



1 & 2 Chronicles

Bible Commentaries

Pastor 'Tunde OLOYEDE

Except where otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations in this book are taken from King James Version (KJV) of the Bible.

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E-mail: oloyedetunde@yahoo.co.uk

Telephone: +234 803 470 9440, +234 803 365 9788

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'Tunde OLOYEDE

Heirs of God Christian Ministry, Ibadan

FOREWORD

The writer of the First and Second Books of Chronicles saw the need to establish the historical facts of God's dealings with His people, Israel. He probably wanted to prevent the spiritual damage which “a lost history” could cause the remnant of God's people in their captivity among the nations. The remnant, no doubt, had the hope of returning to their land afterwards. Therefore, the truth of their history must be reestablished. Their origin was traced to God, and their godly patriarchs who bore God's promises for the nation. Therefore, the remnant, who followed the LORD among all the tribes of Israel, and especially Judah, needed to know who they were. They were no ordinary people but God's elects, who had enjoyed with their fathers, God's dealings of faithfulness, mercy and justice. The piety and steadfastness of David, who was from the tribe of Judah, and the carrier of God's Kingdom promise for Israel were stated. He was God's benchmark for other kings of his dynasty. As a prophet, David received divine vision of a modified ecclesiastical order with the pattern for temple construction and services for Israel. These and others were the unique characteristics of the Books of Chronicles. The need for restating the truth of the word of God now cannot be underestimated. It must be well chronicled and rehearsed to the present and oncoming generations. This is with a view to knowing well, how truly to serve God. There is a great degree of “captivity syndrome” found with many people of God. A good number of God's people are “suffering under the captivity of the flesh, world and Satan”; they are enmeshed in the fleshly, worldly and devilish concept of life. They have lost the true scriptural concept of life in respect of regeneration, separation, holiness and purpose in life.

The lessons here could help revamp this as we trace our lineage to Christ, who lived for God on earth and established God's rule for us. God has translated us into the Kingdom of Jesus, His dear Son; we ought to live for God with the concept of being children of His Kingdom. We should know who we are and live in the realization of that to the glory of God. The worldly concepts and values already embraced by many saints should be discarded. This would stop the further incursion of their pervading and eroding tendencies into the saints. Our good sense of divine historical truth could help to achieve these feat. Shalom.

INTRODUCING THE TWO BOOKS OF CHRONICLES

The history of Judah and, especially, David and his descendants was the focus of these Books. The Books were probably compiled during Judah's captivity and written after the return from the captivity. The writer was unknown, but it had been conjectured that Ezra, "a ready scribe", probably wrote the Books (Ezra 7:6). The Books were written with a view to preserving the divine records of the David's family and dynasty in respect of the Kingdom. They also record the religious order as established in Jerusalem by the directives of the king; and attended to by the priests and Levites. The records of the Books attempted to "draw all lines of redemptive history to their focal point in David" (Scofield Reference Bible; Introduction to 1 Chronicles). David was the King, God enthroned to "pioneer the Kingdom" as God would want, and his Seed would later confirm and establish. David was also the King that had the honour of receiving the divine vision and guidelines for a modified ecclesiastical order, pattern for temple construction and services, for Israel (1 Chronicles 16:8-12; 22:5-13). The 1 Chronicles has (1) the genealogies from Adam to the twelve tribes of Israel (Chapters 1 to 9). (2) The last days of King Saul and his death (Chapter 10). (3) The reign of David, re-arrangement of the ecclesiastical order and temple construction preparations (Chapters 11 to 29). The 2 Chronicles contains (1) the reign of Solomon and account of the building and dedication of the temple (Chapters 1-9). (2) The division of the Kingdom and history of Judah from the time of Rehoboam to the destruction of Jerusalem, the captivity and return from it (Chapters 10 to 36). Wishing you good understanding in the study of the lessons, you are blessed in His name. Amen.

MEDITATIONS IN 1 CHRONICLES

1 Chronicles 1: The "Search the Scripture" lessons this year begin with 1 Chronicles 1:1-54. Therein we have a long list of people's names, which among others, identify them. We are able to see their personal, familial and historical links by their names. Some of the names have their personal deeds mentioned with them (verses 10, 43-54). A particular name has its familial descendants tagged to it (verse 12). And a historical event was attached to one (verse 19). There are corresponding Bible passages elsewhere showing more of the manner, acts and lifestyles of some of the people mentioned here (cf. Gen. 10 & 11).

But some important questions in respect of names that demand answers are: What do our names link us with physically, personally, socially, spiritually, morally, potentially, etc.? What are we making of our names as touching their links? Where our names would be placed when they are being written (cf. Ps. 87:6)? It has to be realized that disciples of Christ, who are also called Christians, are named after Christ (Acts 11:26). This has linked them with a name that is above all other names (Phil. 2:9-11). Therefore, we, as Christians, are obligated to live Christ life.

Many of us also have our good names given us by our parents at birth. Those names that show the parental faith, hope and expectations concerning us. Some of the names even express the experiences of those parents. We owe them the life that fulfills such desires and expectations. Really, a good name as a legacy, is greater to be desired than riches of any sort (cf. Pro. 22:1).

We should equally observe that a link to good name and source does not guarantee good life. Truly, God has "made man upright; but people have sought out many inventions (devices)" which have been the reasons for their varied forms and dispositions in life (Eccl. 7:29). Some men take to bad inventions, after the corrupt nature, inherited from Adam. Some others take to good inventions, receiving "inspirations" from God, the original source of life!

Of note are the records of Adam being the father of Cain, who was of the devil; but he was also the father of Abel and Seth who were of God (1 Jn. 3:12, Gen. 4:25-26). Noah was the forefather of the wicked Canaanites, Jebusites, Girgarites, Amorites and Hivites through Ham. He was as well the father of the Hebrews through Shem (1 Chro. 1:13-27: Gen. 14:13)! Abraham fathered Ishmael, Isaac and others (1 Chro. 1:28 -34) Isaac also was the father of Jacob and Esau (1 Chro. 1:35-54).

The truth is, coming from a good source does not amount to having a good stuff. There are people of God, who are born of God and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but they walk after the flesh (Adamic nature). They have turned themselves to developing bad stuff, though they have a good source. It's a calamitous life lived, this side of eternity!

Christians are traced to Abraham, the father of all them that believe, and by whom all the families of the earth are blessed through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:25-26; Rom. 4:11; Gal. 3:14). Let us draw from our good source of life by the Holy Spirit that is in us, and have noble records of a life well spent to glorify God. We should reject fleshly insinuations from the Adamic nature, which also is in us. It has its source in sin and Satan. Dispositions drawn from it cannot please God; they amount to life of bad records and regrets. Shalom.

1 Chronicles 2: The Books of Chronicles are about historical events with names of men mentioned as role players of those events. We continue to read about names of people, who they were and what they did. Many descendants of Israel and especially Judah are contained in the list in 1 Chronicles 2:1-55.

Judah was given the promise of the throne, which was a great privilege to his person, ascribing to him a preferred status. This status ought to influence his thoughts and actions as well as those of his descendants. But it did not so much do that in all instances here. Judah, here, was said to have married a Canaanite woman. It is surprising he did so! Abraham, Judah's great grandfather did not allow such for his son, Isaac. And Isaac was displeased when Esau did so (Gen. 24:1-4; 26:34-35). Judah also had children through his daughter-in-law due to his unethical conducts (cf. Gen. 38:1- ff)!

Er, the firstborn of Judah was "evil in the sight of the LORD, and he (the LORD) slew him"! Onan, his brother, was not better, he also displeased the LORD and God slew him (Gen. 38:8-10). Can their evil behaviours be linked to their maternal root? Achar (Achan) was also a descendant of Judah, but he was as well "the troubler of Israel" because of his covetousness (verses 3, 7; cf. Josh. 7). These are sad memories concerning Judah and some of his descendants, who did contrary to their noble status.

But Judah also had his descendants that took to godly dispositions. He had Boaz, Obed, Jesse and David who had good records of life as followers of God. Caleb was also a godly descendant of Judah; he with others walked his status, as one who had his root traced to the Judah of God. He followed God fully (Num. 13:6; 14:24). There were as well those related to Judah who chose to be scribes in the law of the LORD, teaching and admonishing people in the things of God. The Kenites, though not direct descendants of Judah, were godly neighbours of his descendants. They feared the God of Judah and embraced His rules. They lived exemplary life.

However, there are children of God who are not walking as God's dear children (Eph. 5:1). They have bad historical records trailing their lives. This is unfortunate. But we are bound to give glory to God that there are the remnant who have chosen to walk "worthy of the vocation wherewith [they are] called" (Eph. 4:1). They do as they are called; they allow their godly status to positively influence their conducts. What are our conducts attracting to our godly status? What are our names synonymous with in the household of God? Surely, our names shall be called and mentioned now, and later. But with what? May we always be conscious of our godly status and behave accordingly. Amen.

1 Chronicles 3 & 4: Godly Awakening to Life Challenges:

The family of David was the focus of the entire chapter 3. David was the illustrious son of Judah, who started the holding of the scepter promised to Judah, until "Shiloh" came (Gen. 49:10). The list of names of his family members stretched to the time of the captivity and beyond, even to the ancestors of Christ, by whom He came, "as concerning the flesh" (1 Chro.3:19-24; cf. Matt. 1:13-17; Rom. 9:5). The differences in names might be the result of a person bearing more than one name.

Life is full of challenges, some of which are relational, familial, or parental as in the case of Jabez. His mother was in a situation that caused her sorrow; we don't know what the situation was. The mother overreacted to the situation and called the child she birthed under such circumstance, Jabez (sorrow, or grief), thus compounding the case. This had mental, emotional, psychological, social and spiritual consequences on Jabez for sometimes.

However, at a point in his life, Jabez had the spiritual awakening about his unfortunate situation, which was brought on him by the circumstance of his birth. He sought the LORD and His strength; he sought His face continually (consistently), and secured divine intervention for a positive change of his condition. May be his other brethren suffered the same situation but did not have the needed awakening for a change. Therefore, Jabez had an edge above them - he was "more honourable than his brethren". Godly awakening facilitates good and godly change.

The descendants of Simeon also had the needed godly awakening in respect of their possessions. There was the unauthorized occupation of their inheritance by strangers for many years. The cause of this might be ignorance or inaction. They however came to the realization of the undue deprivation and acted accordingly, and possessed their land. Any deprivation could be reversed if godly awakening and actions come to play.

1 Chronicles 5 & 6: It is disheartening to read how Reuben was dispossessed of his birthright through his sexual immorality: The Bible says, "... forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph ..." (1 Chro. 5:1). The law of forfeiture came into play because of this crime of his. Truly, sin dispossesses; therefore, people of God should desist from it. It causes greater losses than the supposed gain(s) therein.

The two and a half tribes had valiant and skillful men of war that went to their battles. They had great successes, overcame their enemies and secured their possessions. These feats were attained by trusting God and calling upon Him for help. When they were with God, He was also with them and fought their war as His. Unfortunately, they later forgot the true God and went after the gods of the nations. They suffered the dispossession of their inheritance and went into bondage under their enemies. God Himself stirred up their captors against them (vs. 20-26)!

David's godly innovation shows us how endearing a man after God's heart, who walks accordingly, could be to Him. David initiated setting the sons of Levi, who initially bore the tabernacle materials and vessels, unto other duties. They were to be singing praises to God according to their gifts and abilities before the ark of God. Others among them were also made to be porters in the tabernacle. God was okay with David's innovations because the motive was to glorify God, not self. (vs. 31-32, 48; cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-13). God will not disapprove of anything that is meant to glorify Him. He only frowns at self-seeking glory of man, hiding under the cloak of religiosity.

Therefore, let us learn to take godly initiatives to glorify God in all we do.

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Peace.

1 Chronicles 7 & 8: Thank God for the "valiant men of might", "bands of soldiers for war", "mighty men of valour" mentioned in our lesson. They were people "fit to go out for war and battle" on behalf of their tribes (1 Chronicles 7:2-9). The Church also needs "men of the Spirit, and men of will" who are fit to fight her "battle and war". Men that will adequately resist the devil, flesh and the world. May we have more men that are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" who are able to "withstand the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:10-11), in this age of complacent, indulgent, indifferent and compromised Christianity. Amen.

The "vulnerable" household of Ephraim suffered the wickedness of the marauders, who invaded it, slew some of its members and took away their cattle (1 Chro. 7:20-23). Vulnerability, which could be physical, social, economic, religious, or environmental, is a serious issue of mankind. People of God have always faced dangers of injurious fellows and persecutors of the saints (cf. 1 Tim. 1:13). Really, the saints live in the danger of many things (cf. 2 Cor. 11:22-25). May the Lord continue to save us from "unreasonable and wicked men" (2 Thess. 3:2), who may want to spy out our possible vulnerabilities with the intent to attack us in any way. Amen.

Ephraim had his brethren come to mourn with and comfort him. There are saints waiting for us to so do with them. Even, those that are suffering one attack or the other (Rom. 12: 15-16). God also comforted Ephraim by giving him another son whom he named Beriah (in trouble, or gift in trouble). This was due to his sad experiences. Surprisingly, this son did not bother to change his name. However, in the future, a female descendant of Beriah, was born, even, Sherah, possibly same as Shaarah - Lev. 18:17 (near kinswoman). She was truly a kinswoman; she built cities, redeeming back the fame of the family, one may suggest (1 Chro. 7:24). God is wonderful in His doings!

The tribe of Benjamin had the opportunity of being neighbours to Judah. The tribe eventually shared the benefits of Judah's preference and royalty; aligning with Judah at the division of the Kingdom. This tribe also had one Beriah who was not undeterred by "the meaning of his name". However, he went on to do exploits. He was one of those who led in driving away the inhabitants of Gath, probably in revenge of their earlier wickedness to Ephraim (7:21; 8:13)! The saints can learn to rise above their seeming obstacles and live fruitful and meaningful life for God, the Church and mankind. It's well in His name.

1 Chronicles 9 & 10: Insightful Scriptural Extracts Are The Focus Here.

1 Chronicles. 9:2 - "Now the first inhabitants that dwelt in their possessions in their cities were, the Israelites, the priests, Levites, and the Nethinims."

(The frontliners' daring step of faith that is worthy of emulation, was captured here.)

1 Chronicles 9:13 - "... very able men for the work of the service of the house of God."

(Ability, and not just mere wish, is a requirement to do God's work.)

1 Chronicles 10:4 - "Then said Saul to his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me ..."

(Saul abused the grace of God without repenting from it. He was here trying to avoid any abuse from the Philistines. He sought self-glory rather than God's glory.)

1 Chronicles 10:6 - "So Saul died, and his three sons, and all his house died together."

(Truly, "One sinner destroys much good" - Eccl. 9:18.)

1 Chronicles 10:13 - "So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it."

(Saul did not repent from his sin but died because of it, and in it.)

1 Chronicles 10:14 - "... therefore he (God) slew him (Saul), and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse."

(God removes and installs kings - Dan. 2:21!)

1 Chronicles 11: The Mighty Men of David are Captured Here

David was anointed king over Israel, "according to the word of the LORD by Samuel" (1 Chro. 11:3). But the Jebusites posed themselves as an obstacle to David's reign, and resisted his occupation of Jerusalem. Having done valiantly and taken part of the city, David requested for daring step among his mighty men. He said, "Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain." Joab would not allow such opportunity to pass by; therefore, he "went first up, and was chief"! Jesus is looking for men today who will "bell the cat" and be the first to confront the resistant forces hindering the growth and development of the Kingdom of God. Such are the qualified "chiefs and captains" that will lead the many "soldiers of Christ" unto victory, in His name.

There were other mighty men whom David had that "strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom ... according to the word of the LORD concerning Israel" (1 Chro. 11:10). They understood the will of God with David and worked with him for the accomplishment of the same. Some of them, in "the jeopardy of their lives", broke through the host of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem and brought it to David. Jesus Christ also looks for undaunted saints today who will strengthen "themselves with Him in His Kingdom ... according to the word of the LORD concerning the Church". The saints that will do like Paul and Barnabas, who "hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 15:26).

