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Weekend Manna: FRED SAID

**Extracts from Manna Bible teaching commentaries by Fred
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Use "CTRL F" to search for key words or phrases

Hebrews 2:10-16. *What Jesus did for the Family of Believers*

Jesus was born to suffer and die for our sins. This was the amazing plan of God from the beginning. He acted in exactly the right way. He now brings His family of believers to share in His glory. God made Jesus the perfect One to do this through His sacrifice (2:10).

Jesus offers us all a place in the family of God. This was promised by God long ago in the Old Testament (2:12-13; Psalm 22:22; Isaiah 8:18).

Jesus became a human being like us in order to die for us. 'By doing that, He could destroy the one who rules over the kingdom of death [who is] the devil' (2:14).

Jesus overcame sin and death for us. He set us free from the fear of death (2:15). Jesus robbed Satan of the power he uses to enslave us. He has brought us from death to life (Romans 6:13). We are the children of God. Therefore, we have His power working in us when we are born again.

Jesus came to help the family of Abraham (Hebrews 2:16). He helps

all those who share the faith of Abraham in our Lord God Almighty. He blesses all who obey Him as Abraham did (Genesis 12:1-4). If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are children of God, both Jews and non-Jews. We receive what God promised Abraham (Galatians 3:29). God promised that the family of Abraham would be a blessing throughout the whole world for all who believe.

Extracted from "HEBREWS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris.

Revelation 2:12-17: *Repent from all that is false and unholy*

After praising them, Jesus said to the believers at Pergamum: 'I have a few things against you. You have people there who follow the teaching of Balaam who taught Balak to tempt the Israelites to sin. They ate food sacrificed to the gods. They committed sexual sins. You also have people who follow the teaching of the Nicolaitans' (2:14-15).

The word of the Lord to them is 'REPENT!'

A great battle was being fought for the hearts and minds of this congregation. Persecutions and martyrdom did not stop them from following Christ and His righteousness, so Satan changed his plan! He tempted them with sexual sins and false teaching.

The risen Lord Jesus told them: "Turn away from your sins. If you don't, I will come to you soon. I will fight against those who sin, with the sword that comes out of My mouth" (2:16; Hebrews 4:12).

The whole church was not guilty, yet the call to repent was to the whole congregation. Why? Because they had tolerated false teaching and unholy behaviour in their midst. This was God's complaint against the whole church.

The church in Ephesus had lost its first love for the Lord but remained holy. The church in Pergamum had not lost its love for the Lord but had lost its holiness.

Christ then promised His spiritual food – 'hidden manna from Heaven' – to those who overcame temptation to sin (2:17). This is possible by refusing to sin and pursuing holiness, as well as standing firm in the faith that God has provided through Jesus (1 Peter 5:8-10).

Extracted from "MESSAGES TO SEVEN CHURCHES" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris.

Genesis chapter 8: *Eight people were saved from the Flood*

Now the waters from the deep parts of the oceans and the 'windows' of the Heavens were closed (8:2). The water level went back down (8:3). At the end of 150 days, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat, in Armenia, east of Turkey.

After 40 days, Noah opened a window at the top of the ark. He sent out first a raven, then a dove. Noah waited for God's answer and God gave it to him. The dove came back to Noah with an olive leaf in her beak. Noah waited seven more days (8:12) and sent the dove out again. This time it did not return. Then Noah took off 'the covering' and saw that the land was drying up.

Then God said, "Come out of the ark... Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you..." (8:15-17).

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and sacrificed some of the 'clean' animals as burnt offerings (8:20). God accepted Noah's sacrifice. God told men at the beginning how to walk by faith and how to worship Him (Genesis 4:3-7). The word 'altar' means 'a place of sacrifice'. The blood of innocent animals with no injuries or illness had a special meaning to God.

God forgave Noah's family and made them holy because of the sacrifice of innocent blood. These animal sacrifices at that time looked ahead to the death of Jesus for man's sin (1 Peter 1:19-21; Hebrews 9:22).

Extracted from "BEGINNINGS: The Origin and Purpose of Life" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris.

Genesis Chapter 11 to 22: *Abraham, the father of all who believe the One True God*

Abraham lived in the Promised Land that we now call Israel. But he was a stranger there. He did not own the land. But he began to occupy it for his future families. This was part of God's salvation plan for the world. Abraham was God's starting point for a new tribe who worshipped only Yahweh, the one true and everlasting God.

Abraham was 100 years old before his promised child was born. We shall see in the next Bible Commentary that the promises that God made to Abraham, He made also to his son Isaac and to his grandson Jacob (who was later called Israel). God repeated His agreement to the chosen one in each generation of these great men of faith (patriarchs). In this way, God watched over the family line of the true believers right down to the time when Jesus Christ was born to Mary as Israel's Messiah. Through the family of Abraham, God brought salvation to the whole world so that all who believe that Jesus is the Son of God will be saved.

Abraham gave up everything to obey God and to fulfil His promises. He had times of weakness but he had a close fellowship with God. He received the faith to believe the One True and Almighty God.

Now read what St. Paul said about the faith of Abraham and the faith of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, in Romans 4:17–25.

Extracted from "ABRAHAM" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris.

Genesis Chapter 32: *Jacob prepares to meet his brother*

At last Jacob felt free to move on toward Canaan. He was going back to his own country and taking his large family and all his animals with him. They were passing through strange country. There were many robbers and violent people who might attack them, but Jacob had God's promise, "I am the God of Bethel (31:13). I will be with you" (31:3).

Jacob did not have any soldiers or armed men to protect his family, but as he went on his way an army of angels met him (32:1). What a great thing to have God's angels with us! (Hebrews 1:14).

Jacob knew that God was with him, but he still trusted in himself. He was still very afraid because he had cheated his brother Esau. He sent a messenger ahead to meet his brother who was also coming to meet him.

Jacob called the place where he met the angels Mahanaim. The word means 'two camps'.

1. Here at Mahanaim, east of Jordan and north of Jabbok brook, God showed Jacob His protection. Angel armies were all around him and his family.
2. Jacob now knew that his camp was not the only camp. There was his camp and God's camp. God's 'army' of angels would go with him and they would take him and his family safely to Canaan (2 Kings 6:16).
3. The angels could easily do this without showing themselves.

Jacob was so full of his own problems that he still failed to believe fully in God's wonderful protection and purpose for him.

Extracted from "ISAAC AND JACOB" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris.

