



HOLD FAST

what you have

that no one may take your crown - Rev 3:11



MAHRAGAN ALKERAZA 2015

English Edition

Gr 9-12 & English Adults

HOLD FAST
what you have



H.H. Pope Tawadros II
Pope of Alexandria &
Patriarch of the See of St. Mark



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Introduction	4
Hold Fast What You Have	6
The Church Rites	10
St. Paul's First Epistle To Timothy	18
Faith, Chastity & Inheritance	40
Circle of Transformation	46
Memorization	52

INTRODUCTION

Mahragan Alkeraza 2015

As we celebrated the conclusion of last year's Mahragan with the distribution of the trophies for the first, second and third place winners, we were grateful for God's blessings for a successful 2014 Mahragan. His Holiness Pope Tawadros II said during the Awards Ceremony in Egypt, "I am happy to see the activities of the Youth Bishopric, I am glad that our beautiful Church that is 2000 years old is full of young youth and I am proud to see the creative work and achievements of the youth."

Last year, in addition to the usual participation from Egypt and Sudan, we had a great worldwide participation from 192 Churches representing more than 20 countries and 8 languages.

The theme for Mahragan 2015 is **"Hold Fast What You Have, That No One May Take Your Crown"** (Rev 3:11). This year, God is asking each one of us to grow in Christ by:

1. Having a Strong and Unshaken Faith
2. Reading our Precious Bible Daily
3. Being Faithful to our God
4. Being Successful
5. Honouring Our Home

We hope that all of you will participate in the Mahragan activities this year, and encourage everyone you know to join us in one of the greatest annual events, presented by our mother, the Coptic Orthodox Church.

May God bless Mahragan Alkeraza this year and the efforts of all the participants and coordinators, through the prayers of our beloved father Pope Tawadros II.

✠ My best wishes for a happy
Festival

✠ Bishop Mousa

Hold Fast What You Have

“Hold fast what you have” (Rev 3:11)

That’s the advice that the Lord gave to St. John the Beloved when he was in exile on the island of Patmos. The Lord wanted to let John know that although the world will have many afflictions, if we are steadfast in faith, the final victory will belong to the Lord and His Church.

The Church went through many persecutions and although it was faced with resistance from many different empires throughout the ages, it was always victorious through God who loves it. Our Lord Jesus is the secret behind the victory of the Church, as Saint Paul the apostle said: “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Romans 8: 37)

Whatever tribulations we face on our way to the kingdom of heaven cannot be compared to the glory that we will receive there. We must pray, “Lord, strengthen me in order to endure everything that I encounter in the way, and be with me during my spiritual strive to the end”.

We must therefore hold fast to what we have:

1- Hold fast to our faith

The Church in the early centuries, and the Coptic Church in particular, struggled against many heretics and their heresies that rose against the Christian faith:

- Arius: against the divinity of the Son.
- Sabellius: against the Holy Trinity.
- Macedonius: against the divinity of the Holy Spirit.
- Eutyches: against the mystery of the Incarnation.
- Nestorius: against the unity of the divinity and humanity of our Lord Jesus.

And many others who fought but could not overcome the strength of the Christian faith.

The Nicene Creed confirms in clear decisive words the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the mystery of His incarnation, His redemption, His death and His resurrection, His ascension into heaven, and His sitting at the right hand of the Father after giving us eternal salvation.

It also tells us about God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth and how He revealed himself to us through the Incarnate Son. After we heard about Him from the prophets, we see Him incarnated, as St. John said: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

The Creed also tells us about the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who descended on the Apostles on the day of the Pentecost as tongues of fire divided on each one of them. They heard the sounds of mighty rushing wind declaring that this was the life-giving Spirit.

2- Hold fast to our Book

The Bible is the Word of God to man, and contains books, characters, events, and important lessons for us throughout the ages.

Gandhi said: "The Holy Bible is the crown of all books; the sermon on the mountain is the pearl of the Bible."

3- Hold fast to our doctrine

Faith is linked to a sound doctrine. The Mystery of the Church is the union between the "head", Christ, and the "body", the Church.

Orthodox thought, life, and behavior are all linked together. Our thoughts are responsible for our lifestyle. Thoughts lead to emotions, emotions lead to actions, actions lead to habits and habits become our lifestyle. This lifestyle will determine the quality of life and the relationships that we have in Church and in society.

4- Hold fast to our spirituality

In the sacrament of Baptism, the Lord gives us a garment of righteousness. The baptized person wears white clothes and a red ribbon is tied around his or her chest. This is a sign of renewal and cleansing with the blood of Christ our Redeemer. During the rites of Baptism, the baptized person renounces Satan and declares his faith in Jesus Christ. The baptized person turns from the west to the east,

HOLD FAST

what you have



symbolizing a turn from darkness to light, and from the north to the south, symbolizing a change from humiliation to dignity.

From then on, the baptized person strives to live a holy and spiritual life, bringing forth fruits of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5: 22-23).

5- Hold fast to our values

Whomever the Spirit renews is guided by the Spirit and lives a virtuous life. But this needs a spiritual struggle, daily spiritual practices and the guidance of a father of confession.

We also have to get used to examining ourselves. God tells us not to be negligent and beware of the "little foxes" (Song of Solomon 2:15). These little foxes enter through the smallest openings in the wall, but then begin to eat the fruit of the vine and cannot leave through those small openings anymore. They hide behind the big grape leaves, and the owner of the vineyard cannot see them. They keep growing little by little, and become a threat to the vineyard and the owner himself. These little foxes represent the small mistakes that we leave until they become big sins.

That's why we have to examine our behaviour daily, just as St. Paul tells us. "Have regard for good things in the sight of all men." (Romans 12:17). St. Paul says "all men" and does not only refer to the Church! In that, Jesus' teachings are spread to others, "that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven". (Matthew 5:16).

6- Hold fast to our Church

Our devotion and loyalty extends to our Church as we yearn to serve it, and are willing to sacrifice for its sake.

The Church Rites

A. Meaning of Church “rite”:

The word “rite” is taken from the Greek word “Taksys” which means order or system, and is used to describe the Church order.

In the Church, we practice theological rites.

Theo = God

Rite = Order.

Therefore, in the Church, we practice divine order.

The Church rite is the system on which is based our Church services, prayers, sacrament rituals, consecration prayers, building structure and organization, vessels, icons, readings, hymns and fasts.

The early Church fathers elevated our Church rites to the highest degree of perfection and spirituality, after enduring the Roman persecution which lasted nearly three centuries.

Our Coptic Church is an Evangelical Church which lives by the spirit of the Gospel. All our prayers and rites are arranged under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, according to the Bible. As a result, every rite in the Church has a corresponding Bible reference.

Rites are very important for worship, because everything that edifies must be structured. You may notice that if you visit an Orthodox Church anywhere in the world, you will feel a sense of familiarity and belonging, because the rites, the readings, the hymns and the structure are the same everywhere.

B. The Church rites include:

1. The liturgical Church prayers: the collective prayers of the people. The word Liturgy is taken from the word (Leos) which means people and (ergo) which means work (i.e. the work of the people). These prayers were put together that we all can pray with the same words and the same spirit. For example: The seven prayers of the Agpeya are used as collective prayers and also as individual prayers.

Prayer	Time	Occasion	Goal
Prime	6:00 am	Commemorate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, early Sunday and that He is the true light	It is intended to offer thanks to God for having raising us from the sleep, beseeching Him to shine upon us, enlighten our lives and grant us the power of His resurrection
Third hour	9:00 am	Commemorates 3 significant events: Christ's trial by Pilate, His ascension to Heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit	We ask the Holy Spirit to come upon us and to purify us
Sixth hour	12:00 pm	Crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. Include lots of deep spiritual feelings	We pray that, through Christ's life-giving passion, He may deliver our minds from lusts, and turn our thoughts to the remembrance of His commandments
Ninth hour	3:00 pm	Commemorates the redemptive death of Christ in the flesh on the Cross and His acceptance of the repentance of the thief	We ask our Lord to have a share in paradise
Eleventh Hour Vespers	5:00 pm Sunset	Taking down the body of Christ from the cross and shrouded His pure Body in linen	At the end of the day, we give thanks for God's protection and confess our sins with the prodigal son
Twelfth Hour Compline	End of the day	Commemorates the burial of Christ	We ask God to forgive our sins, we remember that this world is vain and that we need to be prepared
Midnight	3 midnight services	Commemorates the second coming of Christ	This prayer consists of three watches corresponding to the three stages of Christ's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane

HOLD FAST

what you have

2. The Church feasts: have their dates and specific prayers:

Minor Feasts of the Lord			
1	Feast of the Circumcision of our Lord	6 Touba	Luke 2: 21
2	Entry of our Lord to the Temple	8 Amshir	Luke 2:22-35
3	Flight of the Holy Family to Egypt	24 Bashans	Matthew 2:13-23
4	The wedding of Cana of Galilee, the first miracle of our Lord	13 Touba	John 2:1-11
5	Transfiguration of Christ	13 Misra	Matthew 17:1-8
6	Maundy Thursday (Holy Thursday)	Thursday of the Holy Week	Matthew 26:20-29
7	Thomas Sunday	First Sunday After Easter	John 20:24-29

Major feasts of the Lord			
1	Feast of the Annunciation	29 Baramhat	Luke 1:26- 38
2	Nativity	29 Kiahk	Matthew 2:1-12
3	Epiphany	11 Touba	Matthew 3:13-17
4	Palm Sunday	7th week of the Great Lent - Sunday Before Easter	Matthew 21:1-11
5	Easter (Resurrection)	The Sunday after Palm Sunday	Matthew 28:1-10
6	Ascension	40th day after Easter	Luke 24: 36-53
7	Pentecost (descent of the Holy Spirit)	10 days after the ascension	John 15:26 – 16:15

3. The Seven Church sacraments: each of which includes two aspects:
 - a. Doctrine: each sacrament is founded in the Bible by the Lord Jesus Himself and declares the Orthodox faith.
 - b. Ritual: how to practice and apply these sacraments, and the order of the prayers while performing the sacraments.
4. The Church readings: are written in the Katamaras, each day with its own readings.
5. Icons: have a specific organization and method of painting, which have profound meanings.

C. The importance of rites:

1. Rites unite the Church. The Church is the Body of Christ and its members are united by participating in the same Church rites. Rites affirm what Jesus emphasized about the oneness of the Church to His Apostles:
 - a. "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. (John 17:11).
 - b. "That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:"(John 17:21-22).
 - c. "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd." (John 10:16).