David, a valiant man himself, said in one of his songs, "Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies" (Ps. 60:12). He and his men were cognizant of God's support and boldly made themselves available for His use. We should as well make bold in the Lord, strengthen ourselves in Him, and rise up to the task of doing valiantly through our God. Let us take the battle to the gates of hell; we have the promise that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against" the Church (Matt. 16:18). Victory is ours. Hallelujah!

A popular hymn of the Church for "Warfare and Consolation" is relevant in this discourse:

1. Stand up, stand up for Jesus,

Ye soldiers of the cross!

Lift high His royal banner,

It must not suffer loss

From victory unto victory

His army shall He lead,

Till every foe is vanquished,

And Christ is Lord indeed.

2. Stand up, stand up for Jesus!

The trumpet call obey;

Forth to the mighty conflict,

In this His glorious day.

Ye that are men now serve Him

Against unnumbered foes;

Let courage rise with danger,

And strength to strength oppose.

3. Stand up, stand up for Jesus!

Stand in His strength alone;

The arm of flesh will fail you,

Ye dare not trust your own,

Put on the gospel armour,

And watching unto prayer,

When duty calls, or danger,

Be never wanting there!

4. Stand up, stand up for Jesus!

The strife will not be long;

This day the noise of battle,

The next the victor's song

To him that overcometh

A crown of life shall be;

He with the King of glory,

Shall reign eternally.

Shalom.

1 Chronicles 13: Religious Mix-ups is a Good Caption for this Chapter!

David and all Israel were on course when they desired to bring the ark to Jerusalem, the seat of government. The ark was a symbol of the divine presence, which they did not desire in the days of Saul. They executed the project with joy and gladness, playing "before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets". But they were in error because of a mix-up! They had carried the ark using a wrong method. The method in use was of the Philistines. Therefore, "when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God".

Another mix-up was Uzza's presumption and uninformed zeal, or concern. It was a pity that their attempt to correct an earlier error led to other errors: It was an error for Israel to have "enquired not at it (the ark) all the days of Saul". It was an error to have caused the ark to be carried of a new cart. It was an error for Uzza to presume the fall of the ark, and wrongly touch it. May the Lord deliver us from our religious, social, economic, political, spiritual, moral, marital, etc., errors, before they escalate to a grievous dimension. Amen.

It is important to consider the Psalmist's insights in his submissions: He queried, "Who can understand his errors?" He then prayed to God for cleansing from likely errors, and said, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression" (Ps. 19:12-13). May we be so led into such realization and do the needful. Amen.

David was highly displeased because of what happened and was also afraid of God. Many times, our blunders that attract God's anger on us, tend to beat us back from further attempts to come out for God (cf. Exo. 2:11-15; 4: 22-13). This played out for David here, and he queried, "How shall I bring the ark of God home to me"? Therefore, he did not bring it to where he built for it, but was taken to the house of Obededom. Thank God for the godly courage of this man. Being a Levite (cf. 15:18), he had no choice but to take up the responsibility of hosting the ark. He was well blessed of God for acting so responsibly, and in faith. We also stand the chance to be so blessed, if we would learn to perform our obligations and duties, in spite of the odds (vs.11-14). Peace.

1 Chronicles 14: Truly, "man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward". Also, "man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble" (Job 5:7; 14:1). These are the statements made as a result of experiences and realities of life. "Trouble", "war" came the way of David, when the Philistines heard that he was anointed king over all Israel. They came en masse and laid siege on him, to overrun him. But David sought the Lord and became victorious over them. This happened on two occasions as recorded in 1 Chronicles 14:8-17.

David's victory as recorded here was as a result of certain factors: (1) awareness and acknowledgement of the war; (2) seeking God and His strength; and (3) taking steps of engagement. David was well informed of the war that rose against him. He did not ignore it, as some would tend to do, but acknowledged and identified it. He also sought God on how to go about fighting the war, and was duly instructed. He stepped out in faith and obedience for actual engagement in the battle, and he won. David also discovered the dynamics of divine direction on emerging battles of life. He didn't presume on how God would direct him, but waited to hear Him on each stage of the war. We should take a cue from him.

Unfortunately, David did not follow the same procedures when the war of lust rose against him. He caved in for it and was overcome; "he took more wives" (1 Chro. 14:3), a thing he shouldn't have done (cf. Deut. 17:17)! David was probably least aware of the war of lust waging in his heart by which he desired to take more wives. It was the same that overwhelmed him when he took in Bathsheba, first, in adultery and later in marriage (2 Sam. 11)! Marrying more wives was unhealthy for him, and a flagrant violation of divine rule. But he took little cognizance of it, hence his inability to properly identify it. It was the reason he couldn't seek God to fight and overcome it.

What is the level of our awareness in respect of the "lusts that war in [our] members" (James 4:1)? Are we adequately aware of the likely presence of "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" in what we do (1 Jn. 2:16)? Also, those things that proceed from our heart: "evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders" (Mark 7:21), are the enemies that defile and "destroy" us, but we seem to be unconcerned about them!

Any denial of the war ongoing within us, is sheer self-deception and will rob us of our needed victory in life. Many Christians have become casualties in this kind of war. But they pretend to be okay; they're not; they're deceiving themselves! Let's live in the right awareness of our various wars, especially "the lusts that war in [our] members". Do the Identification of where the siege is laid against us. And seek God and His strength for victorious engagement in the battle. "Victoria ascerta", in His name. Amen.

1 Chronicles 15: "Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:10).

It was a thought like this that made David not to stop at only building houses for himself in Jerusalem, but also preparing a place for the ark of God there (1 Chro. 15:1).

It was the reason David was determined to still bring the ark of God to Jerusalem for the blessing of all and sundry; and not just for the household of Obbedom, as was the case (cf. 1 Chro. 13:13-14). He wouldn't allow their "error" to put them in a situation where they would continue to avoid the ark.

It was why David was able to humble himself and come to divine terms of "[n]one ought to carry the ark of God, but the Levites" (1 Chro. 15:2). That is; right people for the right job.

It was the reason David saw their error in not following "after the due order" at their first attempt to carry the ark, and which brought the breach God made upon them (1 Chro. 15:13).

It is important that we develop the attitude of "[p]roving what is acceptable unto the Lord". We should not stop at only what we see people do; we should go further to prove it by the Scripture, whether or not, such is acceptable unto God. This concerns all aspects of our interactions and relationships.

Do we do things "after the due order" as we engage in our religious duties? How do we fare in our economic activities? What about the home front? Our refusal to follow "after the due order" is a scriptural violation, and may bring "a breach upon us" from the Lord, sooner or later!

Michal suffered "a breach" upon herself because she refused to prove what was acceptable unto the Lord, by not ordering her manner of life aright (cf. Ps. 50:23). She despised David in her heart (1Chro. 15:29), because of the way he was praising God, making himself equal with the people (cf. 2 Sam. 6:20-23).

She was unhappy with David, mingling with people the way he did. She didn't realize that "[e]very one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished" (Pro. 16:5). "Therefore, Michal ... had no child unto the day of her death" (2 Sam. 6:23). What a disaster!

It pays to do it "after the due order" so as to be blessed, and, also, prevent "a breach upon us", even, from the Lord! Peace.

1 Chronicles 16: God testified of David that he was a man after His own heart, who would fulfil all His will. (Acts 13:22). He was chosen and ordained for this purpose. Therefore, it is not surprising that he was an instrument of great reforms in the religious system of Israel: It was by what he did, through the Spirit's impulses, we are taught that needful act of mercy overrules mere religious rituals. This was when he asked for, and was given the shewbread to eat, meant only for the priests (Matt. 12:3-4). He prophesied by the Spirit, the change in priesthood from the family of Levi to the house of Judah, by Jesus Christ (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 6:20; 7:11). And in practical terms, David put on the linen and ephod of the priests to signify the future change of the priesthood to Judah's household (1 Chro. 15:27).

Furthermore, David introduced the dimension of songs and music into worship, in the assembly of the saints (1 Chro. 16:4-7). He knew how this could stimulate good knowledge and appreciation of God, using man's exciting moods. David also initiated the upgrading of Israel's house of worship, from tabernacle to the temple, in a permanent place (1 Chro. 22:14-19; 1 Kings 9:2-3). Truly, God called His people into worship and service of Him. This was meant to be in faith, love and truth (sincerity) - cf. Matt. 4:10; 22:37-39, though not without its ritual performances. But as time went on, the Israelites only concentrated on mere ritual observations, in their worship to God. They ignored the spiritual and moral aspects of it (cf. Isa. 29:13; 66:1-4; Lk. 18:9-14; Matt. 15:7-9). God was unhappy about this.

When David came on board, his focus was to bring Israel back to God, in their faith, love and sincere service of Him. Of course, not without the stipulated religious rituals as needed, from time to time. The ark was in a tent at Jerusalem, while other vessels of service with the tabernacle remained in Gibeon, (1 Chro. 16:37-39). However, the priests attended to the service of God in the two tents. But, David's priority was to set the hearts of his people towards God alone, unclogged with mere ritualism. It was what could give true meaning to their religious services.

The priests did not cease to offer sacrifices to God and teach the law of the LORD to people, in those tents. But added to their work was the continual praise and thanksgiving to God with songs and instruments, before the ark. This was a good development that didn't violate any divine principles for God's service. Rather, it was to stimulate joy and gladness in the worshippers, as they approached God "with a true heart, in full assurance of faith" glorifying Him (cf. Ps. 100:1-5; Heb. 10:22).

The Psalms as delivered by David, are words of exhortations to the saints. The saints are here exhorted unto the appreciation of God, comfort of the Spirit, faith in God and the witness of His wondrous doings to others (1 Chro. 16:7-36). Although, it was not in the initial rules of service in the tabernacle, it did not violate any known divine rules. God never said to His people, "Thou shall neither sing songs, nor use instruments of songs in your worship unto me". Therefore, as led of the Spirit, David saw it as expedient, and introduced it. The saints could also sing and use instruments in their services unto God.

This dimension was introduced by David because "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night, Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound" (Ps. 92:1-3). The saints in their service unto God, either in private, or public worship, should learn to thank and worship Him: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Peace, in His name. Amen.

1 Chronicles 17: David had good thought and passion to have desired to build a befitting house for the Ark of the Covenant. He also took a good step to inform Nathan, the prophet, about what he had in mind. Nathan as well had a good thought in asking David to do as he wished. He even reminded and assured David of God's presence in all that he did. But, Nathan failed to know it from God, whether or not, David was eligible to do what he desired to do. Our lesson in 1 Chronicles 13:1-14 was about doing the right thing in a wrong way. However, in 1 Chronicles 17:1-27, it was someone desiring to do a good work, but unqualified to do it! Alas, we need to examine ourselves, whether or not, we are qualified, to do what we are doing, or desiring to do, for God.

We have the exhortation of the Holy Spirit that says, "But let a man examine himself ..." (1 Cor. 11:28). Although this passage is talking about self-examination before we eat the Lord's Super, it is also applicable to other things we do in the name of the Lord. We need to know, by self-examination, whether or not, we are qualified to do what we are doing. This shall be properly done through the use of the Scripture. We are also enjoined to prove "what is acceptable unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:10). That is, asking ourselves about what we are doing, and how we are doing it, whether or not, it is acceptable unto God. But, unfortunately, many saints engage in doing work for God without considering their eligibility or otherwise. They also don't worry about the acceptance, or otherwise, of what they do.

In Paul's letter to Timothy, he talked about being qualified for a work in the church: "If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work." But more than that, he went ahead to list the qualifications of a bishop: "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach, etc. (1 Tim 3:2-7. Surely, there are requirements for whatever work we want to do for God. Therefore, not everyone is qualified to do every work in God's vineyard. There are specific qualifications for specific jobs. Divine engagement requires divine eligibility. May our prayer be "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (Psalms 143:10).

One of the reasons God said, no, to David was that it was not yet time to build the house. God had been content with living in tent and tabernacle over the years, when Israel moved with the ark from place to place. Later, in the future, David said it himself, what was the other reason, why God did not allow him to build a house for Him. He remarked, "But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight" (1 Chro. 22:8).

Thank God for Nathan and David, they were content with God's judgment on the matter: Nathan was not embarrassed, when he was asked to go back and overrule himself on what he earlier told David. He did as God told him, not minding the ridicule it meant to him, for earlier giving David the nod, contrary to God's mind. Not many men of God could be this humble. They would rather go around it for their self-aggrandizement. Or, they would shift the blame wholly on their client for being economical with the truth. They would blame him for hiding sin in his toga and at the same time desiring to work for God. They would not see their own error and miscalculation.

David also took it as God said it. He was not unhappy about God's choice concerning when and who would build a house for Him. Instead, he gave God the glory for His mercy and loving kindness towards his house and Israel, His people. David was content with God's covenant of mercy with his house, though he was disqualified from building house for God. But his house and kingdom shall be established for ever. God's mercy shall not be removed from him: These are what is called in the Bible, "the sure mercies of David", fulfilled through Jesus Christ, the greater son of David, by whom we enjoy the like privilege (Isa. 55:3; Acts 13:34). Hallelujah!

1 Chronicles 18: The story here shows how God gave conquest to David in his war engagements with the troublers of Israel. The war was necessary because of the frequent hostility those nations posed to Israel. They needed to be conquered that Israel might live in peace. And, besides, Israel has God's promise of victory over their enemies (cf. Gen.22:17). It needed to become real in their experiences. David went to places, prosecuting the wars with his gallant military officers and men. And, "the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went" (verses 6, 13).

The conquest which David had gave him the right to possess the conquered land with the wealth and riches thereof. Even, an important king of the region also rejoiced with him and gave him gift to celebrate the conquest. When God does great things for and through us, people will surely celebrate with us (cf. Gen. 21:1-2). David was not self-centred with what he acquired as spoils from the war. He dedicated them to God, for His use and glory, even, unto Him that gave him the victory and power to get the possessions (cf. Deut. 8:17-18). David's skill in the area of administering the possessions as shown here is commendable and exemplary.

Also, David demonstrated great skill in the area of governance: He assigned administrators in the conquered territories and made the nations tributaries to Israel. David as well "reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and justice among all his people" (verse 14). He saw to it that justice and fair play reigned supreme. The officers in charge of different duties were under obligation to do well, even as he had laid a godly example for them to follow: "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn" (Pro. 29:2). What does our leadership style produce?

We have lessons to learn from David here, as we engage in our various responsibilities assigned to us in our homes, work places, communities, local churches, etc. We have the promise of victory over the enemies that may want to hinder us (Lk.10:19). Also, our successes and achievements, as acquired in our engagements should be dedicated to God and His service. This would be in the acknowledgement of His grace and support that we constantly enjoy. In the same vein, the way we deal with others must be characterized with justice and fair play. We shall by such, make those people around us enjoy the grace of God in us. And they would, in turn, glorify God through us. But if not, this is to our discredit, as will be viewed by God and fellow men. May the Lord help us. Peace.

1 Chronicles 19 & 20: The havoc which evil thought and action wreak in people's life is what we are seeing in our lesson this week: David's good intention was misconstrued by Hanun and his princes, for evil. Their misconception led them into wrong actions of maltreating David's ambassadors and making indefensible moves to save themselves from David's sure attacks (1 Chro.19:1-19; 20:1-8). It is the same way people's misconception about God's goodwill towards them makes them to misbehave. They are maltreating God's messengers of peace and afterwards putting up remorseless bold face for a defence against God's sure judgment. But it won't work, except they repent.

Doubtlessly, the Ammonites had stirred up trouble, it would surely come on them. David and his army would hit them with severe destructions. David's military chief, Joab came up with his war plans. His strategy was based on wisdom, unity with his comrade officer and strong faith in God. The Ammonites would not be able to withstand these. God was with Israel to fight for them; the Ammonites' defence would not stand. The Ammonites and their helpers were eventually defeated woefully before Israel. We can as well strategize our battles against the enemies in wisdom, unity and faith, as people of God, for assured victory. Sinners' opposition against God cannot stand; and no matter the efforts, sinners will not go unpunished (cf. Pro. 21:30; 11:22).