Genesis Chapter 42: *Joseph's brothers travel to Egypt*

Joseph's brothers would soon meet Joseph, though they did not know this. God brought them all together so that Joseph could forgive them and they could be friends again. Joseph did not travel to Canaan but his brothers travelled to Egypt. This was part of the plan for the people of Israel that God promised to Abraham.

There was famine everywhere. Jacob (called Israel) and his family in Canaan heard that there was corn in Egypt. He said to his sons, "Go

down there. Buy some for us. Then we will live and not die" (42:2).

The ten oldest sons packed their donkeys and went down to Egypt, but Jacob kept the youngest son Benjamin at home (42:4).

When Jacob's ten sons reached Egypt, they came to Joseph, who was governor of the land at that time. They 'bowed down to him with their faces to the ground' (42:6). In this way Joseph's dreams, when he lived in Canaan with his father Jacob, came true (37:5-7).

Joseph recognised his brothers at once (42:7,8). But they did not know that he was Joseph their younger brother. He looked and spoke just like an Egyptian. Joseph pretended that he did not know them. Then he remembered his dreams and spoke roughly to them. "You are spies" (42:9).

They told him they had come only to buy food. "We are honest men. We are not spies" (42:11). Joseph told them he would test them to see if they were honest. He then put them in prison for three days (42:17).

This gave Joseph time to think what to do next. He did not want the problems from the past to hinder what God would do in the future.

Extracted from "JOSEPH, the Son who was Servant and Saviour" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris.

Exodus Chapter 20: *A new beginning to worship God*

God gave the Ten Commandments to show His people how to worship and obey Him. He wanted them to live holy lives. He wanted them to love Him and each other. This was a new beginning for the children of Israel as a holy people of God.

The Ten Commandments say what is right and what is wrong. They speak about the old life of sin. They reminded the people that God had set them apart to be holy. Today they help us remember how much God wants to save us from sin. Most of all, He wants us to be a holy people so that we are set apart to worship a holy God.

God's Ten Commandments guide us but also remind us that we are sinners, and therefore need Jesus Christ as our Saviour. He is the Son of God who died to save us. The Old Testament Law, which is God's truth, guides us but cannot save us since we are all sinners. Praise God for all that Jesus has done to give us a new life with Him and to know the love and forgiveness of Yahweh, Almighty God, and creator of all things. It is by the grace and mercy of God alone that we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:5,8).

May this be the experience of all who read and obey God's writings, and believe that Jesus is the Son of Almighty God.

Extracted from "MOSES Part 1: the Birth of a Nation" Bible teaching

commentary by Fred Morris.

Exodus Chapter 20: *God's 10 Commandments and the teaching of Jesus*

The Ten Commandments are divided into two parts. The first four guide us into a better relationship with Almighty God, our creator. The final six guide us into a better relationship with other people, His creation. They are listed below with the teachings of Jesus 1500 years later. Jesus fully supported the Ten Commandments. He said that He had come to fulfil the Old Testament Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17).

Commandment One: WORSHIP GOD ONLY

'I am the LORD your God' (20:2,3). See Matthew 4:10.

Commandment Two: NO IDOLS

'Do not make statues ... or worship them' (20:4–6). See Luke 16:13.

Commandment Three: RESPECT GOD'S NAME

'Do not use the name of the LORD your God in wrong ways' (20:7). See Matthew 5:34.

Commandment Four: REMEMBER GOD'S DAY

'Remember the Sabbath day. Keep it holy. Do all your work in six days' (20:8–11). See Mark 2:27-28.

Commandment Five: RESPECT YOUR PARENTS

'Respect your father and mother, so you will live a long time' (20:12). See Matthew 10:37.

Commandment Six: DO NOT KILL ANYONE

'Do not murder' (20:13). See Matthew 5:21,22.

Commandment Seven: NO SEXUAL ACTIVITY OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE

'Do not commit adultery' (20:14). See Matthew 5:28.

Commandment Eight: DO NOT STEAL

'Do not steal' (20:15). See Matthew 19:21.

Commandment Nine: DO NOT LIE

'Do not accuse anyone falsely' (20:16). See Matthew 12:36.

Commandment Ten: DO NOT ENVY

'Do not wish for anything that belongs to your neighbour' (20:17). See Luke 12:15.

Extracted from "MOSES Part 2: The Growth of a Nation" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris.

Joshua Chapter 5: *Joshua meets the Captain of the Lord's Army*

Joshua bowed down with his face to the ground. He asked the man, "What message does my Lord have for me?"

“Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground” (5:15).

God was there at Jericho, a new place, with Joshua and with his men. God showed Joshua that He, the Almighty God of Israel, was in charge. Joshua should trust and obey His voice and not trust himself.

Many people today say that they are Christians, but they do not listen when God tells them to obey His word. To win the battle over sin and over the evil around us, we must take orders from our Commander, Jesus Christ. Then the enemies of God will see that we have His Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, with us and within us (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 4:1).

Think about this: How is God preparing you to progress further from the old life to the new life under His direction? What does the advance of the Kingdom of God mean for you? Do you tell children and young adults about what God has done?

Pray about this: Ask God to be with you as you move forward in the new path of life that He has called you to take. Talk to Him about the protection you need from the enemies of God. Ask God for opportunities to tell others what He has done. Tell Jesus about the help you will need from Father God when you are strong and when you are weak.

Extracted from "JOSHUA: God's First Leader in the Land of Israel" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris.

1 Samuel Chapters 1 to 3: *The story of Hannah and her son Samuel*

Elkanah lived in Ramah, 22 km from Shiloh. He had two wives. It was a custom at that time for some men of Israel to have two wives. The people copied this custom from the neighbouring tribes. This was not the plan of God at the beginning.

The wives of Elkanah were called Peninnah and Hannah (1:2). Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. Peninnah caused Hannah much shame and grief (1:6). Hannah's problem, however, became part of a plan of God for Israel and the world.

Each year, when Hannah went to the House of God at Shiloh, Peninnah teased her. She did this until Hannah cried and did not want to eat (1:7).

Elkanah loved Hannah very much. He said to her, "Hannah, why are you crying? Do I not mean more to you than ten sons?" (1:8). But he could not comfort her.

Hannah, however, was special to God. She loved God. She knew how to worship Him and to pray to Him.

One year in Shiloh, Hannah went alone to the Meeting Tent. Hannah was very sad. She wept and wept. She stood and prayed to the Lord God Almighty (1:10). Her struggle made her bold in her faith. She asked God for a son.