The rites unite the Church as all members pray the same liturgical prayers (which are considered the language of the Church). All together, they look towards the east waiting for the second coming of the Lord.

2. Rites ensure the sense of collectiveness. We all pray the same liturgy using the same words at the same time with one spirit. The Lord Himself commanded us to pray all together, when He said: "Our Father who are in heaven, hallowed be your name ..." (Luke 11:2). We see the collectivity in saying "our Father" not "my Father".
3. Rites explain the faith and preserve it, as they are transmitted from one generation to another without change or distortion. A rite is the practical application of the doctrine, which teaches us the faith as we apply it. For example in the Divine Liturgy, we learn about the divinity of Christ.

Many saints and ordinary people learned from the prayers of the liturgy and used its content to defend the faith against heretics. For example, the practice of the Eucharist proved that Eutyches is wrong when he claimed that the humanity of Christ dissolved in His divinity. What we eat in the Sacrament of the Eucharist is the real Body of Christ, which is on the altar.

4. Rites explain the truth in a simple manner. Example: doing the sign of the cross is a rite doctrine, but reflects the entire Christian dogma. It explains:
 - a. The Incarnation: In the name of the Father, (the Father sent His Son down to earth in the womb of the Virgin). We move our hand from our head down.
 - b. The atonement and redemption: we move our hand from left to right as we moved from darkness to light through salvation which was completed on the cross.
 - c. The Trinity: The name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God. Three in one.
5. Rites use our senses through seeing (icons), tasting (the Body and Blood of Christ), smelling (the incense), hearing (the hymns) and touching (the sign of the cross, relics of the saints, anointing with oil, etc..).

D. The source of rites:

1. The Bible is the source of all Church rites.
2. The teachings of the Apostles (Didaskalia), these teachings were put together by the twelve disciples and St. Paul and St. James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem.
3. The laws of the Holy Synod recognized by the Orthodox Church.
4. The laws of the Coptic Patriarchs and the Church Tradition.

The rites simplify and explain the Christian Orthodox faith, so that people from different cultures, generations and ages can understand Christianity. The rites also help us to worship God with our minds and bodies through the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

The rites preserved the Church Tradition, and preserved the faith and the spirituality of our beliefs. If it were not for the rites, we would have forgotten our Tradition especially in the periods when preaching and teaching Christianity was not strong.

On the surface, it appears that rites are sets of rules and commandments but in reality the rites are full of treasures that appear when we implement them regularly and honestly.

E. Hindrances to the spirituality of Church rites:

1. The lukewarm love to Christ:

Due to sin, our love for God grows weaker, "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12). If we do not love God, would we still enjoy sitting with Him? Sometimes we go late to liturgy, which reflects that we don't like to spend much time with God because our love is getting cold. This prevents us from enjoying Church rites and we start complaining of its length or rigidity. If our hearts are open to Christ, we will enjoy the rites.

2. Lack of awareness:

We have to understand what is said to be able to enjoy it. The lack of awareness prevents us from



feeling the beauty of the rites and their spirituality. Awareness means:

- a. Understanding the words in the rites of the Church, and focusing on the meaning.
- b. Understanding the order of prayers and the meaning and purpose of this order.
- c. Participating in singing the hymns, each tune has a meaning, and lifts our minds higher.

3. Routine:

We often go to Church as a duty. If we feel that Church rites are dialogues between Christ and us, we would be spiritually filled. As the priest stands in front of the altar speaking with Christ, we too have to stand in the Church and speak with Him. When we say Lord have mercy from our heart, we are in communion with God, and our heart is open to heaven and the saints, and the Church.

4. Our fast and busy life:

- a. Our preoccupation with many things is very dangerous for our spiritual life.
- b. It is very important to go to the Church and focus on our prayers and stay away from everything that distracts us.
- c. We have to learn how to concentrate in our prayer and not get occupied with other thoughts. Our main focus should be our Lord Jesus Christ.

F. How to live the Church rites:

1. Understanding:

We have to understand the Church rites to be able to participate.

2. Participating:

It is not enough to memorize and understand, we have to participate in the Church rites. Understanding will make participating enjoyable and put us in a spiritual atmosphere.

3. Focusing.

4. Feeling the presence of Christ in our prayers:

Christ is the joy of our life and the light of our path. Christ is the blood that runs in our veins, for us to stay alive. Christ is the bridegroom; Christ must be present in our lives.

We have to see Christ in every tune, every verse, every sermon, every rite, every occasion, and in every prayer.

HOLD FAST

what you have



Saint Paul's First Epistle To Timothy

INTRODUCTION

Who is Timothy?

- Timothy is a Greek name (Timotheos) meaning "the honor of God" or "righteous man of God".
- He believed in Christ through Saint Paul during his first missionary journey.
- His father was Greek, but His mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois, were Jews. His father died when he was young, his mother and grandmother raised him, teaching him the Holy Scriptures, but he was never circumcised.
- St. Paul circumcised him (Acts 16:22), not because circumcision is important but in order for him to preach in the synagogues, because everyone new that his father was Greek.
- St. Paul had a very close relationship with St. Timothy. He ordained him a bishop of Ephesus.
- When was this epistle written?
- This epistle was written around 64-65 A.D.
- What is the purpose of this epistle to Saint Timothy?
- This is a Pastoral Letter. While most of St. Paul's epistles are directed to a Church in a particular location, the pastoral letters are written to instruct specific leaders.
- St. Paul wrote this letter to Timothy to clarify his pastoral commitments in Ephesus.
- Theme of this Epistle: The Pastoral Care of the Faithful.
- The role of the Church is to manifest the Kingdom of God on earth – "Heaven on Earth".
- How is this done? The Church's function integrally connects both apostolic doctrine/teachings and worship.
- Other themes of this epistle include: (1) the role of the clergy, (2) combating heresy, (3) care for women, widows, and slaves, and (4) money and the ministry.
- This is a particularly attractive epistle to the youth. Timothy was a young minister, himself. Also, we will be called to lead in some capacity; whether in Church, at work, at school, or in our own homes. This epistle teaches us the characteristics of a strong leader in Christ.

HOLD FAST

what you have



CHAPTER 1

Greeting (v. 1-2)

1. Encouraging words to a young minister:
 - a. Timothy is a servant committed to preaching and witness in spite of hardships and difficulties, not only within the Ephesian Church, but also those that come from the pagan world.
 - b. As St. Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God, he also wishes to remind Timothy that his call is also from God.
 - c. St. Paul repeats the phrase “our Savior” in the Pastoral Epistles more than all the other epistles.
 - d. St. Paul calls Timothy “a true son” (genuinos – the original, true, genuine, or real son). St. Paul is Timothy’s spiritual father. This fatherhood reflects the heavenly Fatherhood of God. The Church reflects heaven on earth. The Church is a new family in faith.
 - e. Mercy. The typical Pauline greeting, “grace and peace,” is now expanded to include “mercy.” We need to realize the steadfastness of God’s love in order to be patient with others and offer them the same love and mercy. Related to mercy, Saint Paul also calls our Lord Jesus Christ, our hope.

Opposing Speculations with Faith (v. 3-4):

1. What did Saint Paul instruct Timothy to do?
 - a. Stay in Ephesus:
 - i. Timothy is the first one called to oversee the Church in Ephesus; the first bishop.
 - ii. Saint Paul urges or “pleads anxiously.” He does not command as a master to his slave, but urges and pleads in humility.
 - b. To instruct some Ephesians not to teach other doctrines:
 - i. There were those within the Church who were altering the Christian doctrine, and Timothy is called to fix both the ministers and the people of the Church.
 - ii. The people ought to cleave to the doctrine as it was delivered to them. This is the responsibility of all to preserve the correct Christian doctrine.
 - c. To instruct them not to give heed to fables:
 - i. Jewish fables, as St. Paul told Titus (1:14) “not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth”.
 - ii. Pagan fables of the Greek, Roman, and Persian cultures. These cultures had myths or stories about the descent of some gods to marry daughters of the people of this world.
 - d. And endless genealogies:
 - i. These cause disputes rather than godly edification, which is in faith. So what are these genealogies?

1. Jewish genealogies – there were Jews who had come into Christianity who were still boasting about their lineage or their ancestors, so they stumbled and fell into the trap of pride and vainglory.
 2. Greek genealogies – these also gave great importance; tracing their deities through certain genealogies.
 3. Referring to the Gnostic heresy; the Supreme Being had produced offspring. They believed they could attain the Supreme Being through knowledge as they passed through these 'Aeons' (divine beings), the series of offspring that came into being.
 - ii. St. Paul describes these genealogies as "endless" – tiresome and purposeless.
 - iii. These are not done in love, but in arrogance. They do not build up the Church, but break it down.
2. The Purpose of the Commandment:
- a. Love: Without love (love of God, and love for each other), we deviate from our mission.
 - b. From a Pure Heart: The heart must be cleansed from all sinful love.
 - c. From a Good Conscience: A real belief of the truth of the word of God.
 - d. From a Sincere Faith: Faith that is genuine.
 - e. What are examples of false love? What are examples of true love?
 - i. Saint Augustine says, "We can never love others truly unless we love the Lord. Each one who loves his neighbor as himself loves God, but if he does not love God, then he even does not love himself."
 - ii. Saint John Chrysostom says, "But about what kind of love is the apostle speaking? It is sincere love that is not based on mere words but that stems from the inner inclination and emotions of a being, for the apostle states: "from a pure heart." An evil life creates divisions since: "For everyone practicing evil hates the light" (John 3:20). It is true that there are friendships even among the wicked, for criminals and thieves love each other. Yet this love does not spring from a pure heart or a good conscience, but rather from a profane heart and not out of sincere faith, but from a false and hypocritical one...for faith indicates truth... and whoever truly believes in God cannot keep away from Him."