Many leaders of nations, societies, churches and homes have brought evil on their people because of their evil thoughts and actions. We should pray for our various leaders, and let the leaders also beware of irrational, evil and ungodly thoughts that could cause destruction and death for them and those they lead. Christian brethren and leaders have a better option in their dealings. The Bible urges us to think on such things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtue and praise, (Phil. 4:8). They shall safely prevent us from pulling needless woes on ourselves and others

In the same vein, as people of God, if people of ill will should put up a battle against us, we should not be scared. God has empowered us, by the Holy Spirit, to subdue all thoughts that are against the knowledge of Christ in our lives. Since God is for us, no one can succeed in putting up war against us. We should boldly attack the opposition of Satan, flesh and the world against us (cf. 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Rom. 8:31; James 4:7)

1 Chronicles 21: We are faced with the great task of reconciling two Bible passages that recorded the disastrous census that David ordered to be made: 2 Sam. 24:1 says, "... the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." And, 1 Chro. 21:1 says, "... Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." There is no doubt that Israel was the target here, while David was the tool. David became "the cause of trespass to Israel" bringing judgment on them! Satan was against Israel and caused them to sin against God, through their usual error in heart and the ignorance of God's ways (Heb. 3:10). Their sin brought God's anger on them. Satan also provoked David to become obsessive in numbering Israel for self-glory (cf. Pro. 14:28). David's obsession was so overwhelming that God could not, but just allow him to "[go] and number Israel" as he had wanted to do" (cf. Num. 22:20-35)!

But, even, in David's obsession, caution came his way through his servant. Joab asked David certain self-probing questions that if he rightly answered, would have saved him: He asked, "... but, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? why then doth my lord require this thing? why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel" (1 Chro. 21:3)? But, David's obsession didn't allow him to take heed to the questions Joab asked, to probe into king's motives to number Israel. He insisted on doing the census. And the project was executed for over 9 months without God saying anything (2 Sam. 24:8). However, after the "sham census" (cf. 1 Chro. 21:5-6), judgment struck that claimed seventy thousand men (1 Chro. 21:14)

Although David dodged Joab's self-probing questions because he was his servant, he would not escape the judgment of God, who is the higher than the highest (Eccl. 5:8; 1 Chro. 21:12-13). If we would not do self-examination and self-judgment as counselled, especially by our subordinates, we shall surely be judged by God, our Superior and Maker. If obsession of any sort will not allow us to see sense in godly counsel, judgment will definitely show us our folly: Seeing God's displeasure, David said to God, "I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing ... I have done very foolishly" (1 Chro. 21:8). He owned up to his guilt and asked to be judged rather than the people (verse 17). But Israel also was due for judgment because of her sin. Let leaders take heed to counsels, and learn to discard subjective and self-seeking glory. Naaman would have lost the chance of getting healed of his leprosy if not for learning to purge himself of his obsession (2 Kings 5:10-14). Leaders also should learn to own up their faults, not shifting blames on their followers.

However, God remembered mercy in judgment (cf. Hab. 3:2), as rightly sought by David. The prophet of God confronted David, saying, "... Now therefore advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me" (1 Chro. 21:12). If David would not be advised by any other person, he would advise himself now on what judgment to receive for his sin. He humbled himself and put himself in God's hands to judge rightly and in mercy. He said, "... let me fall now into the hand of the LORD; for very great are his mercies ..." (1 Chro. 21:13). And true to David's belief, when the judgment was ongoing, the Bible says, "... the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand ..." (1 Chro. 21:15). Since David repented of his sin, God also repented of the judgment, and destruction stopped.

Therefore, God must be appreciated as directed by the angel. David moved to the threshing floor where he met with God in worship. Ornan (Araunah), the owner of the place, was on hand and cooperated with David to erect altar and offer burnt and peace sacrifices unto God. They were to thank Him and enjoy fellowship with Him again. David then "called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering" (verse 26). The angel sheathed his sword of judgment and peace returned to the land. This place, afterwards, became a place of offering sacrifices unto God, by David. It has been observed that the same place was where Abraham was told to offer his popular sacrifice (Gen. 22:1-2). And, afterwards the temple was built there. Really, it was a place of "altar" that God chose for Himself. God must be appreciated for His manifold grace, by sacrificial life of sweet smelling savour unto Him (cf. Eph. 5:1-2). Peace.

1 Chronicles 22: David exhibited his love for God and His cause. He knew he was not going to directly build the house of God, but he was keen at facilitating its construction. He knew that life continues after him; and that the work of God will continually be executed by His people. Rather than being indifferent, David chose the part of a mobilizer, influencer, mentor, sponsor and facilitator of the work and service of God. His focus was to leave a good legacy for the oncoming generation as he played this role of a good helper to the truth (1 Chro. 22:1-19). We shall do well to emulate David's good roles in being helpers to the truth, and people, who leave good legacies for the benefit of others (cf. Pro. 13:22; 3 Jn. 1:8).

In David's exhortation to Solomon, he disclosed the historical background of the building, the divine revelation on it and prophecy concerning who would build it. He then proceeded to charge Solomon and others on the need to be up and doing. The princes were urged to give the needed assistance to Solomon. And besides, they must see to it that the commandment of the LORD was their guide and manual to follow and do, on all matters, both in their work and life. Material resources are well utilized, when people of will, vision, passion, integrity and purpose are engaged in the use of them. David wanted this, therefore, the men were well oriented on their duties and responsibilities.

We are responsible as people of God, to leave good legacies through our exemplary lives, for good performance in the work of God, in every sphere of life. We should also be on ground and do all we can, to be fellow helpers to the truth, directly or indirectly. Though the truth is fallen in the street and truth fails (less workable in human affairs), yet we can be valiant for it and help in its spread (cf. Isa. 59:14-15; Jer. 9:3; 3). We should stir ourselves up as well as others, unto love and good work. The saints are bearers of God's covenant, grace and gifts, we should be envisioned, passionate and purposeful in the proper use of them; and encourage others to so do (cf. Heb. 10:24). Like David said to Solomon, "Arise therefore, and be doing", so has Jesus commanded us, "Go ye, therefore and teach all nations ..." (Matt. 28:19). We should be obedient to His command and faithfully do as He said. Peace.

1 Chronicles 23: This chapter shows how David, by the Spirit of God, made good arrangement for stability of the administrative and religious order in Israel, before his demise. He did so as the anointed leader of Israel, "a man after [God's] own heart, who shall fulfill all [His] will" (Acts 13:22). He would not leave anything in disarray, or state of unclarity as the situation seemed to be: There was the case of ambitious Adonijah who desired to be king after David, though this was contrary to God's design (1 Kings 1:5-10). Also, the religious order was not as it should be, in spite of God's known arrangements about it.

The clarity on who would do, or be what, was necessary, especially because of the emerging developments. There were yet to be the rules, stating, in unambiguous terms, what duties the various Levites families would do, in the central place of worship for Israel. The Levites would "no more carry the tabernacle, nor any vessels of it for the service"; their services had been made light (vs. 25-26). David the anointed of God was on hand to arrange these. Jesus, also, has given us rest, and made us "kings and priests unto God". Our service of Him is as well easy and light. Hallelujah! (cf. Rev. 1:6; Matt. 11:28-30).

The arrangements made by David was in line with what he received from the Lord, to supplement the divine rules already on ground. There was no opposition from his people, since they believed God to be working in David, "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (cf. Phil. 2:13). The Levites accepted the different roles as given them by their leader. The groups took their responsibilities in good faith, as unto the Lord. It was even said concerning Moses, the man of God that "his sons were named of the tribe of Levi" (vs. 14). That is, his sons were given roles as meant for other Levites of the Kohathites' family. Although, their father, Moses, was a leader to Aaron, "their office (now) was to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the LORD" (vs. 28).

In the same vein, we are to be satisfied with the gifts, positions and roles, as given us by the Holy Spirit: Are we called to lead, follow, or serve? Let us do it as unto God, and not man. As we have "gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us", let us make use of them accordingly (cf. Rom. 12:6-ff). Also, Aaron "was separated that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons for ever ..." They were possibly among the 38,000 Levites as counted, although, this has been a point of debate. They were separated to keep the sanctity of the "most holy things" (vs. 13). We, as holy priesthood, are as well separated "to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5). We should keep the sanctity of the work without any blemish of the flesh and the world. Peace.

1 Chronicles 24: Man has the great tendency to be confused and cause confusion of any kind. However, God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints (1 Cor. 14:33). This formed the crux of the reason Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, to regulate church service orders there. In view of this, he charged them to do things decently and in order (14:40). In the same vein, a reason for David's arrangements of the work in the temple at Jerusalem might not be different from this (1 Chro. 24:1-31)!

There are certain facts to be noted about man: He is self-willed, self-conceited, self-inclined and self-seeking. He needs a degree of control to regulate his proneness towards these. It is the reason rules are made available for him in the word of God. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the believers, also guides and illuminates their minds towards the truth of the word of God. The watching eyes of the saints with whom they fellowship as well serve as a guide for them. When people are left to themselves they tend to bringing shame to themselves as well as others around them (cf. Pro. 29:15)!

The courses and distributions of the priests and Levites in their functions could also be for other reasons: The Levites were growing in their population, and the family of Aaron was increasing considerably. The things pertaining to the work in the temple could not be left to chances. The self-will, self-conceit and pride of man could actually push him into assuming a position, or duty not meant for him. There could also be a sit-tight agenda with some operators among the stakeholders.

Presumptions, like in the case of Nadab and Abihu, whose names were again mentioned here, could also be a factor (Lev. 10:1-2; 1Chro. 24:2)). These sons of Aaron presumed on the work of the priesthood and died the death! This was even when they were just few in number. Now that they had grown in population, a clearly stated stipulations were necessary to help in the operational sequences of the group. Although this would not mean that there could be no violations, yet, boundaries were set to serve as checks and balances that are necessary and helpful for humans.

The Church of Jesus, though an organism, is comprised of men; they are the parts that need to be organized. It's true that Jesus is the head that controls the parts of the body, but the parts are not left to

themselves in their operational methodologies. There are scriptural rules and guidelines directing their operations. Man needs the rules of decency and orderliness so as to function properly. He has myriads of thoughts in him, on how he would do what. He might be unable to discern how well to behave in line with what is good and acceptable, if he has no guidelines. But rules put down in black and white, as the Spirit leads, and confirmed by the leaders, will go a long way to help the saints in their functions and interactions.

In the church at Corinth, as earlier observed, the members were well endowed and came not behind in any spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 1:4-7). But since they allowed carnal tendencies to overwhelm them, they needed rules to guide them in their operations. Paul, therefore, wrote to them by the leading of the Spirit, on how better to function in the use of their spiritual endowments (1 Cor. 14:1-40). And who will reject such good line of action, in view of the presence of the Adamic nature in the congregating members of any assembly of the saints? It makes sense to have godly rules guiding our operations. This is with a view to doing all things decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40). It's well.

1 Chronicles 25: The support of civil administrative leaders for the things of the Lord was pronounced in the many steps David took concerning the house of God and services therein. He was seen here arranging the singers in the house of the Lord (1 Chro. 25:1-31). The singers were arranged according to the order of the King. Those put in place were the instructed and skilled singers who knew how to sing "the songs of the LORD"; that is, songs dedicated to the LORD. They were to prophesy with songs (sing songs by inspiration), to thank and praise the Lord. This was a service into which they were called; it was not a position they occupied for self aggrandizement!

The method used to fix the singers is noteworthy. Lots were cast to determine arrangement of the courses, to the satisfaction of everyone concerned. No undue consideration for age or status, it was the lot that determined when each would serve. The casting of lots was a method introduced to Israel by God that they might know His decision on a matter. Its use dated back to the time when God told Moses on how Aaron would know the scapegoat from the goat for the LORD, for sin offering (Lev. 16:8-10). By it Israel was taught to be satisfied with whatever outcome the lot brought. It was the reason there was no rancour after the outcome of the lot casting as seen here. They believed the outcome to be God's choice and decision; therefore, there was calm in the group. [cf. Pro. 16:33, 18:18].

This is a lesson for us to be satisfied with our "lot casting" today, which is by the word of God and Holy Spirit's leading. Our heart should be sound with God's choice for us. It is "the life of [our] flesh": but envy (due to dissatisfaction in respect of God's choice) is "the rottenness of the bones" (Pro. 14:30). What you get from the "lot casting" is God's best for you, accept it with a sound mind and not in envy of the "lot" of the other persons. Other lessons for us in this passage are: It helps a lot to have the support of the powers that be, in promoting the things of God as David did. Also, it is in the best interest of the church (local) to have people that know how to do what, in the church's activities. People should be put into different sectors of the church's work, according to their abilities, without envy or grudges.

Singing in the local churches is better done by those that are instructed and skilled in "the songs of the Lord", not just any songs. Their skill would be as they are instructed and taught by the Holy Spirit, and/or by those that are ahead of them in the art. They are to prophesy (sing songs by inspiration) spiritual songs unto the Lord, thanking and praising Him. Also, they are to speak to themselves (especially, in the congregation), in Psalms and spiritual songs, singing with melody in their hearts unto the Lord (Eph. 5:19). They are to see this as a call to serve the Lord and brethren, in the church, and not a service they do to "entertain" anyone. May the Lord help us to so do. Amen.

1 Chronicles 26: The Levites were positionally placed to work in the house of the Lord. And, the specific works to be done by particular people were then assigned to them. 1 Chro. 26:1-32 is another Scriptural passage on job distributions to the Levites. Some of them were here chosen as porters, treasurers, judges and magistrates. The people so chosen also had their endowed and acquired physical, moral and intellectual abilities that were advantageous to what they were assigned to do. There was no quality they had that was too big for any of the jobs. And, there was no job that was too menial for any kind of ability a Levite had, as worker in the house of God.

We are also members of the household of God, who are graciously and positionally placed there to be useful (cf. Eph. 2:19). Our endowed and acquired abilities should as well be cheerfully deployed for whatever work assigned us to do. There is no service for God, especially in the "house of God" that should lack "qualified and qualitative men". Apart from the positional qualification of the Levites, they as well had other abilities. There were blessed men, mighty men of valour, strong men, and able men of strength for service, chief men and wise counsellors. Any level of God's work needs men well endowed to be in charge.

Shelomith and his brethren were in charge of the "treasures of the dedicated things" to maintain the house of God. These people were positionally placed as other Levites to work for God. They were accounted to be faithful, hence assigned to keep the treasures. They should prove themselves to be so in the work given them to do (cf. 1 Tim. 1:12). Part of the spoil which their kings, princes, captains and chief fathers got from the war were dedicated. Other people also dedicated things like they did. We can also dedicate things to maintain "the house of the Lord" and the ministers of God. Even, things from what the Lord gives us in the cause of our labour. Also, the people assigned to keep the treasures should be faithful in the job.

Outward business over Israel, for officers and judges was assigned to certain other people. These men were in charge of all the business of the Lord, and in the service of the king. They were to teach and see that things were done in line with the commandments of the Lord in administrative matters. As good as having godly people in administrative work of any nation is, many of those nations do not have God's commandments as their guide and constitutional documents. They ruled themselves according to their decrees and statutes that they won't want any other law to change. This then constitutes a problem for any godly move to rule them (cf. Dan. 6:1-28)! However, any child of God that finds themselves in government of any nation should do so in the fear of God, no matter what it may cost them. Daniel did so, in spite of the existing laws of the governments under which he served.