Then Hannah made a promise to God. If He gave her a son, she would give the boy back to God. He could then serve God all the days of his life.

Extracted from "RUTH AND HANNAH: Two Women with Faith in God"
Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris.

Mark Chapter 3: *Jesus and His Mother and Brothers*

It may surprise you to read that on one occasion Jesus did not want to see His mother and brothers (3:31). He knew that they wanted to take Him away (3:21). They were worried about the things people were saying about Him in His home town of Nazareth. Some people thought that Jesus was mad.

Jesus did not want to argue with His family. So He chose not to see them. In this way, they would not delay the plan of God. He wanted to stay with the people who needed Him. The crowds wanted Him to teach them and to heal them. He said that they were His mother and brothers and sisters (3:35). The followers of Jesus are the family of God.

Mark does not say that Jesus turned away from His own mother and brothers. He did not want to argue with them. So He chose to stay with those who were doing the will of God. He did the kindest thing and the correct thing towards His family. He avoided a family argument while doing the will of His heavenly Father.

Sometimes, our relatives make it hard for us to do what God wants us to do. We must understand their loving concern. But we must understand what the plan or will of God is. We must avoid big troubles when we make family decisions.

Satan uses the love and fears of family members to try to stop the ministry of Jesus. Jesus did not feel anger for His family, only love. His family also included the poor and sick people in the world and others

who needed Him.

Think about this: How do we show that we are part of a worldwide family of God? How do we avoid family troubles?

Extracted from "THE EARLY TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST: The Good News told by Mark" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris.

Mark Chapter 14: *The Last Meal of Jesus*

The disciples prepared the Passover meal of lamb, bread without yeast, wine, herbs and sauces. This last meal helped the disciples to remember their Lord's death. They knew that the blood of the first Passover lamb was sprinkled on the Israelite doorposts in Egypt (Exodus 12:7,13). Seeing the blood, the angel of death passed over their homes and they were saved. Now Jesus would die at the time of the Passover celebration. He was the Lamb of God soon to be killed to pay the price for our punishment and save all believers from their sins (Hebrews 9:12).

Then Jesus told them again, "The Son of Man will go just as it is written about Him" (Mark 14:21; Isaiah 53:8-9).

While they were eating, Jesus took the bread. He gave thanks and broke it. He gave it to His disciples and said, "This is My body given for you," He said. "Do this to remember Me" (14:22; Luke 22:19).

Then He took the cup saying, "This cup is the New Covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20). He gave thanks and handed it to them. All of them drank from it (Mark 14:23-24).

When Judas had eaten some of the meal with them, he went out (John 13:30).

Jesus again told the disciples about His crucifixion, as well as His resurrection and ascension. Soon they would see His enemies put Him to death.

From this day on they would remember the Passover supper as the Lord's Last Supper.

Extracted from "THE DEATH, RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2002, 2020.

Mark Chapter 13: *Many troubles that will happen*

Jesus said, "You will hear about wars... Do not be alarmed. These things must happen... Nation will fight against nation. There will be earthquakes in many places. People will go hungry" (13:7-8).

We are now living in the days that Jesus warned about and many believers do not realise this. There will be big troubles before Jesus

returns. Also times of a false peace when Christians will forget to pray for the Kingdom of God to be established on Earth. They will be deceived by teaching of prosperity and enjoy the activities of our modern world and do nothing about the moral decline.

Jesus also warned His followers, "You will stand in front of governors and kings because of Me. In that way you will be witnesses to them. The Good News has to be preached to all nations before the end comes. You will be arrested and brought to trial, but do not worry... just say what God brings to your mind at the time. It is not you speaking but the Holy Spirit" (13:9-11).

Then Jesus told the disciples more things that would happen. Many of these things have already happened. Others will happen soon, but we don't know when. The two greatest things Jesus said would happen were:

- The Temple will be pulled down (13:2). This happened about 40 years after Jesus said these words.
- Jesus Christ will come again in power. This is still to happen (13:26).

Jesus warns us that in times of trouble, people will say things that are untrue about His return to Earth. They will try to deceive God's people (13:21-22). He warns us several times, "Keep watching!" (13:5,23,33,37). Jesus will come again and no-one knows when this will happen (13:26,32-36).

Extracted from "THE DEATH, RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2002, 2020.

John Chapter 3: *The truth of God that Jesus told Nicodemus*

Jesus said these wonderful truths about Himself:

- Jesus, the Son of Man, came from Heaven as the Son of God (3:13). 'Son of Man' was one of the names of the promised Messiah given in the Old Testament writings.
- 'The Son of Man must be lifted up' (3:14; Numbers 21:8-9). Jesus spoke in this way about His death on the cross.
- 'Everyone who believes in Him can live with God for ever' (3:15).
- Such was the love of God for the world 'that He gave His one and only Son' (3:16). Jesus died for our sins on the cross. The punishment and price for our sin was paid by Him.
- 'Anyone who believes in Him will not die but will have eternal life' (3:16). Then all who believe in Him are forgiven forever.
- 'God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world. He sent

His Son to save the world through Him' (3:17).

The words of John 3:16-17 are famous words of God's love, purpose and provision. They fulfil the words of prophecy in Isaiah 53:4-12. The truth about Jesus and His Father set Nicodemus free from religious traditions and rules.

Jesus then warned that anyone who does not believe is judged by God (3:18). Jesus is a light in the dark world of sin. Many reject His light and choose darkness. They do evil things and are afraid of His light (3:19-20).

Extracted from "THE PERSONAL TEACHINGS OF JESUS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2008, 2015.

John Chapter 17: *The final promise of Jesus*

Finally, Jesus said He wanted His followers to see Him in all His glory. His disciples would see Him briefly on Earth after His resurrection. All followers of Jesus will be with Him in glory. This glory was given to Jesus because God loved Him before the world was created (17:24).

Then Jesus made a promise to His Father before He was arrested. He explained, "Those You have given Me know that You have sent Me. I have shown You to them." Then He promised "I will continue to show You to them. The love You have for Me will be in them" (17:25-26).

This is the final promise Jesus made to God before His trial and death. He continues to keep this promise for us through the power of the Holy Spirit. In this way, Jesus enables us to know God. We know God's love and we know Jesus. Jesus confirmed, "I myself will be in them" (17:26).

This is the promise of Jesus that continues true today. He continues to talk with His Father about us and prays [pleads] for us (Hebrews 7:25).

Talk about this:

What does Jesus want all His followers to see, that is given to Him (17:24)? Why?

