke, the beloved physician,
and Demas, greet you."*

LUKE: THE PHYSICIAN MISSIONARY

Luke is another hero of church history who must not be missed. Paul mentioned Luke in his prison epistles, even up to the time of his martyrdom under Nero. Luke had accompanied Paul from at least the second missionary journey onward. A Gentile believer, Luke faithfully laboured with Paul in evangelistic missions. Paul identified him as a physician, indicating that Luke was a man of education, training and professional skill.

Luke was uniquely qualified to write the two-volume work of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. Among Paul's companions, Luke alone possessed the ability to record such detailed accounts. Under Paul's guidance, Luke came to know the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus. In Acts, Luke was an eyewitness to many events, carefully documenting the growth of the early church.

Yet, Luke's example stands in contrast to many who, though highly educated, hesitate to give up their careers to serve the Lord. They fear it would be a waste of their talent, time and treasure. Some even postpone obedience until retirement when they would feel more secured financially. But such delay reveals a heart too attached to the world. This attachment divides the heart, distracts the mind, and destroys peace. It undermines faith, weakens zeal, and dulls sensitivity to the God who loves us enough to send His only begotten Son.

Beloved believer, have you heard God's call but are ignoring it out of anxiety for your future? Have you felt the burden to obey and serve God but convinced yourself that the time is not yet? Have you experienced God's goodness but dismissed it as mere luck or chance? Beware of hardening your heart! When judicial hardening comes, all will be lost, even the soul itself.

Luke's life reminds us that true service requires surrender. Luke left behind worldly pursuits to follow Christ and recorded God's work for generations to come.

THOUGHT: Am I ready to leave everything behind for Christ's sake?

PRAYER: Father, help me to value spiritual things above the material.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2

LUKE 2:1-20

LUKE 3:38

*“...which was the son of Adam,
which was the son of God.”*

LUKE: HIS GOSPEL OF JESUS' HUMANITY

Luke's Gospel is the longest book in the New Testament. It forms the first part of a two-volume work, the second being the Book of Acts. Though the writer does not name himself, strong evidence points to Luke, the physician who accompanied Paul from his second missionary journey onward. Luke openly declared that he relied on eyewitness testimonies to record the life of Jesus, showing that he was not himself an eyewitness. The early church fathers testified that Paul was among those eyewitnesses, and Luke, being Paul's close companion, carefully preserved what he learned.

Luke was honest in his approach. As God's chosen writer of the third Gospel, he used his God-given skill as a physician to record with precision the life of our Lord, presenting Him as both fully man and fully God. His careful research and orderly account strengthened the faith of Gentile believers, affirming that Jesus, in His perfect divine nature, is also truly human, man's perfect representative and substitute.

Luke's purpose was to set forth an orderly declaration of the life of Christ. His narrative flows from Jesus' birth and childhood, through His ministry in Galilee, and climaxes with His journey to Jerusalem for the work of redemption. Luke also recorded the appearances of Jesus after His resurrection, confirming the reality of His victory over death.

The Lord gives each of us talents and abilities to be used in His service. Like Luke, we must be thankful for these gifts and dedicate them to glorify our Saviour. Every believer has the privilege of participating in the ministry of bringing souls to Christ. We must not wait passively for others to call us; instead, we must pray for the Lord to open doors of service and be ready to walk through them. Passion for Christ compels us to offer back to Him that which He has entrusted to us.

THOUGHT: Am I truly desiring to serve my Saviour with the gifts He has given me?

PRAYER: Father, help me to actively fulfil my part in the ministry where Thou hast placed me.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3

ACTS 1:1-8

ACTS 16:9-13

*“...the Lord had called us for
to preach the gospel unto them.”*

LUKE: HIS EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

We turn now to another of Luke's historical writings: the record of the acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this inspired account, Luke portrayed the dynamic power of the Spirit of God building the church through His chosen vessels. It was the Spirit who enabled a small band of disciples to transform into a movement that spread across the world, capturing the hearts of God's elect everywhere.

Luke carefully chronicled how the Spirit empowered the Apostles to preach the Gospel boldly, even in the face of fierce persecution and opposition from both Jews and Gentiles. He understood their struggles well, for he was present as an eyewitness to their imprisonment and even their deaths. For this reason, many have called Acts “the fifth Gospel,” for it continues the story of Christ's life and work through His disciples.

Though Luke was not one of the Apostles and did not witness Christ's earthly ministry firsthand (he never saw the miracles nor heard the preaching), yet when he came to believe in Jesus, his life was transformed. He accompanied Paul on many of his most dangerous missionary journeys, risking his own life for the Gospel. Luke was fully convinced that Jesus is the Messiah, the only hope of salvation from sin.

This raises a searching question: Do you have this kind of conviction, brethren? Or are you a nominal Christian who professes Christ but lacks the heart to serve Him? Do you attend church merely out of formality because it is expected of you? Do you think you are a Christian simply because you once prayed a prayer, or because your parents are respectable church leaders? True faith begins with the recognition that you are a wicked and wretched sinner bound for hell, and that Jesus Christ gave Himself on the cross so that your sins can be forgiven and you can enter His kingdom. If this is true, why then remain cold and indifferent? Why live as though Christ has not changed you?

THOUGHT: Am I truly a Christian bound for heaven, or merely one in name only?

PRAYER: Father, let Thy Holy Spirit convict my heart of sin and open my eyes to the saving work of Jesus. May I live with the same conviction and courage as Luke, fully persuaded that Christ is my only Hope.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

MARK 1:1-13

1 PETER 5:13

*“...elected together with you,
saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.”*

MARK: HIS GOSPEL OF JESUS' MINISTRY

Another hero of the faith to consider is Mark. The second Gospel was written anonymously, but early church fathers, such as Papias, quoted by the historian Eusebius, identified Mark as its author. Mark was not one of the Apostles. He was the son of a widow, and at one point was even denied by the Apostle Paul to join the second missionary journey because he had abandoned them during the first. Yet, the Lord still chose him to record for us the Gospel of the servanthood of Jesus Christ.

How did Mark know these Gospel accounts? The Lord used the Apostle Peter's preaching as the foundation of Mark's writing. Mark faithfully recorded what Peter proclaimed about the words and deeds of Jesus. Before Peter's death, when he wrote letters to scattered believers, he affectionately referred to Mark as “*my son*” (1 Pet 5:13). And Paul, who once refused him, later urged Timothy: “*Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry*” (2 Tim 4:11).

Mark's Gospel highlighted the human side of the Lord Jesus Christ. He drew attention to Christ's emotions and actions, showing us that though He is fully divine, He came as a servant to His own creation. Jesus is portrayed as the active Servant, the obedient Servant, and the sacrificial Servant.

There are times in our lives when we feel useless or discouraged, rejected by others, or convinced that we have no value or purpose. Indeed, none of us deserves to be accepted into God's ministry; we are weak and sinful. Yet God, in His grace, calls us to serve. When He sends people to encourage us, and gives us opportunities to labour for Him, let us not be lazy or indifferent. Instead, let us be active in service, obedient to His call, and willing to sacrifice for the sake of Christ's work. In doing so, we share in the sufferings of our Lord and in the blessings of His ministry.

THOUGHT: Am I truly living as God's servant, willing to serve Him with humility and sacrifice?

PRAYER: Father, fill me with the power of Thy Holy Spirit, that I may serve Thee faithfully and wholeheartedly, offering my life as a living sacrifice for Thy glory.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5

LUKE 1:26-45

LUKE 1:46-56

*“...my spirit hath rejoiced
in God my Saviour.”*

MARY: THE MOTHER OF JESUS

Another important character is Mary, the mother of Jesus, one of the most recognised women in Scripture. She is best known as the mother of Jesus the Messiah, and her story shines with immense faith, courage and humility. When the angel announced God’s plan, Mary responded with submission and trust: *“Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word”* (Luke 1:38). She praised the Lord for the privilege of being the vessel through whom the Son of God would take on flesh and dwell among men: *“My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed”* (Luke 1:46-48).

Traditions portrayed the Mary of the Bible differently by exalting her beyond what Scripture teaches. She was a humble woman who acknowledged her need for a Saviour. Though highly favoured to bear Christ, she remained a sinner who required redemption through Him. Mary never claimed divinity, nor did her role as mother of Jesus make her equal with God. She understood her calling as a servant, chosen to bring forth the Messiah, who would be incarnated to represent humanity and die on the cross as our Substitute.

Her life points us back to the central truth: there is no other way to be justified before a holy God except through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Salvation is not earned by works or human merit. Only Jesus saves. He alone is our Mediator and Redeemer. No man or woman can add to His finished work. The only sacrifice that brings forgiveness is His atoning death on Calvary. Those who trust in their own righteousness will face the wages of sin: death followed by eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire. Mary’s faith reminds us that salvation is found in Christ alone, and that humility and obedience are the marks of true discipleship.

THOUGHT: Am I trusting in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ? Or am I relying on my own works?

PRAYER: Father, help me to seek my salvation in Christ alone. Teach me to rest fully in the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6

ACTS 9:36-43

JAMES 2:14-17

*“Even so faith,
if it hath not works,
is dead, being alone.”*

TABITHA: FULL OF GOOD WORKS AND ALMSDEEDS

Another heroine is Tabitha, also called Dorcas (meaning gazelle in Greek), who is remembered in Scripture as a faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Her life was marked by compassion and generosity, for she was known as a woman *“full of good works and almsdeeds”* (Acts 9:36). She consistently helped those in need, especially the poor, showing the love of Christ through her deeds.

Suddenly, Tabitha fell ill and died. The believers in Joppa, grieving over her death, sent for Peter, hoping for God’s intervention. When Peter arrived, he found widows and friends mourning. They showed him the garments Tabitha had lovingly made for them. She was deeply beloved in her community because she had given herself selflessly to others, especially the least among them.

Tabitha’s life is a powerful testimony that true faith is not only professed, but lived out in action. Her works reflected the regenerating power of God in her heart, demonstrating what it means to be *“doers of the word, and not hearers only”* (James 1:22).

Peter prayed and then spoke two simple words: *“Tabitha, arise”* (Acts 9:40). Immediately, she opened her eyes and sat up. This miracle brought great joy to the believers and caused many to put their faith in the Lord. Even in her death and restoration, Tabitha’s life pointed people to Christ.

Her example challenges us today: Are we living out our Christian testimony so that others see Christ in us? Have we truly repented of our sins and believed in Jesus as Lord and Saviour? Are we walking in the Spirit, demonstrating the new life God has given us?

THOUGHT: Am I living as a true witness for the Lord Jesus, showing my faith through works of love?

PRAYER: Father, fill me with Thy Holy Spirit, that I may live in obedience to Thy will, serving others with compassion and reflecting the life of Christ in all I do.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7

ACTS 10:1-20

ACTS 10:44-48

*“...on the Gentiles also was poured out
the gift of the Holy Ghost.”*

CORNELIUS: THE CONVERTED ROMAN CENTURION

One unique hero is Cornelius, a Roman centurion of the Italian Regiment, who is described by Luke as “*a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway*” (Acts 10:2). Though a Gentile, he had embraced the Jewish faith, reading the Scriptures, observing regular hours of prayer, and showing compassion to the poor.

One day, the Lord gave Cornelius a vision in which an angel instructed him to send for Peter in Joppa. Obediently, Cornelius dispatched trusted men to bring the Apostle. When Peter arrived, Cornelius fell at his feet in reverence, but Peter corrected him, reminding him that he was only a man. As Peter preached the Word, the Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius and his household, and they began to speak in other tongues. Peter then baptised them, confirming their full inclusion into the family of God.

Cornelius stands out as one of the first prominent Gentiles to believe in Jesus Christ. His conversion was costly. To confess Christ as Lord was dangerous both among the religious Jews, who viewed Christianity as heresy, and among the Romans, who often despised faith in a crucified Messiah. Yet, Cornelius did not hold back. He openly identified with Jesus, receiving baptism and living as His follower.

This transformation illustrates the power of God’s irresistible grace. Cornelius no longer sought the approval of men, but of God. He no longer lived for himself but for his Saviour. He no longer served merely his earthly superiors, but the heavenly King. His conversion impacted not only his own life, but also those around him, as many came to believe through his testimony. Cornelius reminds us that true conversion is not hidden; it is a bold confession of Christ, lived out in obedience and service, regardless of the cost.

THOUGHT: Is my conversion a living testimony that impacts others for Christ?

PRAYER: Father, grant me courage not to fear confessing Jesus as my Lord. May I live and serve faithfully, seeking only Thy approval and bringing others to faith through my witness.

LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 8

ACTS 4:32-37

ACTS 11:25

*"Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus,
for to seek Saul."*

BARNABAS: THE SON OF CONSOLATION

One unforgettable personality in church history is Barnabas (originally named Joses), a Levite from Cyprus. The Apostles gave him the name "*Barnabas... being interpreted, The son of consolation*" (Acts 4:36), for he was known to bring comfort to the needy and encouragement to the saints. His generosity was evident when he sold a field and laid the proceeds at the Apostles' feet, so that the money could be distributed to the believers according to their needs.

Scripture further describes him as "*a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith*" (Acts 11:24). Barnabas played a vital role in encouraging Saul (later Paul) when others were hesitant to accept him (Acts 9:26-28). He exhorted the growing church in Antioch to remain steadfast in the Lord (Acts 11:19-26) and brought relief to the brethren in Judea during a famine (Acts 11:27-30). Though he had moments of weakness, such as his contention with Paul over John Mark (Acts 15:36-41) and being influenced by Peter's dissimulation (Gal 2:11-13), Barnabas still stands as a model of encouragement and consolation.

His life reminds us that even in human frailty, God's grace enables believers to be sources of comfort and blessing. Having received so much from God, we are called to share the good news of salvation with unbelievers, to exhort new believers to grow in grace, to strengthen the saints to remain steadfast, and to encourage ministers to faithfully preach the Word in season and out of season.