Opposing Legalism with Grace (v. 6-11)

1. To what did some turn astray and why did they do so?
 - a. They turned astray to idle talk:
 - i. Those who turn away from the true, Divine love mentioned in verse 5, are left with emptiness.
 - ii. Instead of filling that emptiness with God's love, they turn to idle talk – corrupt

- conversations, aimless controversies, and an unrighteous life, devoid of understanding what is his purpose in life.
- b. Desiring to be teachers of the Law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm (v. 7):
 - i. One reason for evil is the desire for authority.
 - ii. These look for dignity, yet they disregard the truth.
 - iii. The apostle blames these for they do not know the real aim of the law.
 - iv. They covered their weakness by claiming to be teachers and defenders of the Law. Their activities were not concerned with bringing themselves and others to the Truth (God), with a capital 'T', but they wanted to satisfy their selfish love of authority and supremacy.
 - c. The Law is not bad in and of itself, so long as one uses it lawfully (v. 8):
 - i. The fault is not in the law but in its abuse.
 - ii. The Jews at this time had stressed the letter of the law without realizing its purpose.
 - iii. The Law points to Christ at its heart.
 - d. Who is the law for and what does this all mean?
 - i. The law is for the following:
 1. The lawless and insubordinate - disobedient/rebellious – breaking the commandments intentionally and not out of weakness.
 2. For the ungodly and for sinners – those who commit sin boldly, without shame.
 3. For the unholy and profane – those who are convinced easily to sin without suffering from a guilty conscience.
 4. For murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers – those with the cruelest hearts, behaving as savages.
 5. For fornicators, for sodomites – adultery, impurity, performing that which is contrary to nature.
 6. For kidnappers – those who steal men to sell them as slaves.
 7. For liars, for perjurers – the worst liars.
 8. And if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine – those who not only commit evil but resist the truth.
 - ii. Once we enjoy a life with Christ and know that He dwells in us by His Holy Spirit, guiding our lives, and filling us, then there is no need to return again and fall under the rulings of the Law.
 - iii. Why does Saint Paul instruct Timothy as such? The subject of his preaching is the commandment whose end is love:
 1. It is love that opens our hearts.
 2. The law is presented to the worst and most profane of men to bring them into the

- glory of God's message and his love.
3. He wants these people to feel the need for a Savior.

Paul's Example: Salvation by Grace (v. 12-17)

1. Into what did God put Saint Paul?
 - a. Into the ministry.
 - b. As we said, the commandment's end is love.
 - c. It is this kind of love that enables pastors to care for the wicked, the criminals, the insubordinate, and all those mentioned in verses 9-10.
 - d. This commitment to the ministry is not a gift from a pastor to his people, but rather payment of a debt; the minister loves God by loving others.
2. Saint Paul: A Persecutor (v. 13):
 - a. What was Saint Paul before he became a Christian?

A blasphemer, a persecutor, an insolent man (rude, disrespectful, arrogant).
 - b. Saint Paul shows the practicality of God's love by drawing on his own experience.
 - c. Saint Paul was a great persecutor of the Christians. We see how God loved him much, for He rescued him from death and raised him to be a faithful servant of the Truth.
 - d. Saint Paul never said he was worthy of this love, but he obtained mercy; God showed His grace in abundance.
 - e. Saint Paul is an example for us that no one should despair due to any sin, for it shall be forgiven for him so long as he repents.
 - f. So how did Saint Paul come to resist the Christians in his early life?
 - i. He saw that Christianity was growing and that many disciples were following Christ
 - ii. Saint Paul persecuted them out of jealousy, in a sense, and not for the love of authority
 - iii. He thought Christianity was harmful, and he feared that it would become widespread.
 - iv. God's mercy rescued him and he was enlightened to the truth
3. "...to save sinners, of whom I am chief":
 - a. In light of the way the world treats sin today, Saint Paul's honesty and humility is remarkable.
 - b. We are all sensitive to sin. We do not like to be called sinners by others. Man is no longer concerned with sin, but worried about the consequences of sin: guilt, despair, and low-esteem. But as long as sin is not brought to God in humble and tearful repentance, the consequences of sin will continue to make life miserable for man.
 - c. The problem today is that we have lost our sense of sin:

Saint Antony the Great said, "A time is coming when men will go mad, and when they see someone who is not mad, and they will attack him saying, "You are mad, you are not like us." I believe we are living in those times.

- d. Saint Paul had such a great awareness of his sin. He calls himself the chief among sinners. How did he get such awareness? The closer he drew to God, the more aware he became of his sinfulness.
4. Many sins – One Cure (v. 15-16):
 - a. The confession of Saint Paul that he is the foremost among sinners does not end there. We need to realize that in spite of our many sins, there is one cure: Christ himself. Saint Paul is basically saying, “If Christ could forgive me, the foremost among sinners, then He certainly can forgive anyone else”.
 - b. Once we have repented, we establish union once again with God and become holy (sanctified)– One Cure (v. 15-16) receiving and partaking of His Body and Blood. We develop an intimate relationship with Him.
5. Glory and Honor (v. 17):
 - a. How do we give honor and glory to God?
 - i. By our deeds.
 - ii. By our words of praise.
 - iii. By sanctifying our body and spirit and committing our lives to the Lord, through the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. God was glorified in Saint Paul; Saint Paul became an example for all of us; a sinner who turned into a great servant.

Timothy Called to Faithfulness (v. 18-20):

1. “...according to the prophecies previously made concerning you...”:

Saint Clement of Alexandria does not say that the “prophecies” refer to Timothy specifically, but rather to the general prophecies of the Old Testament, Timothy’s ministry is the fulfillment of the specific prophecies about the spreading of the Gospel.
2. “good warfare”:
 - a. It is not enough that the minister struggles, but that he fights the good fight.
 - b. Today, we are fighting against a lot of false teachings and doctrines, so we are fighting to preserve the Truth; God’s commandments as they have come down to us from the Old and New Testaments.
3. “having faith and a good conscience”:
 - a. These are two elements that we need to achieve victory in the warfare against false teachings and in our own spiritual life.
 - b. Here, Saint Paul connects the ministry with the Word with the inner life of the minister.
 - c. Saint John Chrysostom comments on this phrase saying, “He, who wishes to be a teacher,

needs to teach himself first. A person cannot become a commander without having been a soldier first. The same applies to a teacher too; he needs to have been a student first. Saint Paul advises Timothy to have 'faith and a good conscience' in order to be able to help others.

- d. The result of deviating from the faith is "shipwreck".
4. "Hymenaeus and Alexander":
 - a. Hymenaeus:
 - i. Mentioned in 2 Timothy 2:17 & 1 Timothy 1:20.
 - ii. He strayed concerning the truth saying that the resurrection is already past and was overthrowing the faith of some.
 - iii. He denied the resurrection of the body on the Last Day.
 - b. Alexander:
 - i. The one mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:14 & 1 Timothy 1:20.
 - ii. He did Saint Paul "much harm".
 - c. These two men refused to obey the voice of the Lord due to their own pride.
 - d. Pride leads to "shipwreck", and therefore, it is important for ministers to keep all humility in the sight of the Lord.
 - e. Why were these two punished and temporarily expelled from the group? This excommunication is not punitive (does not serve as punishment), but it should be educative and lead to a "re-conversion." It is to protect the rest of the faithful people from false teachings.

CHAPTER 2

Faithfulness in Prayer (v. 1-7):

1. The Church is an assembly (eekleesia – ekklao – to gather; a gathering) dedicated and devoted to the worship of the Lord. This chapter examines how we ought to worship; which leads us into a personal relationship with God.
2. What are the elements of worship?
 - a. Supplications:
 - i. Making requests for our essential needs.
 - ii. Pleadings made in hope of receiving something.
 - b. Prayers:
 - i. Entering into a deep and loving personal relationship with Him and for Him alone.
 - ii. Expression of worship filled with praise and offered to God, alone.
 - c. Intercessions:
 - i. Offers intercessions or requests on behalf of all men; forgetting all his needs, and instead

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- prays for the needs of others; this is an act motivated by love.
 - ii. Request for specific matters presented to God by someone who has great and unusual hope.
 - d. Giving Thanks: An angelic life based on uninterrupted and constant thanksgiving and praise to God.
3. Saint Paul instructs that the people of the Church pray for those in authority so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.
 4. Also to pray for others as this is good in the sight of God. God wants us to be saved and to come to Him. He wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (v. 4).

Instructions for Male Worshippers (v. 8):

1. Pray everywhere:
Saint Paul calls for liberation from the customs of the Jews who were only permitted to draw near to God and offer their sacrifice in a specific place. Prayer is not confined to a specific place. If Saint Paul asks the Church to pray for everyone since Christ died for all, then it only makes sense that we pray everywhere.
2. Holy Hands:
This represents a holy life, sanctified (made holy) in the spirit. Prayer must be united with quiet and godly behavior.
3. We ought to approach God in the spirit of repentance; to be holy as He is holy.
4. When we stand to pray, we ought to be reconciled with all; being without anger. We also ought to pray with conviction and without doubt.

Instructions for Female Worshippers (v. 9-15):

1. Here, women are called to concern themselves with inner adornment rather than outer appearances.
2. Braided hair, gold pearls, costly clothing:
 - a. In the presence of God, there is no need for such things.
 - b. We are coming to pray for the forgiveness of sins.
 - c. How can one approach God in pleading, supplication, in humility, when they are adorned in such manner?
 - d. The ornaments pleasing to God are humility, chastity, commitment to order, and decency in one's attire.
3. The virtue is not in abstaining from outward adornment. The virtue lies in the commitment to adorn the heart with Christ's love.

4. "Professing godliness with good works":
The women ought to reflect God's sanctity and holiness and His characteristics within them.
5. "learn in silence with all submission":
 - a. Within the Jewish community, a woman was forbidden to study the Law and was not allowed to play any leadership role in social service.
 - b. However, under the Mosaic Law, women enjoyed many rights as compared to others living in the world in that time.
 - c. The Christian Church has offered many rights to women; the Church has always expressed that men and women are equal, but have different roles, in order to keep order and to prevent misunderstandings.
 - d. In the New Testament, we see that women were important during the time of Christ's ministry, and how fervent the women servants were in the Book of Acts. Saint Paul mentions these great women in his epistles, and often mentions them before their husbands, which was unusual at the time.
 - e. Saint Paul does not ignore the role of women in educating the family, fellow women, and towards herself.
 - f. It is a great honor for women to bear children and to teach their children to walk in faith, love, in holiness, and with self-control. The women offer saints to the Church in their children.

CHAPTER 3

Qualifications for Bishops (v. 1-7):

What is a Bishop? In Greek, episkopos, literally means "overseer."

1. "If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work." (v. 1). Saint Paul says that this man would desire a good work. However, the desire to be a bishop because one desires authority and dignity is clearly wrong:
 - a. In undertaking this work, the bishop desires to wash the feet of others and to sacrifice himself for everyone in Christ Jesus.
 - b. Saint John Chrysostom writes, "If anyone desires to be an overseer, he must not desire authority and dominion. He must desire to protect the Church spiritually. If he feels that way, I would not blame him. Even Moses desired the job but not the authority. Yet, his desire brought him sarcastic reproach, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us?' (Acts 7:27, Exodus 2:14) If anyone desires this job with such understanding, then let him desire it. For the role of the bishop has been called episcopacy due to the task of 'overseeing' that is involved in it."