What did Jesus promise for all who believe in Him (17:26)? Is this still true today?

Extracted from "THE FINAL DAYS OF JESUS ON EARTH" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2002, 2017.

Acts Chapter 9: *Peter shows the power of Jesus*

At this time the Holy Spirit made the churches in Judea and Samaria strong and brave. The believers had a period of peace and many people became Christians (9:31).

The community of churches grew both in faith and in numbers. They were also united in spirit.

Peter did not stay all the time in Jerusalem. One day he went to Lydda, which was near Joppa on the west coast of Israel. In this town Peter met Aeneas who had been sick for many years. Peter healed him in the name of Jesus. Then all the people who lived in that town believed in Jesus as the Son of God (9:34-35). They were mostly Jews.

Many people who lived nearby also believed. Dorcas lived in Joppa. She became sick and died. The believers sent for Peter urgently. Peter remembered how Jesus raised three people from death (Matthew 9:25; Luke 7:11-17; John 11:1-44). Peter came to Dorcas. He sent the crowds away and knelt down and prayed and she came back to life. After this, many more people in Joppa believed in the Lord Jesus (9:36-42). They were amazed and had great fear and respect for Him.

Peter stayed in Joppa for some time to teach the Jews about Jesus. While he was there, God told Peter to teach other nations as well. (See the next chapter.)

Extracted from "THE EARLY CHURCH" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2004, 2012, 2019.

Acts 19:20 to 20:38. *Paul plans what to do*

The work of the Holy Spirit in Ephesus became very powerful. The truth of God spread everywhere around (19:20).

During this time Paul began to plan where to travel next. He wanted to visit the new churches across the sea in Macedonia and Achaia (Greece). He also wanted to visit Jerusalem and Rome (19:21). Jerusalem was the centre of the Jewish people and also the centre of the Christian churches. Rome was the centre of the Roman Empire. Achaia was the centre of the old Greek empire.

Paul knew that these were important places to visit to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ and to teach and encourage the new believers. He stayed in Ephesus a little longer but sent two of his helpers to Macedonia (19:22). Paul followed them later (20:1).

At this time, the people who made silver idols encouraged the crowds to cause trouble for the followers of Jesus (19:23-29). Therefore, Paul did not move away from Ephesus at that time. He stayed with the believers to help and support them (19:30). Paul stayed until the trouble was over (20:1). Then he left to visit the churches in Macedonia and Achaia before returning to Troas in Asia Minor (Turkey) (20:1-6).

Paul was a busy preacher and teacher but he listened to the Holy Spirit to guide him. Paul knew that he must:

- Fulfil his divine calling to preach the good News to the Gentiles.
- Plant new churches and teach and encourage the new believers.

- Obey his church leaders in Antioch who regularly prayed for him. Paul also wanted to fulfil his personal desire to visit Jerusalem and then Rome and then Spain.

Extracted from "PAUL BRINGS GOOD NEWS TO THE WORLD" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2005, 2012.

Romans 7. *Set free from the old Law through Christ*

Life in Christ is called 'the new way of the Holy Spirit' (7:6). It sets us free from the Law. So now it is possible to fulfil the Old Testament commandments of God without sinning again and again (6:17,18).

Paul said, 'I would not have known what sin was unless the law had told me' (7:7). So the Law is not bad but it reminds us of the sin that rules in our bodies. The way of the Spirit is called God's new agreement or covenant.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote in the Old Testament, 'A new day is coming when I [Almighty God] will make a new covenant with the people of Israel. It will not be like the covenant I made ... long ago when I ... led the people out of Egypt... I will put my law in their minds. I will write my law on their hearts' (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

Abraham was told by God that all nations on earth would be blessed through his family. Therefore, non-Jews receive this promise through faith in Jesus our Saviour, the Jewish Messiah. This promise is for all people.

The Law condemns people for sin which leads to death (7:10). The Law does not forgive sin. The Law does not give people power over sin. No law can make a person right in God's sight. Only God's grace and faith in Christ can do that. So the Old Testament Law guides us in the truth of God and the things that God hates. And it shows us the need of a saviour through Jesus Christ.

Extracted from "IN CHRIST ALONE" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2008, 2012.

Romans Chapter 15. *Even Christ did not please Himself*

Paul continues to think about the aim of setting a good example for weaker Christians. Romans 15:1 and 2 is a summary of what Paul says in the previous chapter: we should encourage those who are weak in their faith or who have no faith; we should not just be concerned with our own needs or our own ways of serving and worshipping God.

- Criticising others is not good for we, too, have faults (Matthew 7:1-5).
- We should not please ourselves in serving God.

- Encourage others in their faith to please God.

Jesus set an example for us to follow. He did not please Himself (15:3). If you want harmony in your marriage, or in your team, or in your church, this is the answer. Paul says elsewhere that we must have the same attitude that Jesus had and think like Him (Philippians 2:1-16). Christians should therefore put the interests of others first.

Think about this: Why are verses 1 and 2 of chapter 15 so important for believers today?

Extracted from "LIVING IN CHRIST" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2012.

Revelation 2. *Jesus warned that it would get worse.*

Jesus warned that the persecution would continue and get worse. Then He added those familiar words of encouragement: "Do not be afraid of what you are going to suffer" (2:10; see 2 Timothy 1:12).

From the very beginning, Satan has used deceit and compromise to bring down God's children. If you say, 'Caesar is Lord', but think that on the inside you can be a follower of Jesus, then that is a lie!

"Get behind me Satan", Jesus said (Matthew 16:23). Then He suffered on the cross but was given the right to sit at the side of Father God. His victory over sin and death is our salvation, so 'let us keep looking to Jesus' (Hebrews 12:2).

The church at Smyrna would be fully tested. 'For ten days' means 'fully tested'. "I will give you the crown of life" (2:10). The gift of eternal life awaits the faithful Christian who perseveres and overcomes the world and its temptations to sin. This was true for the little fellowship of believers at Smyrna. The risen Christ promised a 'crown of life' as well as eternity with Him.

"He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death." The second death awaits those whose names are NOT written in 'the Book of Life'. It is called 'the lake of fire' (20:14-15).

Extracted from "MESSAGES TO SEVEN CHURCHES" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2013.

Ephesians Chapter 5: *Take every opportunity to do good*

Paul said again and again, "Be very careful how you live your life" (4:1,17; 5:2,8,15). He also explained, "Make the most of every opportunity. The days are evil. Do not be foolish... Understand what the Lord wants [you to do]" (5:16-17).