How refreshing it is when saints exhort one another, when believers are edified by fellow believers, and when servants of the Lord are strengthened by the presence of fellow servants. In a world often hostile to the Christian faith, we desperately need mutual support, fellowship with like-minded brethren, and the uplifting words of pastors and fellow Christians.

THOUGHT: Am I living as an encouragement to others, reflecting the consolation of Christ?

PRAYER: Father, make me a blessing to others, as Thou hast richly blessed me. May my life bring comfort, encouragement and strength to those around me, for Thy glory.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9

ACTS 13:1-12

ACTS 15:2

*“...Paul and Barnabas had
no small dissension and
disputation with them...”*

BARNABAS: PAUL’S FIRST CO-WORKER

We shall further consider the life of Barnabas. He was among the prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1). The Holy Spirit set him apart, together with Saul, for the missionary work to which God had called them. After the leaders laid hands on them, they were sent forth as missionaries. In the missions field, Barnabas was even called an apostle alongside Paul (Acts 14:14), and God worked miracles through them among the Gentiles (Acts 15:12). He persevered in the journey despite persecution (Acts 13:45-50; 14:19), risking his life for Christ (Acts 15:26).

As Paul’s co-worker, Barnabas showed humility. Though Paul was his junior in the faith, Barnabas recognised God’s charge for Paul to be the evangelist to the Gentiles. He was mindful of his own gifts and used them to encourage Paul in the hardship of missionary work. Barnabas did not seek leadership or recognition, but faithfully carried the burden alongside Paul so that God’s purposes could be accomplished. His aim was not to promote his own name but to exalt Christ.

Together, they faced opposition from a sorcerer who tried to turn away the faith of a Roman official. Barnabas endured persecution with Paul in Antioch of Pisidia, where they were expelled (Acts 13:50). He did not abandon Paul when they were threatened with stoning in Iconium (Acts 14:5). He stood with Paul in Lystra, stopping the people from worshipping them as gods (Acts 14:14-15). Even when Paul was stoned and left for dead, Barnabas did not run away but continued with him until they returned to the church in Antioch of Syria which sent them forth.

Barnabas reminds us of the need for faithful co-workers today, those who will not abandon the work when trials come, who will suffer alongside us in poverty and persecution, who will remain steadfast even in imprisonment, and who are willing to give up their lives for Christ’s sake when called by the Lord.

THOUGHT: Am I willing to help others in the work of the Lord, even when it costs me?

PRAYER: Father, grant me a vision that looks beyond earthly trials but that focuses on heaven above. Make me a faithful co-worker in Thy service, willing to share burdens and to glorify Christ alone.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10

ACTS 6:1-15

ACTS 7:51-60

*“And they stoned Stephen,
calling upon God...”*

STEPHEN: THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR

The next hero is a martyr. In Acts 6, Stephen was chosen along with six others to serve as the first deacons of the church. The Apostles prayed and laid their hands on them, setting them apart for service. Stephen, full of faith and the Holy Spirit, worked diligently to bring Grecian Jews to Christ. Many believed, but opposition soon arose from members of the synagogue of the Libertines and others (Acts 6:9). Unable to defeat him in debate, they resorted to false accusations, charging him with speaking against the law of Moses and the temple.

Brought before the Sanhedrin, Stephen was given the privilege of delivering a powerful sermon, recorded in Acts 7. He recounted Israel's history and boldly confronted his accusers: *“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.”* (Acts 7:51). Enraged, they dragged him out of the city and stoned him, laying their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.

Stephen's final words reveal the depth of his union with Christ: *“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”* Then, kneeling down, he cried, *“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”* (Acts 7:59-60). His heart, knit to his Saviour, held no hatred toward his persecutors. Filled with Christ's love, he was ready to forgive, even as Christ forgave him. Only a heart regenerated by God could pray for the forgiveness of enemies in the midst of such pain and cruelty.

Stephen's testimony reminds us that the love of God dwelling in every Christian must flow, and overflow, even toward those who oppose us. God loved us while we were His enemies, sending His only begotten Son to bear the penalty of our sins. His everlasting love calls us to love others as He has loved us.

THOUGHT: Do I reflect the forgiveness of Christ by truly loving those who hate me?

PRAYER: Father, work in my heart to willingly forgive those who have wronged me. May I manifest Christlike love, even toward my enemies, and bear witness to the power of the Gospel.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11

ACTS 8:5-25

ACTS 21:8-9

*“...we entered into
the house of Philip the evangelist,
which was one of the seven...”*

PHILIP: THE EVANGELIST

The role of our next hero, Philip, is vital to church history. He was very instrumental in the spread of the Gospel to the African continent. Philip the Evangelist was one of the seven men chosen by the Apostles to serve the early Christian community in Jerusalem as deacons (Acts 6). Luke recorded him as a man of great faith, zeal and evangelistic spirit who played a crucial role in spreading Christianity beyond Jerusalem.

His ministry began after Stephen's martyrdom, when persecution caused believers in Jerusalem to be scattered. Philip travelled to Samaria and preached the Gospel with remarkable success. His message was confirmed by miraculous signs: unclean spirits were cast out, and the lame and paralysed were healed. And great joy filled the city. Many Samaritans believed and were baptised, including Simon the sorcerer, who had previously deceived the people.

Later, Philip received divine guidance to go south on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. There he encountered an Ethiopian eunuch, a high-ranking official of Queen Candace. The eunuch was reading Isaiah 53:7-8 and, prompted by the Spirit, Philip explained the passage, pointing to Jesus Christ. The eunuch believed, was baptised immediately, and Philip was miraculously transported Azotus.

Philip eventually settled in Caesarea Maritima, where he raised four daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:8-9). His household reflected the sincerity of his faith and the authenticity of his testimony. Philip was not merely an evangelist before others; his family saw the reality of his devotion and followed his example in proclaiming God's Word. His life reminds us that true evangelism begins at home, where our testimony must be genuine and consistent.

THOUGHT: Does my household see my life testimony as genuine, shaping the lives of those closest to me?

PRAYER: Father, fill me with Thy Spirit, that my faith may be sincere and lived from the heart, not as mere words, but a life that bears witness to Christ both in my home and before the world.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12

ACTS 8:26-39

ISAIAH 53:7-8

*“...for the transgression of my people
was he stricken,”*

THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH: SALVATION IS OF THE LORD

Through Philip, one important person to remember is the Ethiopian eunuch, a high-ranking official in the court of Queen Candace. He is remembered in Scripture as a man seeking God. He had travelled to Jerusalem to worship, likely as a Jewish proselyte, and on his return journey, he experienced a life-changing encounter with Philip the Evangelist.

The account in Acts 8 beautifully illustrates God's sovereign role in evangelism. Philip, one of the first deacons of the church, had just preached the Gospel in Samaria with great success (Acts 8:4-8). Then, an angel directed him to go south on the desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza (Acts 8:26). Without hesitation, Philip obeyed.

Meanwhile, the eunuch was seated in his chariot, reading from Isaiah 53:7-8. The Spirit prompted Philip to approach, and he asked the eunuch if he understood what he was reading. The eunuch replied, *“How can I, except some man should guide me?”* (Acts 8:31). Inviting Philip to join him, he asked whether the prophet Isaiah spoke of himself or of another. Philip seized the opportunity to proclaim Jesus Christ, the suffering Servant who gave His life to save sinners. The eunuch believed, and upon seeing water, he asked to be baptised. Philip responded, *“If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.”* The eunuch confessed, *“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”* (Acts 8:37). Immediately, he was baptised, and his life was transformed from that moment.

This account reminds us that evangelism is God's work from beginning to end. He directs His servants, prepares hearts, and opens ears to hear the Gospel. Salvation is not man-centred, but God-centred. Our task is to remain sensitive to the Spirit's leading, and to faithfully proclaim Christ, while trusting God to accomplish His saving purposes.

THOUGHT: Am I truly God-centred in my evangelistic efforts, relying on His Spirit rather than human methods?

PRAYER: Father, Thou knowest who are Thine, and how to bring the elect unto salvation. Make me sensitive to Thy Spirit's leading, that I may faithfully proclaim Christ and glorify Thee in all my witness.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13

ACTS 9:10-18

ACTS 22:12-13

*“And one Ananias,
a devout man according to the law...”*

ANANIAS: A DISCIPLE AT DAMASCUS

Another less known hero, but significantly important, in the history of the church is Ananias. We meet him in Acts 9. He was a disciple of Christ in Damascus. Though not renowned as a leader of the church, his obedience to God left a lasting mark in Christian history. In a vision, the Lord called him by name: *“Ananias.”* His immediate response was, *“Behold, I am here, Lord”* (Acts 9:10). The Lord then gave him detailed instructions: to go to the street called Straight, to the house of Judas, and to find Saul of Tarsus, who was praying and had already seen a vision of Ananias coming to him.

At first, Ananias hesitated, knowing Saul’s reputation for persecuting believers in Jerusalem. Yet the Lord reassured him: *“He is a chosen vessel unto me”* (Acts 9:15). Trusting God’s Word, Ananias obeyed. His obedience became the turning point in Saul’s life, leading to Saul’s conversion, who would later become the Apostle Paul.

This account highlights the precision of God’s instructions and the importance of faithful obedience. The Lord is pleased to use Christians who submit to His commands, even when they wrestle with fear. He delights in those who are diligent, carrying out His tasks with accuracy and fidelity. He empowers those who place their confidence in Him, and not in themselves.

We should be thankful that God still raises up faithful disciples today: men and women who are not bound by traditions, superstitions, or human doctrines, but who trust in the Scriptures and respond quickly to His call. Like Ananias, may we be ready to act when the Lord prompts us, not delaying or resisting, but obeying with faith and courage, whatever the challenge.

THOUGHT: Am I living as an active disciple of Christ, ever ready to obey His call without delay?

PRAYER: Father, grant me a heart that is faithful and trusting in Thy way, whatever the cost. Make me quick to obey Thy commands, confident not in myself but in Thee.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14

ACTS 11:27-30

ACTS 21:10-12

*“...there came down from Judaea
a certain prophet, named Agabus.”*

AGABUS: A TRUE PROPHET OF GOD

The next hero is a prophet. When the news of the grace of God upon Antioch reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, the Apostles and elders sent Barnabas to encourage the believers there (Acts 11:22-24). As the church grew, prophets came from Jerusalem to minister, and among them was Agabus (Acts 11:27).

Agabus, led by the Spirit, foretold that a great famine would spread throughout the world. Luke recorded, *“And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar”* (Acts 11:28). Historical records confirm this prophecy. Ancient writers such as Tacitus, Josephus and Suetonius documented famines during the reign of Claudius (AD 41-54), particularly around AD 45-46. Agabus was no false prophet. His words were fulfilled exactly as spoken.

In response, the disciples acted with compassion: *“Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul”* (Acts 11:29-30). Agabus’ prophecy stirred the church to be united and to give generously, showing how true prophecy built up the body of Christ.

Yet, Jesus Himself warned that, in these last days, many false prophets would arise (Matt 24:11). Believers must remain watchful and discerning, guarding their loyalty to God against impostors who seek to deceive. Christ’s words remind us: *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves... Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them”* (Matt 7:15-20).

Agabus’ example calls us to trust the Spirit’s leading, to heed true prophecy, and to remain vigilant against deception.

THOUGHT: Am I watchful and discerning, testing all things by the Word of God?

PRAYER: Father, grant me wisdom and discernment to recognise false prophets and remain steadfast in Thy truth. Keep my heart loyal to Thee alone, that I may not be deceived, but walk faithfully in Christ.

LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 15

ACTS 16:6-15

ACTS 16:36-40

*"...they went out of the prison,
and entered into the house of Lydia..."*

LYDIA: THE FIRST CONVERT IN EUROPE

This heroine is particularly important in the spread of the Gospel to Europe. Lydia is the first recorded convert in Europe during the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul. Originally from Thyatira in Asia Minor, she encountered Paul and his companions by the river near her new home in Philippi, present-day Greece. Paul's message about Jesus' life, death and resurrection dramatically transformed her life and marked the beginning of the church in Europe.

Scripture describes Lydia as a woman who worshipped God (Acts 16:14). She embraced the God of Israel as revealed in the Old Testament and was earnestly seeking the truth. As she listened intently to Paul's preaching, she was highly favoured of God, *"whose heart the Lord opened"* to believe the Gospel.

Lydia was not merely a hearer of the Word but a doer of it also. She immediately submitted to baptism, fulfilling all righteousness. God's grace extended to her household as well, and her faith was demonstrated through hospitality. She opened her home to Paul and his companions, providing them a place to stay while they were in Philippi.

Her story reminds us that wherever God's elect are, He is faithful to send His servants to preach the Word so that they may believe. When the Lord directs His people to evangelise in a certain place, we can trust His wisdom and timing. No call from God is to be despised, for He knows the perfect moment when unbelievers will be drawn to salvation.

Though the church in Philippi began humbly in Lydia's household, it grew in strength and fruitfulness. Later, Paul commended the Philippians for their generosity, as they supported him financially during his imprisonment in Rome. Their spiritual maturity was evident in their willingness to give of their resources for the advancement of the Gospel.

THOUGHT: Am I actively helping in the missions work of the Lord, using my resources and gifts for His glory?

PRAYER: Father, as Thou hast graciously sent a preacher to bring me Thy Word and salvation, make me a blessing to others. May I support Thy servants and the work of the Gospel with joy and faithfulness.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16

ACTS 16:19-24

ACTS 15:32-34

*“Judas and Silas,
being prophets also themselves,
exhorted the brethren with many words...”*

SILAS: PAUL'S MISSIONARY CO-WORKER

Another equally significant hero that must not be missed is Silas, also known as Silvanus. He first appears in Scripture as one of the chief men in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:22). He was respected and influential, chosen by the Jerusalem Council to carry their decision (regarding the inclusion of Gentiles) to Antioch.