1 Chronicles 27: David's arrangements for security, civil, economic and administrative matters were summarized in a way in 1 Chronicles 27:1-34. David, a man of war, could not but be security conscious. God gave him great men of valour, he could not but make good use of them. He would not leave security issues in Israel to chances. The nation was mostly surrounded by unfriendly nations that could swoop on them unexpectedly. For example, as soon as the Philistines heard that David was made king over Israel, they came to attack him (1 Chro. 14:5- ff). David knew what the enemies' onslaught on Israel could mean, hence, his well coordinated security arrangement for the nation (1 Chro. 27:1-15).

What is our own security arrangement as Christians, upon all that God has made available for us, as a result of our union with Jesus Christ, the Lord? The Bible shows us what warfare we face and how we should equip ourselves for our security (Eph. 6:10-18). How "tight" is our security arrangements? It's true we have for our defense the name of the Lord and the blood of Jesus. But it's equally true that such moral and spiritual virtues like truth, righteousness, peace (as contained in the Gospel we preach), faith and salvation (the status of being truly saved), are part of our safety measure, to ward off the enemies. If we do not put them in place, "we leave our borders porous" for the enemies' encroachment, which is unsafe for us (cf. 1 Pet. 5:9-10)!

Apart from managing the security system, other human and material resources at the reach of David were also well managed by him. He had able leaders over the tribes of Israel, who were rulers and judges, managing the civil affairs, for internal peace and harmony of the nation (vs. 16-22). Also, there were men over the material wealth of the king, for proper management and utilization of the resources (vs. 25-31). In the same vein, David had counsellors whom he consulted on military, civil, administrative, personal and religious affairs (vs. 30-34). David's managerial skill and strategy are laudable, educative and exemplary. However, David goofed in strategizing the numbering of Israel. It was an ill-advised move for self-glory, hence, God's wrath aborted the project (vs. 23-24; cf. 1 Chro. 21:1-12). No matter how strategic we may be, our strategy and planning should be within the ambit of God's plan and purpose, and not against them.

We should also be good managers of God's resources (men and materials) that are put in our trust. The parents at the homes, and leaders in our churches should see to the smooth running of affairs in those spheres. Rules of good behaviour should be set and people of integrity put in place for peace and harmony. Managing the economic activities well is also crucial to man's wellbeing. It should be put in good hands, for personal and public interest. Diligence in economic activities is necessary for a buoyant life. "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds ..." (Pro. 27:23-27). Also, there is nobody that knows it, or does it all; we should learn to avail ourselves of the services of good advisers, counsellors and friends. The Bible says, "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (Pro. 11:14). David had around him choice men of wisdom and integrity, though some of them eventually goofed, like Ahithophel, Joab and Abiathar (2 Sam. 15:31; 1 Kings 1:5-9). God will guide us in chosen well. Amen.

1 Chronicles 28: 1 Chronicles 28:1-21 gave us the narration on how David called the civil and military leaders of Israel for an important briefing: It was to publicly share with them what he believed to be the mind of God in respect of the kingship and temple construction. This was necessary that all might know and be reminded that nothing was done through selfish interest as might be insinuated by some. It should be recollected that Adonijah, the eldest prince, Abiathar, the chief priest and Joab, the head of the army, for reasons best known to them, were not on the same page with David on the choice of Solomon as the next king (1 Kings 1:5-10). Therefore, those that could be unduly used by any disgruntled folks, for possible insurrection, were called for proper orientation that they might be on the side of God, doing His will. Proper orientation enhances right mobilization and coordination. Let the leaders in the homes, churches and societies take note.

David went further to discuss the pattern for the house of the Lord with his people and Solomon, his son. He got the revelation "by the spirit", possibly, divine inspiration to put things down in writing (verses 13, 19). He would not want them to build any other thing than the LORD revealed to him. Doing any work for God requires following the divine pattern on how it should be done, and not just as we may want to do it. The onus is on the "visioner" to educate others that the right pattern might be followed, to the satisfaction of God that owns the work. David did not stop there, he gave moral and spiritual counsel, encouragement, warning and exhortation to the people and Solomon, his son (verses 8-10, 20-21). This was to the effect that nobody would be skeptical, weak, deceived and derailed from supporting and doing what was the will of God for them, as individuals and the nation as a whole.

Of course, there was the need for materials to build the house. David also made good provision for the construction of the temple: He had the vision of building the temple; God took it up from there and gave him the pattern of what to build, because it was God that worked in him "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). David made available, great material things for the construction of the temple according to the blessing of God upon him (verses 14-18). This is a good lesson for us as people of God that have the vision and pattern of what God wants us to "build". We must as well make good and great provision for such, according to God's blessing upon us that others may be moved to so do, for the performance of the task. May we not fail God and our generation, in providing proper orientation, exhortation, encouragement and provision, in respect of what God has committed to our hands. Amen.

1 Chronicles 29: David was a good leader of his people. He wanted his people to seek God and serve Him. Some of the best ways he knew to do so were demonstrated in 1 Chro. 29:1-30. He made good preparations for the building of the temple: He said to His people, "Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house," Therefore, as a result of the good example he showed, he had the moral justification to challenge others unto good works. He asked, "And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD? Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work, offered willingly," for the building of the house of the Lord (verses 3-6). They saw the good example of their leader and followed suit; they had no excuse to do otherwise. May God cause us to be good leaders and followers, as the case may be. Amen.

David was also a good leader in showing the people how to truly be thankful unto God and praise Him. A meditative consideration of the wordings of his thanksgiving and praise song will teach us how well to thank and praise God (verses 10-16). Furthermore, David prayed unto God for Israel, his subjects; he did so that they might cultivate a good attitude of praying right. His prayer for them centred on a willing heart to serve God and proper heart preparation towards Him (verse 18). The heart of man is key when it comes to serving God. The unwilling and unprepared heart cannot truly serve the Lord. The service of such heart will centre only on selfish interest. That is, serving God for what one wants and not for who God is! Oh, that we may know how to be thankful to God, praise Him and pray unto Him with only Him, being our focus! Amen.

When leaders have righteous affection for God and live under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they cannot but influence good things in those that follow them. The same is true with the followers that have righteous affection for God and live under the influence of the Holy Spirit, they will respond positively to what God does in their leaders, without any iota of doubt. Leaders are put in place by God to be initiators and influencers of good things through what they say and do. Their sincere followers will definitely do as they see them say and do. The followers that God has chosen to be with their leaders should also learn to follow their good examples in what they say and do. God has set them (leaders) to initiate and influence good things in their followers. Let both the leaders and followers watch what they say and do, so as to please God who has chosen the two. Peace, as we live in obedience to God in what we say and do. Amen.

2 Chronicles 1 & 2: Chapter 1 of 2 Chronicles starts with how Solomon enjoyed the presence of the LORD as king over Israel; he was thereby strengthened and magnified, exceedingly. He also commanded great respect among his people, by which he was able to mobilize them for a great service and sacrifice unto God at Gibeon. It is important to think great of our great God, who does great things for His people. Great service in offerings and sacrifices is as well due unto Him, like Solomon and his people did here. Solomon's appreciation of God got God's attention and favour. Therefore, the LORD was ready to do more for him; he was then asked by God to make request of what more things he wanted.

Solomon was not selfish in his request, but asked that he would be given wisdom and understanding to govern according to God's delight, and the wellbeing of His people. This also pleased God that He gave him "exceeding abundantly" above all that he asked, or thought of (cf. Eph. 3:20). We have many lessons to learn in this about seeking to attract God's delight in all we do. It will attract more blessings from God unto us. Also, when God gives us "a blank check" on which to write the much we want, let's be wise on what we put down, and be selfless in our requests.

However, as good as Solomon's initial steps were, in serving the LORD, he goofed in multiplying horses for himself (2 Chro. 1:14). This was a violation of God's command in Deuteronomy 17:16: "But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way." But Solomon did this because he wanted to be like the kings of other nations. His fame was becoming a snare unto him! This is a food for thought unto us, as "kings and priests" unto God with the order not to lay up for ourselves "treasures upon the earth", but in heaven (Rev. 1:6; Matt. 6:19-20)!

Chapter 2 of 2 Chronicles is about building great house for the name of the great God, to make sacrifices unto Him. The house was to be built with valuable materials upon which highly skilful artificers would work (vs. 5-10). Anything done for the name of the LORD should be done by the best brains, and be a work of great standard and value. He deserves the best from us. Also, there were the necessary jobs for bearers of burden and hewers of trees that were given to the strangers and foreigners in Israel, probably the Gibeonites (cf. Josh. 9:21-27). Today, we have several categories of jobs in the house of the Lord, the high and low rating jobs. But they are all necessary and important for a complete work. Thank God that we were once strangers to the Lord, but we have been brought into His household for service unto His glory (Eph. 2:19). We therefore rejoice in whatever duty He assigns us for His glory. Hallelujah!

2 Chronicles 3 & 4: Solomon's realization of his mandate as someone chosen of God to build a sanctuary for Him, went a long way in deploying himself well, for the work. David had told him, "Take heed now; for the LORD hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it" (1 Chro. 28:10).

Solomon promptly began the building work on the prescribed site after making good preparations for it. He started to build the temple in the fourth year of his reign. The dimensions and materials were according to specifications, in size, magnitude and quality (cf. 1 Chro. 28:10-19; 2 Chro. 3:1- ff). May the Lord grant us the grace to realize our mandate and be well deployed for it, in the homes, churches and societies. Amen.

Solomon was told to "Take heed", in the sense of caution, care and watchfulness. This was so that nothing, and nobody would disturb, delay, or derail him in the performance of the task before him. He was to be strong in his desire, will, strength and determination to practically get the job done. When the job started, Solomon did not forget to do as he was charged. He was strong and active in the building of the house of God. We, also, have the responsibility to take heed to ourselves and the work God has given us to do. Paul said to Timothy, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim 4:16). We should take heed, be strong and active as the chosen of God in our duties.

Huram-Abi (Hiram - my father's, or the father) was another star in this lesson. He was well gifted and diligent in his chosen field that he was known as the "father" in it, even by the king. He was, also, well deployed to duty; he finished the work to the satisfaction of Solomon, concerning the house of the LORD (2 Chro. 4:11, 16). Really, he was a skillful artificer, recommended by his own king, as requested for by Solomon (2 Chro. 2:7). Hiram, the king, said of this man, "... I have sent a cunning man, endued with understanding, of Hiram my father's ... skilful to work in gold, and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple, in blue, and in fine linen, and in crimson; also to grave any manner of graving, and to find out every device which shall be put to him ..." (2 Chro. 2:13-14).

Hiram proved his worth as a diligent and skillful worker. It was the reason he was sought for, and so recommended. He was not a failure; he did good jobs, and on time. We can be diligent like him and be well deployed in our various fields as artisans, technicians, professionals and church workers. This will, no doubt, bring us before kings, and not mean men (Pro. 18:16; 22:29). The qualities of good service delivery as observed in this lesson include awareness, in being conscious of what one is meant to do; integrity, in being strict to moral and ethical rules. Others are faithfulness, in holding allegiance to responsibilities and obligations; diligence, in doing well in jobs and duties. It's also important that we realize the time-bound nature of our lives and duties that we may be prompt in what we do. These qualities as highlighted will help us to do well in the responsibilities assigned us. Peace in His name.

2 Chronicle 5 & 6: It was hurrah galore, for a well finished work! 2 Chronicles chapters 5 & 6 have the records of arranging and dedicating the temple. The Bible says, "Thus all the work that Solomon made for the house of the LORD was finished ..." (2 Chro. 5:1). Many set to begin one work, or the other, but only few finish the work they begin. We must aim at finishing the work that God has given us to do. Jesus had the vision of a finished work, and rejoiced at finishing it (John 4:34; 17:4). The same was true of Paul (Acts 20:24; 2 Tim. 4:7). We have been assigned by God to do a work for Him, we should finish it. The Preacher said, "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof ..." (Eccl. 7:8). Really, true success lies in starting a good thing and finishing it well.

The house of the LORD was not only finished and elaborately furnished, it was also scripturally prepared by putting the ark of the covenant of God in it (5:7). This symbolized God's presence because of the law of His covenant that was in it (5:10). The absence of ark in the temple would render it an ordinary house, void of divine presence. In the same vein, no matter how good our physical and religious outfits may look, only our moral and spiritual outfits could draw God's presence to us (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14-18). Our body is His temple; it should be well garnished for His habitation. And, when His word dwells in us richly, we'll surely draw His blessed presence on us (1 Cor. 6:19-20; Col. 3:16).

God was well celebrated by His people: He is the Alpha and Omega, Beginning and the End, Author and Finisher, All in all. "He is good and his mercy endures forever", may His people continue to say. The house was finished, well equipped, materially, and according to the scriptures. The LORD enabled this; He should be praised for the feat. The people did so, adequately. God was, also, pleased with the obedience and praise of His people. He indicated His pleasure and approval by His appearance, filling the house with a cloud (5:13-14). A job done well shall never lack divine pleasure and approval. Solomon was being used to revive the hitherto moribund religious system of Israel. It had been long, since they experienced such; no doubt, during the time of Moses (cf. Exo. 40:34-35)! Things had gone awry towards the end of Eli's life and ministry. Israel religious life had been in disarray since then (cf. 1 Sam. 4:15-22; Ps.78:60-61). It was now coming alive through Solomon, the anointed king of God. May the Lord raise movers of true revival and re-awakening of the dying love, dedication and zeal, of the saints, in His Church. Amen.

In 2 Chronicles chapter 6, Solomon acknowledged and appreciated God's favour and faithfulness towards his tribe, household and person. It was by God's doing that he became the king, builder of the temple and "restorer of the breach". Therefore, he prayed for more of His grace and faithfulness towards his household. He also prayed for God's attention towards the temple and His presence in it. As beneficiaries of God's favour and faithfulness, we can also make bold to ask for more of such in our lives. The Bible says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). Again, it says, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith ..." (Heb. 10:22). God gives more grace, let's afford ourselves more of it (James 4:6). Shalom.

2 Chronicles 7: It was another token of God's approval as "fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house". Israel, her king with her religious leaders appreciated God for this. Their appreciation was still to sing, "For he is good, and his mercy endureth forever." Furthermore, they again appreciated God with their lavish sacrifices, seeing how they were well approved of God. Solomon's offering was a great one (22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep) for the dedication of the house of God! We are to be as favourably disposed as he was, in our offerings to God. We should see to it that we "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ", as holy priests of God (1 Pet. 2:5). Our spiritual sacrifices are as the Holy Spirit and Scriptures would allow us to do.

The Bible talks of the LORD'S goodness unto David, Solomon and Israel, which the people acknowledged and they were merry. Also, the Bible says that Solomon "prosperously" did all that came to his heart to do, both in the house of the LORD and his own house (vs. 10-11). It was as a result of God's grace and goodness. Truly, God is God of all grace, and He gives grace to His people for the performance of His will (cf. 1 Pet. 5:10; 1 Cor. 15:9-10). Let's make good use of the grace of God bestowed upon us that the grace be "not in vain" but utilized to its fullest capacity.

The way God answers prayers varies. It could be instant and open like we find in verse 1. But it could also be later, and in secret as seen in verse 12.

Whichever way, we should be assured "that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us" (1 Jn 5:14). We may be unable to exactly say which way He would do it: His "way is in the sea, and ... path in the great waters, and ... footsteps are not known (Ps. 77:19)! Great is our God, He went to Solomon in his dream and gave him the assurance of answered prayer. He however demanded their obedience to His commandments.

God was also going to be merciful to them, when they sinned. But they would need to properly acknowledge it, humble themselves and repent of it. He said, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (7:14). The promise was to Israel, as a nation of God's people, and it was in respect to Solomon's request for them. We may not have problem applying this to people of God now, but its indiscriminate use is unacceptable.

The warnings God gave about how He would discard Israel and her temple are note worthy. We should be careful the way we relate with God. He is good and his mercy endures forever. But He is also God of justice that cannot be taken for granted. Let us learn to serve Him "acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12:28-29). May God help us. Amen.