Paul warned, "Do not fill yourself up with wine... Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit" (5:18). Speak from the Spirit of Christ within you and "sing from your heart to the Lord" (5:19).

Be wise and be true to Jesus. Paul said in another letter, "Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21). So, to please God we must:

- keep away from evil;
- expose it when we find it;
- do good;
- stop doing foolish things that anger God;
- understand what the Lord's will is for us;
- be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit does not come to fill an empty space, but to fulfil a life which has received Jesus as Saviour. We must be under His control every day. God said we are to ask for this control of Holy Spirit power in our lives (Luke 11:13). We should keep on asking. We come often, we come boldly, we come asking: that pleases our Father (Hebrews 10:19-22).

So, let us speak and sing from the heart, "always giving thanks to God the Father for everything... in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (5:20).

Believers who are guided by the Holy Spirit:

- sing praises to God and to each other (5:19);
- give thanks always (5:20);
- submit to other Christians (5:21).

Extracted from "PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2018.

Hebrews Chapter 10: *We are made holy to come close to God*

The writer of Hebrews quotes again from the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah (10:15-17; Jeremiah 31:33-34):

- God will make a New Covenant with His people.
- The Old Covenant laws of God will be written on their hearts and in their minds.
- God will not remember their sins any more.

The Holy Spirit confirms these things (Hebrews 10:15). For those who are forgiven, there is now no need of animal sacrifices for sin under the Old Covenant (10:18).

Because of this great work of God in Christ for us, we have confidence in our salvation under the New Covenant. We can now enter boldly into the presence of God by the blood of Jesus (10:19). This way to God is now open to all, Jews and non-Jews, who accept Jesus as their Saviour.

This was a shock to many Jews. The way was now open to meet God through the Temple curtain in Jerusalem (10:20). They knew that no-one was allowed into the holiest place in the Temple apart from the high priest of Israel. Before Jesus died, no-one else could enter the holiest place. The big curtain shut them out. When Jesus died, however, that curtain was torn open from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51).

Now, because Jesus is our perfect Great High Priest, all believers can come freely into the presence of God. "So let us come near to God with an honest and true heart. Let us come near with a faith that is sure and strong" (Hebrews 10:22).

God has made us clean and holy by the blood of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we can have fellowship with Him. This was the plan of God from the beginning. It is a plan of love, grace and mercy.

Extracted from "HEBREWS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris
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REVELATON CHAPTER 3: *Stir up the flame that is within you*

Then Jesus said [to the church at Laodicea], "I know what you are doing. I know you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other" (3:15).

There was no Jezebel in this church and no mention of evil practices. Compromise with heathen gods did not seem to be a problem. Nor did there appear to be any persecution at that time or pressure to worship the Roman Emperor.

The problem was that they had no real trust in God. The life of their church during a time of peace was not giving glory to God. Their love and faith were warm but not hot.

"So," said the risen Christ, "because you are neither hot nor cold, I am about to spit you out of My mouth" (3:16)

This is the same mouth that spoke love, compassion, forgiveness and encouragement, with clear commands to His people. Both judgment and the loving nature of Almighty God come from the mouth of Jesus the Christ. From His mouth comes the ... power to destroy what is sinful and encourage what is good.

This is what the risen Christ had against the church at Laodicea: there was no real life of Christ among them. They did not give a good witness of Almighty God to non-believers outside the church; nor were there any miracles happening in their congregation in the name of Jesus.

We cannot be and do what He wants unless we are prodded and 'stirred up' within. This happens only when we spend time in His presence, asking for more of His Holy Spirit power to worship, witness

and work for His glory.

Extracted from "MESSAGE TO SEVEN CHURCHES" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2013.

Genesis Chapter 4: *Cain knew right from wrong but failed*

Cain thought he could obey God in his own way, but God warned him, "If you do what is right, you will be accepted" (4:7).

Cain learnt from his parents that in everything we do, there is a right and a wrong way. How can we know what is right? God tells us in His word. His word is TRUTH. You can trust God's word! He has given us a conscience. He has also given believers His Holy Spirit to guide us.

But Cain rejected God's way of doing what is right. He then became angry. His life was spoilt by sin. He became the servant of sin.

God waited for Cain to repent. If Cain was sorry, then God could receive his true worship. Cain knew that God was not pleased with his offering. But he did not want to offer what Abel offered. He did not want to ask his brother for a lamb to sacrifice to God. He was too proud to ask. He knew what was right to please God but failed to do it. He disobeyed God.

Cain became angry with his brother. That was not right. It was not Abel's fault. It was Cain's fault.

"Why are you angry?" God asked. God told Cain, "Do what is right, then you will be accepted." The Bible says: "By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did" (Hebrews 11:4). And also: "Do not be like Cain who belonged to the evil one [Satan]" (1 John 3:12).

Extracted from "BEGINNINGS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2001, 2003, 2006.

Genesis Chapter 18: *The choices made by the people of Sodom*

From the early days in Canaan, Abraham cared for his nephew Lot. Both had the same opportunity to worship and serve the living God. Abraham let God use the hard things in his life to keep him humble and trusting. Lot looked for the easy way and made a comfortable life for himself in a fertile valley. His choice took him to the wicked city of Sodom. He became friendly with the city leaders. Before long, he accepted a seat on the city council. Lot believed in God and wanted to do what was right. But he also wanted an easy life and become popular and successful. He did not put God first in his life. He lived with evil men. This weakened his faith in God and his witness to all people he met. The

choice that Lot made nearly cost him his life. The choice that the men of Sodom made DID cost them their lives.

God is not pleased when men choose wrong ways of making love outside of marriage. God did not create men for this purpose. He did not create the sexual desire for this purpose. He created the desire for making love in order to produce children. When a man makes love with his wife, it is a wonderful thing. God made it wonderful for this purpose. Men should choose God's way.

Jesus warned that when He returns to earth it will be like "the days of Lot" (Luke 17:28–30). We are now living in those days (the "end times"). We must watch and pray and choose to live holy lives as we await the return of Christ.

Extracted from "ABRAHAM" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris
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Genesis 33: *Jacob meets his brother Esau*

'Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men.' As Jacob came near to his brother, he bowed to the ground seven times (33:3).

Esau was not expecting this! He ran to meet Jacob, threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they cried together (33:4).

"Who are these people with you?" Esau asked Jacob when he saw all the women, children and servants. Jacob answered, "They are the children God has kindly given to me" (33:5).

Then all the families came forward in order and bowed before Esau: the maidservants and their children came first, Leah and her children next and Rachel and Joseph last.