Soon after, Silas became Paul's companion on the second missionary journey. He risked his life for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In Philippi, he was beaten and imprisoned with Paul. Yet even in chains, they prayed and sang hymns to God, so much so that the other prisoners listened. In the midst of suffering, their faith shone brightly. God then miraculously released them, and the jailer, deeply moved, asked: *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”* Paul and Silas answered: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”* That very night, the jailer and his household believed and were baptised (Acts 16:30-33).

Silas continued faithfully in ministry. He and Timothy strengthened the believers in Berea (Acts 17:14), and he remained in Corinth for a time, ministering after Paul departed. When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, he mentioned Silas as being with him (1 Thess 1:1). Through many trials and dangers, Silas stood as a steadfast co-worker, vital to the establishment of churches in Macedonia: Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea.

Silas' example reminds us of the importance of faithful companions in the work of the Lord. He was not seeking his own glory, but was willing to suffer, pray, sing and serve alongside Paul for the sake of Christ. His life calls us to support pastors and missionaries, to share in their burdens, and to rejoice with them when God establishes His church. As redeemed children of God, the true meaning in life is found in serving wherever the Lord puts us.

THOUGHT: Am I serving the Lord faithfully, willing to share the burdens of His work?

PRAYER: Father, show me where I can devote my life for Thy glory. May I spend my days meaningfully, serving Thee and supporting Thy servants in the work of the Gospel.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17

ACTS 18:1-3

ACTS 18:24-26

*“...they took him unto them,
and expounded unto him
the way of God more perfectly.”*

AQUILA AND PRISCILLA: TENTMAKERS

Another two heroes are Aquila, a Jewish Christian, and his wife Priscilla. This Jewish couple first met Paul in Corinth. Scripture tells us that Paul stayed with them because they shared the same trade: *“for by their occupation they were tentmakers”* (Acts 18:3). They had come from Italy after being expelled during the reign of Emperor Claudius, yet even in displacement, they faithfully served the Lord.

Their contribution to the ministry was exemplary. When Apollos, an eloquent man from Alexandria, came to Ephesus, he was mighty in the Scriptures but knew only the baptism of John. Aquila and Priscilla, with loving care, took him aside privately and explained the way of God more perfectly to him. Their gentle correction helped equip Apollos to boldly proclaim Christ, showing us the importance of mature believers who can guide others with wisdom and grace.

How greatly the church today needs Christians like Aquila and Priscilla, those who correct with tenderness, not harshness; who teach with patience, not pride. Their example stands in contrast to worldly attitudes of scolding, belittling or bullying. Yet their honesty was uncompromising. They did not sugar-coat or dilute the truth. They taught the Word of God faithfully, holding to it as inerrant and infallible.

Read Paul’s commendation of them in Romans 16:3-4. Aquila and Priscilla risked their lives for the Gospel, living with the conviction that heaven was their true home. For them, to live was to serve Christ, and to die was to be with Him forever.

Their testimony calls us to the same devotion: to build up others in the faith, to risk comfort and even life for the sake of the Gospel, and to live with eternity in view.

THOUGHT: Am I ready to face death for the sake of Christ, living each day with eternity in mind?

PRAYER: Father, grant me joy in building up others for Thee while living in the blessed anticipation of the return of the Lord Jesus. May my life reflect the courage and devotion of Aquila and Priscilla, wholly given to Thy service.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18

ACTS 18:24-28

1 CORINTHIANS 4:6

*“...that ye might learn in us
not to think of men
above that which is written...”*

APOLLOS: AN ELOQUENT PREACHER

One particular hero is Apollos, a well-known preacher. He was a Jew from Alexandria, described in Scripture as *“an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures”* (Acts 18:24). He had been instructed in the way of the Lord and, being fervent in spirit, diligently taught the things of God. Yet at first, he knew only the baptism of John (Acts 18:25), which suggested that he might have been a disciple of John the Baptist.

In Ephesus, Apollos spoke boldly in the synagogue. Aquila and Priscilla, discerning his incomplete understanding of Christ's doctrines, lovingly took him aside and explained the way of God more perfectly to him. Apollos humbly received their instruction, showing himself ready to be corrected and be further equipped. With this fuller knowledge, he went on to Achaia, where *“he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ”* (Acts 18:28).

Apollos' ministry was powerful, especially in Corinth. Yet his eloquence unintentionally became a source of division, as some believers began to form partisan loyalties around their favourite preachers (1 Cor 1:12). Paul reminded them that all ministers were but *“labourers together with God”* (1 Cor 3:9), and that the focus must remain on Christ alone. Apollos himself was not the target of rebuke; it was the Corinthian Christians who had misplaced their devotion.

His example teaches us the importance of humility in ministry. A servant of God must be willing to learn from others, accept correction from those who care, and submit to the guidance of faithful shepherds. Our walk with God must never be about personal gain, fame or human approval. True service seeks only the glory of Christ, not worldly recognition or reward. May every believer remain Christ-centred, lifting up His name above all else, even above church traditions or denominational pride.

THOUGHT: Am I serving the Lord all for His glory alone, without seeking man's praise?

PRAYER: Father, grant me humility to receive instruction and correction, that I may be better equipped to serve Thee. Keep my heart centred on Christ, that all I do may glorify Thy name alone.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19

ACTS 15:13-21

GALATIANS 1:19

*“But other of the apostles saw I none,
save James the Lord’s brother.”*

JAMES: THE LORD’S BROTHER

James, the Lord’s brother, must not be neglected even though he first rejected the Lord Jesus. James is listed first among the brothers of Jesus, indicating that he was likely the oldest (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3). Paul later named him as one of the leaders he met in Jerusalem three years after his conversion (Gal 1:19). In the Gospels, James is mentioned to highlight his family’s humble status in their village (Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3). He might have been among the brothers who accompanied Jesus to Capernaum (John 2:12), and later, he and his siblings urged Jesus to go to Judaea during the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:3). At that time, however, they did not yet believe in Him (John 7:5).

James’ early unbelief reminds us that one can be so near to Christ and yet so far from salvation. Growing up with Jesus, he saw His humanity: His hunger, His weariness. He might have struggled to accept Jesus’ divinity. Truly, familiarity breeds contempt. James and his siblings could not easily acknowledge Him as God while seeing Him daily in their home.

It is only by the grace of God that anyone can see the truth about Jesus. Many hear the Gospel, know it well, and even speak of it, yet remain unbelieving. Judas Iscariot himself spent over three years with Jesus, proclaiming Him to others, but never truly believed.

James, however, came to faith, likely because of the resurrection. When he realised that his brother, who had died and been buried for three days, had risen again, his eyes were opened. This stupendous miracle was the turning point. By God’s grace, James believed, and later became a pillar of the church in Jerusalem. His story reminds us that salvation is always the work of God’s grace. No matter how close we may be to the things of God, only His mercy can bring us to faith in Christ. This truth echoes the cry of the sixteenth-century Reformation: *Soli Deo Gloria*, to God alone be the glory!

THOUGHT: Do I humbly acknowledge the grace of God upon me, knowing that salvation is His work alone?

PRAYER: Father, I am saved from all my sins only because of the finished work of Christ. May I live each day giving glory to Thee alone.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20

COLOSSIANS 4:12-13

COLOSSIANS 1:7-8

*“...Epaphras our dear fellowservant,
who is for you
a faithful minister of Christ...”*

EPAPHRAS: FAITHFUL MINISTER OF CHRIST

Our next hero is Epaphras, one who was commended by the Apostle Paul as a faithful minister of the church at Colosse (Col 1:7). Many believe that he may have been the founder of that church, possibly one of Paul's students during his ministry at the School of Tyrannus in Ephesus, where *“all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks”* (Acts 19:10).

Paul reminded the Colossian believers that they had learned the true Gospel from Epaphras. His teaching stood in contrast to the false doctrines of early gnosticism that had threatened the church. Paul's strong affirmation of Epaphras served to silence opposition and strengthen the believers' confidence in his ministry.

Epaphras did not rely on his own wisdom or strength. He prayed earnestly and sought the Lord's help, remembering the faithful teaching of Paul. His example reminds us that God has placed Christian leaders in our lives: parents in the family, teachers in school, pastors and elders in the church, to guide us in His Word.

Above all, we rejoice that as born-again believers, we have the indwelling Holy Spirit. He counsels us, teaches us the truth of Scripture, and produces fruit in our lives. The Spirit also directs us to godly counsel and guidance when we face trials or attacks from the enemy. We are not left to solve our problems alone. The Lord provides His help through His Spirit, through His people, and even through circumstances He ordains.

Epaphras' faithfulness calls us to depend continually on the Spirit of God, to pray earnestly, and to trust the Lord's provision in every situation.

THOUGHT: Am I continually asking the Holy Spirit to help me? Or do I rely on my own strength?

PRAYER: Father, teach me to seek Thy help in every trial. Fill me with Thy Spirit, that I may walk faithfully, depend on Thy guidance, and glorify Thee in all things.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21

PHILIPPIANS 2:25-30

PHILIPPIANS 4:10-18

*“...having received of Epaphroditus
the things which were sent from you...”*

EPAPHRODITUS: A FELLOW SOLDIER

Another hero is Epaphroditus who was the trusted delegate of the Christian community at Philippi, sent to deliver their gift to Paul during Paul's first Roman imprisonment. Paul commended Epaphroditus with high honours. His journey was no small task. Philippi was far from Rome, requiring him to cross seas and climb mountains. Yet Epaphroditus bore the hardships faithfully, not for personal gain, but as a brother-in-Christ, serving Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, who might well have been instrumental in his own conversion.

Paul described him as a companion in labour. Epaphroditus shared the burdens of the ministry, lifting the weight alongside Paul. He did not pursue his own agenda, but supported the Spirit's leading upon Paul, making their partnership fruitful. Paul's burdens became his burdens, Paul's struggles his struggles, and Paul's solutions his own. What comfort it must have been for Paul to have such a co-labourer by his side.

He was also a fellow soldier in the advancement of the Gospel and in the defence of the faith. The spiritual battle was fierce, with attacks from both without and within the church. Epaphroditus stood as a comrade, willing to risk his life for the sake of Christ, faithfully serving under the Great Commander and standing beside Paul in the fight.

Above all, Epaphroditus devoted his life to the ministry of the Word, especially among the Philippian believers. He brought them the Word of Life, teaching them all that Christ commanded. His service was primarily unto the Lord Jesus Christ, meeting both the spiritual needs of the people and the practical needs of Paul.

His example reminds us of the importance of faithful co-labourers in the Gospel, those who serve not for recognition, but for Christ, willing to endure hardship, share burdens and risk all for the sake of the kingdom.

THOUGHT: Am I a true co-labourer of my pastor and fellow servants of Christ, sharing their burdens for the Gospel?

PRAYER: Father, help me to see the needs of my brethren, that I may serve them faithfully. Grant me the heart of a fellow soldier, willing to labour and sacrifice for Thy glory.

LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 22

ACTS 27:1-12

ACTS 19:29

*“...having caught Gaius and Aristarchus,
men of Macedonia,
Paul's companions in travel...”*

ARISTARCHUS: A FAITHFUL FELLOW WORKER

Our next hero is another less-heard-of name, yet he did good for the work of the Lord through Paul. Aristarchus, whose name means “best ruler,” was a steadfast companion of the Apostle Paul. He is described as a Macedonian from Thessalonica (Acts 27:2). Though little is known of his background or how he came to faith, some suggested that he might have been a Jewish convert to Christianity. His first mention in Scripture is during the riot in Ephesus, when he and Gaius were seized by the angry mob stirred up by Demetrius and the idol-makers of Diana (Acts 19:21-29).

From that point onward, Aristarchus proved himself a faithful co-labourer. He travelled with Paul toward Jerusalem and accompanied him on several journeys. After the riot, Paul spent three months in Greece before returning through Macedonia, and Aristarchus was among those who joined him (Acts 20:1-4).

Paul later referred to Aristarchus as his “*fellowprisoner*” in his letter to the Colossians (Col 4:10). He was with Paul during the perilous sea voyage to Rome and remained by his side even in imprisonment. Aristarchus' loyalty was not limited to times of peace or freedom. He was willing to suffer alongside Paul, partaking of his hardship for the sake of Christ.

His example reminds us of the rare and noble gift of faithful companionship in ministry. Many can offer kind words or material support, but few are willing to endure suffering and imprisonment with God's servants. Aristarchus stood as one who encouraged Paul not only in word, but in presence, embodying the spirit of true Christian brotherhood.

Such men are the Lord's provision. Food, clothing and shelter may be found, but how precious is the brother-in-Christ who remains with you, sharing the load of your trials for the sake of Christ.

THOUGHT: Am I willing to become a true fellow prisoner with my leaders, sharing their burdens for Christ?

PRAYER: Father, grant me devotion and loyalty to Thy anointed servants. Make me steadfast in encouragement, and faithful in companionship, willing to suffer for the sake of the Gospel.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23

COLOSSIANS 4:7-15

ROMANS 16:5

*“Likewise greet the church
that is in their house...”*

NYMPHAS: A HOST OF THE CHURCH

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul saluted a man named Nymphas and *“the church which is in his house”* (Col 4:15). Nymphas might have been from Colosse or nearby Laodicea, but what is clear is that his household had embraced the Gospel. His family, likely consisting of numerous members, opened their home for the worship of God, providing a place of fellowship and encouragement for believers.

In the early days of Christianity, there were no dedicated buildings for worship. Under persecution from both Romans and Jews, believers often gathered in private homes. Nymphas’ household became one such sanctuary, a place where prayers were lifted, hymns sung, and Scripture read. His example was not unique. Paul also mentioned other households that hosted churches, such as that of Priscilla and Aquila (Rom 16:5) and Philemon in Colosse. Yet, it was never easy. Hosting believers meant risking hostility from devout Jews, atheistic Romans, and idolatrous pagans. It required courage, love and deep faith in the Lord.