2. The Characteristics of a Bishop (v. 2-7):

a. Blameless:

- i. The Bishop is one who provides for and administers to others. Therefore, he must be faultless, so that others may look up to him as a role model.
- ii. They need clarity in perceiving heavenly inspiration.
- iii. Be able to walk in the path of the Truth.
- iv. Needs to possess spiritual discernment.

b. The husband of one wife (in the early church):

- i. Saint Paul does not set this down as a command that the bishop should be married, but rather if he is married, he should be the husband of one wife, only, and not more.
- ii. This was an important reminder at that time since:
 1. The Jews were not only allowed to get married twice, but also to have two wives at the same time.
 2. Polygamy was allowed and prevalent among the Gentiles.
 3. Those who are ordained should be from among the chaste and the pure.

c. Temperate:

- i. He needs to be cautious, sharp in his sight, having an unclouded inner vision (Chrysostom).
- ii. As an overseer, he must see and be aware of his own personal salvation as well as that of his spiritual brothers.
- iii. His goal towards Christ should be very clear so that he is on the path and he is bringing others to the path with him.
- iv. Therefore, he should not be so preoccupied with administrative duties that he loses this vision.

d. Sober-minded:

- i. The bishop should not go to extremes.
- ii. He should guide his children providing for all their needs; that is, balancing all aspects of their life: the spiritual, the psychological, the social, and the physical.
- iii. He also needs to know how to deal with all kinds of people: adolescents, elders, poor, rich, married, virgins, the humble, the arrogant, etc.

e. Good behavior:

- i. Good behavior and modest in appearance, action, and speech.

f. Hospitable:

- i. He takes the example of Father Abraham, receiving strangers. "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels" (Hebrews 13:2).

- ii. Hospitality indicates a generous heart filled with practical love.
- iii. If he does not have this kind of love before his ordination, then how could he offer lovingly his life as a sacrifice to serve his congregation in becoming a bishop?
- g. Able to teach:
 - i. This is not a requirement for those who are being provided for, but certainly essential for those who are ordained and provide for others (Chrysostom).
 - ii. It is a gift from God and not granted to all.
- h. Not given to wine:
 - i. Giving to wine reveals an empty heart that needs to be filled.
 - ii. The bishop should be filled with the Holy Spirit. Not giving to wine is a sign of his fullness of the real spiritual wine, the wine of the Holy Spirit that grants joy to the soul.
 - iii. It is fullness and a spiritual wine that pours out to others.
 - iv. Giving to wine also indicates an undisciplined soul and laxity in behavior. This leads to a loss of chastity. The person who lives for pleasure is dead. As for the drunkard, he is not only dead but buried (Saint Jerome).
- i. Not violent:

Violence is no way to solve inner renovation. The bishop must not use violence to persuade his flock, but penetrate their hearts with love.
- j. Not greedy for money:
 - i. If he is greedy for money, how could the bishop know how to offer his wealth and life in the ministry of his people?
 - ii. Riches will tie him down. He needs to put the rights and needs of his people ahead of his own.
- k. Gentle, not quarrelsome:
 - i. It is gentleness and humility that our Lord taught, and He told us to imitate this quality.
 - ii. The Bishop is an agent of Christ on earth and therefore must do the same. He must live in the spirit of his Master in order to present a living picture of the humble King.
- l. Not covetous:
 - i. This is a bad trait in any, but worse for the minister who has it.
 - ii. He should not desire the possessions of another, as he is called to give and to sacrifice.
- m. One who rules his own house having his children in submission with all reverence (early church):
 - i. Why? For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the Church of God?
 - ii. In one's house, the children will submit to their parents because of the natural bond between them.

- iii. But laws do not dictate the submission of the people to their Church fathers. This can only be accomplished through spiritual love and faith.

If he has not gathered people around him before his ordination, how can he expect to win them to Christ afterward?

n. Not a novice:

So he does not fall into pride. Age is not the concern here, but rather maturity in the faith.

Saint Timothy was young in age, but mature in the faith.

Being new to the faith and having zeal to serve can be a dangerous combination. It can lead to self-imposition and arrogance. The servant must be wise so that he does not lose his soul by his own pride and destroy the souls of others who are entrusted to his care.

o. Good testimony among those who are outside:

i. Lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

ii. It is easy for believers to give a good report of their leaders and servants within the Church. But when non-believers give a good report, it is a confirmation of that belief.

iii. Even enemies can see a good life, just as anyone can see light and differentiate it from darkness.

Qualifications for Deacons (v. 8-13)

1. Who are deacons?

a. Comes from the Greek “diakonos”, which means “servant”.

2. Characteristics of Deacons:

a. Reverent:

i. They need to have dignity, having the same characteristics of the bishop.

ii. “For there is nothing more demeaning to man than dishonesty, and nothing more harmful to the Church than not attaining salvation” (Chrysostom).

b. Not double-tongued, Not given to much wine, Not greedy for money, Holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience:

i. These are the same characteristics listed for the bishop.

ii. Double-tongued – to say one thing and to say another (or to do another).

iii. Working in the same vineyard, everyone needs to possess the same traits as the Owner, who is Christ. They need to possess His One Holy Spirit.

iv. Saint Paul also mentions that deacons must first be approved since they have not been ordained before. Whereas bishops have first received the priestly rank and have practiced before their ordination as bishop.

- c. Blameless.
- d. Wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things (a teaching concerning the wives of deacons).
- e. Husbands of one wife.
- f. Ruling their children and their own houses well:
All these words about the conduct of the hierarchy lead to the correct view, role, and conduct of the Church.

The Guide for Faithfulness: An Early Creed (The Concept of the Pastor regarding the Church) (v. 14-16):

1. "I hope to come to you shortly" (v.14):
 - a. Saint Paul may have been concerned that Timothy would be overcome with frustration, so he promises to go to him.
 - b. Although he promises to come soon, Saint Paul assures him not to give in to depression if he does not arrive soon.
 - c. This is a better opportunity for Timothy, to use this tribulation, to exert an even greater effort as a minister in the Church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of truth.
2. The pillar and ground of truth (v. 15):
 - a. Christ is the Truth who holds the whole Church together.
 - b. The Church is the means by which we reach truth, who is Christ
 - c. Saint Jerome says, "The Church does not embrace walls and buildings, but rather comprises the truth of her teachings. She is the true faith! Actually, ever since fifteen or twenty years after the rise of the Church, heretics have controlled all its buildings. However, the true Church exists wherever the true faith exists"
3. The Mystery of Godliness (v. 16):
 - a. The Church does not concern itself with mere intellectual knowledge of truth, but really represents the practical attainment of truth through a holy and godly life.
 - b. The Divine Incarnation – Christ taught us how to live.
 - c. We can enjoy His life, His characteristics, and have fellowship in His glory!
4. Justified in the Spirit (v. 16):

It is the Spirit that makes us steadfast in the Lord Jesus Christ and takes us to Him, not only to be washed in His precious Blood for our sins, but also to grant us His righteousness so that we may be seen as righteous by the Father.
5. Seen by Angels (v.16):
 - a. The Church is truly heaven on earth; living an angelic life.
 - b. The believers are like angels able to perceive the intangible God.

- c. The Church in the New Testament is the revelation of the only Son in the midst of His believers.
 - d. The angels who had seen God before the incarnation have come to see Him in a new light after He was incarnate in His Church:
 - i. He is seen as the lover of mankind through His crucifixion and His amazing work among the believers:
Those who were once sinners and enemies have been transformed, sanctified, justified, and have become beloved children, glorified in Him!
6. Preached among the Gentiles (v.16):
- a. These gifts are offered to all of mankind.
 - b. No nation or race is given preference.
 - c. In order to elevate all of mankind into the heavenly glory.

We ought to see the Church as a practical enjoyment of truth. She embodies the mystery of the Incarnation, the entry into the life of godliness, the justification of the soul, and the fellowship with the angels.

CHAPTER 4

Watch Yourself (v. 1-6):

1. "Forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from foods":
 - a. The heretics, who had Gnostic tendencies, viewed the body as evil.
 - b. Their misconception led them to preach abstention from marriage and from eating meat.
 - c. The Christian views the body as God's good and holy creation.
 - d. How do we know that the body is not evil?
 - i. From the beginning, God created man with a body, and everything that He created was good.
 - ii. Our Lord Jesus Christ accepted a body like ours, and sanctified it (made it holy).
 - e. How do we know that God blessed the relation between husband and wife?
 - i. In the beginning, God created them male and female.
 - ii. Christ said, "Have you not read that He who made them in the beginning 'made them male and female' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:4-6).
 - iii. Furthermore, Christ attended the Wedding at Cana of Galilee, and performed His first miracle there, forever sanctifying the sacrament of matrimony.

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- iv. With God, the married couple will conceive children who will be members in the holy Body and children of God.
- f. God created food to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth:
 - i. We control our passions not because the material world is evil, but because we are corrupt and tend to sin.
 - i. Disobedience, an unthankful disposition, and uncontrolled desires are evil.
 - ii. The Church instructs us to bring us back to God.
- 2. The first three verses instruct us therefore to watch ourselves against false teaching. The instruction continues in verses 4-6:
 - a. Saint Paul connects the sanctification of matter (marriage & foods) with sanctification of man through the incarnation of our Lord (the Word (Logos) of God).
 - b. Thanksgiving, the word of God, Prayer:
 - i. These are elements of orthodox worship and sanctification; and another example of how the life of the Church reflects heaven on earth.
 - ii. The sacrifice of the incarnate Word of God, thanksgiving, and prayerful life are all intimately connected in the Liturgy. We gather to pray - We listen to Christ speaking to us in the Gospel and we see His sacrifice for us on the altar (His Body and Blood) - We give thanks for this sacrifice by participating in it in the Holy Eucharist.
 - c. How can we watch ourselves from falling into false teaching? (verse 6):
 - i. Education and Knowledge of the truth – “Instruct the brethren”:
When we know the truth, we develop a personal relationship with the Lord, we can guard ourselves and protect ourselves against false teaching and evil desires.
 - ii. Mere knowledge is not enough, but to be nourished in the words of faith:
 - 1. We must bring Christ Himself to Others.
 - 2. Be nourished in the words of the faith (the gospel, the good news).
 - 3. And the doctrine (the teachings) that we have carefully followed for our salvation.
 - 4. Using words without the Word (without a deepening relationship with the Savior) is in vain.

Exercise Yourself (v. 7-11):

- 1. Spiritual Exercise:
 - a. Reject profane and old wives' fables:
 - i. These are no longer appropriate to the new life we have in Christ.
 - ii. Therefore, the spiritual person has to keep progressing out of childhood into manhood. By reverting back to old behavior and old habits, we do not progress spiritually.
 - b. Physical exercise is good for the body, but spiritual exercise is profitable for all things, having

promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. Physical exercise could be beneficial to the body, but it cannot benefit the soul unless it is linked to the spirit.

- c. What are the results of spiritual exercise?
 - i. Trust and Confidence in the living God, who is the Savior of all men.
 - ii. We will lead a happy life. If physical exercise were only enough, then every athlete today would lead a happy and joyous life.
 - iii. We will rejoice in spite of any pain.
 - iv. The Cross becomes sweet in spite of all the pain, labor, and bitterness and deprivation that it brings.
 - v. There can be no joyous resurrection without the suffering on the Cross.
 - vi. The work of the Savior is for all men, but only those who believe will feel this work and participate in it.

Give Yourself (12-16):

1. "Let no one despise your youth":
 - a. Even if you are young, you have a role in the Church and should not feel inferior. The elder is not judged according to his age but according to his wisdom.
 - b. As you are blameless, your youth will never be despised.
 - c. At the same time, those who are blameless will never be debased because of their youth. On the contrary, these blameless youth will be admired in the end (both from the elders and their peers).
2. "be an example to the believers". In Word, Conduct, Love, Spirit, Faith and Purity.
3. What are practical things that we can do in our everyday lives to be an example to all people in these areas?
4. "Give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine":
 - a. The servant must constantly progress in his spiritual life.
 - b. The servant plays the dual role of student and teacher.
 - c. He grows daily, learning, and producing fruit in his own life first, then overflows and spills over to others, for the benefit of his fellow men and spiritual children.
5. The gift of the priesthood is granted to invest a person with responsibility rather than an honor. It needs someone to dedicate their whole life, their energy, and talents to the ministry of these free gifts.
6. The progress must be evident to all.
7. There has to be balance in the life of a minister to act spiritually for his own edification as well as that for God's people. His spiritual life must not come at the expense of his own progress.

CHAPTER 5

Pastoral Care

1. General care (1, 2):
 - a. Wisdom in dealing with everyone to gain them to Christ.
 - b. Use the appropriate method for each situation.
 - c. The pastor does not deal with people from a position of authority but with love and gentleness.
2. Care for widows (3 – 16):
 - a. Who is a widow indeed?

In the Church at Jerusalem the widows were honored (Acts 6:1). The teaching of Saint Paul here seems to place widows who were above sixty years old, and without children or grandchildren to support them, in a class of Church widows devoted to the work of the Church, and be supported out of its funds.
 - b. The Church cares for the widow and God is her guardian.
 - c. What is the behavior of a widow?
 - i. Trust in God.
 - ii. Continue in supplications and prayers night and day.
 - iii. Not lead a life of pleasure or leisure.
 - iv. Blameless.
 - d. Role of the family members towards widows:

Children and grandchildren must support their aged parents. Any one who does not provide for his own family, whether it is wife and children, or aged parents, has practically denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever, for even unbelievers do these things.
 - e. Conditions to enroll widows in the rank of the Church:
 - i. Age.
 - ii. Wife of one man.
 - iii. Well reported for good work.
 - iv. Brought up children.
 - v. Lodged strangers.
 - vi. Washed the saints' feet.
 - vii. Relieved the afflicted.
 - viii. Diligently followed every good deed.
3. Care for the elders (priests) (17 – 25):
 - a. The care of the Church for the priest. Support their needs to focus on their spiritual labor. "And

- the laborer is worthy of his reward” (Mathew 10:10 and Luke 10:7)
- b. Do not accept an accusation against an elder except from two to three witnesses
 - c. If there is a threat to the faith from their behavior, rebuke them in public to protect the faith of the Church
 - d. Care in choosing priests. He who appoints an unfit man to office becomes in a certain sense responsible for that man’s sins.
4. Suggestion for Timothy in his sickness (23):
Saint Paul advises Timothy, that instead of water, he tries light wines, “for his stomach’s sake and his frequent infirmities”. The prescription is not of a beverage, but of a remedy for his sickness.
5. Good and bad works of others (24, 25):
Saint Paul emphasizes that the Church should be careful in the choice for the priest.

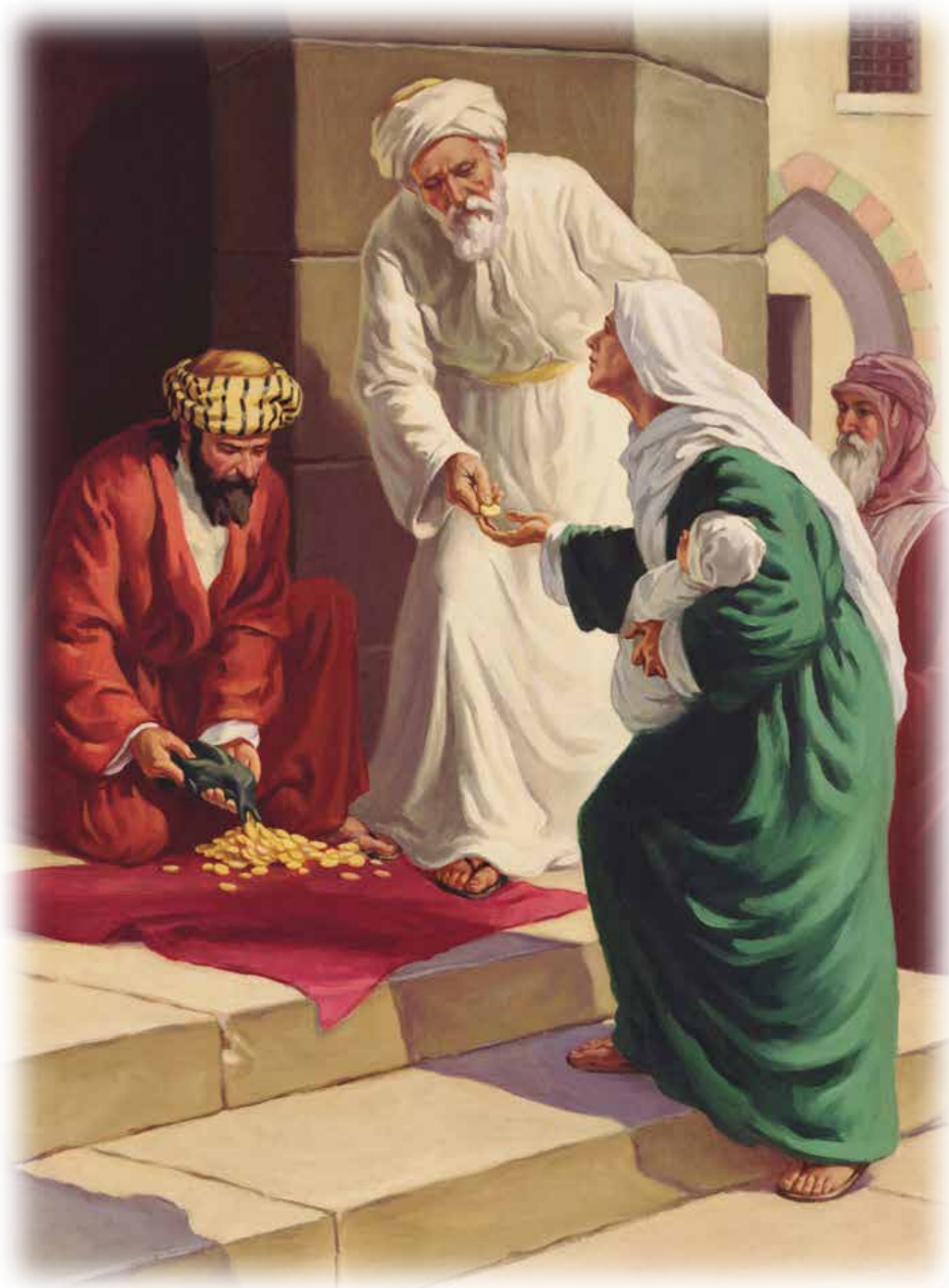
CHAPTER 6

Social Relationships:

1. Advice for Slaves (v. 1-2):
 - a. He asks slaves who are ‘under the yoke’ to live a Christian life and not disrespect their masters, even if they are oppressing them. Everyone is worthy of Christ’s love.
 - b. The slaves with gentle masters should also treat them with love because the masters are believers. Do not abuse the brotherhood relationship. We have our temporal duties and St. Paul asks us to abide by this fact.
2. Error in the Doctrine (v. 3-5): Those who do not abide by the laws of Christ and think they know everything by using many words and arguments really know absolutely nothing. St. Paul asks Timothy and his congregation to stay away from such people.
3. Greed (v. 6-10): A message to those who wish to be rich (not necessarily those who are rich):
 - a. We need to seek godliness and nothing more. This is considered “great gain” according to St. Paul
 - b. Realize that we only need to survive, not live in riches. We will die carrying the same things as when we came in to the world—absolutely nothing.
 - c. Those who use their money wisely to help people can be rich and still be on the path of salvation.
4. The Good Confession (v. 11-16):
 - a. St. Paul reminds Timothy that a man of God, has a responsibility.
 - b. It is not enough to simply not lust for riches. He must flee from these things.
 - c. Fight the good fight of faith and hold fast to the eternal life.

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- d. To keep the commandment blameless.
 - e. St. Paul is very serious in this request. He asks Timothy and his people to obey these things in the “sight of God” and “before Jesus Christ...until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing.”
5. Instructions to the Rich (v. 17-19):
- a. Do not be arrogant
 - b. Do not depend on money, but on God.
 - c. Your riches are not on earth, but in heaven
 - d. Your earthly wealth is not yours, but God’s, so be generous and share it with others.
6. Guarding the Faith:
- a. St. Paul passes down the apostolic inheritance to Timothy.
 - b. He speaks against the Gnostics of the current time. People without faith have no knowledge.

Faith, Chastity & Inheritance

Hold fast to your faith: St. Polycarp the martyr

Imagine being able to sit at the feet of the apostles and hear stories about Jesus from their own lips. Imagine walking with those who had walked with Jesus, seen Him, and touched Him. That's exactly what St. Polycarp did. St. Polycarp was a disciple of St. John the beloved who ordained him bishop of Smyrna.

He is the angel of the Church of Smyrna to whom the Lord wrote in the Book of Revelation: "These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things that you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." Revelation 2:8-10

During a period of Christian bloodshed and martyrdom, they used to enclose Christians in an arena filled with wild animals in order to torture and kill them. One day, the arena's crowd demanded more blood by crying, "Down with the atheists; let Polycarp be found." (They considered Christians "atheists" because they didn't believe in their pantheon of gods.)

St. Polycarp was calm but others persuaded him to leave the city and hide at a nearby farm. He spent his time praying for the Church and for God to strengthen the people. During his prayer, he saw a vision of his pillow turning to fire. He knew that this dream meant that he would be burned alive. As the search for St. Polycarp closed in, he moved to another farm and stayed upstairs in the house. Word got out that he was there and his captors were determined to find him. The Christians warned him to run, but he refused saying, "God's will be done."

When his captors arrived to the house, he went downstairs, talked to them and fed them a meal. All he asked of them was that they give him an hour to pray. Many of his captors started to wonder why they were arresting this holy, eighty-six-year-old bishop. But that didn't stop them from taking him into the arena. As he entered the arena, the crowd roared like the animals as they cheered. Those around Polycarp heard a voice from heaven above the crowd, "Be brave, Polycarp."



The Proconsul asked him whether he was Polycarp. On hearing that he was, he tried to persuade him to apostatize (renounce his Christian belief), saying, "Have respect for your old age, swear by the fortune of Caesar. Repent, and say, 'Down with the Atheists!'" Polycarp looked grimly at the wicked heathen multitude in the arena, and gesturing towards them, he said, "Down with the Atheists!" "Swear," urged the Proconsul, "reproach Christ, and I will set you free." "86 years I have served him," Polycarp declared, "and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?"

Finally, when all else failed the proconsul reminded Polycarp that he would be thrown to the wild animals unless he changed his mind. Polycarp answered, "Change of mind from better to worse is not a change allowed to us." Because of Polycarp's lack of fear, the proconsul told him he would be burned alive but Polycarp knew that the fire that burned for an hour was better than eternal fire. When he was tied up to be burned, St. Polycarp prayed, thanking God that he made him worthy to die for His name and asking God to accept his soul.

The fire was lit. The eyewitnesses who reported said they saw a miracle. The fire burst up in an arch around Polycarp, the flames surrounding him like sails, and instead of being burned, he seemed to glow like bread baking, or gold being melted in a furnace. When the captors saw he wasn't being burned, they stabbed him. The blood that flowed put the fire out. St. Polycarp was neither afraid nor intimidated by death. He held fast to his faith.

Hold fast to your chastity: Susanna the chaste

Susanna is a Hebrew name meaning flower "lily". The story of Susanna is found in the Deuterocanonical books (Daniel 13). She is a great example of a person who held fast to her purity and understood that sin is death. Susanna lived in Babylon and was married to a man named Joakim. Susanna, the daughter of Hilkihah, was a very beautiful and God-fearing woman. Her parents were righteous and trained her according to the Law of Moses.

Joakim was very rich and had a garden near his house. The Jews often asked for his advice because he was the most respected of them all. That year, two elders of the people were appointed judges. These men, to whom all brought their cases, frequented the house of Joakim. Susanna used to enter her husband's garden for a walk. When the elders saw her enter every day for her walk, they began to lust for her. One day they said to each other, "Let us be off for home, it is time for the noon meal." So they went their separate ways. But both turned back and arrived at the same spot. When they asked each other the reason, they admitted their lust, and then they agreed to look for an occasion when they could find her alone.

One day, while they were waiting for the right moment, she entered as usual with two maids, wanting to bathe in the garden, for the weather was warm. Nobody else was there except the two elders, who had hidden themselves and were watching her. "Bring me oil and soap," she said to the maids, "and shut the garden gates while I bathe." They did as she said; they shut the garden gates and left by the side gate to fetch what she had ordered, unaware that the elders were hidden inside. As soon as the maids had left, the two old men got up and ran to her. They asked her to commit the sin with them otherwise they will accuse her with adultery.

"I am completely trapped," Susanna groaned. "If I yield, it will be my death; if I refuse, I cannot escape your power. Yet it is better for me not to do it and to fall into your power than to sin before the Lord." They then witnessed that they saw her in the garden with a young man and everyone believed them because they were judges. Susanna knew the law, and that she would be put to death but she would rather keep her purity and die than to sin against the Lord. Susanna cried aloud: "Eternal God, you know what is hidden and are aware of all things before they come to be: you know that they have testified falsely against me. Here I am about to die, though I have done none of the things for which these men have condemned me." The Lord heard her prayer. As they took her to be executed, God stirred up the holy spirit of a young boy named Daniel.

Daniel asked that the two elders be separated from one another and he will examine them. After they were separated from each other, he called one of them and said: "Now, then, if you were a witness, tell me under what tree did you see them together?" "Under a mastic tree," he answered. Putting him to one side, he ordered the other one to be brought. Daniel said to him: "Now, then, tell me under what tree did you find them together?"

"Under an oak tree," he said. "Your fine lie has cost you also your head," said Daniel. The whole assembly cried aloud, blessing God who saves those who hope in Him. They rose up against the two old men, and condemned them to the fate they had planned for their neighbour: in accordance with the Law of Moses, they put them to death. Thus, innocent blood was spared that day. Hilkiah and his wife praised God for their daughter Susanna, with Joakim her husband and all her relatives, because she was found innocent of any shameful deed.

Hold fast to your inheritance: Naboth the Jezreelite

Naboth is a Hebrew name that means "fruit produce". He was the owner of a piece of land on the eastern slope of the hill of Jezreel (1 Kings 21 & 2 Kings 9:25-26). This small piece of land seems to

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have been all he possessed. It was a vineyard, and laid "hard by the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria" (1 Kings 21:1-2), who greatly coveted it. Naboth, however, refused on any terms to part with it to the king. He had inherited it from his fathers, and no Israelite could lawfully sell his property (Lev. 25:23). He said to Ahab, "The Lord forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!" (1 Kings 21:3).

Jezebel, Ahab's wife, was grievously offended at Naboth's refusal to part with his vineyard. By a crafty and cruel plot, she compassed his death. (2 Kings 9:26; 1 Kings 21:19). She sent to the elders of the town and asked them to accuse Naboth of blasphemy against God and the king and stone him that he may die. They then sent to Jezebel to tell her that Naboth has been stoned and that he was dead. She then came to Ahab and said, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard; for Naboth is not alive, but dead." Ahab arose and went forth into the garden, which had been so treacherously and cruelly acquired, seemingly enjoying his new possession. But God was very displeased and He sent Elijah to Ahab to deliver the message of the Lord. So Elijah said to Ahab, "Thus says the Lord: "Have you murdered and also taken possession?" "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours." (1 Kings 21:19-20).

Notes:

1. In Israel giving away the inheritance of the fathers was a sin. The sons inherit their fathers to keep the land and the name of the family. For example, we call Israel the land that belongs to the Children of Israel.
2. The King inherits whoever has no heir: That's why he killed Naboth and his sons to inherit him.

Naboth held fast to the inheritance of his fathers and to the Law of God, despite:

- 1- Ahab's promises: Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying: "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money." (1 Kings 21:2).
- 2- Threatening: he knew that he would be stoned to death because he refused the king's request. "And seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, "You have blasphemed God and the king." Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die." (1 Kings 21:10).

If Naboth held fast to the inheritance of his fathers even to death, we also ought to hold fast to our heavenly inheritance. We must strive in our spiritual life in order not to lose our eternal inheritance.

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Circle of Transformation

The Book of Judges – Chapters 1-8, 13-16

The book of Judges talks about two types of transformation:

1. A change for the worse: After they inherited the Promised Land, the people of Israel began to turn away from God. They did not stay away from the foreign nations as commanded by the Lord. As a result, the Israelites deviated from God's way and went after foreign gods.
2. A change for the better: When God permitted them to fall in the hands of their enemies, they cried out to Him. God sent them a deliverer to help them overcome their enemies so they can return to Him.

Introduction

1. The book is called Judges because it contains the works of the Judges of Israel. The word "judge" in Hebrew means "leader". This era started from the death of Joshua to the death of Samuel the prophet (the writer of this book).
2. There are 15 Judges mentioned in the Holy Bible, thirteen of them in the book of Judges and the last two, Eli the priest and Samuel the prophet, in the first book of Samuel. A judge was considered as a saviour who would deliver the people from their enemies. They all symbolized the Lord Jesus Christ our true Saviour.
3. Judges had authority, but not as kings because God was the true King. He gave His message to the people through the High Priest. Each tribe leader was responsible for his tribe. The role of the Judge was political, military and religious. They also judged between the people to resolve conflict.
4. The book of Judges consists of three parts:
 - a. The condition of the people after Joshua's death (Chapter 1-2)
 - b. The Judges' rule (Chapter 3-16)
 - c. Two major events during the Judges' rule (Chapter 17-24)

Chapter 1

1. The Lord promised to give the land of Canaan to the Jews. The Israelites lived waiting for the fulfillment of this promise until Joshua the son of Nun became their leader. He led the

people across the Jordan to the Promised Land and distributed the land among them. The Lord commanded the people to destroy all foreign nations around them. However, after Joshua died, some foreign nations still lived among them.

2. The Lord chose the tribe of Judah to lead the people against the Canaanites. Judah asked Simeon his brother to help him.
3. Judah and Simeon went up and fought Adoni-Bezek, who had defeated and tortured seventy kings. They pursued him, caught him and brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.
4. And the house of Joseph went up against Bethel, and the Lord was with them. Joseph, who is a symbol of Christ, came after Judah.
5. The Israelites did not get rid of the foreign nations as God commanded. God did not want them to learn their religions and bad habits, as they were a symbol of sin, which we should eradicate from our life completely.

Message:

We must not associate with bad friends or pursue bad relationships that can drive us away from God and teach us bad habits.

Chapter 2

1. The Angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim.
2. The Angel of the Lord is one of the manifestations of God the Logos in the Old Testament. He first led the people to Gilgal where they were victorious. At Bochim, He reprimanded them for their sin in neglecting God's covenant and making a new covenant with the foreign nations. When the people heard these words, they raised their voices and cried and saw the need to change.

Message:

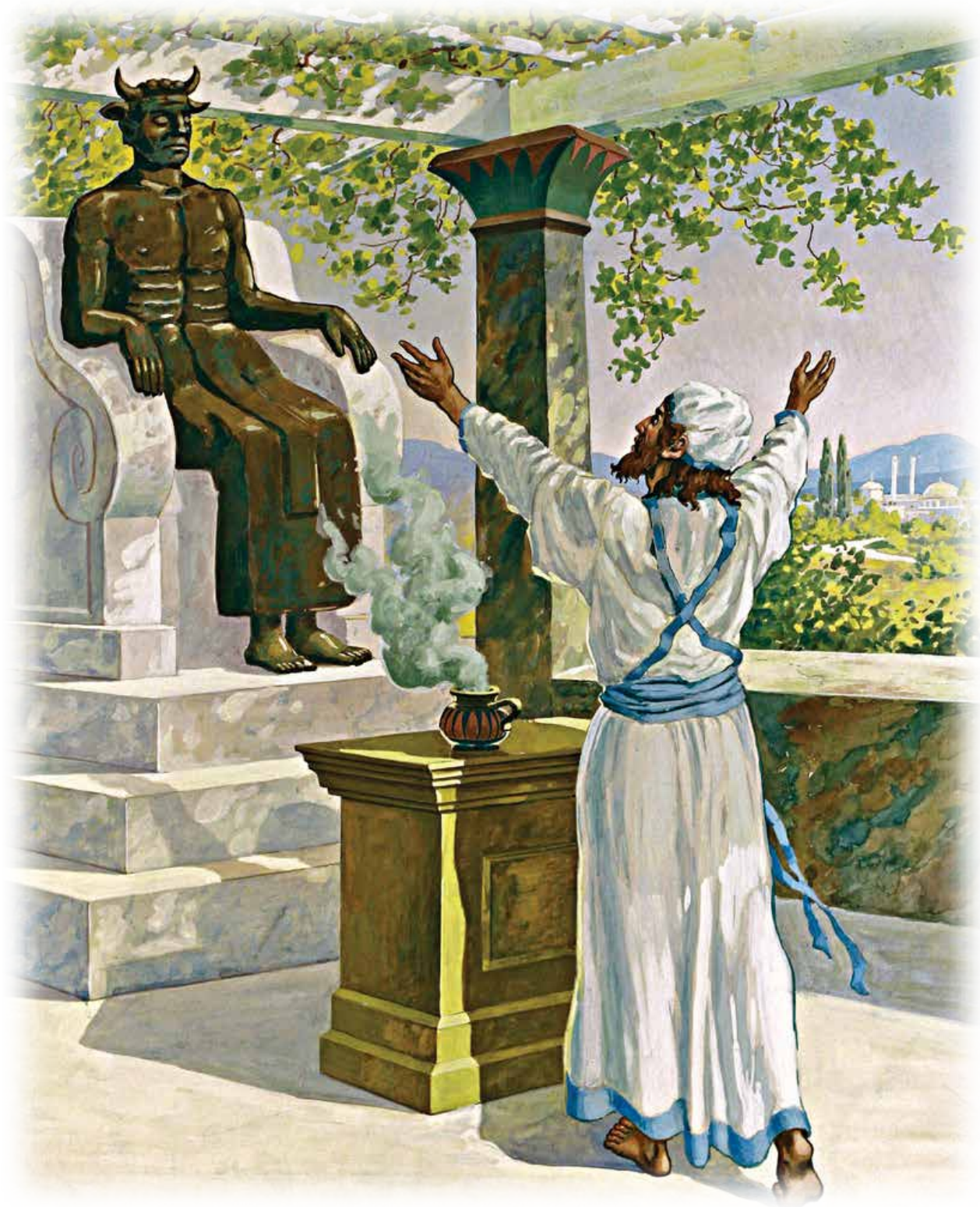
God was angry because the people were careless to obey and follow His commandments. However, when the people cried out to Him in repentance, God accepted His children in His love. If we want to receive God's grace and help, we must repent and change. God will be faithful to His covenant and this gives us hope.

Chapter 3

1. This chapter started with Israel being careless to get rid of the foreign nations. The Lord allowed these nations to punish Israel and to be an instrument of war to train Israel to live the life of victory by depending on God.

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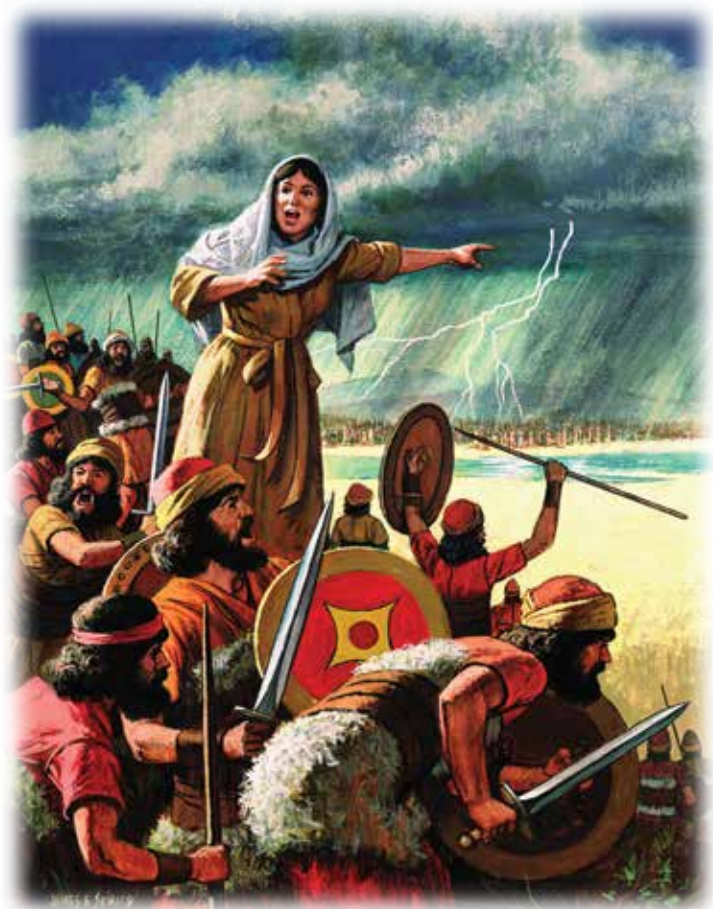
2. Because of these nations, the people turned away from God and married people among them which led them to worship idols.
3. God's people sinned twice by marrying foreigners and worshipping idols. When they removed this evil and cried to the Lord, He sent Othniel the son of Kenaz to deliver them. "Othniel" means God's answer or God's power. He was the first judge from the tribe of Judah.
4. There was peace in Israel for 40 years and then the people returned to sin. God delivered them into the hand of Eglon king of Moab. He gathered to himself the people of Ammon and Amalek and possessed the City of Palms (Jericho).
5. The people cried to the Lord, and He sent them a deliverer, Ehud the son of Gera. He was the second judge, from the tribe of Benjamin. He killed Eglon, the king of Moab, in his private chamber then escaped. He blew the trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim and the children of Israel came to him, and they killed 10,000 men. There was peace in Israel for 80 years.
6. After him was Shamgar, the son of Anath, who killed six hundred Philistines with an ox goad and delivered Israel.

Message:

It is important to keep ourselves away from the corrupt habits of the unbelievers as St. Paul warned us saying, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers." (2 Corinthians 6:14)

Chapter 4

1. The Israelites sinned again so the Lord delivered them into the hand of Jabin, the king of Canaan who reigned over them for 20 years. They cried to the Lord, and He sent them Deborah the prophetess (fourth judge) who delivered them from Sisera.



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2. The Lord chose Deborah to do this great job to emphasize that men are not greater than women.
3. Deborah asked Barak to take 10,000 men from the tribe of Naphtali and Zebulun to fight Sisera. He refused to go without her because he trusted in her spirituality as a prophetess and her wisdom as a judge. Also, the people loved and trusted her. She went with Barak after she encouraged him, "Rise up! For this is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand."
4. The Lord fulfilled His promise and routed Sisera and all his army before Barak. Sisera escaped and went to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber, and hid there. Jael killed him while he was in deep sleep. Then she went out of the tent and told Barak, fulfilling what Deborah said, "the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman."



Message:

We are one in Christ and every member has a role, like the unity between Deborah and Barak.

Chapter 5

1. Deborah's song was the song of victory. She sang it when the Lord delivered His people from Sisera.
2. She began her song by blessing the Lord and ended it by glorifying Him for His great work and grace.

Message:

Deborah's song is a song for anyone in spiritual struggle. It is a song of thanksgiving in the time of joy, for God's great work. We must praise God and give thanks to Him in every condition, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

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Chapter 6

1. Again, the Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord so He delivered them into the hands of the Midianites for 7 years. They cried to the Lord, and He sent them a prophet to tell them to repent from their sins.
2. Gideon, the son of Joash the Abiezrite from Ophrah west of Judea, was a mighty warrior. He was threshing wheat in a winepress to protect it from the Midianites, when the Angel of the Lord appeared to him. This was one of the manifestations of God in the Old Testament.
3. God sent him to deliver His people, and he became the fifth judge. Gideon humbled himself before the Lord, and the Lord reassured him that He would be with him and that he will defeat the Midianites.
4. Gideon asked for a sign to make sure that it was the Lord who was talking to him. Gideon asked the Lord to wait until he brings Him an offering and He accepted it. The Angel of the Lord then disappeared.
5. Gideon realized that he saw the Lord face to face and he thought that he would die. As the Lord told Moses, "You cannot see My face for no man shall see Me and live" (Exodus 33:20). But the Lord reassured him and said "Peace be with you, do not fear, you shall not die." So Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and called it The-Lord-Is-Peace.
6. The Lord asked Gideon to destroy Baal's altar, which was built by his father and to cut down the wooden image that was beside it, and build an altar for the Lord. He told him to take the second bull that belonged to his father and offer it as a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image, which he would cut down. This was a symbol of Jesus Christ, the true sacrifice.
7. When the men of the city knew what Gideon did, they wanted to kill him, but his father defended him and Gideon was encouraged.
8. The Midianites, the Amalakites and the people of the east gathered to fight Israel. When Gideon saw that they went down to war, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he blew the trumpet. Before going to the battle, Gideon asked God for a sign and the Lord gave him one to encourage him.

Message:

God wants us to worship Him and serve Him alone. We must destroy the "Bals" in our lives as we cannot serve two masters. God reveals His power and strength through the weak and humble. When we humble ourselves before the Lord, He will give us power to do our duties, and glorify Himself in us.