2 Chronicles 8 & 9: Our lesson in 2 Chronicles chapters 8 & 9 shows, among others, how Solomon spent seven and thirteen years, respectively, to build the temple and His own house. He used the total of twenty years to build the two. Afterwards, he went on a building spree, building many things, including "... all the store cities that [he] had, and all the chariot cities, and the cities of the horsemen, and all that [he] desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and throughout all the land of his dominion" (2 Chro. 8:1-6). A great feat, we might say! But how profitable to God, who initially blessed Solomon, was this whole enterprise? It is interesting to note that the writer of the Chronicles chose not to show us the bad side of Solomon. However, the Holy Spirit has revealed to us those lapses in his life that we may learn how well to use and not abuse God's grace in our lives.

Solomon was a great builder and explorer, but whether or not he was a good one, has been a topic of discussion. However, we know of the extant divine injunctions for any king of Israel that Solomon obviously violated, which made him to be painted black (cf. Deut. 17:14-17)! He was truly chosen and blessed of God to "build the temple" (cf. 1 Kings 3:10-13; 1 Chro. 28:10); and he could not be blamed for building a house for himself as well. Also, the building of the cities rejected by Hiram which he called "the land of Cabul" (displeasure, or sterility - 1 Kings 9:12-13), was a good job (vs. 4). However, many other things that he built, including the temples for the gods of his strange wives, were mere ego boosting and self-glorifying ventures (1 Kings 11:7-8).

He did those things, using God-initiated blessings upon his life, though "enhanced" with his unwarranted adventurous and exploitative economic drive afterwards (cf. 1 Kings 12:1-4)! Solomon's methods of the use and creation of wealth have been discussed, severally. Some have criticized him for allowing abuse to permeate the ways he used and created wealth, while some others have praised him. However, at the end of the day, he himself confirmed the futility of it all, and described them as "vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccl. 2:4-11). But he recommended the fear of God and keeping of His commandments as more important (Eccl. 12:13). It is disheartening to note that Solomon's structures for the gods of his many wives and his worship of them were means of anger unto God (1 Kings 11:9)!

Solomon had the singular honour to host many world leaders from different parts of the globe. The queen of Sheba came as well as other kings to learn from him. This was not without precious gifts for the king. His business ventures with trade partners like Hiram were also means of wealth creation for him (2 Chro. 9:1-14). The height of God's gracious dealings with Solomon is summarized thus, He "passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom" (9:22). This started with God's blessing upon him. But, later he delved into excessive drive for wealth and wisdom which led him into compromise and religious liberalism. Therefore, his "spirituality" became more theoretical and less practical. He spoke well about God and His things, but did not so much do as he spoke. However, on our part, the Scripture says, "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:12).

Jesus, the greater than Solomon, has however greatly made and built us as "an habitation of God through the Spirit (Matt. 12:42; Eph. 2:10, 19-22). He has invested a lot in us that we may, in turn, be good builders and explorers for God, spreading His Kingdom news and building people for Him, by the spiritual and material resources He has blessed us with (Matt 28:19). We should not be like Solomon, to engage in building frivolities around. We can take a cue from Paul, "as a wise builder", to ensure that we heed the Holy Spirit's injunction which says, "... let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon" (1 Cor. 3:10). We should not repeat Solomon's mistakes as builders and explorers for God. Let's sincerely ask ourselves and answer this salient question: How are we exploring and building for God with the resources He gives? It's well.

2 Chronicles 10 & 11: There are several things to learn from our lesson in 2 Chronicles 10 & 11 – Rehoboam, the main character in the lesson, started on a good note. He obliged himself to honour the invitation to come down to Shechem, one of the cities of refuge, taken from the tribe of Ephraim. The invitation was at the instance of the ten tribes of Israel, led by Jeroboam, also an Ephraimite. It was to see if they could negotiate relief and dividends of good governance with the new king. The people claimed that Solomon's rule was of great burden on them. Was this truly so, or these people only designed a fault against the Davidic dynasty? It could be either way. But why were they seeking for relief? Did they not agree to abide by whatever form the manner of the king was, when they initially asked for a king (cf. 1 Sam. 8:9-20)? Meanwhile, Rehoboam did well again, to have consulted with people about the case on ground. The consultation afforded him the exposure to different views about governance. But, due to his own rudeness, impoliteness, unrighteousness and insensitivity, he chose to go the way of the youths.

It was through this that he made himself an instrument of offence (cf. Pro. 15:1, 28; Matt. 18:7-9). He became a partaker of his father's sin, which was the reason for the division of the kingdom in Israel (1 Kings 11:13). Truly, "offence" must need come, but it would come by them that allow themselves as instruments of offence. Jeroboam, who led Israel to negotiate the terms of governance with Rehoboam was already on the verge of dividing the kingdom (cf. 1 Kings 11:25). He could have been left to complete what he started without any assistance from Rehoboam. But due to Rehoboam's own tendency for ungodliness and carelessness, he became a channel of offence. He spoke roughly to the people, being obsessed with his position of royalty, and fulfilling the Scripture that says, "The poor useth intreaties; but the rich answereth roughly (cf. Pro. 18:23).

The people chose to go their own way having found a route in the rough answer of Rehoboam. They chanted an old slogan of division - "What portion have we in David?" It was a quote from the rebellious statement of Sheba, of Benjamin, who raised sedition during the reign of David (2 Sam. 20:1). We should be careful as to what type of instrument we chose to be in respect of fulfilling the word of God: A vessel unto honour, or a vessel unto dishonour? God has both in His "big house" (2 Tim. 2:20-21). Let us be vessels unto honour for Him. The king afterwards sent Hadoram, the man over the tribute to, possibly, collect same from Israel. This was to yet assert his royal authority over them. But the man was brutally killed, to show that Israel was no more part of the one kingdom. Hadoram failed to run errands with wisdom. He was, no doubt, rude and arrogant in the discharge of his duty. He showed his normal disposition on matters of evil rule, and he died the death. But his principal was wiser, he ran away to avoid the like fate.

It was also to the credit of Rehoboam and his men that "they obeyed the words of the LORD, and returned from going against Jeroboam." Their attempt to "bring back the Kingdom was stopped by the LORD, who originally caused the division because of Solomon's sin. Any war to bring the Kingdom back was a nullity, it should not be pursued. May we learn to stay away from fighting a needless war. Another good work of Rehoboam was that he dwelt in Jerusalem and built cities for defense in Judah, to secure that which remained of his kingdom. We should learn to build that which remains, lest it falls (cf. Rev. 3:2). Also we should build ourselves strong by putting on the whole armour of God that we may be able to withstand the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:10-12).

It is unfortunate that Jeroboam so soon apostatized from the faith of the only true God. He forsook God that "promoted" him and followed the service of other gods. This made the priests and Levites that were chosen of the Lord to minister in the holy things of the temple to come over to Jerusalem. It was their best bet, to choose Jerusalem and submit to the leadership there. It afforded them the opportunity to do their services unto God after Jeroboam threw them out of it in his domain (vs. 13-15). They were not the only ones, others that sought the LORD from among the break away tribes, also came to Jerusalem for the service of the LORD (vs. 16-17).

Rehoboam, married many wives, a lifestyle that he took after his dad, Solomon, and his grandfather, David. It's unfortunate that such polygamous lifestyle could be allowed to persist, even, in the household of David, despite God's warning against it (Deut. 17:14-17). The trend of taking after men to disobey the Scriptural injunctions is common with people. Many would say, David and Solomon married many wives, so they too would follow suit. It is better to abhor that which is evil, but cleave to that which is good (Rom. 12:9). God help us to so do. Amen.

Chapter 12: The problem of man's inconsistency and unstableness in respect of the service of God is clearly shown in the case of Rehoboam and Israel, as recorded in 2 Chro. 12:1-16. The people as earlier observed, walked in the way of the LORD (2 Chro. 11:17). But they soon left this for their self-chosen way, which amounted to transgression against the LORD. They lost divine care, support and security. God also left them in the hands of a Gentile king to afflict them! They were forced out of their fenced cities and only left with Jerusalem, their capital city. They came there as their last port, for safety, or defence, or to seek God's face (12:1-5).

As common with God, He sent message to them in love and mercy, to intimate them with the cause of their problem: "Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak." It was a divine enlightenment that could help them to recover, if they would incline themselves to it. Many people receive divine enlightenment today through the Scripture, which is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path (Ps. 119:105), but they refuse to walk by it, and remain in their error. However, for Rehoboam and the princes, they chose the path of wisdom. They humbled themselves and repented of their apostasy, confessing that God is righteous in all His dealings.

God continued to show them His love and mercy by sending His messenger to them again with the message of relief. God will first send His message of enlightenment to His erring people with a view to towing the right path. And as they so do, He will not delay in sending His message of comfort, as seen done here. He said of His people, "I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries" (12:7-8). If people choose not to be fully committed to the service of God, they should be ready to only be granted "some deliverance", and not "total deliverance" from Him! Also, they must be prepared to serve men, with rigour, since they will not serve God in comfort (cf. Deut. 28:47-48).

Jerusalem was not destroyed as God said, but it was plundered. The people lost their valued treasures in the temple and palace, to their new master. While serving God adds value to one's life, being the servant of men, as a punishment from God, tends towards diminishing one. When Judah and her king were subdued by Shishak, he stripped them of the treasures they were blessed with by God! They afterwards struggled with materials of less value, even, bronze, in their doubtful renewed service of God: "And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD turned from him, that he would not destroy him altogether: and also in Judah things went well" (verse 12). That is, Rehoboam continued as their king and the siege stopped. But, this was God's second best for them, and not His best. It was because they also chose not to give God their best. Meanwhile, they settled to serve under bond of yearly taxes as subjects to this Gentile king.

The concluding remarks about Rehoboam's life is very unfortunate. The Bible says he "did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD" (vs. 14). Although Rehoboam did things outwardly that looked like seeking God, yet not sincerely and heartily, hence, the remark that he did evil. The heart that is not prepared to seek the LORD will be unstable in his claimed service of God. The only way we can avoid doing "evil" is to prepare our heart to seek the LORD and not our selfish interest and goal: "Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually" (1 Chro. 16:11). And, it shall be well with us.

2 Chronicles 13: The record in 2 Chronicles 13:1-22 says much about a particular battle of Judah with Israel, when Abijah (Abijam) was the king of Judah. It is not so much about the life of Abijah; this is better narrated in 1 Kings 15:1-9. But, in 2 Chronicles we have the record of a war event and the reliance which Abijah with his people had upon the LORD, for victory. It's surprising that several kings of Judah, from the house of David, did not have an account of true godly life. However, they enjoyed God's support on the account of the godly life of David and God's faithfulness to His covenant. In this instance, Abijah could not be said to be a sincere worshipper of God; he was a mere worshipper of convenience. However, God delivered him and his subjects, for His name's sake and His covenant with David, His servant. Truly, "the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Rom. 10:12). But He does not want His goodness to be taken for granted; it is to draw people unto Himself for better submission and love (cf. Rom. 2:4).

Jeroboam was the aggressor in this war (verses 8, 12). He possibly took the undue advantage that the king in Judah was new and young. He wanted to annex Judah, being not satisfied with the ten tribes that God gave him on a platter of gold. However, since God had endorsed Jerusalem for His worship, He would defend it. He had also made covenant with David, He would, for that reason, preserve the kingdom for David's household. Although, Abijah with Judah still professed faith in God, it was on the surface, it was not with "a perfect heart" (cf. 1 Kings 15:3). Abijah only had 400,000 soldiers to fight against the 800,000 soldiers of Jeroboam, but, the dire situation pushed him to "make bold in God" this time! This is common with some believers, who only seek God and profess good things about Him, when they are in problems. They do not "seek his face continually"; it's only unfavorable circumstances that make them to seek God.

Meanwhile, Abijah appealed to, and cautioned Israel to consider peace option, and refrain from waging war against Judah for annexation purposes. Abijah laid claim to God's presence and the fact that they worshipped Him alone; but they did not do this wholeheartedly. Their service was only of the external, which had little, or no effect on the life they lived. They drew near unto God with their mouth, their heart was far from Him (cf. Isa. 29:13). However, because the LORD was with Judah, Jeroboam and his cohorts were urged not to make war against the LORD by fighting Judah. They would not prosper in such a bid (vs. 10-12). As Abijah was making his appeal, the ungodly Jeroboam was scheming his war strategy. The appeal to reason did not find place in him; he was bent on executing his selfish project, to his own ruin. He lost another opportunity to adhere to good counsel and divine warning (cf. 1 Kings 13:1-6). This is the trend with many unrepentant sinners.

To Judah's surprise, Israel had hedged her, front and back. Therefore, they remembered to call upon God as they had been taught to do (Num. 10:9). And, God gave them the victory. This was not because Judah was more righteous than Israel, but to prove God's faithfulness, since "they relied upon the LORD God of their fathers" for the war (vs. 14-18). God would want Judah to draw nearer unto Him than she had done, hence the victory granted her. Also, Jeroboam and Israel were defeated, to teach them that their godlessness would not do them any good. God still uses His mercy and judgement to draw people to Him. He shows His mercy to people who claim to serve Him, but not wholeheartedly. This could be on the account of their parents, or spiritual leaders, and, more importantly, for the sake of Christ. The stubborn ones are also judged that they might tremble and come to God. Let those concerned learn.

However, the godless Jeroboam did not read any meaning to Abijah's counsel and came to his awful end. He was ordained of God and given the authority to have the kingdom of Israel. But when he got there, he puffed up and forgot God, his source. He was therefore humiliated, incapacitated and eventually, struck dead by the same God, because he would not repent. Also, Abijah was no better, he "waxed mighty" by the goodness of God. But he used his might, not to get better with God; instead, he served selfish interest. He gave his strength to marrying more wives, totalling fourteen; he followed his fathers' polygamous lifestyle. The act of marrying several wives had become the norm for kings and princes in Judah, in spite of the divine injunction and wise counsel against it (Deut. 17:17; Pro. 31:1-2).

Abijah only reigned for just three years (vs. 3), walking in the sin of his father (cf. 1 Kings 14:23; 15:3). The victory God gave him over Jeroboam was never a lesson for him to "seek God and His strength ..."! As we enjoy God's grace in various ways, let this teach us to "seek His face continually", in true obedience and submission. Peace.

2 Chronicles 14, 15 & 16: There are many lessons for us in the life of Asa as we read in 2 Chronicles chapters 14, 15 & 16: The first ten years of his reign over Judah was peaceful; there was no war. Asa came on board as a king that sought the LORD, not self; he did that which was good in the eyes of the LORD: He discouraged idolatry, reformed Judah's religious life and better built the security system in the land. (vs. 1-8). He also prepared Judah to seek God, and he made the nation ready for any possible onslaught from the enemies with a standby army. At the time the Ethiopians took it upon themselves to wage war against Judah for selfish reasons, they met their Waterloo. Although they came with a huge army of 1,000,000 soldiers and 300,000 chariots, the smaller army of Judah's 500,000 soldiers overcame them by divine support. Asa called upon God for victory and the LORD gave it to them with great blessings. It pays to trust and serve God. Hallelujah!