Today, many churches struggle to find families willing to host even occasional fellowship gatherings. Excuses abound, but often the root is a lack of love and faith. In places where persecution is minimal, the challenge is not external opposition, but internal reluctance. How different Nymphas was. He counted it a privilege to open his home for the Lord’s work and His people.

What a blessing it is when a household becomes a place of worship and fellowship. To host believers is to glorify God, magnify His Word and strengthen the bonds of Christian unity. Though preparation may be demanding, and not everyone may be satisfied, yet the joy of serving the saints and the honour of glorifying Christ far outweigh the inconvenience.

THOUGHT: Am I willing to open my home to host fellowship with the brethren, counting it a privilege to serve the Lord in this way?

PRAYER: Father, make me a joyful host of believers in the place Thou hast provided for me and my family. May my home be a sanctuary of worship, fellowship and love, bringing glory to Thy name.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24

ROMANS 16:7

2 CORINTHIANS 11:23

*“...in stripes above measure,
in prisons more frequent,
in deaths oft.”*

ANDRONICUS AND JUNIA: FELLOW PRISONERS

The next two heroes were Paul's fellow prisoners. Paul greeted Andronicus and Junia in his epistle to the Romans (Rom 16:7). Their mention has sparked much discussion throughout church history, particularly regarding Junia's gender. John Chrysostom, writing in the fourth century, recognised Junia as a woman and noted her as being *“of note among the apostles.”* Others in his time interpreted the name as masculine. Debate continues among scholars today. Regardless, Paul's commendation highlighted their significance in the early church.

Paul referred to them as his kinsmen and fellowprisoners (Rom 16:7). The Greek word for *“kinsmen”* can mean blood relatives or spiritual kin. Calvin observed that Paul rarely emphasised family ties, yet here he acknowledged their relationship, perhaps to strengthen their reputation among believers. Barnes, likewise, suggested they were likely distant relatives of Paul. This was remarkable, for identifying with Paul, who was often despised and persecuted, could bring about reproach rather than honour.

More striking still is Paul's description of them as *“fellowprisoners.”* Paul endured frequent imprisonments (2 Cor 11:23), and it is probable that Andronicus and Junia partook of some of these sufferings. Their willingness to be incarcerated for the faith demonstrated not only loyalty to Paul, but devotion to Christ. They were kinsmen not only by blood, but through shared suffering. Matthew Henry noted that they were *“of note among the apostles,”* not because of worldly status, but because of their spiritual gifts, knowledge and graces. The Apostles discerned their sincerity and maturity in Christ.

Their example challenges us today. Are our fellow believers aware of our presence in the church because of how we serve, or because of how little we contribute? True discipleship is not hidden. It shines through service, sacrifice, and love for Christ.

THOUGHT: Do other believers see my love for Christ through my service and devotion?

PRAYER: Father, let my light so shine before men, that they may see the good works Thou hast wrought in me, and glorify Thee.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25

ACTS 17:1-9

1 THESSALONIANS 1:2-10

*“And to wait for his Son from heaven,
whom he raised from the dead...”*

JASON: MISSIONARIES' HOST

Jason might not have much written about him in church history, but his courageous acts deserve to be mentioned here. After Paul and his companions left Philippi, they came to Thessalonica, where Paul reasoned in the synagogue for three Sabbaths. Many devout Greeks believed, but the Jews, filled with envy, stirred up a mob and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring Paul and Silas before the city officials (Acts 17:5-6).

Unable to find their targets, the crowd dragged Jason and some brethren before the rulers, accusing them of hosting men who *“turned the world upside down”* and who proclaimed *“another king, one Jesus”* (Acts 17:7). Jason was implicated simply because he had welcomed the missionaries into his home. It is believed that he posted bond and was released, allowing Paul and his companions to leave safely.

Jason's hospitality came at great risk. By hosting Paul and Silas, he and his family faced the possibility of imprisonment or even execution. Yet, true believers count such dangers as temporary compared to the eternal reward in Christ. For Jason, it was not about Paul or Silas themselves, but about the Gospel they preached. His sacrifice ensured that the message of Jesus continued to spread, even in the face of opposition. His actions were deeply sacrificial. The threat extended not only to him but also to his household, who remained in Thessalonica under the constant hostility of unbelievers. Jason even paid a substantial sum to appease corrupt officials so that Paul and his companions could depart safely. His faith reflected the steadfast hope of the Thessalonian Christians, who eagerly awaited the return of Christ. Whether in life or in death, they trusted in the promise of resurrection.

Jason's example reminds us that serving Christ often requires risk, sacrifice and courage. Tomorrow may be too late, so let us give our all for the Gospel today, living with eternity's value in view.

THOUGHT: Am I serving Christ with eternity's value in view, willing to risk all for His name?

PRAYER: Father, let me give my all for the sake of the Gospel. Strengthen me to serve with courage, sacrifice and eternal hope in Christ.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26

ACTS 20:1-6

EPHESIANS 6:21

*“...Tychicus, a beloved brother
and faithful minister in the Lord...”*

TYCHICUS: BELOVED BROTHER AND FAITHFUL MINISTER

Tychicus, meaning “fortunate” or “fortuitous,” was a close friend and valued helper of the Apostle Paul. Along with Trophimus, he was among the believers from Asia chosen to carry the collection to Jerusalem, joining six others who accompanied Paul as they sailed from Philippi (Acts 20:4-6).

Tychicus remained a trusted companion during Paul’s first Roman imprisonment. He was entrusted with the vital mission of delivering Paul’s letters to the churches at Ephesus (Eph 6:21) and Colosse (Col 4:7-9). His task was not merely to deliver correspondence, but to encourage the believers by informing them of Paul’s condition and welfare. Travelling with him was Onesimus, the runaway slave of Philemon. Tychicus’ presence likely helped ensure Onesimus’ safe return, serving as Paul’s representative to mediate between master and servant. Later, Paul sent him again to Ephesus (2 Tim 4:12).

Paul regarded Tychicus as a “*beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord*” (Eph 6:21). His role required risk, endurance and faithfulness. He carried letters that would later become part of the New Testament canon, precious writings that continue to shape the church today. His diligence and trustworthiness ensured that these epistles reached their recipients safely, preserving them for generations.

Tychicus’ example challenges us to consider our own faithfulness, or lack of it. Are we trustworthy servants of Christ, willing to endure fatigue, risk and hardship for the sake of the Gospel? His life reminds us that true honour and glory redound to God when His servants accomplish their tasks faithfully, regardless of the dangers ahead.

THOUGHT: Am I willing to serve the Lord faithfully, even when dangers and hardship lie ahead?

PRAYER: Father, grant me courage and zeal to serve Thee wholeheartedly. Strengthen me to remain faithful in the work of the Gospel, no matter the trials I may face.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27

ACTS 21:27-36

2 TIMOTHY 4:20

“...Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.”

TROPHIMUS: PAUL’S CO-LABOURER

This next hero may not be a familiar name to many, but his work must be familiarised because of his contribution to the historical records. Trophimus, whose name of Greek origin means “nourishing” or “well-fed,” was a Gentile believer from Ephesus who played a significant role in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. He was among those chosen, along with Tychicus and six others, to carry the collection to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4-6). His dedication to the work of the Lord was evident, even when he was sick (2 Tim 4:20).

His presence in Jerusalem became a point of contention. The Jews from Asia accused Paul of defiling the temple by bringing Gentiles inside. They stirred up a riot, crying: *“This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place”* (Acts 21:28). They had seen Paul with Trophimus in the city and supposed he had brought him into the temple. This incident highlights the deep tension between Jewish customs and the inclusion of Gentiles in the early church.

Trophimus’s story reflects the rejection Gentile believers often faced, and the struggles of the early church to reconcile Jewish traditions with the new covenant in Christ. Yet Paul declared the mystery revealed by God: *“That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel”* (Eph 3:6). Through Christ, Gentiles were no longer outsiders but full participants in God’s plan of redemption.

How we Gentiles should praise the Lord for His grace in including us in His church! Trophimus’ life reminds us that salvation is not limited by heritage or tradition, but is extended to all who believe in Christ.

THOUGHT: Am I truly thankful for the salvation I have received through Christ, recognising it as pure grace?

PRAYER: Father, help me to realise the great favour Thou hast extended unto us Gentiles, making us part of the body of Christ. May my heart overflow with gratitude for Thy mercy and grace.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28

ACTS 19:21-34

ROMANS 16:23

*“Erastus, the chamberlain
of the city saluteth you...”*

ERASTUS: THE CHAMBERLAIN OF THE CITY

Similarly, Erastus is not so well-known, but his deeds are known to God. Erastus was a co-worker of the Apostle Paul, a civil servant in Corinth, and a believer in Jesus Christ. Scripture records: *“So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season”* (Acts 19:22). Paul’s confidence in sending Erastus alongside Timothy showed that Erastus was a trusted and proven servant of the Lord, capable of carrying out important tasks with diligence and faithfulness.

Erastus is identified as the *“chamberlain of the city”* (Rom 16:23). The term refers to a steward or manager, one entrusted with overseeing public funds and properties, similar to a treasurer or overseer today. His role in civic life demonstrated that he was trustworthy in his secular responsibilities, and Paul recognised him as equally reliable in spiritual matters. Truly, if one can be faithful in earthly stewardship, he can be trusted with the riches of God’s kingdom.

Jesus taught: *“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much... If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?”* (Luke 16:10-11). This warning reminds us that many stumble in the temptation of money, even pastors and elders. The love of wealth has sidelined countless servants of the Lord. But Erastus’ example shows us that faithfulness in both earthly and spiritual stewardship brings honour to Christ.

May the Lord spare us from the snares of greed and grant us hearts of contentment. True gain is found not in riches, but in Christ Himself. Whether in lack or abundance, He is our all in all.

THOUGHT: Am I easily tempted by money matters, or am I faithful in both earthly and spiritual stewardship?

PRAYER: Father, grant me a heart that treasures Thee above all else. Teach me contentment, that I may resist the temptations of wealth, and remain faithful in serving Thee.

LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 29

PHILEMON 1:1-7

JOSHUA 24:15

*"...but as for me and my house,
we will serve the LORD."*

APPHIA AND ARCHIPPUS: FELLOW SOLDIERS

Apphia and Archippus may not be so familiar, but Scripture records their names. Paul mentioned Apphia and Archippus in his letter to Philemon (Philem 1:2). From the context, many believe Apphia was Philemon's wife and Archippus their son. Together, this household hosted the church that met in their home, serving as a model of family devotion to the Lord.

Apphia, called "*beloved*" in the feminine form, exemplifies the role of a minister's wife who faithfully supports the work of her husband. Her concern was not for worldly adornment or vanity, but for the people of God who gathered in their home. She prepared the house for worship, ensuring that the congregation could meet in an atmosphere of reverence and fellowship. What a comfort it must have been for Philemon to have a wife who gave him the freedom to focus on preparing spiritual food for the church, knowing she was faithfully caring for the practical needs of the assembly.

Archippus, described as "*our fellowsoldier*" (Philem 1:2) was likely assisting in the ministry at Colosse. His diligence reflected the exhortation of Joshua: "*...as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*" (Josh 24:15). Perhaps he rose early to prepare for the Lord's work, ensuring that the Word would be faithfully preached and heard. His example reminds us of the joy of fathers whose sons are actively engaged in the service of the Lord, prioritising worship over worldly distractions.

This family's devotion was not nepotism but a testimony of faithfulness. Each member served the Lord in their own role, united in their commitment to Christ. Paul's commendation of them encourages us to cultivate families where every member is involved in the work of the Gospel, serving together in love and unity.

THOUGHT: Is my family united in our service for the Lord, each fulfilling the role He has assigned?

PRAYER: Father, help each member of my family to be involved in Thy work. Unite us in devotion and service, that our household may glorify Thee together.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30

2 TIMOTHY 3:10-17

PHILIPPIANS 4:3

*“...with Clement also,
and with other my fellowlabourers...”*

CLEMENT OF ROME: A VOICE OF UNITY

Let us proceed now to the Apostolic Fathers. They were early Christian leaders and writers who lived shortly after the Apostles, with their works dated between AD 80-180. Many of them personally knew the Apostles or were closely connected to their ministries. Among the most prominent was Clement of Rome, considered the earliest of the Apostolic Fathers.

Some early church historians identified Clement with Paul's companion mentioned in Philippians 4:3. As an elder in Rome, he ministered at a time when the teachings of Peter and Paul were still fresh in the memory of believers. His most notable work is his “First Letter to the Corinthians,” written to exhort the church to unity. In this letter, he urged those revolting against their elders to repent and submit, reminding them of the importance of humility, obedience and peace within the body of Christ.

This epistle is significant because it is the earliest Christian writing outside of the New Testament. It provides a unique glimpse into the struggles of the early church: factionalism, envy, and sin; and offers timeless lessons for believers today. Written by one who had known the Apostles, it stands as a powerful call to repentance and steadfastness in God's will. Clement himself was later martyred under the persecution of Emperor Trajan, sealing his testimony with his blood.

What a privilege Clement had, living in the shadow of the Apostles and witnessing their lives firsthand. Yet, we, as Christians today, are not shortchanged either. By God's grace, we have not only the inspired Word of God but also its preservation, allowing us to sit figuratively at the feet of Moses, the prophets and the Apostles. Their words continue to instruct, rebuke and encourage us, just as they did the early believers.

THOUGHT: Am I truly listening to the words of the prophets and Apostles, preserved for me in Scripture?

PRAYER: Father, help me to live like the early believers who genuinely loved Thee and served Thee with devotion. May I treasure Thy Word and walk faithfully in obedience.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1

PSALM 89:5-37

PROVERBS 14:5

*“A faithful witness will not lie:
but a false witness will utter lies.”*

IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH: A FAITHFUL WITNESS

This next hero is Ignatius of Antioch. One of the most well-known Apostolic Fathers, he served as bishop of Antioch in Syria (modern-day Türkiye). He is remembered chiefly for seven letters written on his journey to Rome, where he was condemned to die in the imperial games for his Christian testimony. Arrested for his faith, he was sent to Rome to be killed by wild beasts.