Chapter 7

1. Gideon gathered 32,000 men to fight against 135,000. But the Lord wanted to reveal His power with a fewer number of men so the Israelites would not attribute their victory to themselves. He asked Gideon to send back any who were afraid, and only 10,000 remained. To further reduce the number of men, Gideon was commanded by God to take the men to the water, and everyone who drinks from the water with their tongue, as a dog drink, shall be set apart. The number of those who drank by putting their hands to their mouth, was three hundred men, while all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water. Then the Lord said to Gideon, "By the three hundred men who lapped I will save you, and deliver the Midianites into your hand."
2. The 300 men went under Gideon's leadership, carrying provisions and trumpets. He divided his people into three groups and he gave each one a trumpet, an empty pitcher and torches inside the pitchers. When the Midianites came at the middle watch, they blew their trumpets and broke the pitchers making a loud noise. This scared the enemies, causing them to start fighting amongst



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- themselves and killing each other. Gideon's men stood far away, carrying their torches as they watched God deliver the Midianites into their hands without raising a sword.
3. The people of Ephraim pursued the Midianites. They captured two princes of the Midianites and killed them.

Message:

God uses the little we have to reveal His strength and power. As we prepare for a spiritual



struggle, we must do as Gideon instructed his men, to carry provisions, which represent faith, and carry trumpets, which represent the Word of God.

In the time of tribulation, not only will the believers see the hand of God with them but also their adversaries will witness the wonders of the Lord with His children.

Chapter 8

1. The people of Ephraim became angry with Gideon because he did not invite them to fight the Midianites. He handled the situation with wisdom and humility, and praised them for killing the princes of Midian, considering this more important than what he did.
2. Gideon asked the people of Succoth saying, "Please give loaves of bread to the people who follow me, for they are exhausted." But when the men of Succoth refused, to discourage Gideon, he promised to fight them so the curse would not fall on his people.
3. Gideon followed the kings of Median, Zebah and Zalmunna at Karkor and their army and he fought them, but the kings escaped. He followed them and captured them.
4. Gideon returned to fight Succoth and Penuel and defeated them.
5. The people asked Gideon to rule over them but he refused and told them that God was the only one who rules over them. This was the first time that Israel was trying to set a hierarchy system.
6. Gideon was a faithful judge for the people of Israel until his death, and he was one of the heroes of faith.
7. There was peace in the land for 40 years. After Gideon's death the people returned to doing evil and made Baal-Berith their god.

Message:

We must always be kind and caring towards people in difficult situations. When our life is under the leadership of Christ, we can conquer Satan.

Chapter 13

1. The children of Israel returned to their evil ways and the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for 40 years.
2. The Angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife who was barren and told her, "For behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. And no razor shall come upon his head, for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judges 13:5). He told her not to drink wine or eat anything unclean because her son will save Israel from the hands of the Philistines.
3. The women told her husband, and he believed in God's promise. He asked to see the

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Lord's Angel because he wanted to take the blessing with his wife.

4. The Angel appeared again, fulfilling the promise. Manoah thought that he was human and wanted to prepare a young goat for him, and the Angel told him to offer the sacrifice before God.
5. Manoah was surprised, and he asked the Angel for his name. He said to him, "Why do you ask me My name, seeing it is wonderful?" So God's name was wonderful and it was God who appeared like an Angel.
6. Manoah offered a young goat with the grain offering upon the rock. The flame went up towards heaven from the altar, and the Angel of the Lord ascended in the flames. Manoah and his wife fell on their faces to the ground.
7. The woman gave birth to a son, and she named him Samson and the Spirit of the Lord began to move him.

Message:

God is faithful in His promises but in His own time.

Chapter 14

1. Samson grew to be a strong man. He grew his hair as a symbol of his consecration to the Lord. His power however was not in his hair, but in the Lord's Spirit.
2. On his way to propose to the Philistine girl, Samson went down to Timnah, and he found a young lion so he tore it apart.
3. Samson returned back and saw the carcass of the lion. And behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the carcass of the lion. He ate from it and gave to his parents.
4. On his wedding day, Samson said to his guests, "Let me pose a riddle to you. If you can correctly solve it and explain it to me within the seven days of the feast, then I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing. But if you cannot explain it to me, then you shall give me thirty linen garments and thirty changes of clothing."
5. The Philistines could not solve the riddle. They pressured the woman to get the answer from Samson; otherwise they would burn her and her father's house. She wept to Samson until he explained it to her. Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle. So his anger was aroused, and he went back up to his father's house. And Samson's wife was given to his companion.

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Message:

Samson symbolizes Christ when He faced Satan, and tore him with His hands on the cross. The Lord's Spirit works in us, and He is the source of our power.

Chapter 15

1. Samson went to find his wife, but her father told him that she became the wife of his companion and asked him if he wanted to marry her younger sister. He became very angry and went down and burned the Philistines' fields.
2. The Philistines went and burned her and her father's house. Samson sought revenge.
3. The Philistines came to Judah, asking for Samson to be delivered to them. The Israelites tied Samson and delivered him to his enemies, but the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. The ropes that were on his arms became like flax that is burned with fire, and the bonds broke loose from his hands. He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it, and killed a thousand men with it.
4. Samson was thirsty so he cried to the Lord. Then God split the hollow place that is in Lehi and water came out for him to drink.

Message:

Samson was called to save the Israelites from the hands of their enemies. God helped Samson and demonstrated the work of His salvation through the killing of a thousand men. The water given to Samson symbolizes the work of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 16

1. One day Samson went to Gaza to a harlot's house and the people of Gaza plotted to kill him at dawn. But Samson woke up in the middle of the night, took hold of the city gates and destroyed them.
2. Later on, Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah. The Philistines conspired with Delilah to find out the secret behind Samson's great strength.
3. Delilah asked Samson to reveal to her the mystery of his power. The first time Samson told her that if he was tied with seven fresh bowstrings, he would lose his strength. However, when she tried to subdue him, Samson broke the bowstrings effortlessly.
4. Once again, Delilah asked Samson to tell her his secret and he claimed that if he was tied with new unused ropes his strength would fail. Delilah tried again but to no avail.
5. Again Delilah asked Samson and he told her that if she weaves the seven braids on his head, he would lose his strength. She tried but as usual Samson prevailed.

HOLD FAST

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6. Delilah continued to nag Samson daily to tell her his secret, so he finally told her everything. “No razor has ever come upon my head, because I have been a Nazirite dedicated to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak and be like any other man” (Judges 16:7). While Samson was sleeping, Delilah shaved his head, and the Spirit of the Lord left him.
7. His enemies captured him, took out his eyes and he became spiritually blind. He then became a grinder in the prison.
8. His hair started to grow. He began to regret all he had done and repented. He prayed and asked God for help, not depending on his own power. He extended his two arms between the columns of the temple and braced himself against them one on each side, and the temple fell down. In fact, the number of Philistines that he killed at his death were more than the number that he had killed in his life.

Message:

Satan will not give up, but he will present us with the opportunity to sin in different ways repeatedly. He was able to defeat Samson, the mighty judge, with lust. In order to defeat Satan, we must reject the sin and not begin to debate with Satan. When the Spirit of the Lord is with us, we have extraordinary powers against sin. As soon as we leave God, we become weak. Repentance has no restricted time or place and God will always accept our repentance.

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Memorization

PSALM 3 (AGPEYA)

O Lord, why have they who afflict me multiplied? Many have risen up upon me. Many say unto my soul, "There is no salvation for him in his God." But You, O Lord, are my supporter, my glory, and the elevation of my head.

With my voice I cried unto the Lord, and He heard me out of His holy mountain. I laid down and slept; and I arose; for the Lord is He who supports me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, who surround me; who have risen upon me. Rise, O Lord, save me, O my God: for You have smitten all who are enemies to me without cause. The teeth of the sinners You have broken. Salvation is the Lord's, and His blessing is upon His people. ALLELUIA.

PSALM 6 (AGPEYA)

O Lord, do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chasten me in Your wrath. Have mercy on me, O Lord; for I am weak: heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled, and my soul is grievously troubled. But You, O Lord, how long? Return, deliver my soul: revive me for the sake of Your mercy. For in death there is no one who is remembering You: and in Hades who is able to confess to You? I became wearied in my groaning; I shall wash my bed every night; I shall wet my couch with my tears. My eye is troubled because of anger; I have grown old because of all my enemies.

Depart away from me, all who do iniquity; for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord has heard my petition; the Lord has accepted my prayer. All my enemies shall be put to shame and greatly troubled: they shall be turned back and put to shame speedily. ALLELUIA.

PSALM 12 (AGPEYA)

How long, O Lord, do You forget me, for ever? How long do You turn Your face away from me? How long do I put these counsels in my soul, and these sorrows in my heart for the whole day? How long does my enemy exalt over me?

Look, hearken to me, O Lord my God: enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep in death; lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed against him": those who distress me will rejoice if ever I stumble. But I have hoped in Your mercy; my heart will rejoice in Your salvation. I will praise the Lord Who has done good to me, and I will sing to the name of the Lord Most High. ALLELUIA.

PSALM 26 (AGPEYA)

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom will I fear? The Lord is the defender of my life; of whom will I be afraid? When the wicked drew near against me to eat up my flesh, those who distress me and my enemies, they fainted and fell. Though an army should fight me, my heart shall not be afraid: though war should rise up against me, in this I am confident.

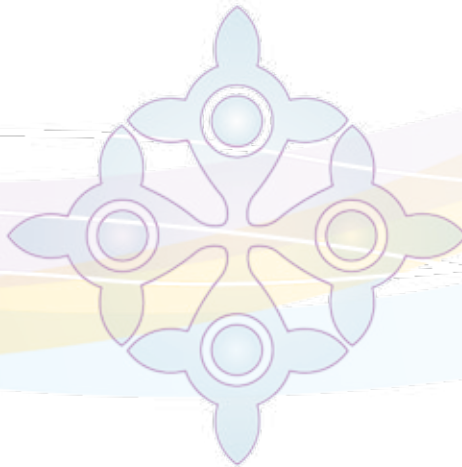
One thing I have asked of the Lord, this also I will seek, that I should dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, that I should behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and visit His holy temple. For in the day of my afflictions He hid me in His tabernacle: He sheltered me in the secret of His tabernacle; He set me up on a rock. And now, behold, He has lifted up my head over my enemies: I went round and offered in His tabernacle a sacrifice of joy; I shall sing, and sing psalms to the Lord.

Hear, O Lord, my voice which I have uttered aloud: have mercy on me, and hearken to me. For You are He to whom my heart said, "I have sought Your face:

HOLD FAST

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Your face, O Lord, I will seek." Do not turn away Your face from me, do not reject Your servant in anger: be a helper to me, and do not forsake me; and do not overlook me, O God my Savior. For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord has accepted me unto Himself. Set a law for me, O Lord, in Your ways, and guide me in a right path, because of my enemies. Do not deliver me over to the souls of those who afflict me; for unjust witnesses have risen up against me, and injustice has lied to itself. I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord: be of good cheer and let your heart be strengthened: and wait for the Lord. ALLELUIA.



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