Jacob admitted that he was afraid and he had prepared gifts to please Esau. Esau told Jacob, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself!" (33:9).

God was working in Jacob's heart, changing him into a new man. God was building character into Jacob's life. God was showing him how to walk and talk His way, without deceit or fear.

It is easy for us to choose God's way now and then choose Jacob's old ways the next time that a test comes! This will not make you happy. If you choose God's way in every test and not your own way, you will grow in your faith.

Jacob would succeed, not in his own strength but in the strength and peace that God gave him.

Extracted from "ISAAC AND JACOB" Bible teaching commentary by Fred

Morris © 2002, 2018.

GENESIS 43: The second journey to Egypt

When Jacob's sons and their families had no food left, Jacob said to his sons, "Go back [to Egypt]. Buy us a little more food" (43:2).

Judah reminded his father that if they did not take Benjamin with them they could not buy food (43:3-4).

He blamed his sons for bringing trouble on him (43:6). They said they had to answer all the Egyptian man's questions (43:7).

Judah said to Jacob, "Send the boy along with me. We will go at once. Then you and your children will live and not die. I myself promise to keep him safe. If not, you can blame me" (43:8-9).

What a change! It was Judah who sent his brother Joseph into Egypt as a slave without telling his father. Now he tells his father that he will take his brother Benjamin into Egypt and take care of him.

Jacob said, "Put some of the best goods of the land in your bags and take them down to the man as a gift ... Take twice the amount of money with you. You must give back the money that was put back into your sacks. Maybe it was a mistake" (43:11-12).

Then Jacob gave them his most precious gift: his son Benjamin (43:13). And he used one of the special names of God, *El Shaddai*, God Almighty, in his prayer for mercy and safety (43:14). He prayed that God Almighty would show mercy when Judah and Benjamin met 'the man' (Joseph). We see clearly that this was a prayer that was very much God's will. Jacob was sad and afraid but he also trusted in God.

The brothers took Benjamin with some gifts, and their two lots of money to buy food, and went back to Egypt.

Extracted from "JOSEPH" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2002, 2018.

Joshua 3: *God's plan for the people to cross over*

Joshua told the people God's plan. First he told the priests what to do: "When you reach the edge of the Jordan River, go into the water and stand there" (3:8).

Then he spoke to the people: "Come here. Listen to what Almighty God is saying. You will soon know that the living God is among you. You can be sure that He will drive out the people who are now living in the land. He will do it to make room for you" (3:9-10). That was an amazing promise!

The priests, who carried the Ark of the Lord, must step into the river. "Its waters will pile up in one place. That's how you will know that the

living God is among you" (3:13).

The people believed what God told Joshua. They obeyed and they got ready to go across the Jordan River. The priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant went ahead of them (3:14).

The priests stepped into the water. Then the water they were standing in moved away and no more water came down the river. The waters were held back 20km away at a town called Adam near Zarethan (3:16).

All the people obeyed God and walked across the riverbed. The priests with the Ark stood in the riverbed until the whole nation of Israel had finished crossing the Jordan River (3:17).

God wants us to go forward into our 'promised land' and possess what God has provided for us. Joshua told the people, "You must move out... and follow..." (3:3). "Then you will know which way to go. You have not been this way before..." (3:4).

We must be ready to obey God. He wants the very best for us. He wants victory over all evil forces. He wants victory over sin within our own lives and over the sin around us. The people of Israel chose to obey God and follow Joshua. When we choose to follow Christ, we should go the way God is leading and not where we want to go.

Extracted from "JOSHUA" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2014.

1 Samuel 2: *Hannah's song of praise*

Hannah sang these words of thanks and divine understanding, including words of prophecy:

- Hannah praised and thanked God for His power over her enemies. She rejoiced in her salvation (2:1).
- She worshipped God for His great holiness. He was the rock in her life. There is no-one else like Him (2:2).
- She claimed there was no place for pride. God knows all things and is judge of all we say and do (2:3).
- She believed that mighty people are brought down by God. Those who stumble are lifted up by God with renewed strength (2:4).
- She rejoiced that those who are hungry are fed and those who are childless are finally blessed. She saw how ungrateful people who have plenty of food and children end up unhappy (2:5).
- She knew that God gives life and He takes it away. He sends the wicked to Hell and believers to Heaven. He makes some poor and others rich. He humbles people and He lifts up whoever He chooses (2:6-8).
- She believed that God created the world. She trusted in the Creator, the Lord God Almighty (2:8).

- She declared that strong and wicked people will not finally win. God guards those who are godly (2:9).
- She declared that the enemies of God would be destroyed since He is the great judge of all nations (2:10).
- She then prophesied about a coming king at a time when there were no kings in Israel. He would be the 'anointed one' of God (2:10).

When Samuel became Israel's priest and prophet, he anointed Saul as the first king of Israel (10:1). He also anointed King David to replace Saul (16:13).

Extracted from "RUTH AND HANNAH" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2016.

Mark part 1: *Spreading the Good News*

The book of Mark tells us the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus chose and taught His disciples to have faith in Him. He prepared them to do His good works of compassion in ministry of teaching, with miracles of healing and freedom from evil spirits. He taught them the truth about His heavenly Father, our Lord God Almighty. Faith in Jesus is the most precious gift from God.

Jesus told His disciples to teach everyone all that He taught them. Some preachers teach the Good News of Jesus by only telling people that God loves everyone and will bless them and give them good things if they follow Jesus. Jesus came to tell the whole truth from God. God knows that we deserve to be punished for our sins and need to be set free from our sins. Jesus came to take the punishment for us by dying on the cross. If we repent and believe this, then we can be forgiven and accepted by God. Then He can give us a new purpose in this life with faith and hope for the future. But there will be troubles at times. We must be ready to pick up our own cross to follow Jesus (Mark 8:34). It is the whole Gospel that we must teach and preach. This is called 'spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ'. This is why He promised to send the power of the Holy Spirit to help us to do this after His return to Heaven.

Extracted from "THE EARLY TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2000, 2008, 2016.

Mark Chapter 15: *How the death of Jesus on the cross changed world history*

The Old Testament tells how God would send His Messiah to save His people Israel from their sins. The New Testament confirms how God

sent His own Son to suffer and to die as their Messiah, then to rise again from death so that people who believe He is the Son of God can be forgiven (Ephesians 4:32) and have everlasting life with Him.

To some, the cross is nothing more than a strange story. To those who know the love and mercy of God, it is the greatest thing that ever happened. The cross and death and resurrection of Jesus have become the most important events in history!

To people everywhere, this 'mystery of Christ' means, "I love you. I died for you. There is no other way for you to be saved from God's hatred of sin." We all deserve God's punishment, for all have sinned (Romans 3:9,10). God, in His love, saves us from the punishment we deserve (Psalm 103:10-12). Jesus took the punishment in our place (Romans 5:8). For those who turn to Jesus and repent and believe that He died for them, their lives are changed. Their sins are forgiven. They come closer to God when He fills them with His Holy Spirit. They also become more like Jesus. They have hope of eternal life with Him in Heaven, or meeting Him on Earth when He returns.

Extracted from "THE DEATH, RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2002, 2020.

John Chapter 6: *The religious leaders argue with Jesus*

The Jewish leaders began to complain about Jesus. This was because He said, "I am the bread that came down from Heaven" (6:41). They knew His father and mother so they refused to believe that He was from Heaven.

Jesus told them to stop arguing (6:43). He told them these things about Himself:

- "No-one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me brings him" (6:44).
- "Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him comes to Me" (6:45).
- "No-one has seen the Father except the One who has come from God" (6:46).
- "Everyone who believes [Me] has life for ever" (6:47).
- "I am the bread of life" (6:48).

"Long ago your people ate the manna in the desert and yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from Heaven. I am the living bread that came down from Heaven... Everyone who eats this bread will live forever. The bread is My body. I will give it for the life of the world" (6:49-51).

Jesus said further things to shock them. "What I am about to tell you is true... Anyone who eats My body and drinks My blood has eternal life. I will raise them up on the last day" (6:53-54). Jesus meant that if they believed and fed on Him they would receive eternal life.

Jesus also said, "The living Father sent me, and I live because of Him. In the same way, those who feed on Me will live because of Me" (6:57).

He said again that long ago the Jewish people ate manna from Heaven and died in the desert. "But those who feed on this bread will live forever" (6:58).

Extracted from "THE PERSONAL TEACHINGS OF JESUS" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2008, 2015.

John Chapter 19: *The religious leaders shout "Crucify Him!"*

'The soldiers twisted thorns together to make a crown. They put it on the head of Jesus. Then they put a purple robe on Him' (19:1-3).

Pilate went outside and said to the people, "I find no reason for a charge against Him" (19:4). Jesus followed him outside. He stood before them wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe (19:5).

As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw Him, they shouted, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

But Pilate answered, "You take Him and crucify Him." He said a third time, "I find no reason for a charge against Him" (19:6).

The religious leaders answered Pilate, "We have a law. That law says He must die. He claimed to be the Son of God" (19:7).

'When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid' (19:8). He wanted to know more, but Jesus did not answer. He said to Jesus, "Do you not understand? I have the power to set You free or to nail You to a cross" (19:10).

Jesus said that only God gave Pilate the power. Jesus knew His Father was in control.

'From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are not a friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king is against Caesar" ' (19:12). Caesar was the Roman Emperor at that time.

Pilate sat down on the judge's seat. It was now about noon on the day of preparation for the Passover Feast. Pilate said to the Jews, "Here is your king!" (19:13-14).

Extracted from "THE FINAL DAYS OF JESUS ON EARTH" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2002, 2017.

Acts Chapter 6: *Preparing the Church to grow*

More and more Jews were joining the groups of believers in Jerusalem (6:1). Soon they needed more people to help share food for the poor and the widows. This needed to be shared fairly to avoid complaints. They also needed extra helpers and teachers to enable the church to keep growing.

The apostles asked the believers to choose seven men. Notice how they chose them:

- They understood that this work of serving others was important.
- They called a meeting of believers.
- They chose the men to do this work so that the apostles could be free to teach (6:2).
- They chose men who were wise and full of the Holy Spirit (6:3).
- The apostles laid their hands on the seven men they chose and prayed with them and for them (6:6).

The result of choosing helpers who were filled by the Holy Spirit was:

- Everyone was pleased (6:5).
- God's message, the Good News of Jesus, continued to spread (6:7).
- The numbers of believers in Jerusalem continued to grow 'and a large number of priests began to obey the teachings of Jesus' (6:7).
- One of the chosen workers performed miracles among the people (6:8).

God uses ordinary people to do wonderful things. When we preach the Good News, through the Holy Spirit, God calls and saves sinners. He delivers them from the grip of sins that hold them fast. God does miracles, and He does them through anyone He chooses.

Extracted from "THE EARLY CHURCH" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2004, 2012, 2019.

Acts Chapter 13: *Saul's first journey preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ*

The Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ were first called Christians in the church in Antioch (11:26). The church in Antioch grew strong. Some were teachers, some were preachers and some had the gift of prophecy.

One day, as they were worshipping, praying and fasting (13:2) the Holy Spirit spoke to the believers: "Set apart Saul and Barnabas for Me. I appoint them for the special work I want them to do."

The church leaders fasted again. They prayed and laid their hands on the heads of Barnabas and Saul. They sent them off to do special work for the Lord (13:3). The Holy Spirit was in charge. He called and led His servants. He went before them to make people's hearts ready to hear the Good News.

Notice these things about the calling of Saul and Barnabas:

- Saul and Barnabas were trusted leaders in the church (13:1).
- Time was given to allow the Holy Spirit to speak through the people (13:2).
- The church leaders fasted and prayed for guidance about Saul and Barnabas. They laid hands on them to dedicate them to God's work (13:3).
- Saul and Barnabas were sent out guided by the Holy Spirit (13:3,4).

Notice also that the Holy Spirit called Saul and Barnabas but it was the local church that sent them out. The church members showed their support for Saul and Barnabas and also for their church leaders. They were all in agreement. They all met together united, to witness the laying on of hands. In this way, Saul and Barnabas were sent out by God through the local church. Later, the church received them back and the members were blessed through listening to their report (14:27).

Extracted from "PAUL BRINGS GOOD NEWS TO THE WORLD" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2005, 2012.

Romans Chapter 6: *We are set free to be God's slaves!*

Paul says that without God, it is easy for men to sin. Soon after we are born we begin to sin. It is our nature because we are born in sin. We are created in the image of God but with the sin of Adam within us, which deserves eternal death (Genesis 2:17). But now that we are Christians Paul asks again, "Shall we sin because God's grace has set us free?" (Romans 6:15). Of course not! Paul says that we are free to choose. We are free to be His slaves because we love Him as His bond servants (6:16–18; Leviticus 25:39). A bond servant promises to be true to his master, because he loves him. We happily give ourselves to serve our Lord Jesus and by faith receive eternal life.