After the victory, the LORD sent His prophet to Asa to strengthen him in the good works he was doing (vs. 2). He was reminded of God's past dealings with Israel in their different conditions: There was the time everyone did that which was right in their own eyes with its devastating results (cf. Jud. 17:6). But, when they turned to the LORD, they were saved. They should learn from such and seek the LORD for better rewards (vs. 3-7). Asa was by this message, better motivated and inspired in his work of reforms. He did more in it and led Judah into better commitments to God and His service. They vowed to serve God alone and deal ruthlessly with any apostates. Even, the king's mother (grandmother), was "removed ... from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped it, and burnt it at the brook Kidron" (v. 16). However, the high places dedicated for the service of God apart from the temple were not totally removed. An incomplete reform you would say! But, the LORD still gave them "rest round about" from war of any great magnitude, for a long time. Truly, our "labour is not in vain, in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

Meanwhile, Baasha, the king of Israel, was envious of the progress, prospects and prosperity in Judah, especially the migration to Judah by devout Israelites. He, therefore, waged war against Judah, which posed a great threat to the peace and progress in Judah. Asa then unnecessarily became scared and sought help from Syria, which he got; but, to his detriment. It was a sign of declension in his life! But why this? It's unfortunate that at times we become so scared that we forget to seek help from the Lord, it is a bad signal in our spiritual life. It's a drawback! God sent message of judgment to Asa, who, in turn, became annoyed by the message, rather than being repentant. It was another sign of declension in his life. Asa punished the prophet for speaking God's word to him. This was a damaging progression in his journey of declension! Also, Asa continued to oppress "some of the people", possibly those who spoke truth to authority. It was a rush to his destination of no return. A very unfortunate development in the life of a once devoted worshipper of God! Eventually, Asa got his own judgment from God; he became "diseased in his feet", yet, he didn't seek God in it, and he died. It was an inglorious exit of a once seeker of God. What was it that went wrong? Sheer inability to be steadfast, one may conclude. "How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished" (2 Sam. 1:27)! May God help us.

2 Chronicles 17: Jehoshaphat started well as the next king in Judah, after the reign of his father. He ensured a strong prevention of any military incursions into Judah by placing forces in the cities for necessary defence. He as well walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not after Baalim. He sought the LORD and walked in His commandments. Therefore, the LORD was with him and established the kingdom in his hands. He was also blessed with riches and honour in abundance, as all Judah brought him presents. Of important note is the fact that Jehoshaphat's abundant honour and riches didn't make him to become haughty and arrogant. Rather, his heart was made to be "lifted up in the ways of the LORD" and "he took away the high places and groves out of Judah" (vs. 5-6). It did not stop there, he saw to it that the true knowledge of God filled all Judah. He sent out princes and Levites to embark on itinerant teaching ministry of the law of God throughout Judah. He attempted a good business of building men for God. It was a revival of the knowledge of the word of God in the land. Acceptable service unto God would be with the true knowledge of Him and His ways. Hallelujah!

God made Jehoshaphat to be blessed with honour, wealth and strength as one that sought the LORD. Really, the LORD has many ways to reward them that seek Him. The neighbouring countries were also at peace with him. They made no war against him, instead, they gave him gifts and tributes which greatly multiplied his wealth. The Scripture says, "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Pro. 16:7).

Jehoshaphat built castles, cities and businesses by the blessing and peace he enjoyed. He also had "men of war, mighty men of valour" that waited upon him in Jerusalem, apart from those in several fenced cities of Judah. They had among them somebody like Amasiah, who willingly offered himself unto the LORD, by his services to the king. The lifestyles, including security network of God's people, were becoming more sophisticated due to the method of governance adopted from the nations around them! This a food for thought.

Jehoshaphat was another great "builder" among the kings of Judah, like David, Solomon, Abijah and Asa, his fathers. They built tabernacle, temple, cities, castles, storehouses, and businesses. Some of what they built were to the glory of God and benefit of mankind. Some were, also, mere ego boosting ventures with little or no direct benefit to the populace. Alas, there were and are, great "kings" who reigned and reign, pursuing personal agenda at the expense of the masses! May God enable our various leaders to lead, for the glory of God and benefit of fellow humans. Amen.

2 Chronicles 18 & 19: The first verse of 2 Chronicles chapter 18 introduces us to how Jehoshaphat compromised his godly stand and became an ally of godless Ahab, king of Israel. It says, "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab." He married Ahab's daughter, Ataliah, to his son, Jehoram (21:6). Truly, it was God that made Jehoshaphat to be rich and honourable (17:3-5, 12). But afterwards he began his "foolish" journey to "unmake" himself by being unequally yoked with the unbelievers. The Bible does not tell us why he did so, but several things might be responsible for his compromised steps. It could be because of his fear of any likely wars with Israel. It should be recollected that Israel had been hostile to Judah for sometimes (2 Chronicles 13:1-20; 16:1). But, if that was the case, he sought the peace in a wrong way. Was it not God that caused peace to reign in his domain, when the surrounding nations were prevented from waging war against him (17:10-11)? Why would he then seek peace through an unholy alliance with Israel?

Also, Jehoshaphat's affinity with Ahab could be because he was seeking relevance with a colleague king, who could, in turn, link him with yet other kings. Ahab was already an ally of the king of the Zidonians, another notable king in that region (1 Kings 16:31). But Jehoshaphat was already relevant in honour, riches and godly life. If relevance is what someone defines as "taking actions to make sure that you matter to your constituents and compatriots", Jehoshaphat already mattered to God, his nation and, even, the surrounding nations that sought his favour. However, to seek relevance unduly, would require some flexibilities and compromises on the part of the seekers. Anyone that seeks such must prepare for the demands to shift grounds! Another reason for Jehoshaphat's affinity with Ahab could be that the "riches and honour" he had "in abundance" might have drawn many people to him, including Ahab, which made the two to be in-laws, eventually. The Bible says, "Wealth maketh many friends ..." (Pro. 19:4).

Jehoshaphat's steps to be in alliance with Ahab would definitely cause him to soften his strong godly stand and conviction! Formerly, his soul was lifted up in the ways of the LORD, and he was blessed through that. But now that his soul was lifted up to align with Ahab, he thus began to compromise his righteous virtues: Therefore, he became an in-law to Ahab; he conceded to engage in a self-destroying battle with Ahab; he sought God's mind with his host from the compromised prophets of Israel; he followed Ahab to war against divine revelation; he bought into the idea of wearing a royal garment on the war front, while Ahab disguised as a common soldier! True, is the statement of our Lord that says, "... the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" (Lk. 16:8). Jehoshaphat became the prisoner of his selfish desires, gullibly followed Ahab, and unsuspectingly drifted away from "the ways of the LORD" which he had earlier sought to thread!

However, in God's abundant mercy, Jehoshaphat was saved by the whisker from his suicidal voyage; and he returned home in "peace". God afterwards sent His servant to reprimand him for his ill-advised steps in joining himself to a godless fellow: "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD ..." (19:1-3). The phrase, "... therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD" has much to be desired. It is in the present form, indicating "wrath upon [Jehoshaphat] from before the LORD", in as much as he was in affinity with Ahab. He was seen again joining himself in economic venture with the house of Ahab, and the LORD spoilt the venture (20:35-37). His affinity with the house of Ahab had brought wrath upon his house! We see this in subsequent events within his household (2 Chro. 21:4-7; 22:1-10).

But, Jehoshaphat still put up the outward show of godly virtues in his public works, as the king (19:4-11). We may however ask ourselves what was the depth of his love for the LORD, even, with this stigma of unequal yoke on him? People of God should learn to stay away from compromising their righteous stand. It attracts God's displeasure on them that tow such path, the outcome of which no one can predict. Also, putting up a mere outward show of godliness when the inward disposition towards God is already compromised, is unacceptable. It cannot deliver from the wrath that comes "from before the LORD". Please Beware!

2 Chronicles 20: Some of the surrounding nations "came against Jehoshaphat to battle" (2 Chro. 20:1)! This was unlike, when "the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat" (17:10)! Could this be due to the recent prophetic pronouncement of "wrath upon thee from before the LORD" (19:2)? Asa, his father, faced a similar situation for seeking alliance with Syria. God's message of displeasure came to him through Hanani, the father of Jehu, the prophet here. He said, "... from henceforth thou shalt have wars" (16:9). When God speaks peace to us, it's important that we turn not "again to folly" that war might not be drawn unto us (cf. Ps. 85:8)!

However, Jehoshaphat did well to "set himself to seek the LORD" in his war situation. But, if God is still the one we would run to, in our war situations, as Jehoshaphat did, we should, ab initio, learn to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing ..." (Col. 1:10). We should know that God's displeasure draws wars. Therefore, we ought to consider him first in all our interactions and relationships. Jehoshaphat's affinity with Ahab was displeasing to God, yet, it was God he ran to, for help in his time of trouble! He led his people into a serious prayer session towards God, praying for victory over the enemies. The wordings of their prayer were according to the truth of how God had been dealing with them and the evil connivance of the enemies against them. They also claimed God's promise of victory and called upon Him to intervene on their behalf.

God promptly answered His people's requests and sent His minister to tell them what to do. The people believed God's message and worshipped Him, for His goodness and mercy towards them. They set to trust Him for victory, and refused to go into the folly of unbelief. What they earlier saw moved them no more, but were positively moved by the word of God, spoken to them. It is profitable for us to believe God, as Jehoshaphat charged his people. Therein lie our establishment and prosperity (verse 20). As a result of the victory God gave to His people who trusted Him, the surrounding nations ceased from coming against them. "So, the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about." This was victory over war from the outside. But, Jehoshaphat still had his internal war to fight because of his unholy alliance with the house of Ahab!

The summary of Jehoshaphat's life and reign showed his commitment and that of his people to God. He was said to have walked in the way of Asa, his father. This surely was in reference to his father's early walk with God (2 Chro. 14 & 15). Jehoshaphat had his good points in his walk with God, irrespective of his unholy alliance with Ahab. But another blemish on the part of Jehoshaphat with Judah, concerning their service unto God, was the issue of "high places". Jehoshaphat truly removed the high places where people served other gods (17:6). But, the "high places" where people claimed to still serve God were not removed, in spite of God's disapproval of the practice (Deut. 12:13-14). The "people of God" continued in the practice because, "as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers". This was the divine assessment as revealed to God's minister (cf. verse 33)! But, why? What about the previous reformation work? Was it ineffective, or people only feigned the claimed change, or could it have been a relapse into their old ways? These questions are waiting for answers.

We witness same today. The service of God is mainly on the outside, the hearts of many worshippers are not seeking God. But, "... true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him" (John 4:23). Meanwhile, Jehoshaphat's romance with the household of Ahab continued. So did the displeasure from God continued to be upon him, hence the business they engaged in, and the tool of their business were "broken". Care should be taken in ensuring faith and obedience to God's word. Whatever He says is binding on us. Any attempt at circumventing it shall receive God's judgement of any sort. Peace in His name.

2 Chronicles 21 - 22:1-9: Jehoram and Ahaziah missed it in their reigns as king of Judah because they had wicked wife and mother, in the person of ungodly Ataliah, to counsel them (2 Chro. 21:6; 22:3). Jehoshaphat, their father and grandfather, respectively, left them the bad legacy of choosing Ataliah for their household. Therefore, when Jehoram became the king of Judah, he "strengthened himself" towards taking after Ahab's lifestyle, which was characterized with idolatry and wickedness. He, also, "slew all his brethren with the sword, and divers also of the princes of Israel", even, those that were better than him: He tried to eliminate any opposition to his ungodly and wicked rule. He "wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD", courtesy of his wife's counsel and the unholy alliance with ungodly Ahab. Truly, "evil communication corrupts good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33 ASV).

However, in spite of Jehoram's ungodliness and wickedness, God would still not remove the kingdom from the house of David. The kingdom was not in the house of David by merits but by mercy. And God has promised not to remove His mercy from the household (2 Sam. 7:6-13). Great are God's faithfulness and mercy. But, unfortunately, the mercy existed with "chaos" that was already introduced, carelessly, into Jehoshaphat's household. We, also, enjoy the grace of God by which we are accepted in Christ Jesus, God's beloved (Eph. 1:5-6). Let's see to it that we don't dent this with our careless and wrong choices. Meanwhile, Jehoram started to lose his grip, authority and influence on his subjects, both externally and internally because he forsook the LORD, his God and source. There are great losses for forsaking God (cf. Jer. 2:19; 17:13)! The Edomites would not want his rulership over them again; they declared themselves free and began their own separate government. The people of Libnah, probably for their righteous commitment, refused to obey Jehoram's ungodly directives, but chose to "serve and obey" God alone (cf. 2 Chro. 11:13-14; Acts 4:18-21; 5:28-29).

Jehoram continued in his idolatry; he also influenced and forced Judah into it. God's judgment was pronounced upon him for this: His people, family members and all his goods would be smitten with great plague. He, also, would suffer terminal disease in his bowels. The LORD, eventually, stirred up war against him from the Philistines and Arabians, who were near the Ethiopians: Many were carried away, probably, injured and diseased in their bodies. Jehoram, the king of Judah, and son of David's household, had every opportunity to live godly and be loved, both by God and fellow men. But, he lived a detestable life, suffered incurable disease in his bowels, writhing in pains for a couple of years, and "departed (died) not being desired". He was inglorious in life, death and after death because he was not "desired" by his subjects!

Ahaziah's reign was not better than his father's. He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab like his father did, for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly. The same way this woman counselled Jehoram, her husband, to do wickedly, she did to her son (21:6). Therefore, Ahaziah "did evil in the sight of the LORD like the house of Ahab: for they were his counsellors "to his destruction". He, also, walked after their counsel to follow Jehoram, son of Ahab, to war, like Jehoshaphat, his grandfather did. But God saved him that he was not killed. However, he still went to visit his wounded uncle afterwards, and thereby met his Waterloo! Ahaziah's destruction was of God, because, "he went out with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab". Ahaziah didn't learn from the first incident, when he was divinely spared in the war he went with Jehoram. Therefore, as he proceeded wantonly in his unguided union with the son of Ahab, he was made to die with him.

The need for virtuous and godly women as wives and mothers in the homes cannot be overemphasized. Also, our homes need men of godly insight into life matters, as fathers. Such are the fathers that will have godly value judgments, to choose and decide well for the homes. Godly fathers, mothers and wives that will counsel their children and husbands unto virtue and godliness, for the well-being of the homes. A virtuous woman is both a good wife to her husband, and good mother to her children (Pro. 31:10-12, 28). God give us virtuous women and men as wives, husbands, mothers and fathers for our homes; they will lead us unto following the Lord. Amen.

2 Chronicles 22:10-12 & 23: Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, was an instrument of evil, planted by marriage into the household of David that was graciously chosen of God! She "arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah" to become the king, who "reigned over the land" (2 Chro. 22:10 & 12). She usurped every right and authority in Judah: the royal, religious and civil. It was a period of unprecedented confusion and disorder in the land. But, God also had His own "vessels of mercy" (Rom. 9:23) that He would use for restoration: Jehoshabeath, a daughter of the king, was the first to come on board among them. She "took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole (secretly took) him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bedchamber". This woman was the daughter of king Jehoram, a sister to Ahaziah, the slain king, and wife of Jehoiada the priest. She hid this son from Athaliah that she didn't see him to kill. The situation was like that for sometimes; but Jehoshabeath, her husband and other stakeholders, waited for God's plan to unfold, as to the time and methods of His restoration agenda. Athaliah was also busy in her reign of wickedness and ungodliness, no one stopping her, for the space of six years!

Meanwhile, the appointed time of God, eventually came, and "in the seventh year, Jehoiada strengthened himself", to mobilize the like minds for action. He declared what he believed to be God's will unto them, saying, "Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the LORD hath said of the sons of David" (2 Chro. 23:1-3; cf. 21:7). It was an obligation into which the concerned people of God must stick out their necks. The time of restoration had come. When God gives the vision of what's to be done, we should also learn to strengthen ourselves for actions, when His time comes, like Jehoiada did. Of course, it is the Lord that strengthens us, but we as well have the responsibility to, by faith, "be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10). This is a duty no one will do for us, but we, ourselves, as the priests of God. Jehoiada was a good visionary and actor. His vision was in line with the word of God, and his actions were as led of God. He also had godly, faithful and committed like-minded people to work with, including his family members. As we seek to do the will of God on earth, May we be linked with godly, committed and faithful fellow workers, to work with. Amen.

Jehoiada told the people what to do, as he gathered them for action. He gave them specific instructions as to their duties. He was a good leader of vision and action; the people were also faithful partners unto good works. May the Church have such leaders and followers to be so united and obedient to doing God's will on earth. Amen. Eventually, royal right and authority got restored: "... they brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and gave him the testimony, and made him king." The anointing was done by Jehoiada and his sons, in their capacity as the priests. Thank God for this household of god-fearing members. At the anointing of the king, he was given "the testimony", the law of the LORD, by which to run the affairs of the nation (2 Chro. 23:4-11). It was a good way to do the restoration work. When there is proper adherence to God's commandments, there will, surely, be proper restoration work, done.