Along the way, Ignatius was allowed to receive visitors from the churches of the towns he passed through. In gratitude, he wrote letters of encouragement and warning. His “Letter to the Romans” is especially striking: he pleaded with them not to intervene to save him from martyrdom, for he welcomed death as the means by which he would become “pure bread of Christ”, ground by the teeth of beasts. These letters, written around AD 110, remain a powerful witness to his devotion and courage.

Ignatius also used his letters to warn the churches against dangerous heresies. He opposed the Judaisers, who rejected the authority of the New Testament, and the docetists, who denied the reality of Christ’s suffering and death. Ignatius insisted on the truth of Christ’s incarnation and atoning sacrifice, reminding believers that the Gospel rests on the reality of Jesus Christ in the flesh. His writings provide invaluable insight into the life and struggles of the early church at the dawn of the 2nd century.

His ministry of warning is just as vital today. In an age where false teachers and false prophets abound, the church must remain vigilant. Many prefer “gracious and living messages” that avoid confrontation, but the trumpet call against false doctrine must never be silenced. Ignatius’ example reminds us that love for Christ and His truth requires courage to confront error and steadfastness to endure suffering.

THOUGHT: Am I discerning and watchful against false teachers and teachings in our day?

PRAYER: Father, grant Thy people discerning minds and steadfast hearts, that we may recognise and resist false teachings. Keep us faithful to Christ and His truth, even in the face of opposition.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2

ACTS 24:10-27

JOHN 14:10-12

*“Believe me that I am in the Father,
and the Father in me...”*

QUADRATUS OF ATHENS

Quadratus of Athens is remembered as the earliest known Christian apologist. Serving as a pastor in the early church, likely in Athens, Greece, he was mentioned by the church historians Eusebius and Jerome. Though most of his writings have been lost, history preserves the account of his bold defence of the faith before Emperor Hadrian in AD 124.

Eusebius records that Quadratus was a disciple of the original Apostles. After Publius, the leader of the church in Athens, was martyred, Quadratus stepped into the role of shepherd, bringing comfort and courage to the believers in a time of fear and uncertainty. Some traditions even suggest he was among the seventy (or seventy-two) disciples sent out by Christ in Luke 10:1: *“After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.”*

Quadratus’ most enduring legacy is his apologetic letter to Hadrian, earning him the title *“the first apologist.”* His defence was rational, rooted in both faith and reason, and expressed in the cultural language of Greek philosophy. He argued that Christ’s miracles were not illusions or tricks, but enduring works of divine power. Those healed or raised from the dead continued in health for years afterward. Some were still alive in Quadratus’ own lifetime, serving as living testimony to the truth of Christ.

History portrays Quadratus as a courageous and trustworthy pastor, willing to risk his life by succeeding Publius and reviving the shaken flock in Athens. Whether or not he had personally witnessed Christ’s ministry, he stood boldly before the Roman Emperor, proclaiming the deity of Christ with unwavering conviction.

THOUGHT: Am I willing to be a courageous witness for my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, even when it is costly to me?

PRAYER: Father, grant me boldness to proclaim the Gospel of Truth. Strengthen me to stand firm in faith, to share Thy grace with love, and to warn of the judgment awaiting those who refuse to believe. May my witness, like Quadratus’, be marked by courage, clarity and steadfast devotion to Thee.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3

JOHN 1:1-14

COLOSSIANS 3:1-4

*“If ye then be risen with Christ,
seek those things which are above...”*

ARISTIDES OF ATHENS

Aristides, an Athenian philosopher, stands among the earliest defenders of the Christian faith. Known as one of the first apologists, he boldly wrote an “Apology” presenting Christianity as superior to all philosophies and religions of his time. His work, addressed either to Emperor Hadrian (AD 117–138) or Antoninus Pius (AD 138–161), is one of the oldest surviving apologetic documents, and later influenced great apologists such as Justin Martyr.

Unlike the more elaborate writings of later apologists like Athenagoras and Tertullian, Aristides’ defence was simple yet profound. He judged all other religions inadequate, declaring that only the “new nation” (the Christians) possessed the true knowledge of God, who created all things.

Aristides described Christian worship as a life of holiness, shaped by the commandments of Christ and sustained by hope in the resurrection and eternal life. He was deeply impressed by the charity and purity of the Christian community, insisting that though few in number, Christians upheld the world itself through their prayers and intercession before God.

This testimony reveals a deep and spiritual grasp of the doctrine of Christ, one that contrasts sharply with modern distortions such as hyper-grace and antinomianism. Aristides reminds us that true Christianity is not about clever philosophies or human wisdom, but about living faithfully in obedience to Christ and reflecting His holiness in the world.

THOUGHT: Is my understanding of Christianity shaped by God’s Word? Or is it corrupted by human philosophies?

PRAYER: Father, fill me with Thy Holy Spirit, that I may discern Thy truth clearly. Guard me from doctrines that distort Thy Word, and grant me the spiritual understanding to live faithfully, as the early Christians did: holy, charitable, and steadfast in hope of the resurrection.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4

REVELATION 1:1-20

REVELATION 2:8-11

*“...be thou faithful unto death,
and I will give thee a crown of life.”*

POLYCARP OF SMYRNA

Polycarp of Smyrna, one of the great Apostolic Fathers, served most of his life as pastor of the church in Smyrna, a city in Asia Minor (modern Izmir, Türkiye) devoted to Roman worship. A personal disciple of the Apostle John, Polycarp was likely the last surviving Christian leader to have known an Apostle firsthand. He was deeply revered as a teacher and shepherd of the early church as a result of this connection.

Around AD 155, Polycarp was martyred for his faith. The account of his death, preserved in a letter from eyewitnesses to neighbouring churches, is the earliest record of a martyrdom outside the New Testament. During a time of fierce persecution, Polycarp was betrayed by a servant and arrested. He surrendered calmly, saying, “God’s will be done.” He even offered food to his captors and prayed for himself, the church and his enemies.

The test was simple, yet deadly: confess Caesar as Lord or face execution. Polycarp refused, declaring: “Eighty and six years have I served Christ, and he has done me no wrong; how then can I blaspheme my King who has saved me? You threaten me with fire that burns for an hour and is quenched; but you know not of... the fire of eternal punishment. Bring what you will.” As the flames rose around him, Polycarp prayed: “Lord God, Father of our blessed Saviour, I thank thee that I have been deemed worthy to receive the crown of martyrdom, and that I may die for thee and for thy cause.”

By the grace of Christ, Polycarp despised the cruelties of this world, enduring the suffering of a single hour to escape eternal punishment. To him, the fire of his executioners seemed cool when viewed in light of the eternal glory promised to those who endure. He fixed his eyes on the unseen treasures of God: “...*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man...*” (1 Cor 2:9).

THOUGHT: Am I prepared to stand firm in faith, even if persecution should come?

PRAYER: Father, grant me courage to endure whatever dangers may come, and keep my eyes fixed on Christ, my Saviour and King. May I be faithful unto death, that I too may receive the crown of life.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5

LUKE 1:1-4

ACTS 1:1-3

*“...he shewed himself alive
after his passion by
many infallible proofs...”*

PAPIAS OF HIERAPOLIS

Papias of Hierapolis, one of the Apostolic Fathers, lived in the late first and early second century AD. Serving as bishop in Hierapolis (in modern-day Türkiye), he ministered during a time when believers deeply valued teachings passed down directly from those who had walked with Jesus’ disciples. Early sources such as Irenaeus (“Against Heresies” 5.33.4) and Eusebius (“Ecclesiastical History” 3.39) described Papias as a vital link between the apostolic generation and the next wave of church leaders. Tradition holds that as a young man, he learned under the aged Apostle John himself.

Papias’ life overlapped with the close of the apostolic era, a pivotal moment when the church sought to preserve eyewitness testimonies of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. He devoted himself to gathering accurate accounts, echoing the careful approach described in Luke 1:1-2: *“Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us...”*

Around the middle of the second century AD, Papias wrote “The Interpretation of the Sayings of the Lord,” a five-volume work recording what he had received from older Christians who had known the Apostles. Though the full text has been lost, fragments preserved in Irenaeus’ writings reveal Papias’ strong millennial views and his deep concern for faithfully transmitting the words and works of Christ. Scholars lament the loss of his complete writings, recognising the light they would have shed on the beliefs and practices of the early church.

Yet even though human writings may perish, the Word of God endures forever. Papias’ devotion reminds us to treasure the Scriptures as the perfectly preserved testimony of Christ. His efforts encourage believers today, showing that the promises of God have been experienced and confirmed by faithful witnesses across generations.

THOUGHT: Am I fully convinced that the Bible is perfect, complete, and sufficient for my faith?

PRAYER: Father, may I cling to Thy 100% inspired and 100% preserved Word. May I cling to Thy truth with confidence, knowing that heaven and earth may pass away, but Thy Word will never fail.

LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 6

MATTHEW 10:16-28

1 PETER 3:14-16

*“...give an answer to every man
that asketh you a reason...”*

JUSTIN MARTYR

Justin Martyr (AD 100-165) was the foremost apologist of the second century AD and one of the most influential voices in the early Christian church. A philosopher by training, his writings represent one of the first positive encounters between Christian revelation and Greek philosophy, laying the foundation for a theology of history.

Born to pagan parents, raised in a Jewish environment and educated in Stoic, Platonic and other philosophies, Justin sought truth in many systems. In AD 132, an elderly man directed him to the Scriptures as the true philosophy, and Justin embraced Christ. By AD 135, he began travelling widely, proclaiming his newfound faith and seeking to persuade educated pagans. His boldness led to conflict with the cynical philosopher Crescens, who denounced him to the Roman authorities. Justin was condemned as subversive and executed by beheading, along with six companions. Authentic records of his martyrdom survive, testifying to his steadfastness.

Among his works are two: “Apologies” and “Dialogue with Trypho.” His “First Apology” (c. AD 150), addressed to Emperors Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, defended Christians against charges of atheism and disloyalty to the state. He argued that Christ’s life and morality had been foretold in the Old Testament and attributed persecution to the work of demons. His “Second Apology” served as an appendix, emphasising that all goodness in humanity comes from Christ. In the “Dialogue with Trypho,” Justin sought to convince the Jews of Jesus’ messiahship.

Justin’s life reminds us that God raises defenders of the faith in every generation. Though few take up this role today, often dismissed as narrow-minded or outdated, the call remains. We must be rooted and grounded in the truth, ready to defend the faith once delivered to the saints, and be vigilant against the creeping influence error.

THOUGHT: Am I prepared to be a defender of God’s truth, even when the world mocks or opposes me?

PRAYER: Father, grant me courage and zeal to defend the faith. Keep me faithful in resisting error. May my life, like Justin’s, bear witness to the power and truth of the Gospel.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 7

MATTHEW 19:1-12

MATTHEW 4:3-4

*“...Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that proceedeth
out of the mouth of God.”*

MELITO OF SARDIS

Melito of Sardis, another Apostolic Father, might have been the immediate successor of the “angel” of the church of Sardis, to whom Christ addressed His words in the Book of Revelation. It is likely that Melito knew Polycarp and Irenaeus, and was introduced as “the Philosopher” and known as “the Eunuch.” His celibacy was not monastic withdrawal, but a deliberate choice to serve the Lord with undivided devotion.

Melito was especially skilled in the literature of the Old Testament and became one of the most prolific Christian writers of his time. Born Jewish, he lived in a time when Christianity retained a strong Jewish imprint. He is revered for his diligence in establishing the canon of the Old Testament, ensuring that the Scriptures were recognised and preserved for the church.

His writings expounded on the incarnation and passion of Christ, while also defending Christianity against paganism, Judaism, and heresies. Influenced by both his Jewish heritage and Stoic background, Melito argued that the Christian Passover should coincide with the Jewish Passover, seeing the Old Covenant fulfilled in Christ. His views also shaped early discussions about the date of Easter.

Melito’s life and work remind us that Christianity is deeply rooted in the Scriptures of both covenants. The Old Testament conceals the New, and the New Testament reveals the Old. Together, they form the inspired and preserved Word of God. No believer can rightly prefer one over the other, for both testify of Christ. As Jesus declared: *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”* (Matt 4:4; cf. Deut 8:3).

THOUGHT: Do I truly believe the whole Bible, both Old and New Testaments, as the inspired Word of God?

PRAYER: Father, give me a deep love for Thy Word in its entirety. Let me treasure both the promises of the Old Testament and the fulfilment in the New. May I meditate on all of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, that I may know Thy will and walk faithfully in it.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8

ACTS 17:16-34

1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-17

*“...if Christ be not raised,
your faith is vain;
ye are yet in your sins.”*

ATHENAGORAS OF ATHENS

Athenagoras of Athens was one of the three great Greek philosophers (alongside Aristides and Justin Martyr) who converted to Christianity in the second century AD. Once a pagan philosopher, he became one of the most eloquent apologists of the early church, presenting a written plea for the toleration of Christians to the Roman emperors around AD 177. His intellectual training became a powerful tool for bearing witness to the Gospel before the most influential rulers of his day.

Athenagoras presented his “Apology” before Marcus Aurelius, the Stoic philosopher-emperor whose “Meditations” remain widely read. In his defence, Athenagoras argued that Christians surpassed the piety of the best pagan philosophers. Philosophy could sharpen the mind, but it could not transform the heart. He asked pointedly: “Who among their students have so purged their souls as, instead of hating their enemies, to love them; and, instead of speaking ill of those who revile them, to bless them; and to pray for those who plot against their lives?”

The philosophical schools lacked the power to cleanse hatred and resentment, but Christ could change and transform from within.

Athenagoras also wrote “On the Resurrection of the Dead,” addressing sceptical philosophers who scoffed at the idea of bodily resurrection. He insisted that true resurrection restores both soul and body, reintegrating them for eternity. Humanity is not complete without this union: as body and soul experience life together, so they will experience eternity together. His writings remind us how the early saints lived with eternity in view, longing for life with Christ. How different this is from much of modern Christianity, which often focuses only on the here and now, forgetting the eternal values of the kingdom of God.

THOUGHT: Am I living out my Christian faith with eternity’s values in view, or only for the present moment?

PRAYER: Father, may my profession of Christ be more than mere words. Let my life manifest true Christlikeness: loving my enemies, blessing those who revile me and living with eternity in view. Transform me by Thy Spirit, that I may reflect the life of Christ in all I do.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9

ROMANS 1:18-32

JOHN 4:21-24

*“God is a Spirit:
and they that worship him must
worship him in spirit and in truth.”*

THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH

Theophilus of Antioch (from the region of modern-day Iraq) served as the sixth bishop of Antioch and was one of the notable Christian apologists of the second century. Educated in the Greek tradition, he became a Christian as an adult after careful deliberation, and by AD 170, was elected bishop. He is remembered for three letters written to an unbeliever, defending the basics of the Christian faith against philosophical and historical objections. While the doctrine of the Trinity was already present in the church, Theophilus was the first to use the Greek word “triad” to describe the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In his writings, Theophilus exposed the immoralities of the pagan gods, pointing out their shameful deeds as recorded in myths and poetry. He wrote:

“...indeed, the names of those whom you say you worship, are the names of dead men... Is not Saturn found to be a cannibal, destroying and devouring his own children? And if you name his son Jupiter, hear also his deeds and conduct... his incest, and adultery, and lust...”

He also condemned idolatry as absurd, noting how Egyptians worshipped animals, reptiles and even household objects, while Greeks and other nations bowed to lifeless stones and wood:

“For these are not gods, but idols... the works of men’s hands and unclean demons. And such may all those become who make them and put their trust in them!”

Theophilus reminds us today that true worship belongs to the living God alone. Many churches today embrace practices that are more pagan than biblical. The saints of old fully embraced God’s Word; we too must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

THOUGHT: Am I faithfully avoiding what the Bible forbids and doing what it requires?
PRAYER: Father, may my heart be ruled by Thy Spirit, that I may worship Thee alone in truth. Guard me from idolatry in all its forms, and make me a true worshipper who honours Thee in both word and deed.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10

1 JOHN 4:1-6

JOHN 20:21-23

*“...as my Father hath sent me,
even so send I you.”*

IRENÆUS OF LYON

Irenaeus of Lyon, a native of Asia Minor, was a disciple of Polycarp, the beloved pastor of Smyrna who was himself a disciple of the Apostle John. This direct link to apostolic teaching shaped Irenaeus' approach to Scripture and the Christian faith. Later, he became pastor of the church in Lyon (in France), where he rose to prominence as one of the greatest theologians of the second century AD.

In the AD 180s, Irenaeus wrote his monumental five-volume work “Against Heresies” (formally titled “A Refutation and Subversion of What is Falsely Called Knowledge”). In it, he carefully refuted the errors of the Gnostics and other heretical groups, while presenting the true Christian faith as faithfully handed down from Christ and His Apostles. His writings remain a treasure of early Christian theology, combining rigorous analysis with pastoral clarity. He also authored “Proofs of Apostolic Preaching,” which summarised the core of Christian belief and demonstrated how the Gospel proclaimed by Jesus and His Apostles was preserved in the church. Together, these works established Irenaeus as the greatest theologian since the apostolic age.

Irenaeus is often cited in discussions of apostolic succession, but his writings must be understood in context. The Gnostics claimed secret knowledge passed down from Jesus, hidden from the wider church. In response, Irenaeus argued that the true bishops of the church could trace their teaching openly and faithfully back to the Apostles, who themselves received it from Christ. This unbroken line of teaching safeguarded the truth, and Irenaeus himself could trace his own message back to the Apostle John through his teacher Polycarp. His testimony reminds us that the authority of the church rests not in hidden traditions, but in the public, preserved Word of God.

THOUGHT: Am I a Berean Christian who diligently searches the Scriptures to test all teachings against God's truth?

PRAYER: Father, give me a hunger and thirst for Thy Word. Let me meditate upon it day and night, that I may not be deceived by false teachings. Keep me steadfast in the truth handed down from Christ and His Apostles, and make me a faithful witness of Thy Gospel.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11

EPHESIANS 6:10-20

JUDE 1:3-7

*“...the angels which
kept not their first estate,
but left their own habitation...”*

TERTULLIAN

Tertullian, one of the great early Christian authors, was born around AD 160 in Carthage, in the Roman province of Africa. The son of a Roman centurion, he received an excellent education in literature and rhetoric. Converted to Christianity in his late thirties, he devoted himself to defending the faith against pagan critics and heretical movements. His eloquence in Latin earned him the title “Father of Latin Theology.”

Tertullian was responsible for coining some of the most enduring theological terms in Christian tradition. It is in his writings that we first encounter the Latin word *trinitas* (“Trinity”) to describe the relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (one God in three persons). This formula remains foundational to Christian doctrine today. He also made significant contributions to Christology, articulating the truth that Christ is “one person in two natures,” fully divine and fully human, a teaching later affirmed by the Council of Chalcedon. He authored numerous apologetic and theological works, many of which remain quotable and influential. His famous statement, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church,” continues to inspire believers facing persecution. Tertullian was greatly used of God to define and defend essential doctrines, and the church still benefits from his ministry centuries later.

Later in life, however, Tertullian aligned himself with Montanism, a sect known for its strict moralism and expectation of Christ’s imminent return. While his zeal was sincere, this choice reminds us that even great leaders are susceptible to error. Orthodoxy alone does not guarantee safety from deception; we must continually depend on the Lord and the guidance of His Spirit. Many leaders begin well but stumble when they trust in their own eloquence or wisdom rather than God’s Word. Tertullian’s life is both an inspiration and a warning: we must remain humble, vigilant and rooted in Scripture.

THOUGHT: Am I keeping my steps according to God’s Word? Or am I leaning on my own wisdom?

PRAYER: Father, guard me from pride and deception, and grant me grace to earnestly contend for the faith. May my life be guided by Thy Spirit, that I may walk faithfully in truth and holiness.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12

MATTHEW 10:24-39

HEBREWS 11:35-40

*“They were stoned,
they were sawn asunder, were tempted,
were slain with the sword...”*

PERPETUA

In AD 203, Perpetua of Carthage, North Africa, was martyred for her Christian faith. Only twenty-two years old, she was a wife, the mother of a nursing infant, and the daughter of an aged father. Arrested along with her slave Felicity and several companions, she refused to renounce Christ despite the desperate pleas of her father and the pressure of Roman officials.

Perpetua and her companions were condemned to die in the arena during festivities for the emperor's birthday. They were flogged, torn by wild animals and finally executed by the sword. Her courage and steadfastness became one of the most powerful testimonies of early Christian martyrdom.

Educated and articulate, Perpetua recorded much of her experience in her diary, which remains one of the earliest firsthand accounts of Christian martyrdom. Her writings also include details about Felicity, who shared her fate. While later generations have tried to reshape her story, some portraying her as a flawless saint, others as a feminist symbol, her true witness was simple faithfulness to Jesus Christ, who gave His life for her.

Perpetua's life reminds us that the power of martyrdom lies not in human strength or extraordinary works, but in obedience to God's Word. She embodied Christ's teaching: *“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me”* (Matt 10:37). Her sacrifice was not about rejecting family or seeking recognition, but about loving Christ above all, even unto death.

THOUGHT: Do I have the simple faith to believe and obey what the Bible says, without compromise?

PRAYER: Father, grant me a wise and willing heart to obey Thy Word. Strengthen me with simple faith, that I may live and, if called, die for Christ. Let my obedience shine as a witness to Thy power and grace.

LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 13

MATTHEW 18:23-35

EPHESIANS 4:31-32

*“...forgiving one another,
even as God for Christ's sake
hath forgiven you.”*

HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME

Hippolytus of Rome was one of the most important Christian theologians of the late second and early third centuries AD. Though elusive to historians, he is remembered as a brilliant bishop and gifted writer, and often regarded as a Church Father. His treatises addressed the heresies troubling the church in his day, especially those concerning the Trinity and the Person of Christ. Early Christians wrestled with how best to articulate the apostolic teaching that Jesus was both truly God and truly man, and Hippolytus sought to defend this truth with clarity.

He was particularly opposed to the heresy of Modalism (also called Sabellianism), which blurred the distinctions between Father, Son and Holy Spirit by claiming they were merely different “modes” of one divine person. Hippolytus urged Bishop Zephyrinus (AD 198-217) to condemn the modalists, but when Zephyrinus failed to act, Hippolytus grew frustrated. His opposition intensified under Callistus I (AD 217-222), whom he considered unworthy of office due to his past and his leniency toward pagan converts.

Some traditions suggest Hippolytus led a rival group in Rome, later labelled an antipope by Catholic historians. Yet, despite his conflicts, he was reconciled to the church before his death. He was martyred for Christ and eventually honoured as a saint.

Hippolytus' life reminds us that zeal for orthodoxy must always be tempered by love. Doctrinal purity without grace can turn us into harsh judges rather than humble servants. We are all sinners saved by grace, and as forgiven people, we must also extend forgiveness. Orthodoxy is essential, but it must be lived out in the spirit of Christ's love.

THOUGHT: Am I becoming pharisaical in how I view other believers, forgetting that I, too, am a sinner saved by grace?

PRAYER: Father, help me to hold fast to Thy truth with humility. Keep me faithful to Thy justice, yet overflowing with love for Thy children. Teach me to forgive as I have been forgiven, and to walk in both truth and grace.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14

JOHN 16:5-16

JOHN 20:30-31

*“But these are written,
that ye might believe that
Jesus is the Christ...”*

TATIAN OF ADIABENE

Of Syrian descent, Tatian of Adiabene was also known as Tatian the Syrian or Tatian the Assyrian (Greek: Tatianos). He was a Christian writer and theologian of the second century AD whose most influential work was the “Diatessaron,” a “harmony” of the four New Testament Gospels woven into a single narrative of Christ’s life. Ephrem the Syrian referred to it as the “Evangelion da Mehallete” (“The Gospel of the Mixed”), and for centuries it was the primary Gospel text used in Assyria, especially during the third and fourth centuries AD.

Tatian also wrote “Address to the Greeks,” a defence of Christianity that condemned paganism as empty, and praised the reasonableness and antiquity of the faith. Even Eusebius commended his discussions of Moses and Jewish law, which gave his work credibility despite his later controversies.

Yet, Tatian’s legacy is mixed. His association with the Encratites, a heretical sect in Syria, and his tendency to elevate his Diatessaron above the inspired four Gospels, proved problematic. While harmonising the Gospels can help believers grasp the life of Christ more fully, replacing the inspired text with human synthesis is dangerous. The Syrian church eventually recognised this, and by the fifth century, the bishop of Edessa ordered the Diatessaron replaced with the original four Gospels.

Tatian’s story reminds us that even influential contributions must be tested against the Word of God. His work shows both the value of intellectual effort and the peril of relying too much on human wisdom. As believers, we must remain humble, seeking counsel and depending on the Spirit of God to guide us into His truth.

THOUGHT: Am I relying on my own wisdom instead of humbly submitting to God’s Word?

PRAYER: Father, grant me humility to seek the counsel of others and to listen with a teachable spirit. Keep me from pride and error, and let Thy Spirit guide me always by Thy Word, that I may walk faithfully and not fall.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15

COLOSSIANS 2:13-23

1 TIMOTHY 6:19-21

*“...avoiding profane and
vain babblings, and oppositions
of science falsely so called...”*

MARCUS MINUCIUS FELIX

Marcus Minucius Felix was one of the earliest and most elegant Christian apologists, and among the first to write in Latin. A Roman lawyer by profession, he authored “Octavius,” a dialogue on Providence and Christianity, framed as a debate between the sceptic pagan Caecilius and the Christian Octavius. Written for educated non-Christians, the work drew heavily from Cicero’s “De Natura Deorum” (“Concerning the Nature of the Gods”) and the writings of the Greek apologists. Its distinction lies not in originality, but in its classical refinement and persuasive style.

Little is known of Minucius’ personal history apart from his book. The earliest mention of him comes from Lactantius, who described him as a lawyer, likely inferring this from “Octavius” itself. Jerome also referenced him, but his knowledge appears to have been drawn from Lactantius. Attempts to date Minucius more precisely have been inconclusive, leaving his life largely hidden in history.

In “Octavius,” Minucius exposed the absurdities of pagan worship. He showed that the gods of the heathen were merely deified men, their myths filled with cruelty, immorality and folly. He condemned image-worship and the licentious rites of pagan religion, tracing idolatry to the deception of demons, fallen beings who sought to drag humanity into ruin, inspiring false oracles, counterfeit miracles, and slanders against Christianity.

His work reminds us of the wisdom God gave to early defenders of the faith, equipping them to confront error with truth. Yet today, many Christians compromise by embracing philosophies that contradict Scripture, even accepting theories like evolution in an attempt to appear intellectual. Minucius’ example calls us back to confidence in God’s Word as the ultimate authority.

THOUGHT: Do I believe the whole Bible as true, or have I allowed worldly philosophies to cloud my faith?

PRAYER: Father, help me to stand firm against vain philosophies of this world. Strengthen my heart to believe the whole Bible as Thy inspired Word, and let me live in obedience to its truth.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16

MATTHEW 5:1-12

JOHN 6:66-69

*“...Lord, to whom shall we go?
thou hast the words of eternal life.”*

EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS

The “Epistle to Diognetus” is one of the most beautiful and important writings of early Christianity, though its author remains unknown. The writer identified himself only as “Mathetes” (Greek for “disciple”), claiming to be a student of the Apostles. Written in the second or third century AD, it stands as one of the earliest Christian apologies, defending the doctrines of the faith with clarity and elegance.

The identity of the recipient, Diognetus, is likewise uncertain. Addressed as “His Excellency,” he might be a man of rank, possibly Tiberius Claudius Diogenes, procurator of Alexandria, or perhaps the archon Diognetus, son of Apollonius. Whoever he was, the letter sought to explain the distinctiveness of the Christian life.

Scholars such as J.B. Lightfoot have described the “Epistle to Diognetus” as “the noblest of early Christian writings.” Beyond its literary beauty, it offers a profound glimpse into how the New Testament was understood in the earliest centuries. The author vividly contrasted Christians with non-Christians, describing their resilience and grace under persecution:

“They are dishonoured, and yet in their very dishonour they are glorified; they are spoken ill of and yet are justified; they are reviled but bless; they are insulted and repay the insult with honour; they do good, yet are punished as evildoers; when punished, they rejoice as if raised from the dead.”

This testimony magnifies a timeless truth: the lifestyle Jesus called His followers to live has not changed. Persecution has accompanied the church since Christ walked the earth and will continue until He returns (Matt 5:10-12). Yet the “Epistle to Diognetus” reminds us that there is no greater life than one lived for Jesus. As the hymn writer declared: “Take the world but give me Jesus...”

THOUGHT: Am I truly living for Jesus, reflecting His life in mine even amid trials?

PRAYER: Father, grant me a heart wholly devoted to Christ. Teach me to follow Him according to the Scriptures, to endure dishonour with joy, and to live a life that glorifies Thee alone.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17

1 PETER 2:13-25

MATTHEW 10:23-28

*“And fear not them which kill the body,
but are not able to kill the soul...”*

CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

Cyprian, born to wealthy pagan parents and trained in law, practised as a lawyer in Carthage before his conversion to Christianity around AD 246. In baptism, he found complete release from the sinful and empty life he had lived, and his rapid growth in grace and knowledge of Christ led to his election as bishop of Carthage. His eloquence in Latin made him one of the most influential writers of Western Christianity, second only to Jerome and Augustine in later centuries.

In AD 250, Cyprian faced the Decian persecution, a time of great trial for the church. Choosing initially to go into hiding, he explained that his withdrawal was not cowardice but obedience to God's will, so that he might continue to shepherd the flock from a distance rather than leave them without guidance. His leadership strengthened the Christians of North Africa during this crisis, and his example of faith and service became a source of encouragement.

Eventually, Cyprian was arrested and brought before Proconsul Galerius. When asked to reconsider his faith, he replied firmly: “Do what you are required to do: in such a simple matter there is nothing to consider.” Upon hearing his sentence of execution by the sword, he exclaimed: “Thanks be to God!” Surrounded by a great crowd, Cyprian was beheaded, becoming the first bishop-martyr of Africa.

Cyprian's testimony reminds us that the God who sustained him is the same God who sustains us today. His life and death exemplify what it means to sacrifice for Christ, trusting in His mercy and grace. As the old saying goes: “Only one life, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last.”

THOUGHT: Am I ready to die for Christ, trusting fully in His promise of eternal life?

PRAYER: Father, grant me a heart assured of the eternal life promised through Thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Strengthen me with courage to stand firm in faith, whether in life or in death, that all glory may be given to Thee alone.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18

HEBREWS 11:32-40

LUKE 9:23-27

*“...whosoever will
lose his life for my sake,
the same shall save it.”*

BLANDINA

To many, it may seem unlikely that a young slave girl could be remembered as a hero of the faith. Yet Blandina, who died in AD 177 in Lyon (in France) during the reign of Emperor Marcus Aurelius, stands as one of the most inspiring martyrs of the early church. She had no Roman citizenship, no rights as a slave, was young and described as physically weak. But by her faith, her encouragement of fellow believers, and her courageous death in the amphitheatre, she strengthened the church in its time of trial.

The historian Eusebius of Caesarea (AD 260-339) preserved the record of her martyrdom through an ancient letter describing her death and that of other Christians in Lyon. The letter testifies that through Blandina's humble virtues, Christ revealed that what the world despises is honoured in God's sight. Her weakness became the stage for Christ's strength to be perfected. Interrogated by the governor, Blandina endured torture and public humiliation. Christians who refused to renounce their faith were condemned to wild beasts, becoming a spectacle in place of gladiatorial games. Blandina was the last to die. Hung from a post, she was exposed to animals, but they would not attack.

Foxe's "Book of Martyrs" records her extraordinary endurance: "She was endued with so much fortitude, that those who successively tortured her from morning to night were quite worn out with fatigue... amazed to see her still breathing whilst her body was torn and laid open. The blessed woman recovered fresh vigour in the act of confession; and it was an evident annihilation of all her pains, to say – 'I am a Christian, and no evil is committed among us.'"

Blandina's testimony reminds us that true strength is not found in human power but in Christ. Her life and death proclaim that even the weakest vessel can display the glory of God when surrendered to Him.

THOUGHT: Do I have courage to declare my faith in Christ, even in the face of death?

PRAYER: Father, may Thy strength be made perfect in my weakness. May others see Thy faithfulness through my life, and may I stand firm in Thy will, even unto death, for the glory of Christ.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19

1 CORINTHIANS 4:1-13

MATTHEW 27:26-31

*“...when he had scourged Jesus,
he delivered him to be crucified.”*

ATTALUS OF LYON

The persecution in Lyon in AD 177 was one of the fiercest outbreaks of hostility against Christians in Roman Gaul (modern-day Lyon, France) during the reign of Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Many believers in Vienne and Lyon were Greeks from Asia, and even before the violence erupted, Christians were forbidden from public places such as the marketplace, forum, and baths. If they appeared in public, they were mocked, beaten and robbed. Their homes were vandalised, and they were slandered with accusations of cannibalism and incest.

Amid this storm of persecution, one man stood out: Attalus, a deacon described as a pillar and support of the church. Arrested for his faith in Jesus Christ, he endured cruel torture for two days in the Roman amphitheatre. He was roasted alive in an iron chair, yet when asked about the God of the Christians, he boldly declared:

“Where there are many gods, they are distinguished by names; but where there is but one God, no name is necessary.”

Attalus was then exposed to wild beasts, but they did not touch him. Finally, he was executed, stabbed through the throat, and according to some accounts, beheaded. His steadfastness became a testimony of unshakeable faith in the face of unimaginable suffering.

Attalus reminds us that the strength of the martyrs was not their own, but the gift of an immutable God who never changes. Their faith was anchored in eternity, while the world around them was consumed with temporal things. His life challenges us to lift our eyes beyond the fleeting pleasures of this world and to live as living sacrifices, wholly devoted to God.

THOUGHT: Do I look forward to the Kingdom of God? Or am I consumed by the temporary things of this world?

PRAYER: Father, grant me the grace to live as a living sacrifice, willing to serve and suffer for Thee. May my heart be fixed on the eternal Kingdom, and may I follow the example of Christ, who gave the greatest sacrifice for me.

LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 20

ACTS 16:19-31

PHILIPPIANS 1:11-21

*"...Christ shall be magnified in my body,
whether it be by life, or by death."*

SANCTUS AND MATURUS

Around the same time that Attalus was martyred in Lyon, two other faithful servants of Christ (deacon Sanctus and Maturus) sealed their testimonies with their blood. Both endured dreadful torments from morning until night, yet neither would deny the name of Jesus.

Sanctus, who ministered to the poor, was pressed with red-hot copper plates against his body. Interrogated about his name, parentage and country, he refused to answer with anything but:

"I am a Christian; that is my name, my parentage, and my country; indeed, I am altogether nothing else than a Christian."

This enraged his persecutors, who continued to torture him until his body was one massive wound. Yet he remained fearless, strengthened inwardly by the consolations of Christ.

Maturus suffered in much the same way, steadfast and immovable. After being tortured, both men were cast into prison, only to be brought out again for further torment. Eusebius recorded that they were scourged repeatedly, beaten with rods, pierced with hooks, and torn with iron combs. Still, their faith did not waver.

Finally, before thousands gathered in the amphitheatre, Sanctus and Maturus were placed on burning iron chairs, their flesh consumed by fire. Yet, when their enemies saw that their spirits remained immovable, they executed them by beheading them. Their testimony echoes the words of Paul: *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"* (Phil 1:21).

Their lives remind us that true love for Christ surpasses even the instinct for self-preservation. They chose eternal glory over temporary comfort, proving that the power of Christ is greater than the fiercest flames or the sharpest blades.

THOUGHT: Do I love Christ more than I love myself, willing to surrender all for Him?

PRAYER: Father, may my love for Christ exceed my desire to cling to this earthly life. Strengthen me to live and, if called, to die for Jesus, that my testimony may glorify Thy name.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21

ACTS 20:22-35

JOHN 10:11-15

*“...the good shepherd
giveth his life for the sheep.”*

SIXTUS II

Sixtus II, of Greek origin, became bishop of Rome in AD 257, succeeding Bishop Stephen who had been martyred during the persecutions under Emperor Valerian. Though little is known of his early life, his brief ministry as bishop was marked by faithfulness and courage in the face of danger.

At first, under Valerian's persecution, Sixtus was allowed to continue his pastoral duties without interference. But in August of AD 258, a new edict targeted bishops, priests and deacons for execution. Determined not to abandon his flock, Sixtus gathered believers in a secluded cemetery near St Callistus to preach God's Word. There, soldiers arrested him and his companions. On August 6, Sixtus was beheaded, along with six deacons: Januarius, Vincentius, Magnus, Stephanus, Felicissimus and Agapitus. Four days later, his most famous deacon, Laurence of Rome, also suffered martyrdom.

Sixtus' example reminds us of the kind of shepherds the church needs today: pastors willing to risk their lives rather than starve their people of God's Word. He understood that *“man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”* (Matt 4:4). He knew that without the Word, the flock would be vulnerable to heresy and deception. For him, Scripture was the lamp to the feet and the light to the path of believers, even in times of danger and fear.

His testimony calls us to pray earnestly for our pastors, that they may remain steadfast, faithful, and bold in preaching the Word in season and out of season.

THOUGHT: Do I pray faithfully for my pastor, that he may be strengthened to feed the flock with God's Word?

PRAYER: Father, please keep Thy under-shepherds faithful and diligent in their study and preaching of Thy Word. Strengthen them against the wiles of the enemy, and grant them courage to lead Thy people with truth and love.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 22

JOHN 1:1-14

JOHN 3:27-30

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

LAURENCE

Laurence was one of the seven deacons of the Roman church, serving under Bishop Sixtus II. His martyrdom followed just days after Sixtus’ execution during the persecution under Emperor Valerian, who ordered the deaths of bishops, priests and deacons.

Laurence was known for his compassion and generosity, distributing the church’s wealth to the poor and sick before his arrest. When commanded by the emperor to surrender the church’s treasures, Laurence gathered the poor, the widows, the hungry and the orphaned, presenting them to Valerian with the words:

“These are the treasures of the church.”

In that moment, Laurence embodied Christ’s teaching that true riches are found not in gold or silver, but in lives transformed by love. Enraged, the prefect ordered his execution.

Tradition holds that Laurence was roasted alive on a gridiron and, in defiance, he reportedly quipped to his torturers: *“I am cooked on that side; turn me over, and eat.”* Whether beheaded or burned, his death became a powerful testimony of faith. Many conversions to Christianity were said to follow, including several Roman senators who witnessed his martyrdom.

Though little is known of his life, the greatest fact remains: Laurence died for Christ. His devotion was not about fame or recognition, but about total surrender to the love of Jesus. His story reminds us that the path of discipleship is one of sacrifice, where the believer decreases so that Christ may be exalted.

THOUGHT: Am I seeking to be known by Christ, rather than by the world?

PRAYER: Father, may my life decrease so that Thy name may be exalted. Teach me to treasure what Thou treasures, the souls of men, and to live with a heart wholly devoted to Christ, even unto death.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23

ACTS 17:22-34

HEBREWS 12:1-2

*“...let us run with patience the race
that is set before us.”*

ROMANUS OF CAESAREA

Romanus of Caesarea, remembered through the writings of Eusebius (“Church History,” Books 3 and 12), was a deacon born in Palestine. During the persecution of Christians, he lived in Antioch, where he boldly preached God’s Word to strengthen believers. When the Eparch Asclypiades threatened to destroy the church, Romanus exhorted the faithful to stand firm, assuring them that even if they died, they would sing a hymn of victory in heaven.

At a pagan festival, Romanus confronted Asclypiades and the idolaters, proclaiming that the idols were false and that only Jesus Christ is truly God. Enraged, Asclypiades ordered Romanus to be beaten and tortured. Suspended and scraped with metal blades, Romanus endured the torment with courage, continuing to confess Christ and rebuking the governor’s obstinacy. Condemned to death by fire, Romanus was spared when rain extinguished the flames. His tongue was then cut out, yet he still confessed Christ. Finally, he was nailed to a keg and strangled in prison. Romanus finished his race with patience and courage, entering the heavenly Kingdom where he glorifies Father, Son and Holy Spirit forever.

His testimony reminds us that the Christian life is a race set before us by God. We must run it with diligence, faithfulness and endurance, encouraging others to press on in Christ. Romanus shows us that victory is not in escaping suffering, but in remaining steadfast until the end.

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away”
(Rev 21:3-4).

THOUGHT: Am I running the race in Christ’s strength, with endurance and faithfulness?

PRAYER: Father, grant me the faith and endurance to continue running the race Thou hast set before me. Strengthen me to encourage others also to endure that, together, we may glorify Thee in life and in death.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24

MATTHEW 10:24-42

MATTHEW 12:47-50

*“...whosoever shall do the will
of my Father which is in heaven...”*

FELICITAS OF ROME

Felicitas of Rome, a wealthy widow, is remembered as one of the most courageous women martyrs of the early church. She was arrested along with her seven sons (Januarius, Felix, Philip, Silvanus, Alexander, Vitalius and Marcial) during the reign of Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Boldly confessing Christ before the emperor and civil authorities, she was accused by pagan priests of insulting the gods by spreading Christianity.

The Prefect Publius sought to persuade her to renounce her faith for the sake of her children, saying: “Take pity on your children, Felicitas: they are in the bloom of youth and may aspire to greater honours and preferments.” Felicitas replied: “Your pity is really impiety, and the compassion to which you exhort me would make me the most cruel of mothers.” Turning to her sons, she exhorted them: “My sons, look up to heaven where Jesus Christ with His saints expects you. Be faithful in His love, and fight courageously for your souls.”

One by one, her sons were tortured and executed before her eyes. Felicitas prayed that they would remain steadfast and enter the heavenly Kingdom before her. Finally, she herself was condemned and martyred, following her sons in death for Christ. Their witness, preserved in tradition and mentioned by Saint Gregory the Great, stands as a powerful testimony of faith and love.

Felicitas reminds us that true devotion to Christ surpasses even the deepest earthly ties. Her love for the Lord was greater than her love for her family, and in that love she found strength to encourage her children to die faithfully for Christ. Her story is a living echo of Jesus’ words: *“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me”* (Matt 10:37).

ng the Lord more than my family, placing Him above all earthly ties?

PRAYER: Father, help me to love Thee above all else, even above my dearest earthly relationships. Teach me to treasure the sacrifice of Christ, who gave His life for me, and grant me grace to remain faithful in love and obedience to Thee.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25

ACTS 21:27-40

REVELATION 21:1-5

*“...God shall wipe away
all tears from their eyes;
and there shall be no more death...”*

POTHINUS OF LYON

Pothinus, remembered as the first bishop of Lyon and the first bishop of Gaul, was a disciple of Polycarp of Smyrna. Born around AD 87, he accompanied his teacher to Rome in AD 158. Later, Bishop Anicetus sent him to evangelise the Gauls, where he established a flourishing church in Lyon and faithfully shepherded it for nearly twenty years.

Irenaeus, who later succeeded him, testified that Pothinus was his predecessor and the first to hold the office of bishop in Lyon. By AD 177, violent persecution broke out under Emperor Marcus Aurelius. At ninety years old, Pothinus was seized by a mob and brought before the magistrate. He endured brutal abuse in prison and died from his sufferings, while many of his companions were killed by wild beasts in the amphitheatre.

The letter from the church in Lyon, preserved by Eusebius, records the intensity of this persecution and the steadfastness of the martyrs. Pothinus' life and death remind us of the mindset of the early believers: ready to suffer, ready to be imprisoned, ready to die: all for Jesus. They saw themselves as pilgrims passing through this world, anticipating the eternal rest prepared for them in heaven, where there will be no more tears, pain or death. His testimony challenges us today: Do we live with the same anticipation of seeing Christ face to face? The martyrs of old fixed their eyes on eternity, and their example calls us to do the same. They minded not the things of this world, but set their affections on things above. They lived in anticipation of life eternal promised to them.

Colossians 3:1-4: *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”*

THOUGHT: Am I excited to see Jesus face to face, longing for the eternal rest He has promised?

PRAYER: Father, please assure my heart of the eternal bliss that awaits all who are truly born again. Teach me to live as a pilgrim in this world, with eyes fixed on Christ, until the day I behold Him in glory.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26

2 TIMOTHY 3:10-17

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31-33

*“...whatsoever ye do,
do all to the glory of God.”*

LACTANTIUS

Lucius Caecilius Firmianus Lactantius was a Christian author and apologist whose influence reached the highest levels of the Roman Empire. Born around AD 250, he became an advisor to Emperor Constantine I, guiding his early Christian policies, and served as tutor to Constantine's son Crispus.

His most important work, “Institutiones Divinae” (“The Divine Institutes”), was a systematic apologetic treatise written to demonstrate the reasonableness and truth of Christianity to pagan critics. It remains one of the earliest attempts to present Christian doctrine in an organised, comprehensive way.

Lactantius was widely admired for his eloquence and style, earning him the title “Christian Cicero” (Cicero Christianus) among Renaissance humanists. Jerome praised his literary grace, though he noted limitations in his apologetic strength. Still, his writings were celebrated for their erudition, elegance and clarity.

Like many early Christian thinkers, Lactantius held a premillennialist view, teaching that Christ's second coming would precede a thousand-year reign on earth. Scholars such as Charles E. Hill note that Lactantius sought to revive a more “genuine” form of chiliasm in the early fourth century. His works defended Christianity against the criticisms of Hellenistic philosophers and explained the faith in terms accessible to educated pagans.

Through his writings, Lactantius reminds us that God endows each person with gifts and talents meant for His glory. Whether through eloquence, teaching or service, all are to be used for the exaltation of Christ and the advancement of His kingdom. His life challenges us to use our abilities for the Lord while we still have time.

THOUGHT: Am I giving my talents and skills fully to the Lord, using them for His glory?

PRAYER: Father, use me for Thy glory alone. Make me willing to do even the least of tasks if they are for Thee. May my gifts and abilities be surrendered to Christ, that others may come to know Him.

LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 27

2 PETER 2

2 TIMOTHY 2:14-18

*"...shun profane and vain babblings:
for they will increase
unto more ungodliness."*

METHODIUS

Methodius of Olympus (died in AD 311) was a church bishop, ecclesiastical writer and martyr. He was the Bishop of Olympus in Lycia during the late third and early fourth centuries AD. The place of his martyrdom is uncertain. Jerome provided the earliest accounts of him, reporting him as Bishop of Olympus.

Methodius received a comprehensive education with a strong influence from Plato's philosophy. As a theologian and prolific author, he wrote several books. He became of special importance in the history of theological literature, in that he combated various views of Origen's. He was indebted to Alexandrian allegorism. However, Methodius remained faithful to the Asiatic tradition (literal and historical) of Irenaeus (who had gone to France from Asia Minor) and his realism. Methodius castigated Origen's ideas on the pre-existence of souls, the flesh as the spirit's prison, and the spiritual nature of the resurrected body. He was known to be the acutest among the critics of Origen.

In his "The Treatise on Free Will," he aimed to prove in the form of a dialogue that the free will of man is responsible for evil. The bad cannot be thought of as originating in God, neither is it uncreated matter, nor eternal like God. In the discussion, Methodius rejected Origen's idea of an indefinite succession of worlds. It seems that the treatise is directed against the dualistic system of the Valentinians and other Gnostics.

In our present generation, we are plagued with false teachers and doctrines. Thus, we need to be vigilant and watchful. The children of God must not be lazy and slack, but industrious and prolific in writing and teaching against the falsehoods of the day. We must not be like dumb dogs who just watch and wag our tails even when robbers and thieves enter the house to plunder and to take the spoil. We need to bark at, and to bite if possible, those who creep in and destroy the pure and perfect doctrines of God. Let us be awake and active, for Jesus may come at any time, and sooner than we ever think.

THOUGHT: Am I actively pointing out the error from the truth?

PRAYER: Father, may Thou keep me alert so that I will be able to note the enemy's deception coming my way.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 28

1 CORINTHIANS 8

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-3

*“...in the latter times
some shall depart from the faith...”*

ARNOBIUS THE ELDER

Arnobius the Elder (also called Afer) lived in Africa during the reign of Emperor Diocletian (AD 284-305). Originally a pagan and a teacher of rhetoric at Sicca Veneria, he later embraced the Christian faith. He was even the master of Lactantius, another great Christian apologist. Because of Arnobius' former paganism, the local bishop was suspicious of him. To prove the sincerity of his conversion, Arnobius composed seven books “Adversus Nationes” (“Against the Pagans”) around AD 303 (before his baptism).

In these writings, Arnobius defended Christianity against pagan accusations and exposed the inconsistencies of pagan belief. He attacked Neoplatonism, anthropomorphism and heathen mythology, and condemned the worship of images, temples and rituals. His tone was not that of a reluctant catechumen, but of a convinced Christian, voluntarily undertaking the task of defending the faith against reproach.

Arnobius demonstrated extensive knowledge of pagan worship and literature, making his work a valuable source for understanding the religious practices of his time. His apologetics was distinctive in that he not only refuted charges against Christianity, but also sought to show that Christianity itself could be demonstrated by evidence.

Arnobius reminds us that defending the faith is not merely about answering critics, but also about bearing witness to the truth of Christ with wisdom and courage. His example challenges us to stand firm, to pass on the Word of life to future generations, and to answer false accusations with grace.

THOUGHT: Am I a defender of my Christian faith, ready to give an answer with grace and wisdom?

PRAYER: Father, grant me courage to stand for Thee. Make me ready to share Thy love with those in need, and to defend the faith, once delivered to the saints, with humility and boldness.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29

ACTS 13:16-26

COLOSSIANS 1:15-18

*“For by him were all things created,
that are in heaven,
and that are in earth...”*

SEXTUS JULIUS AFRICANUS

Sextus Julius Africanus was the first Christian historian known to produce a universal chronology. Born around AD 170, he once referred to Jerusalem as his birthplace. In his youth, he served in the army, but his education must have been extensive, for he mastered Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Aramaic. A true polymath, he represented a new type of Christian intellectual, one who sought to harness the best of Greek and Roman philosophy as well as science in service of the faith.

He emerged in church history toward the end of the second century AD, a time when Christianity faced sharp intellectual attacks. Writers like Celsus mocked Christ with false claims, portraying Him as illegitimate and accusing Him of sorcery. Against such criticisms, Africanus stood as a defender of the faith.

His greatest work was the “Chronographiai,” a five-volume treatise covering sacred and secular history from Creation (which he dated to 5499 BC) to AD 221. Using Scripture as the foundation, he synchronised Egyptian and Chaldaean chronologies, Greek mythology and Jewish history with Christianity. In doing so, he elevated the prestige of the Christian faith by placing it firmly within the broader historical context of the world. He also wrote a critical study on the genealogies of Christ in Matthew and Luke, seeking to reconcile apparent differences.

Africanus reminds us that intellectual gifts are meant to glorify God. Too often, scholars and scientists pursue knowledge for their own fame, forgetting the Creator who is the source of all wisdom. True science and true scholarship point back to Christ, the One through whom all things were made.

THOUGHT: Do I truly believe that Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things, and acknowledge Him in all knowledge?

PRAYER: Father, may I acknowledge that nothing in this world is new, but all unfolds according to Thy plans and purposes. May my mind and talents be used to glorify Thee, the Creator of all things.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30

ROMANS 10:11-21

MATTHEW 28:18-20

*“Go ye therefore,
and teach all nations...”*

GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR

Gregory the Illuminator is remembered as the great missionary and chief bishop of Armenia, serving from about AD 314 to 325. He is honoured as the one through whom God brought the Armenian people to Christ, making Armenia the first nation in history to adopt Christianity as its official religion.

Born in Valarshapat (or possibly Caesarea in Cappadocia), Gregory was raised in the Christian faith and educated in the Greek culture of Caesarea. Returning to Armenia during a time of persecution under King Tiridates III, Gregory was imprisoned in a pit for his refusal to worship idols. After his miraculous rescue around AD 300, God used him to save and convert King Tiridates, who then embraced Christianity and imposed it upon his people. This was nearly two decades before Constantine's conversion in Rome.

Gregory received episcopal ordination in Caesarea and returned to Armenia to destroy pagan shrines, build churches, establish monasteries and ordain bishops. His leadership laid the foundation for the Armenian Church, and his influence extended into neighbouring regions such as Albania and the Caucasus. Eventually, he handed over his episcopal duties to his son Aristakes and retired to a solitary life. Though Gregory faced opposition and hardship, his mission succeeded largely because of God's providence and the support of the royal family. His story reminds us that the work of the Lord is not carried out in isolation, but through cooperation with others in the body of Christ.

“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” (Eccles 4:9-10).

THOUGHT: Am I living as a lone ranger Christian, or am I open to working with others in the body of Christ?

PRAYER: Father, help me to be open to cooperating with like-minded believers in the work of the Lord. Teach me to value the strength of fellowship and unity, that together we may glorify Thy name and advance Thy kingdom.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31

EPHESIANS 4:17-32

1 JOHN 1:8-10

*“If we confess our sins,
he is faithful and just
to forgive us our sins...”*

HERMAS AND THE SHEPHERD OF HERMAS

Hermas (remembered through the early Christian text “The Shepherd of Hermas”) was a visionary writer in Rome during the second century AD. The “shepherd” in his work refers to an angelic figure who guided him through a series of visions. According to the Muratorian Canon (c. third century AD), the book was written by the brother of Pius, Bishop of Rome, though it remains uncertain who the true author is.

Hermas was not a church leader but a seer of visions, and his book is divided into five visions, twelve commandments and ten parables. His central concern was repentance. Wrestling with his own sin after baptism, Hermas reflected on the tension within the Roman church: some believed repentant sinners could remain in fellowship, while others insisted that post-baptismal sin required complete exclusion. His writings sought to guide believers toward renewal and a deeper commitment to Christ.

The “Shepherd of Hermas” emphasises ethical living and calls Christians to purify their lives, turn wholeheartedly to the Lord, and pray with confidence. He urged believers to clothe themselves with faith, resisting distractions and vanities, and to cultivate an identity distinct from the surrounding society. His message remains timeless: repentance is not merely a sorrow for sin, but also a renewed devotion to God.

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing” (Phil 3:13-16).

THOUGHT: Are my mind and heart truly focused on God? Or are they distracted by the vanities of this world?

PRAYER: Father, help me to live a life worthy of being called a true follower of Christ. Purify my heart, strengthen my faith, and keep my mind fixed on Thee alone.