We can only say 'no' to sin if we have Christ to make us strong. We can only finish with our old life as slaves to sin if His Holy Spirit is living in us. Without the Holy Spirit we cannot live a holy life. His Spirit tells us how to live and we do what He tells us. The Spirit knows the truth and the truth sets us free (John 8:32).

God calls Christians to live for Him. They are called to be different (Titus 2:14). The good things that God gives you lead to holy living (Romans 6:22). God wants us to grow more and more like Jesus.

Extracted from "IN CHRIST ALONE" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2008, 2012.

Romans Chapter 12: *Avoid seeking revenge*

It is hard to believe, but some Christians try to repay what others do to them. They not only try to pay back good things with good things but also try to pay back bad things with bad things. These are thoughts that come from their old mind, from their former lives, before Christ saved them.

In every group of believers there are differences of opinion and also problems caused by different social, racial and national cultures. This is why Paul says, "Be careful to do what is right" (12:17). So do not make trouble in your church! "As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (12:18). Do not pay back evil with evil: do what is best for others and do not seek revenge. This is the message taught by Jesus. Leave the judgement of others to God. Instead, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. He will not be able to forget your love towards him (12:20).

Even when Christians are hurt by other believers, we must not repay them with evil or think unwise words or actions. A just and holy God knows all things. We are not called to try to make all wrong things right in our own strength, but to trust our heavenly Father to look after them. This is one of the purposes of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus promised to send to work in power among all believers (John 14:16-17). For all who truly love God, His Spirit is promised to work in them and through them and with them and around them.

Extracted from "LIVING IN CHRIST" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2012.

Hebrews Chapter 11: *The great men and women who lived by faith*

The writer of Hebrews tells us about some of the believers in God from the Old Testament. These men and women lived by faith and died in hope. By faith, these people believed the things God promised: **Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Joseph, Jochebed, Moses, Joshua, Rahab.**

The faith of these people of God still speaks to us today. They lived by faith until they died. Many did not receive the things that God had promised. Instead, they looked forward to a 'heavenly country' (11:16), and the future fulfilment of God's promises through their families and the families of other believers.

They did not understand the many parts of the plan of God. They trusted, however, that God would keep His promises. They lived and died in hope.

Many suffered but they refused to deny their faith. They chose instead to suffer and die and be raised up to a better life after death. Some were laughed at and some were beaten. Others were put in chains in prison. Some were stoned and some were sawn in two. They were poor. They were attacked. They were badly treated. Some lived in caves or holes in the ground.

The world did not deserve such great and faithful people of God. The world was not worthy of them. But to God, they were worthy people. 'All these people were praised because they had faith.' No-one was worthy if they did not have faith in God.

Extracted from "A LETTER TO THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2005, 2016.

James 1:4. *Growing in faith during times of trouble*

James said, "The strength to keep going must be allowed to finish its work. Then you will be all you should be. You will have every [strength] you need." (1:4). He wanted his readers to know that when our faith is tested our spiritual strength will grow.

When we accept Jesus to be our Saviour from sin, we are born again by God's Spirit (John 3:3-6). From that time, we may have more difficulties and more things may go wrong. To keep going forward is like the steps of a small child. Each believer must begin to learn to walk by faith. Jesus uses these things to strengthen our faith in Him.

It takes time to grow and become strong in our faith. We fail and fall down but get up again. We say sorry to God and admit that we have done wrong (1 John 1:9). As we go on, we learn to trust the Holy Spirit to show us the wrong thoughts and actions and the right ones.

When we obey the words of Jesus, we grow stronger in our faith. We continue to grow even more when we meet with other followers of Jesus and share our faith and encourage each other. God's plan for us is that we should grow to be mature believers in Christ.

Every believer stumbles and falls. Satan's aim is to take us down. But God is never far away. He watches over us, just as Jesus watched over His disciples rowing a boat in a storm (Matthew 14:23-25).

Extracted from "THE LETTER OF JAMES" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2000, 2020.

Revelation 3: *The faithful remnant*

In spite of all the problems in the church in Sardis, Jesus said that there were a faithful few believers "who have kept their clothes clean. They will walk with Me, dressed in white, because they are worthy" (3:4).

God's faithful people are often called a remnant. 'Remnant' means a small number. There will be a time when these faithful saints will put on their robes of pure white, and gather round the throne of God in their millions.

For those who overcome, Jesus said, "I will never remove their names from the Book of Life. I will speak of them by name to My Father and His angels" (3:5). However, there will be difficulties, persecutions, trials, troubles and temptations on the way. Their names might be cursed or scorned in this life but the names of those who overcome shall never be removed from the Lamb's Book of Life. This is God's promise because Jesus, the Lamb of God, will give their names to God His Father in Heaven. He will witness to Him of their faithfulness.

To those who are spiritually asleep, the call is to wake up and strengthen what you have before you lose it – before you are spiritually dead.

A faithful remnant in any congregation can strengthen the whole assembly. These faithful believers are the ones who can change a congregation. The Holy Spirit can breathe life into a dead church and make it a living force in the community. Pray for Almighty God to send His Holy Spirit in power!

Extracted from "MESSAGES TO SEVEN CHURCHES" Bible teaching commentary by Fred Morris © 2013.

Genesis chapter 3: *Adam and Eve try to hide their shame*

Adam and Eve found some big leaves and sewed them together to make aprons (skirts). They tried to hide their shame by covering their nakedness with aprons. They put on the aprons and crept away into the forest. They knew God would be coming to talk with them. He always came to the garden in the evening when it was cool (3:8).

Would He come? Would He stop loving them? No! He did not stop loving them, but He was very sad. When we disobey God's laws it hurts God, it hurts us and it hurts others.

In the evening, God came to the garden to talk with His children. Adam and Eve were hiding because they knew they had done wrong. How foolish for them to think they could hide from God! The Bible says 'No-one can hide from God. His eyes see everything we do. We must give an answer to God for what we have done' (Hebrews 4:13).

There is only one way for people who have lost their closeness with God to come back to Him. They must be sorry for their sin of wrong wrong. They must tell God they are sorry for the wrong things they have

done. They must repent. They must turn away from the wrong things they do and come back to their Heavenly Father.

God wanted Adam and Eve to admit their sin and to be sorry for disobeying His command. He wanted Adam to confess his sin, so God came calling to Adam, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9)

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