Athaliah, the usurper, became aware of the new development, and, in her arrogance, shouted, "Treason, Treason", against the implementation of God's will. Surely, the ungodly that are against the LORD cannot but see "treason" in obeying God, since it speaks volumes, against their life of disobedience to God. But, before she caused a serious stir, she was killed. This put an end to "the wickedness of the wicked"; the usurper was gone. Hallelujah! Jehoiada continued in his restoration work to restore religious right and order in Judah. It was time to serve the LORD, beginning from the king to the people. They entered into the covenant to be the LORD'S; it was the only way they could truly serve God. Such mindset further helped them in destroying the temple of Baal and its priest. This was God's method to put away the remembrance of idolatry in the land (cf. Deut. 13:5-6). The service of God was revived through an instilled good sense of belongingness in the people. Such realization could go a long way to strengthen their commitment to God. The civil rights and authority also got restored. The king, captains, governors and the nobles of the people were set in place. The people rejoiced and lived in peace, thenceforth (2 Chro. 23:12-21).

Also, till today, "the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (16:9). Let's make ourselves available for His good use as His "vessels of mercy" (Rom. 9:23). We have a lot to learn in this lesson. Let's understand, properly, our belongingness in the household of God (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Jn. 5:19); and make a clear-cut mortification of our "members that are in the world" (Col. 3:1-5). We shall thus stand a better chance to serve Him, as we are meant to do. Peace in His name.

2 Chronicles 24: More on the identity and initial deeds of Joash the king, open 2 Chronicles 24. He was said to have done that which was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest (his mentor). Jehoiada the priest instructed him, and he took to his counsel (cf. 2 Kings 12:2). This was as far as he could go. He followed divine rules as dictated to him, but didn't have them as principles for his life, hence, his failure to continue after Jehoiada's death. Jehoiada, though, led Joash to do that which was right before God, he also, influenced him to marry more than one wife, which had become a negative tradition of the kings of Judah and Israel.

Joash's effort to repair the house of the Lord was a good one. It was a payback step for what the house had been for him. He had his beginnings there; he was preserved, nurtured and anointed as the king there. Besides, it was the place approved for God's service as well as the habitation of the priests, his benefactors and supporters. Joash desired that the repair work would begin as soon as possible, but the Levites that were charged for collection of funds were dragging their feet, for reasons not disclosed. The king, therefore, devised an alternative method by which the people gave generously for the work. The money collected was disbursed for the work and used faithfully and judiciously. The house then became a befitting place for the services of God, where, "they offered burnt offerings ... continually all the days of Jehoiada" (vs. 4-14). A commendable step at bringing people back to God.

Eventually, Jehoiada, the influencer of revival and godly things in Judah, died. His death marked the end of a glorious era in Judah: The time when the people served the LORD their God, through the righteous influences of Jehoiada, who did well in Israel, both to God and His house. It will be nice of us to live a life that seeks to do well, to God and His Church, before we leave here. But Jehoiada's death made the princes of Judah see themselves as free of his strong influences on the nation. Therefore, they came and made obeisance (deification) to the king. This was with a view to enticing and drawing him away from God.

Unfortunately, the king hearkened unto them and bought into their idea of doing away with God. He did so because his heart was weak and not anchored on divine principles, but mere influences of the godly Jehoiada. The king succumbed to evil enticement. Hmm, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it" (Jer. 17:9)? The deception inherent in man only waits to be triggered by any other deception from the outside. Joash was enticed to forsake the guide of his youth and covenant of the LORD, to serve other gods, together with his people. God's wrath was on them for this. But, His mercy was also shown them. He sent prophets to them, including Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, with the hope that they would repent. But, they did not; they continued in their ungodliness and wickedness (verses 17-20).

Meanwhile, the Spirit of God came on Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada. He challenged the congregation, one day, concerning their transgression in forsaking God, and the consequences. This didn't go down well with them; they threw caution to the wind; they revered not God and the son of "their late mentor". They killed him, even, at the order of the king, for speaking truth to authority! Thus, the king remembered not the kindness of God to him, through Jehoiada. Joash was highly engrossed in the sin of ungodly enticement, forsaking his God, and remembering not the kindness done him by God, through Jehoiada!

Therefore, Joash woefully suffered the consequences of his sins, God using "the rod of his anger" to judge him. Let's watch that we do not allow ourselves to be enticed. It could lead to serious sin of forsaking God, and remembering not the kindness done us by Him, through our fellow men. Thus, doing wickedly, which carries dire consequences. We ought not to act like the one that "forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God" (Pro. 2:17)!

2 Chronicles 25 & 26: The aim of our lesson this week is to learn honouring God in our achievements and attainments. But only true children of God can learn to do so. Men, generally have the natural inclination towards pride and self-glory. It's only the people that are born again and walking in the Spirit that will not be proud, or ascribe glory to himself. Although, Amaziah, a king of Judah, was said to have done "that which was right in the sight of the LORD," it was, however, "not with a perfect heart" (verse 2). It was the reason he couldn't walk well with God. One can do that which is right in the sight of God, but with a selfish motive. This could be seen in the activities of the Pharisees and Scribes. Their "righteousness" was with selfish motive, to receive the praise of men (Matt. 5:20; 23:3-ff). Let's check our hearts to discover why and how we do, even, such thing that "is right in the sight of the LORD"; and note whether or not, it is with a perfect heart. Doing what is right, but not with a perfect heart, is a sign of selfishness and disregard to divine rules that guide doing what is right.

Amaziah was in such spiritual condition, when he decided to go to war against Edom (vs. 5-13). Although, we don't know the cause of this war, whether a defensive, or offensive one, Amaziah's strategy to hire mercenaries from Israel was ill-advised. He only backed out of the deal to hire mercenaries, when he was told of a "better deal". He didn't do so because of his readiness to obey God. Also, the way he allowed the prisoners of war from Edom to be treated was against natural justice. Elisha cautioned a king of Israel against such (2 Kings 6:22). Only the Canaanites were to be so killed, none should be spared among them (Deut. 20:16-18). But not so, to the Edomites who were brothers to Israel and Judah (cf. Obadiah 1:10-16).

Meanwhile, Amaziah was attracted to the gods of the Edomites, to serve them because his service of God was not with "a perfect heart". He was, surely reserved in his worship of the true God. It was a worship of convenience, not a sincere, or perfect one. He did it, as the circumstance allowed. Therefore, on this occasion, he probably did so to protest against his perceived failure of God to protect Judah when Israel's mercenaries vented their anger on them (verse 13). Anyone that does not serve God with a perfect heart will easily find fault with whatever way God deals with him. Amaziah was never drawn to God with "a true heart, in full assurance of faith"; he was a "double-minded man, unstable in his ways" (Heb. 10:22; James 1:8).

In the same vein, many who claim to serve God are like that. It's the reason we are to watch our hearts as we profess to serve God. Serving God with imperfect heart and double-mindedness can only amount to unstable walk with God, like Amaziah did. Those who reject divine counsel will be given "over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient" (Rom. 1:28). This might be the reason Amaziah wanted a revenge war with Israel that eventually humiliated him. No war can be fought without God's support. But Amaziah's pride and disregard for God were dragging him to disaster, hence his plan to go to war, trusting his own strength. He went to battle with Israel and was woefully defeated, plundered and incapacitated.

On the part of Uzziah, the king, he "did that which was right in the sight of the LORD" like his father Amaziah did. That is, he, probably, followed his father in not doing it with "a perfect heart". Also, he was like Joash, his grandfather, in doing well as long as he had a prophet to guide him. But, how viable are such dispositions, in sustaining him? However, Uzziah "was marvellously helped, till he was strong" (verse 15). He was helped in battles, constructions, inventions and governance. But he failed to ascribe the glory to God for such help.

Instead, he became arrogant and usurped the authority of the priests. He probably felt that as a great achiever and inventor, who had researched into many things, nothing would stop him from intruding into the priesthood office. This was his pride and dishonour to divine rules. There are people who would not work "according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to [them]". But want to "boast in another man's line of things" (2 Cor. 10:13, 16). Such action would only lead to humiliation as it was with Uzziah. Truly, pride is destructive. May the Lord save us from pride.

2 Chronicles 27 & 28: Jotham, a king of Judah was both a good follower and leader. He keenly observed the good points of his father's life and practiced them. He was at the same time careful not to follow the bad examples of his father: "... he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah did: howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD" (2 Chro. 27:2). Jotham was mature to have his "senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14). And, he chose to do well, while avoiding the evil. Unfortunately, not many people are like him; they instead exercise their discretion to follow bad examples and lead others into same.

Meanwhile, the Bible records that many people of Jotham's days "yet did corruptly" (27:2), in spite of the fact that they saw their king doing rightly! They didn't have him for an example of good walk with God. It's important for us to follow our leaders, as they demonstrate godly virtues. We owe it an obligation to so do; it is the reason we say we are following them. But many times, personal, selfish, worldly and godless tendencies and considerations debar us from following after our godly leaders, like the people of Judah did.

However, God highly rewarded Jotham's piety. The Bible says, he "became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God" (27:6). Jotham ordered his steps, in line with the word of God. He didn't walk anyhow, or according to his own wisdom; but only, as the word of God says. He understood divine rule that says, "... and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God" (Ps. 50:23). It was the key to Jotham's success. He did not leave his life to mere social, or religious chances, but he marked, planned, prepared and walked his ways in line with godly principles.

Jotham lived a short, but steadfast and purposeful life. He didn't allow himself to be "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14). He lived for 41 years and only reigned for 16 years, less than one quarter of the 52 years his father, Uzziah, reigned in Judah. Jotham lived, reigned and died gloriously. He didn't outlive his glory like his father did. God has His wonderful ways He deals with us: He allows for long and short spans of life as it suits His divine purpose.

Ahaz was made king after the death of his father, Jotham; but he chose to be both a bad follower and leader. He didn't take after his father; the godless style of the king of Israel was his choice. Therefore, he did not do "that which was right in the sight of the LORD" (2 Chro. 28:1-4). He thus led his people into the path of evil. It's disheartening to note that bad examples are easier to follow than good examples. The people of Judah did not so much follow the good examples of Jotham, but readily followed Ahaz in his godless deeds!

Therefore, as a result of the ungodliness of Ahaz, the king of Judah, "the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria", who smote them and carried away great multitude of them captives to Damascus. Also they were afflicted by Pekah, king of Israel. He killed 120,000 among the valiant men of Judah and carried 200,000 women and children as captives because they forsook "the LORD God of their fathers" (28:5-8). "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god" (Ps. 16:4). Hmm!

Meanwhile, God remembered mercy in His wrath against Judah; He sent His prophet to move their captors unto compassion, towards them (28:9-15). The captives taken by Israel were well treated and returned to Judah, though, those taken to Damascus were not so treated. Our "God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Ps. 115:3). However, these didn't serve as lessons for Ahaz who remained unremorseful and unrepentant. God's miracle of mercy and deliverance didn't change him for better. Rezin, king of Syria and Pekah, king of Israel were confederates, who had planned to annex Jerusalem, but God didn't allow it to happen (cf. Isa. 7:1-11).

Ahaz didn't learn, yet, to trace his way back to the God of his father. Therefore, affliction upon affliction continued to trail Judah: "For the LORD brought Judah low, because of Ahaz king of Israel (that is, for following the ways of Ahaz, king of Israel); for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD" (verse 19). The Edomites afflicted them; so also were the Philistines. But, rather than seeking God, Ahaz and the people sought help from the Assyrian king, who distressed, but didn't help them. Yet, in their distress, Ahaz, their king and leader, further led them away from God. He sought help from the gods of the Syrians that earlier smote them, because he felt the Syrians were helped by their gods to do the feat. But those things were to his ruin, and of his people.

The Bible says, "... this is that King Ahaz" (28:22). This remark is like saying, "This is King Ahaz for you, in his utter ungodliness. In his own remark, John Gill's, in his Bible commentary, wrote of Ahaz that he was a "monster of iniquity" with no match, "of all the kings of Judah". We should therefore take heed to scriptural injunctions on how we follow leaders. We are to follow those who follow Christ, as Paul exhorted the saints: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). This is a good lesson for all, and especially, the leaders: A good follower of Jesus will surely be a good leader of the saints.

Furthermore, Paul said in his Epistle to the Philippians chapter 3:17-19, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them who walk so, as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.") They are not the type of leaders we should follow. They are the toxic type to runaway from. May God help us.

2 Chronicles 29: Hezekiah began to reign and "he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done". He was a true descendant of David, who knew David's anointing, purpose and goal in life. He now saw himself on the throne to fulfill same. Therefore, his choice was to do like David and not like Ahaz, his immediate father. We also can choose to make a good difference in the world, as people of God. Jesus said, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (Jn. 9:5). He rightly identified Himself in the midst of the crooked system, and chose the role He was sent to play. This same knowledge was, no doubt, in Hezekiah, hence, his choice of godly life and actions. He was the son of David, a man after God's heart that did the will of God. He was not going to be different from that, in spite of the glaring decadence on ground.

Therefore, Hezekiah started on a good note to restore Judah back to God, by opening the door of the temple, to commence the worship of God. He understood who the Priests and Levites were, the anointed of God, for His service. He incorporated them into the task of reformation. He said to them, "Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant (an alignment) with the LORD God of Israel that his fierce wrath may turn away from us. My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense" (vs. 10-11). He was a good ruler, who knew what to do and how to woo others into doing the same. What do we make of the decadence around us, as people of God? What do we know of ourselves as the light of the world? And what do we make of our knowledge?

Meanwhile, God had already prepared the Levites, priests and the people, for the reformation. The priests and Levites heeded the call of their king to the work which God had called them into. They went straight into action, cleaned the temple and reset it for the true worship of God. They were not hindered by anyone or anything. The princes, rulers and people also gave favourable response to align with God's move. The enthusiasm was there with all, to align with God in what He was doing. Afterwards, Hezekiah said to the people, "Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the LORD, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD. And the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings; and as many as were of a free heart burnt offerings" (verse 31). The reformation was truly of the LORD. "So the service of the house of the LORD was set in order. And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly (with no human orchestration)" (vs. 35-36).

In our own time, we also have God working in us both to will and do of his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). We have the obligation to align with what God does in us. But, we can be hindered if we do not get our perspectives right about God, ourselves and the rottenness on ground with its adverse effects. Now, do we see ourselves as agents of good change in God's hand? We need divine encounter that we may begin to live and act in line with the divine purpose concerning us. Paul had such encounter that changed his life for the better. He said, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood" (Gal. 1:15-16). This was unlike another person, who saw "the vision of the Almighty", but, followed his own ways (Num. 24:16)! May we be responsive to the working of God in our lives "both to will and to do of his good pleasure". Amen.

2 Chronicles 30: Of a truth, Hezekiah had tasted and seen that "the LORD is good"; he was already experiencing the blessing of them that trust in the LORD. Therefore, he "sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel" (2 Chro. 30:1; cf. Ps. 34:8). This is a lesson unto us; we should learn to invite people into the goodness of the Lord, which we enjoy. Jesus said to someone, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee (Mark 5:19).

The call to return to the LORD and enjoy fellowship with Him, as necessary for His backsliding people, was clearly made. People were invited to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel. The posts went with letters from the king and his princes, throughout all Israel and Judah, saying, "Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God ... and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria" (verse 6). It, however, received different responses from the people of Israel: some "laughed them to scorn, and mocked them"; while some "humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem." However, "in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD" (vs. 10-12).

Glory to God for this grace as enjoyed by the people of Judah; this was mainly because of the move of God that had earlier begun with them (2 Chro. 29)! The people of Israel that came for the feast also enjoyed God's grace. God pardoned and healed them, when Hezekiah prayed for them. This was because they "be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary" (verses 19). But their heart was prepared to seek the LORD. What is our response to the various calls of God to us? God uses several means, calling us to Himself: the call to repentance, fellowship, consecration, service, etc. What is our take to the calls? It's good we reflect on the wording of the hymn:

Jesus calls us, o'er the tumult

Of our life's wild, restless sea,

Day by day his voice is sounding,

Saying, 'Christians, follow me'.

Meanwhile, every participant at the feast enjoyed the fellowship with God and themselves. It was so sweet that they agreed to add more days to the days they spent together in the presence of the LORD: Really, in the presence of the LORD there is "fullness of joy", and it is pleasant "for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 16:11, 133:1). Great and resounding joy filled everywhere and the prayer of the people went up to God. What a fellowship! The saints still enjoy sweet fellowship in Christ, and with one another, even, as they walk in the light of the word of God (1 Jn. 1:7). Therefore, "[l]et us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water", to enjoy sweet fellowship with God and ourselves (Heb. 10:22).

Peace, in His name.

2 Chronicles 31: The "fruits meet for repentance" had begun to show forth in the lives of people of God that truly repented (cf. Matt. 3:8). We saw what "zeal" it wrought in them, when they made ready the temple for the worship of God. They were also quick to start observing the offering of sacrifices and celebration of the feasts (2 Chro. 29 and 30). The "fruits meet for repentance" continued to manifest in their lives as they went out to destroy the symbols of their previous apostasy (2 Chro. 31:1). They also heeded the directives of their king to bring things into the storehouse of God, to encourage the temple ministers in their duties. And, when those things were brought in, bountifully, they were well disbursed by faithful people of God. It was another fruit meet for repentance in their lives (2 Chro. 31:4-21)!

Of a truth, those who really repent will sincerely turn to God and submit to His directives. They will learn to function under the wisdom of God and abandon their fleshly, worldly and demonic wisdom with which they lived, prior to their repentance (cf. James 3:14-17). Paul graphically portrayed how true repentance towards God worked in the Corinthians. He wrote, "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter" (2 Cor. 7:11). But now, we see many professors of the Christian faith who refuse to do the "works meet for repentance"! This is so because, the word of God they hear does "not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them ..." (Heb. 4:7).

Great claims with no corresponding proofs are what they make in respect of salvation and service to God. But, they don't have the fruits that match their claims, in respect of the way they live. Jesus says, "... the tree is known by [its] fruit" (Matt.12:33). Irrespective of what the claim may be, what a tree truly is, shall be known by the fruit it bears. In spite of what we may claim our spiritual status, or experience to be, the life we live is the proof of who we are, in the real sense of it. There are those who claim to be spiritual, indwelt by, and filled with the Holy Spirit. They make boast of their ministries, gifts and positions as Christians. However, the fruits they produce in their lives are the opposite of their claims. But why would people claim one thing and live contrary to the same? This is hypocrisy, or walking after the flesh, by any believers. Whichever it may be, it's the product of unbelief in the lives of those concerned.

The purpose of the Gospel is for people to "repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:20). The hearers of the Gospel are called to repent from their path of disobedience, and turn to God in obedience. The next to follow is to "do works meet (fit) for repentance". Those works are the proof of their true repentance and union with God. In that wise, they should be seen always mortifying their "members which are upon the earth" (the works of the flesh) - Col. 3:5. Again, they are to be favourably disposed to the giving of their substance, both to God and their fellow brethren (cf. 2 Cor. 8:1-5). Also, a good degree of faithfulness is expected of them that are chosen as stewards in distributing the things brought for the service of God and benefit of the saints (2 Cor. 8:15-21).

But unfortunately, some people that profess the Christian faith are seeing, still living their old lives. There are also "Christians" not forthcoming in serving the Lord with their substance. We as well see unfaithfulness with some that are charged with managing church's funds. These are signs of hypocrisy, or walking after the flesh. The former will attract woe, while the latter will incur forfeiture, at the end (cf. Matt. 23:13-15; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21). May the Lord help us as Christians, to live well, doing "works meet for repentance". Amen.

2 Chronicles 32: The Bible says, "After these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself" (2 Chro. 32:1). It is one of the ways God does His works on earth. Judah was divinely moved into reformation, dedication and commitment to the service of God. It was after "these things" that Sennacherib with his army was made to come against Judah with the thought to win the land for himself! As people of God, we don't seem to expect that the enemy could be allowed to come so close to us, especially, after our "grand spiritual re-awakening", as seen in Judah. But God may allow it, for His glory as well as our spiritual, material and physical benefits. Hallelujah!

Hezekiah held on to his trust in God. He consulted with his officers, and made good preparations for defence and safety. They had much faith to encourage themselves in the Lord than the siege of the enemies could upset. They continued to trust God with their safety, and also learned to use some means, as available, to fortify them against the onslaught of the enemies. They would not give room for the enemies. They arose to their responsibilities, doing what they could, as humans, so as not to be guilty of tempting God (2 Chro. 32:1-8). When we presume on God's protective power over us and fail to do the needful as expected of us, we are tempting God. A condition the devil would want to bring on us, so as to get us. We should be wary of it.

Sennacherib did not only lay siege on Jerusalem, he also sent frightening messages to the people. This was with a view to drawing them away from their faith in God. He, through his servants said several things against God and His servant, Hezekiah: He boasted, "Now therefore let not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you on this manner, neither yet believe him: for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people out of mine hand, and out of the hand of my fathers: how much less shall your God deliver you out of mine hand" (verse 15)? Sennacherib, even, tried to downplay God and His power to save! It was the height of folly for him. He would pay dearly for this. This is the way the devil tries to scare us with his empty boast; we should not listen to him. Hezekiah counselled his people well, saying, "Answer him not" (2 Kings 18:36).

Rather than answering him, or becoming fretful, they "prayed and cried to heaven". The LORD sent deliverance to His people by destroying the invading army, and instigating the eventual death of Sennacherib in the hands of his sons (vs.20-23). Afterwards, the LORD was appreciated, so also was Hezekiah, the king, who led them unto path of victory. The LORD knows how He gives victory unto His people, and as He does so, let us learn to appreciate Him as well as them that lead us towards seeking God for victory. Beside the battle, Hezekiah also had the challenge of sickness, even, "unto death". He again called upon God, as the faithful would do. Hezekiah was delivered in his sickness with divine and outstanding sign (cf. Isa. 38:1, 8, 21-22). God was glorified, and his servant was bountifully blessed. It's so good to trust in the Lord.

However, Hezekiah was not as good in success management as he was in getting the success. He became ungrateful and proud by the success God graciously gave him. The Bible says, "But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up, therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem" (verse 25). People came around to applaud him for the feat wrought for him, and on his behalf. He began "to think of himself more highly than he ought to think ..." He didn't think "soberly, according, as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3). Although, he eventually humbled himself, under divine rebuke, the consequence of his error was to be suffered by his children, after him (cf. 2 Kings 20:14-19)!

Poor success management is the bane of human affairs. Many people try to do well, when faced with problems, but they become full of themselves when they succeed. It is important that we be conscious of this scriptural injunction that says, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it" (1 Cor. 4:7)? God is the giver of all things, including those we reckon as "personal achievements". We should learn to humble ourselves before God. Meanwhile, for those that are already guilty of pride in respect of their "achievements", let them come humbly before God to receive mercy. Peace.

2 Chronicles 33: Manasseh was 12 years old when he ascended the throne (2 Chro. 33:1). He was born and raised in a period when the spiritual fervour in Judah had declined. The fire of revival and reformation had already gone down in the land. Judah was enjoying in the euphoria of victory, prosperity, fame and recognition. This was the situation on ground for most part of the last fifteen years of Hezekiah's reign (2 Chro. 32:22-31; 2 Kings 20:12-19). Again, due to the birth circumstances of Manasseh, the only son of his parents, he was, probably, overpampered and unnecessarily handled with kid gloves, thereby becoming indulgent! These were factors that likely contributed to making Manasseh the ungodly guy and king that he was, initially. God saw trend of spiritual declension in Judah. It was the reason He said that though, Hezekiah and Judah were forgiven their sin of pride, the seed already sown would germinate and grow. It would adversely affect the upcoming generations, culminating into their captivity (2 Chro. 32:26; 2 Kings 20:16-19).

Consequent upon Judah's apostasy and her refusal to hearken to God's entreaties and warnings, judgment came on the nation, from God. The "LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon." He was subjected to great affliction there. And, this eventually helped him, because, in his affliction, he "besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, [a]nd prayed unto him." The LORD heard his "supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God" (2 Chro. 33:11-13). God uses comfort and persuasion as well as discomfort and affliction to cause people to serve Him. This is a great lesson for us; we should not unnecessarily shield people from hardship. God may use it as a means to teach them better, than they are ever willing to learn, through comfort.

Manasseh started a new life, when he came back from captivity. He began to serve God and his nation better (2 Chro. 33:14-16). He did "works meet for repentance" (cf. Acts 26:20). People who truly repent have the responsibility to work out their "own salvation with fear and trembling" (cf. Phil. 2:12). They already have what to show for the new life they profess. However, many times, this is not perfectly done, due to several factors, one of which is human tradition! We saw this with the people of Judah, who, against the law of the LORD, still served God in the high places (2 Chro. 32:17). They transgressed the commandment of God by their tradition, and thought to make the commandment of God of none effect by the same (cf. Matt. 15:3-6). Meanwhile, Manasseh's life and times did not escape historical records. Both the good and bad sides of him were penned down as undeniable occurrences. Let this fact of life guide us in our actions and inactions. What we do and refuse to do are on record. They shall be rehearsed, remembered and remarked upon, from generation to generation.

We don't know how many sons of Manasseh survived the deadly idolatry initiation they were subjected to (verse 6)! But Amon was a surviving son of Manasseh who succeeded him as king afterwards. Amon was a bad, and an ungodly person, by choice. He had the examples of his father to learn from. The father was formerly ungodly, but later became a godly king of Judah. However, Amon chose to tow the path of ungodliness, and ignored the way of righteousness. The affliction and humiliation that his father suffered, due to his ungodly deeds, didn't scare him from ungodliness. Also, the grace of God shown to his father, in his restoration, did not woo him unto righteous deeds. What then can be done for man that he may choose to serve God? Amon chose to be this bad a person. He was early cut down by some of his servants, who were no better than he was (vs. 21-23). Amon missed the opportunity to repent because of his sudden death. He was not as fortunate as his father, who had "enough" time. We should learn to tow the path of repentance before it is too late. "... behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2). Peace in His name.

2 Chronicles 34 & 35: Josiah began his reign in Judah with God's glory in view. He sought to do God's will and serve Him according to His commandments. The Bible says that Josiah "did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand, nor to the left" (2 Chro. 34:2). He submitted himself towards doing God's will and cooperating with Him, along the same line. Josiah was one of the best among Judah's kings, and the last that sought the LORD in a unique way. He used his "sovereign power of choice", as available with everyone, to make the right choice. Of course, there are internal and external factors that influence people to choose. God has given man the right to choose. After which he becomes responsible and accountable for his choice.

Josiah chose to seek after God. He also began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from their tendencies towards the high places, groves, carved and molten images (verse 3). This young man, although born by an ungodly father and with obvious ungodliness around him, yet, chose to be on the side of God. This was God's great grace upon his life. His efforts at seeking God led to the repairing of the temple. And, this, in turn, led to the discovery of the book of the law, to their greater benefits.

The Psalmist says this of the temple of the LORD: "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple" (Ps. 27:4). The good knowledge of the law of the LORD was "closed" to the people because they had abandoned the temple, where the law was kept (2 Chro. 6:11). But when they went there they had access to the law of the LORD. There are great spiritual discoveries, when we seek the Lord with other saints in our assemblies. We should not neglect, but desire it (Heb. 10:24-25). The reading of the law, as kings ought to (Deut. 17:11), made them to discover the extent of Judah's apostasy. A consistent meditation in the word of God is of great blessing (Ps. 1:1-3). Judah had chosen to tow the path of disobedience and ungodliness, she would bear the consequences (cf. Deut. 28:15ff)! Josiah was moved unto penitence and remorse by the discovery. He humbled himself and sought for divine mercy.

Truly, "sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17). God will certainly look to the man, "even, to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at [His] word" (Isa 66:2). It was the bailout for Josiah; he would not witness the turbulences & calamities coming upon Judah for her sins. This promise encouraged Josiah to continue his walk and work of godliness, as the king of Judah. He also led Judah and part of Israel towards seeking and serving God. A memorable Passover Feast was observed in his days, one that surpassed others held by any king of Israel (2 Chro. 35:1-19). God's goodness towards us should be a strong springboard, to catapult us unto greater dedication and service for Him.

But, the way Josiah ended his life has become a difficult issue to explain. We would not know what was responsible for his wrong choice, by willfully going out to confront Necho, as the latter went to war against the king of Assyria (35:20-25). Presumption on God's promise: "thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace" (2 Chro. 34:28), has been suggested as a likely reason for meddling in a war he was not supposed to fight. Seeking of self-glory could also be a factor of Josiah's rashness. Inability to understand God's way is another possibility for Josiah's error. Whatever was the reason, we know that God is no respecter of persons. He sent His prophet to caution the people of Judah. He said, "Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you" (2 Chro. 15:2). We cannot enjoy His support, when we willfully pursue our selfish interest. May the Lord help us to remain faithful with Him. Peace in His name.

2 Chronicles 36: The conclusion of our lessons in 1 & 2 Chronicles brings to the fore the unfortunate story of Judah's inconsistency in serving the LORD and her disobedience to God. The leaders, religious and civil as well as the people failed to seek and serve the LORD, as they should. The last four kings of Judah had the dismal record of doing "that which was evil in the sight of the LORD" (2 Kings 23:32; 2 Chro. 36:5, 9, 12). The summary of the evil the kings did before the LORD is captured in what was said about Zedekiah, their last king: "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah, the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the LORD" (2 Chro. 36:12). The evil of the religious leaders and the people was as their kings also did: "... they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy" (verse 16).

Doing evil before the LORD is not only in committing the vilest sin. It's also in every disobedience to the word of God, as the following Bible passages show: 1 Sam. 13:13-14; 15:22-23; 2 Chro. 19:2-3; 35:22; Isa. 39:1-8. Therefore, it is important that we begin to understand in a better way, all that constitutes evil before the LORD. Evil is larger than what we have humanly considered it to be. The prevalent inconsistent walk of man with God and his disobedience to Him, in various shades and forms, are evil. They will receive a just judgment from God. But, if we recognize evil in all its ramifications, it will help us to "[a]bhor that which is evil; [and] cleave to that which is good", as dear people of God (Rom. 12:9).

Although people of Judah got the just judgment of God for their sin, however, in His mercy, God still brought them back to their land, afterwards. This was after the land had had its Sabbath (rest), during the seventy years of captivity of its inhabitants (2 Chronicles 36:21)! They profaned the sabbath-day and did not observe the sabbatical year. Many times they ploughed and sowed their land in the seventh year, when it should have rested, but now it laid unploughed and unsown for seventy years. Anyhow, God will effect compliance to His rules by persuasion or compulsion, to prove that He is the LORD over all. Peace.

THE AUTHOR

Tunde Oloyede resides in Ibadan, Nigeria, with his family. He was called into full-time gospel ministry in 1977. Since his call, he has been involved in various areas of the church's work. He is one of those the Lord gives the church to mature the saints for the work of the ministry. A teacher by ministry, he teaches the word of God in churches, mission schools, conferences, campuses and discipleship training schools, etc, along side his commitments to his local church work, he is also a missionary trainer, a mission mobilizer and facilitator. His great commitment in interdenominational Christian bodies accounts for these. Such bodies include Christian Leadership and Missionary Training Institute and Heirs of God Christian Ministry, all in Ibadan. Tunde Oloyede holds master's degree in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Ibadan. He is married to Rachel. Their marriage is blessed with four children, who have been brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord".