

Hand of God

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Psalm 8:1-4 LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens. ² Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger. ³ When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, ⁴ what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them

God's glory is revealed in the heavens (sky) as well as on the earth. The most current estimates guess that there are 100 to 200 billion galaxies in the Universe, each of which has hundreds of billions of stars. A recent German supercomputer simulation put that number even higher: 500 billion (50,000 Crores). In other words, there could be a galaxy out there for every star in the Milky Way.

If we count each star per second in our own galaxy called Milky Way, it will take 2,500 years to count them. Then imagine the expanse of the universe?? Vs3 says 'When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, Which you have set in place'. It is wonderful to know that entire universe is the work of the fingers of our father in heaven. Then how big is His hand? How powerful is he?

God says to Israel in **Isaiah 41:10** so do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

What if the almighty God whose fingers made and put the billions of stars in place, holds you in his hand! How wonderful it will be? Should you fear anything at all? We are going to have a series of Lessons on the 'Hand of God'. This is going to help us build faith and great trust in our wonderful almighty father in heaven.

Exodus 6:6 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.

People of Israel were slaves in Egypt for 100s of years. It was a mighty nation that oppressed them. People of Israel could have never got freedom by any of their own efforts. But God had mercy on them and out of his compassion he promised them deliverance.

God promised Israel that he will deliver them with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. We know how his outstretched arm worked wonders and how through 10 plagues against Egypt and by parting the Red Sea he delivered them and established them as a nation in the Promised Land. Later on God reasons out with them to remind them that there is no other God:

Deuteronomy 4:34 Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings", by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?

Deuteronomy 5:15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

What does that mean to all of us who are living on the same planet 1000s of years later?

Deuteronomy 7:19 You saw with your own eyes the great trials, the signs and wonders, the mighty hand and outstretched arm, with which the LORD your God brought you out. The LORD your God will do the same to all the peoples you now fear.

What will He do for us? The LORD your God will do the same to all the peoples you now fear.

Do you believe that the Hand of God is upon you? Our God is the same and His love for us is the same. He will certainly do unbelievable things even in our life time. We just have to 'fear' Him (Revere and Love Him).

Think of what are the situations you fear in your life or people?

Submit those into God's hand and pray till you are sure that His hand will save you. In few lessons that follow, we are going to see how this promise was fulfilled in the lives of people who lived after the Exodus.

Day 1 : HAND OF GOD PROVIDES ALL WHAT WE NEED

Deuteronomy 11:1-4 Love the LORD your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws and his commands always. ² Remember today that your children were not the ones who saw and experienced the discipline of the LORD your God: his majesty, his mighty hand, his outstretched arm; ³ the signs he performed and the things he did in the heart of Egypt, both to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his whole country; ⁴ what he did to the Egyptian army, to its horses and chariots, how he overwhelmed them with the waters of the Red Sea as they were pursuing you, and how the LORD brought lasting ruin on them.

Remember that the Lord did amazing miracles with his mighty hand, his outstretched arm, to reveal his love to the people of this world and to help them to love him in return.

We will see an incident that happened after the Israelites crossed the Red Sea and reached the wilderness. God has been providing them with Manna from heaven every day for them to eat. Yet they were unsatisfied and started grumbling.

Numbers 11:4-6 The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, "If only we had meat to eat! ⁵ We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. ⁶ But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!"

God was angry about their ungrateful heart and grumbling. Moses was also really burdened to see the attitude of the people.

Numbers 11:11-15

So God gave a solution:

Numbers 11:18-23

Even though God was angry about their attitude he promised them meat! hundred thousand men on foot, and you say, 'I will give them meat to eat for a whole month!' 22 Would they have enough if flocks and herds were slaughtered for them? Would they have enough if all the fish in the sea were caught for them?" 23 The Lord answered Moses, "Is the Lord's arm too short? Now you will see whether or not what I say will come true for you."

There were more than a million (10Lakh) people! Moses was wondering how in the world anyone can provide meat for more than a million people in the wilderness!

God was promising 'I will give them meat to eat for a whole month!'

God was willing to give them meat not for a day or two but for a whole month.

Moses felt it was impossible! He even expressed that plainly to God!

What was God's answer?

Vs.23 The Lord answered Moses, "Is the Lord's arm too short? Now you will see whether or not what I say will come true for you."

What are some things that you feel as your need but feel like it is impossible for anyone to meet that need?

Have you prayed for something and gave up praying because you think it is not possible?

Most horrible thing that we can do against God is to despise him.

Despise means 'to regard with contempt or scorn'.

How can we despise God? By believing or expressing in any way to others that something is impossible for God! That gives the impression that God is weak!!

We are created by God to 'glorify Him' not to despise Him.(Isaiah 43:5-7Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. 6 I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not hold them back.' Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth—7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.")(NIV emphasis added)

So what happened to God's promise to give meat?

Numbers 11:31-34

God sent a wind (Entire nature is under his power) and brought quail and scattered them in their camp. Quails piled up two cubits (3 feet) deep all around the camp, as far as a day's walk in any direction (vs 31). Can you imagine that sight?

{Cubit is the distance from the elbow to the fingertips - that is around 18-20inches. So 2 Cubits mean almost 3 ft. Imagine the amount of quail to cover the area a day's walk distance (approximately 46kms) multiplied by 3ft!}

{homer is approximately 4 liters - so each one collecting 10 homers of quail means 40 liters of quail}

No one would have been able to count or measure the amount of quail that God sent them.

It was much more than more than a million Israelites could eat!

So how powerful is the hand of God? With his outstretched arm he could feed the entire nation with meat!

But because they doubted the power of God to provide them with meat (or anything they needed), God struck them with a severe plague and many people perished.

Sharing: Many years ago Church in Bangalore used to hire a hall in Vishranthi Nilayam for Evening Services and meetings for small groups. One of the session Beena & I were taking care was Christian Training Program. We had booked the hall for 3 days a week for few weeks. Every time we go there the authorities used to give us a lot of trouble. Either they will say we haven't booked the place, or they will change the location to some other hall in the same campus etc.

As disciples were coming from different parts of the city after work to learn from the Bible, we decided to buy a flask and take coffee for them. When we reached the place, the authorities stopped us and said 'you can't bring any food or drinks from outside!' We felt so sad! From that time we started praying 'God help us to be able to buy our own place in a very convenient place for such meetings!' We remembered

(Eph 3:20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.. (NIV)) God is able to provide more than what we ask or imagine! Very next day I bought an advertisement weekly (Free Ads/Admag) and checked for advertisements for commercial buildings for sale and there it was: an advertisement for a portion of a building for sale right in the heart of the city –walk able distance from Sivaji Nagar Bus station near Commercial street!

The owner was kind enough to give it for a really low price. Usually people sell properties as and how it is. But this owner was willing to fix new doors, provide alterations as we specified with good quality materials, polished the floors and painted it well –all with his own money! It became ready to use! We had to

just buy chairs, curtains and sound system! In no time we could buy the building and the Church started having Evening services and any program for around 100 people.

Being in a commercial location, no one is bothered about us singing, praying etc. Now no one can send us out! We have the freedom to make tea/coffee/food etc.

Truly God provides with HIS OUTSTRETCHED ARM

Challenge:

1. Make a list of all what God provided for you in your life. Thank him for all that. Share with others how wonderful is God.
2. Make another list of what you want God to provide for you (also for the Church).

Day 2 : HAND OF GOD THAT PROVIDES FOR SABBATH

God established Sabbath - day of rest through the 10 commandments.

God wanted people to have rest at least once a week. When the Israelites received the Promised Land God wanted even the land to have Sabbath rest every 7th year.

Even when God commands us to rest, we can feel like I need to work one more day to earn more to meet the needs of us and our family!!

When God commands us to rest, he also knows how to provide for us when we rest. Do you trust that God will provide when we obey him and rest?

Read Exodus 16 & Leviticus 25

In the wilderness where Israel spent 40 years, God sent Manna every morning for 6 days and on the 6th day he gave them double portion so that they can collect for Sabbath day also and keep it cooked and ready to be eaten on the day of Sabbath so that they don't have to do any work on the day of Sabbath. God kept this promise and provided them Manna for 40 years without fail.

Even after giving all these promises and commands, see what some Israelites have done: Ex 16:27 Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. 28 Then the LORD said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions?"

Do you take rest? Do you know that God expects you to take rest?

Scientists have found that sleep refreshes us and allows the brain to do clean up process - this helps us to rejuvenate.

(Read article on the web http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2013-10/uormtsp100913.php)

In Lev 25 God commanded them to observe Sabbath year rest for the fields. Six years they were allowed to cultivate the land and on the seventh year they were commanded to give rest for the land that means no cultivation at all in 7th year.

Then the question will be - 'how will they survive in the 7th year?'

Well God always makes great plans that are surely successful. See what God says in : **Lev 25:20-22** You may ask, "What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?" 21 I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. 22 While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in. Isn't God's plans wonderful?

Scientists have found that the land can't sustain growth of the same crop repeatedly without a period of rejuvenation. Nutrients and bacteria (specifically, nitrogen-fixing bacteria) that had been removed from the land as a result of the never-ending sowing-and reaping cycles needed time to be replaced. When the land is given an year of rest after 6 years of farming, the land is rejuvenated by having the nutrients and helpful bacteria are replaced in the land. Scientists came to be aware of these facts only in the last few decades! But God had given these commands 1000s of years ago!

Who knows best about cultivation? The God who created the land and crops! If we listen to him our land, crops and life are all safe and well provided.

Do you trust and obey God's commands? Or are you waiting for reasons to be provided for you to obey? Let us trust and obey because God is superior in wisdom and is trustworthy! Results and reasons will be revealed later!

Do you find any Scriptures not reasonable and so have disobeyed?

List them out and confess and surrender to God. (eg. Commands on tithe, Encourage one another daily, attending meetings, taking discipling, confession etc.)

Day 3 : HAND OF GOD THAT BUILT THE TABERNACLE

Read Exodus 35:4 - 36:7

When the Israelites were in the desert on the way from Egypt to the Promised Land, God commanded Moses to build a Tabernacle and all the materials required to offer sacrifices in it. Moses gathered all the people together and told them to bring free will offerings for the construction of the Tabernacle. People responded quickly and brought more than what was needed.

Remember that these Israelites were slaves in Egypt - the slaves don't have much possessions especially valuable things gold and precious stones!

Yet God demanded them to build the Tabernacle with very expensive and best materials. How could this be possible? God is a master planner - he had planned about it much before they left Egypt. Let us see what happened there:

Exodus 12:35,36 The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. 36 The LORD had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians.

All the gold, silver, precious stones and all the materials needed were already provided by God through the Egyptians before the Israelites left Egypt. The reason why the Egyptians gave so generously to their slaves was that they saw 10 plagues sent by God and they feared the God of Israel and wanted the Israelites go in peace so that the Egyptians won't be cursed any further.

Now have a look at the materials needed for building the Tabernacle - this required not only silver, gold and precious stones but also enormous amount of materials for the tent including acacia wood!

In advance God made sure that the hearts of Egyptians to be moved to give more than what was needed for building the Tabernacle. Also God moved the hearts of Israelites to give more than what was needed for this purpose. They gave so much that Moses had to order them to stop bringing any more offerings.

Also Read **Ex 35:30-34**

God gave amazing abilities and skills to Bezalel and Oholiab to do all the artistic works and train others to help them in the extensive work. Hudson Taylor, great missionary to China said "God's work done in God's way never lacks God's supply".

- Do you know and acknowledge that all that you have belong to God?
- Do you give generously to God - Finance - more than 10% of your gross income, time and your gifts and talents?
- What ways can you give more?
- How are you involved in building God's kingdom?
- When was the last time you were involved in saving a soul?
- Are you serving in any leadership position? What does it take you for taking it higher? (If you are not a leader, to become a leader & if you are a leader how to serve more?)

Day 4 : THE LORD WILL FIGHT FOR YOU

Exodus 13:21 By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. 22 Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

When God took Israel out of slavery in Egypt and brought them on the journey to the Promised Land, He went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.

Imagine what an amazing experience it was?

The Almighty God is with you going ahead and preparing your way and protecting you day and night!

He was with them in a pillar of cloud in the day so that he could guide them as well as protect them from the scorching sun in the desert. By night he was with them in the pillar of cloud so that he could provide light and heat as the desert gets very cold at night.

We can't express in words how caring was God to his people. He met all their needs by being with them personally - not through some angels or agents - so that he proved to them he was their father!

What else was he doing when he was with them?

Deuteronomy 1:26-36

Even after being with them day and night and carrying them as a father, when God asked them to enter the promised land, they refused to go in as most of the spies brought bad news saying that the people of Canaan are giants and they will all perish if they fight against these giants. God was sad and angry because they did not appreciate all what he has done and they were ungrateful and were not able to trust that he will keep his promise of giving them the land irrespective of who lives there.

Only Caleb & Joshua had the faith and trust.

In response to their rebellion and faithlessness, God is speaking in this passage.

God is telling them clearly what was his plan: Vs. 29,30 Then I said to you, "Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. 30 The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, 31 and in the desert.

God's plan was not to send these people into the land of giants and get them defeated and killed by the giants. Rather his plan was that he himself will go ahead of them and fight the battles for them.

Now God is reminding them that this is not something new rather this is what God has been doing from the time he sent Moses to lead them out of Egypt. He was always going ahead of them and fighting for them in Egypt and all through the journey in the desert.

Read few more passages on this matter:

Deuteronomy 20:1-4

Isaiah 45:2 I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron.

Isaiah 52:12 but you will not leave in haste or go in flight; for the LORD will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

Isaiah 58:8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

How powerful is the Hand of God? If he goes before you and fights for you, is there anything that you need to fear or feel insecure about?

God is with us like a great father & mother going ahead and preparing the way for us so that we won't suffer from any danger ahead.

He is a great leader who goes ahead and searches out the right way for us to go and leads us gently & safely.

He is a mighty general who can fight alone all our battles ahead of us.

- Do you see him? Do you notice his presence?
- Write down how he has been fighting for you all these years?
- Write down your present fears and the battles ahead?
- Start believing that these are not your own problems or battles? These are God's battles because you belong to him and you don't have to worry about them rather trust that He goes before you and fights for you with his outstretched arm and mighty hand!

If God fights for you like this, will you be able to overcome temptations?

Write down the temptation that seems difficult for you to overcome and entrust him with all your battles and stand firm and see the deliverance.

Day 5 : GOD'S MIGHTY HAND OF JUDGMENT

God's judgment is simple - Either Blessing or Curse

Deut 2:7 The LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast desert.

These forty years the LORD your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything.

Deut 2:14-23

Jeremiah 17:5-7 lays it down clearly how God judges.

Vs.5 This is what the LORD says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD

Vs.7"But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. God brings blessings or curses on us based on whom we trust.

This is what happened with people of Israel - Even after doing so many amazing miracles by the 'outstretched arm of God' and saving them from slavery of Egypt, they could not trust that the same God will stretch his hand and save them from the 'giants' they saw in the promised land.

As they did not trust God, they got cursed by God and all the adults had to perish in the desert and they had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years.

Vs.14b, 15 by then that entire generation of fighting men had perished from the camp, as the LORD had sworn to them. 15 **The LORD's hand was against them until he had completely eliminated them from the camp.**

After God eliminated all the adults who doubted him, he takes the next generation to the promised land tells them what he will do for them.

Deu 7:16-26

God says that he will send out hornets among the inhabitants of the Canaan to drive them out! Hornets make up the *Vespa* genus of insects, and are the largest type of wasp.



Apart from this Scripture, **Exodus 23:28** says: I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way.

Also after Joshua conquering most the Promised Land God says in **Joshua 24:11,12** "Then you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I gave them into your hands. 12 I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you--also the two Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow.

When God says 'I sent the hornet ahead of you' it may mean sending literally sending hornets or as suggested in the following Scriptures, the angel whom God sent ahead of them. as vs 27 says "I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter." which caused enemies of God to run away or cause self destruction!

Exodus 23:20"See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared.

Vs.23: My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out

Vs.27:"I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run.

Let us finish by reading the first Scripture: **Deut 2:20-23** (That too was considered a land of the Rephaites, who used to live there; but the Ammonites called them Zamzummites. 21 they were a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. The LORD destroyed them from before the Ammonites, who drove them out and settled in their place. 22 The LORD had done the same for the descendants of Esau, who lived in Seir, when he destroyed the Horites from before them. They drove them out and have lived in their place to this day. 23 And as for the Avvites who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorites coming out from Caphtor destroyed them and settled in their place.)

See how God's hand of judgment worked on other nations!

Land of Zamzummites who were like Anakites - gigantic people. But God brought Ammonites and got them destroyed and given the land to Ammonites.

Horites were destroyed and their land taken over by Edomites (descendants of Esau) Avvites were destroyed by Caphtorites and took over their land.

No one can escape from God's judgment.

In 1 Cor 10 Paul says that all these stories written in Old Testament are written as a warning for us.

1 Cor 10:11These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. 12So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

Are we taking those warnings seriously in our lives? Are we really careful that we don't fall like them? God has showered so much of grace upon us and after showing so much grace through the very sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, God expects us to live carefully following his will. Carefully living to please God shows that we are truly grateful for His amazing grace.

Meditate on **Hebrews 10:26-31** and identify if there are any sins that you are deliberately doing. Confess & repent of them remembering vs. 31 'It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'

Day 6 : BE STILL AND SEE THE HAND OF GOD WORKING

Exodus 14

God purposely sandwiched Israel between marching mighty army of Egyptians and the Red Sea. He had a clear plan and he revealed that to Moses (read vs.1-4).

But when the Israelites saw the mighty army of Egyptians marching against them and seeing that they are trapped between the Red Sea and the Egyptian army, their

true colors was revealed. They started grumbling and complaining against Moses and God.

Vs11-14 They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? 12 Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"13 Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. 14 The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

As we learnt before, God's expectation on people is to trust Him completely. But our temptation is always to doubt him.

When we question God's plan and doubt him and his plans, we are only looking at the present situation and not seeing that we are carried by the mighty hand of God and he is directing the whole plot and he is the true winner in the end.

These doubting Israelites are looking back and saying that it was better to serve the Egyptians than to be rescued by God!

Have you ever felt like the life you had before becoming a Christian was better? Well you had a lot of freedom - freedom to sin (do whatever you liked or brought pleasure for yourself)! Yes there are challenges in our journey as a Christian! But don't lose sight of our destination God has promised! He is a trustworthy God and will surely stretch out his hands and rescue us and bring us to the destination he has promised because he is a faithful God.

Consider the difference in attitude of Moses & the people who were complaining. Because Moses fully trusted God's plans and ability to rescue them from any upcoming challenges, however big they may be, he was not shaken by fear but others were trembling in fear!

Notice what Moses told them: 13 Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. 14 The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

Whenever we face challenges in life our question is 'what can I do!' What answer can you get from here?

The answer Moses gave them has profound meaning "Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today."

See different translations on vs.14

- The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."(NIV)
- The LORD himself will fight for you. Just stay calm."(NLT)
- The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."(ESV)
- "The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent."(NASB)

What NIV states as 'be still' doesn't mean 'stand still like a statue' it means 'still your tongue' or 'be silent'.

What were they doing with their tongue?

Complain, grumble, expressing words that are revealing their doubts and dissatisfaction about Moses and God.

Jesus said "For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks." (Luke 6:45). Words from their mouth revealed that they were not trusting God!

So what were Moses & God expecting from them? Keep quiet (by trusting God and believing that His hand is mighty enough to save them) and see the deliverance of God - wait for the deliverance that God will bring about.

What happened after this?

Amazing and dramatic things happened that is considered as some of the most amazing miracles done by God.

Ex 14:15,16 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. 16 Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground.

God expected Moses also to be at peace and lead Israel to 'move on'.

Move forward even if you don't see the way ahead! That is walking by faith! When we walk by that kind of faith God opens the way that we don't see now! Wow that is amazing!

Vs. 20-22 then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, 20 coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long. 21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, 22 and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

First he sent the angel that was in the front to behind them to protect Israel from being harmed by Egyptians. Also throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side. Then God sent an east wind that divided the sea and the wind was strong that even the sea bed that is wet and slushy became dry ground so that Israel could walk across the sea.

- What do you learn from this passage?
- What are your responses when you face challenges?
- Write down what are the biggest challenges you have ever faced and how did God deliver you?

- Write down how you have seen God delivering others from terrible situations. What can you learn from them?
- What do you do with your tongue when you face challenges?
- What have you learnt to do from now on?

Day 7 : HAND OF GOD PROVIDES THE BEST

Deut 11:10-21

Remember how faithless Israelites were complaining near the Red Sea that it was better if they had stayed back in Egypt?

Probably this was because the best land they had ever seen was Egypt.

But God is telling that what I am offering and what I have prepared with my mighty hand is far better than even your imagination.

He compares both the lands - Vs.10-14 In Egypt ".....you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden. 11 But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. 12 It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end."13 So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today--to love the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul-- 14 then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil.

Only expectation that God has from his people is that they love the Lord their God and faithfully obey his commands. Then he will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil.

That is a promise! And God kept that promise as long as they loved God!

Do you pay attention to God's promises?

Do you believe that His mighty hand will provide all what he promised? Or do you doubt?

When we trust we are confident and are joyful. When we don't trust in God's ability to fulfill his promises we are insecure and worried!

Even though Israel witnessed the fulfillment of this promise, experienced living in that amazingly best land, enjoyed the harvest, they rejected God very soon!

Then just as God promised he shut the heavens and the land became barren and those who failed to trust God faced severe famine. (1 Kings 18 explains one of such situations)

What God is promising us today is not a piece of land but Eternal home in heaven. Do you believe that God will keep his promise? Are your eyes set on heaven?

Even while we live on earth, he will meet our needs as long as we love him and trust him.

Expectation God had from his people was that they don't get enticed by foreign gods and worship them!

That is the challenge for us also.

Who do you worship? God of heaven or this world and the pleasures and splendor of this world?

If our priority is on making money than serving God we have already fallen into idol worship even though we are claiming 'we are still in the Church'.

James 4:4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

God is calling those who were claiming to be Christians 'You adulterous people!' Why? Jesus is our bridegroom and we are his bride! He is so committed and faithful in his love for us. But if we flirt with someone else it is adultery! How are we flirting and being unfaithful and adulterous? Friendship with the world!

Jesus said the world is ruled by the Devil! In what ways are you attracted to the world? (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)

2 Cor 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Idolatry was always considered and addressed as adultery in the Old Testament that is consistent in the New Testament also. Admiring; desiring; building friendship with the world is hatred towards God. In what ways are you tempted to be attracted to the world? How does God feel about it? How are you going to overcome such attractions?

Day 8 : HAND OF GOD BRINGS FEAR ON UNBELIEVERS

Deut 11:25

No one will be able to stand against you. The LORD your God, as he promised you, will put the terror and fear of you on the whole land, wherever you go.

Deut 28:6-10

Even though God says all the enemies of Israel will fear them, it is actually that they feared the mighty God who was with Israel. These promises in Deuteronomy were

made by God when Israel was still in the wilderness before they even faced any enemies and God fulfilled all those promises.

An instance is at the time the spies went to Jericho: Rahab tells them how the people of Jericho felt when they heard the news of what God was doing for Israel!

Joshua 2:8-11

Another instance is at the time when the LORD helped them to cross the river Jordan.

Joshua 4:23,24

For the LORD your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The LORD your God did to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. 24 He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God."

The Scripture says the purpose of God drying up Jordan and helping the Israel to cross over was to let all other people of the earth know "that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God." Vs.24

Also remember when we fear God fear of men vanishes!

Another instance is at the time of Gideon. Israel was very weak and huge armies came to attack them. God chose one ordinary man Gideon to lead Israel against those enemies and rescue Israel. God also expected him not to take a huge army but only 300 people!

Imagine the fear and insecurity Gideon had! Finally Gideon went down to the camp of the enemies and heard what those soldiers were speaking to each other and he gained his trust in God because he realized already the hand of God is at work in filling them with fear.

Judges 7:12-15

See the response of Gideon after he overheard the conversation of enemy soldiers! Seeing how the Lord has filled them with fear, he gained courage and worshipped God and led his people on attack very courageously.

Romans 8:31b-39

Paul is asking a very important question to get us think - If God is for us, who can be against us?

Today we are not fighting battles like Israel did! But we are on a spiritual battle - this is a daily battle for whole life. Devil is trying to make us fall into temptations so that he can win our souls! But remember Jesus has fought the battle for us and won! So we are more than conquerors through Jesus who loved us!

When you face temptations do you fear? Do you have confidence that we can overcome them or you easily give into them? Remember Christ fought the battle and laid down his precious life not for us to surrender to the Devil but to gain courage and fight every temptation and win and be like Christ!

If all those invading armies feared Israel knowing that the LORD is with them, how much more the Devil is afraid of us when the same LORD is with us?

What are the temptations you have been facing recently? How was your attitude? Fear and surrender or Courage and overcoming?

James 4:7

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

What are the temptations you have been facing recently? How was your attitude towards those temptations? Fear and surrender or courage and overcoming?

Experience the Hand of God by resisting the temptations and 'turning your weaknesses into your strength'.

Day 9 : GRATITUDE TO THE BLESSINGS FROM THE HAND OF GOD

Deuteronomy 26:1-15

This is another command given to the Israelites just before they took over the Promised Land. God is commanding them about how to show their gratitude to the mighty God who gives them the land where milk and honey is flowing.

They were commanded to bring their first fruits to the Tabernacle and express their gratitude verbally also:

Let us focus on **Vs.3-11**

See the three parts in their expression of gratitude:

1. Remembering their past condition and suffering. (Slavery)
2. How the LORD brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. (Deliverance from Slavery)
3. How God brought them to this place and gave them this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. (Glorious present and future)

They were expected to show their gratitude by giving the first fruits to God as offering and verbally expressing their gratitude.

Isn't it the same thing God expects from us now?

Do you remember where you came from - your past? How you were slaves of sin! How hopeless was that life? You couldn't save yourself!

God stretched out his mighty hand and saved you through the sacrifice of his only son!

He brought you into His Kingdom and made you part of his family as a child of God!

Now you have the glorious life in His Kingdom and after this life on earth you will be in the real Promised Land - heaven for eternity!

Are you grateful for all this? Do you show gratitude to God? Do you give your first fruits and tithe and more to God? Or are you selfish and ungrateful keeping everything for yourself?

Do you verbally thank him remembering your past, present and the promised future?

Let us learn to be grateful for the blessings brought by the hand of God.

What will happen if we are ungrateful? Hand of God that saves us will be against us and crush us till we repent!

Read Duet 31:14-23 and see what God was predicting about the plight of ungrateful Israel! He even gave them a song to be taught to all Israel to remind them of their ungratefulness and to help them repent.

Meditate on that song in Duet 32

Write down your story - what was your past and how God delivered you and the blessings that God has given you so far and what you are surely going to receive from him in the future!

Once in a while (you set the frequency) read it and thank God.

As an expression of gratitude continue to give more and more to God in offering and to the poor and widows.

Decide to do something today to express your gratitude to God

Day 10 - NO WALLS ARE TOO STRONG FOR THE HAND OF GOD

Joshua 6 - Fall of Jericho

Do you remember how Israelites grumbled against God and Moses?

Duet 1:27,28 "The LORD hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us. 28Where can we go? Our brothers have made our hearts melt in fear. They say, 'The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there.'"

Even at that time God had reminded them gently and patiently –

Duet 1:29-31 Then I said to you, “Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. 30 The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, 31 and in the wilderness. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.”

How many powerful deeds of the Hand of God they had already witnessed? 10 plagues against Egypt, parting the Red Sea, destruction of mighty army of Egypt, receiving manna from heaven every morning, getting water from the rock... the list goes on! Yet they got terrified knowing that the Promised Land has cities with very high walls.

Now God is bringing them to the first such city that they were afraid of!

Here God wanted to show them it is he who fights for them and they have to do only very little to capture such places.

Just by marching around the walls for 7 days and raising their voices on the 7th day, God brought down the mighty walls they described as that are up to the sky! What brought down the walls?

Is it their marching? Is it their shouting? Or is it the invisible mighty hand of God?

Is there any walls that are too strong for God to bring down?

Centuries after this incident, the walls of Nineveh, capital of 150 feet high walls that had the width on top of it good enough for 3 chariots to run abreast with 1200 towers was brought down when God brought the flooded river against it!

What are the walls that you are afraid of? Which areas of your city do you feel like Gospel cannot enter?

Which are the groups of people in your city that you feel like impenetrable?

Do you reject some people thinking that their hearts are too hard and will not let the Gospel enter?

By this you are not just misjudging people but also God! You are saying that God is so weak that he can't break those walls!

Are you not despising God with such thoughts? This is the worst thing we can do against God! On the other hand, when we completely trust Him and believe there are no walls too strong for God to breach, God is glorified and honored and he will accomplish what you believe.

Write down such things that you want to witness and pray to God.

When God breaks those walls, write down and let the generations hear about it and gain the same faith!

Some of us have experienced the hand of God working powerfully by turning the whole family to Christ by breaking down the walls of traditions, false beliefs, bitterness etc.

Here is such a great story of Saji Alex's family: Saji grew up in a traditional Christian family in Kerala. He and his family faced very intense challenges when he was growing up. When he finished schooling he was not sure what direction he has to take for his future.

He went along with a friend who wanted to join Catholic Seminary and he too joined the seminary. After few years of seminary life he realized that is not what he should continue and so he quit. After much struggle he got a job in Bangalore and while working there he was invited to the Church. The Bible studies helped him to clearly understand God's plan for his life and he became a disciple. But he faced a lot of opposition from his family.

As he was the eldest in the family, he was expected to earn and take care of the family. His mother was afraid that he will not take care of the family anymore. From the time he became a disciple he was desiring and praying that everyone in his family will also be saved. His brother Sojan came and stayed with him and took up a job and he too became a disciple. Saji joined the mission team to Cochin in 1992. Soon his sister Sheji became a disciple in Cochin. Saji got married to Sheeba in Cochin.

Then his brother Binu became a disciple. Saji kept praying for the rest of the family and his brother Biju and his wife Ciniya came to Cochin to help Saji & Sojan to construct their house and they stayed back and became disciples. By this time their mother Leelamma became very interested in following Jesus but there was no Church in Kannur where she was residing with her husband. So the whole family prayed and soon in 2012 the Church was started in Kannur.

Saji's mother was so eager to follow Christ that she started attending the Church services in Kannur travelling a long distance from her village by spending 6 hours by bus (up and down). The biggest challenge was about his dad. He was an alcoholic. He had no interest in following Jesus all these years. But in 2013 he became very sick and was in the ICU for several days. During this time disciples from Kannur Church sincerely reached out to him by visiting, praying and serving him. With much prayer and perseverance Saji's dad Alexander repented and got baptized.

By this all his family members are saved. New chapter of the second generation coming to Christ began with Sojan's daughter getting baptized in 2014.

Day 11 : HAND OF GOD THAT TURNS HEAVENLY BODIES

Joshua 10:1-14

Five kings of Amorites gathered their armies together to fight against Israel. Fear of the LORD and how He helps Israel to take over cities spread among all nations living in the 'Promised Land'. They might have thought if they gather together and fight they may win.

Gibeonites who lived in that region were wise enough to surrender to Israel even though their city was important and larger than many other cities and that all their men were good fighters.

(Joshua 10:2 He and his people were very much alarmed at this, because Gibeon was an important city, like one of the royal cities; it was larger than Ai, and all its men were good fighters.)

Five kings of Amorites set out to attack Gibeon and they in turn requested help of Joshua.

Joshua responded and got his army march against the enemies. Immediately the LORD spoke to Joshua "Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you."

Whenever we set out to do God's will, however hard the task is, God is on our side and he will help us with his mighty hand to provide us success.

How can Israel - a small nation with few soldiers - win against armies of five nations? Well nothing is impossible when God is fighting for us!

It is not the strength of Joshua or his army that fought the battle and won but the hand of God did it.

First God threw them into confusion and many enemy soldiers ran for their lives. Vs. 11 "As they fled before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Azekah, the LORD hurled large hailstones down on them from the sky, and more of them died from the hailstones than were killed by the swords of the Israelites."

Who fought against the enemies of Israel? This is not the only time God fought against his enemies using natural forces. Study about how God used natural forces that are under his control to fight against the wicked nations and how he destroyed them. Praise God for His amazing ways. Gain faith and trust in God's saving hand.

The story is not over. Read vs.12-15

12 On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel: "O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon."13 So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. 14 There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a man. Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel! 15 Then Joshua returned with all Israel to the camp at Gilgal.

This is one of the most amazing ways God worked - As the battle against Amorites goes on Joshua realized that he needs more time to finish the attack on his enemies. He asks more time for sun to go down (sunset)! This is something no one will ever dare to imagine. But Joshua knew so well that it is God who controls the whole universe.

Let us look at his prayer and learn from it - Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel: "O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon." He is not asking, God if possible please stop the sun! See the confidence he had on the power of God.

God was so pleased with Joshua's faith and zeal that he extended the day by probably another 12 hours!

How did God do it? We don't know how to explain that but one thing is sure - this miracle did happen! More important matter is to believe that we are worshipping a God who controls the entire universe! Trust him and dare to ask (like Joshua) confidently for God to work beyond our logics and reasons.

Write down your miracle prayers:

Believe that you have already received them (Mark 11:24)

Write down answered prayers and share with others giving glory to God.

Day 12 : GOD WHO FULFILS HIS PROMISES

In the last few devotionals we read many of God's promises. Those promises seemed to be too big for us. Such great promises can even make us doubt - "will God do that much?"

Those who trust God will see the promises of God being fulfilled in their own life.

Joshua was one of those rare faithful ones. When all others around him failed to trust God, he stood up and went against the crowd and trusted God and challenged the faithless. God rewarded him to see the fulfillment of those promises he trusted.

God brought them out of Egypt promising them to be settled in the Promised Land of Canaan. When they were in the wilderness very close to the land of Canaan God had asked Moses to send out 12 spies to survey the land. They saw the land was indeed flowing with milk and honey but 10 of them had no faith that God will help them to capture the land.

Only Joshua and Caleb had the faith in God's ability to fulfill his promises. Those 10 of them caused the minds of the rest of Israel to be troubled to the point they all believed that they will perish in the hands of the 'giant Anakites' who lived in Canaan. So they rebelled against God and Moses.

Numbers 14:6-9

Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes ⁷ and said to the entire Israelite assembly, “The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. ⁸ If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. ⁹ Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them.”

Joshua and Caleb had so much of trust in God that they stood up before a million grumbling faithless Israelites and proclaimed their faith in God's power to fulfill God's promises.

God was pleased with Joshua and Caleb but was angry with the faithless. So he cursed the faithless and made sure they wander in the desert for 40 days and perish. Only Joshua and Caleb who trusted God got a chance to step into the 'Promised Land'.

Then God made this promise to Joshua:

Joshua 1:3-6

I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. ⁴ Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. ⁵ No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.

See the fulfillment of this promise:

Joshua 11:16-23

What happened to the Anakite giants that people feared {Numbers 13:32b,33 All the people we saw there are of great size. ³³We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim).

We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.”}

Not only Joshua but Caleb was also blessed to see the fulfillment of the promises he trusted:

Joshua 14:12-15

Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the LORD helping me, I will drive them out just as he said.” ¹³ Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as his inheritance. ¹⁴ So Hebron has belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the LORD, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly. ¹⁵ (Hebron used to be called

KiriathArba after Arba, who was the greatest man among the Anakites.) Then the land had rest from war.

Did God fulfill his promises? Let us hear Joshua's own testimony on this:

Joshua 21:43-45

So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their ancestors, and they took possession of it and settled there. 44 The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their ancestors. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hands. 45 Not one of all the LORD's good promises to the house of Israel failed; everyone was fulfilled.

Do you trust in God's faithfulness and power to fulfill His promises?

Do you even remember His promises?

One of the goals of all the people in this world is to be happy! Best way to be joyful (that is the word found more in the Bible than happiness) in this life is to remember the promises of God and trust those promises and wait in expectation to see their fulfillment.

Study the promises of God in the Bible.

Make a list of them. Choose those are relevant to you and pray to God to fulfill them.

Trust and wait to see those fulfillments. Enjoy and praise God and share those amazing stories to others around you. This will not only make you joyful but will glorify God - that is the ultimate purpose.

Day : 13 CHOOSING THE WEAK TO REVEAL THE MIGHTY HAND OF GOD

It is noticeable in the Bible that God always chooses the weak and ordinary men and make them do mighty deeds by the power of God so that He will gain glory.

Young boy David was used by God to kill giant Goliath and win the battle against Philistines.

Young boy Samuel was used by God to prophesy about Eli & family and lead Israel.

Most of the prophets were very ordinary people but brought extraordinary prophecies and some did extraordinary miracles.

Moses had a stammering tongue but God used his tongue to bring the mighty kingdom of Egypt to its knees.

List goes on...(Read Hebr 11 to know more)

Judges 6:1-6

Because of the sins of Israelites, God handed them over to the Midianites. Vs2. because the power of Midian was so oppressive, the Israelites prepared shelters for themselves in mountain clefts, caves and strongholds.

See how the Israelites had to suffer under the oppression of Midianites?

When they were crushed so hard they cried out to God and God sent a deliverer - Gideon.

Read Judges 7

See how God works - when thousands of Israelites gathered to fight the Midianites God wanted most of them to go back and have only 300 of them to accompany Gideon to fight innumerable Midianite soldiers. Why did God send most of them back? If a huge army fights Midianites and win the war people may give the credit of victory to the army and not to God who really fights for them and gives them victory! God wants to gain glory and so he did this.

Who will ever imagine a small group of 300 can win the victory over such a huge army of Midianites? By worldly point of view it is impossible to even imagine that it is possible for a victory by just 300 ordinary famished men!

But remember the promise God had made with them -

Deut 1: 29 Then I said to you, "Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. 30 The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes,....

Also here we see how God understands our weaknesses and how he strengthens us.

Read again Judges 7:9-16

God knew that Gideon was fearful! See vs.10 ¹⁰If you are afraid to attack, go down to the camp with your servant Purah¹¹ and listen to what they are saying. Afterward, you will be encouraged to attack the camp." So he and Purah his servant went down to the outposts of the camp.

So Gideon went down to the camp of Midianites and as God himself promised he got strengthened!

Vs.13-15 Gideon arrived just as a man was telling a friend his dream. "I had a dream," he was saying. "A round loaf of barley bread came tumbling into the Midianite camp. It struck the tent with such force that the tent overturned and collapsed." ¹⁴ His friend responded, "This can be nothing other than the sword of Gideon son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given the Midianites and the whole camp into his hands." ¹⁵ When Gideon heard the dream and its interpretation, he bowed

down and worshiped. He returned to the camp of Israel and called out, "Get up! The LORD has given the Midianite camp into your hands."

See how God works - God put dreams in the minds of his enemies and made them to live in fear! When Gideon overheard the dream of one of those Midianite soldiers and its interpretation, he was so convinced that God is working so powerfully to give Israel a great victory and so he worshipped God then and there! Also he took courage and led the 300 soldiers with him and led them to great victory over such a huge army!

Vs.22 When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the LORD caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords.

The army fled to Beth Shittah toward Zererah as far as the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath.

See how the hand of God worked? When the 300 men with Gideon sounded the trumpet in faith, God caused confusion and fear among the enemies and they killed each other with their swords and the rest of them fled in fear.

What ways are you being like Gideon and his people? Do you consider yourself weak? Well then understand from these Scriptures that God has great plans for those who are weak but are willing to trust the 'strong and powerful' God.

Think and write down few things you considered impossible for you as you felt you were weak.

It could be like the following:

- I am afraid & I don't know how to share my faith with my friends, colleagues or boss.
- I wish I could start a Bible Talk in my college, work place or neighborhood but I don't have the knowledge and courage.
- I am so weak in fellowship that I don't have many friends in the Church.
- I am so weak in my knowledge of Scriptures that I can't teach the Bible to any non-Christians.

While I am writing these lines I am reminded of how God helped me - I had no Bible knowledge before becoming a disciple. I was amazed and touched by the way the brothers who taught me were so well versed in the Scriptures. They were able to give me answers for any questions from the Scriptures!

After getting baptized as I got joined them for studying the Bible with new comers, I was even more amazed to see how fast people are overcoming addictions and sins they were enslaved for years just by the Bible studies. I was wondering that if I can also equipped to study the Bible with people like this, so many more people could be saved. But I did not have the confidence that I can ever do it. One reason was that as I suffered some sickness few years before that I had lost my ability to memorize.

This had seriously affected my education and work. Then it dawned on me that if God has changed me so much and as I witnessed, God is changing so many others around me, then why can't I pray for God to help me regain my ability to memorize?

Also I remembered that after baptism I am not alone but I have received the gift of Holy Spirit. I started praying and started making efforts to memorize Scriptures and Guard the Gospel studies. Amazingly soon God helped my brain to start functioning much better than ever before. With the help of Holy Spirit and other brothers I learnt to do Guard the Gospel studies and memorized 100 Scriptures in two months!

So many of them with whom I started studying the Bible even got baptized. I know it so well that I am still very weak but it is not my ability or power but it is truly the power God that works through weak people like me!

Gain faith from the example of Gideon and pray that God will strengthen you and use you powerfully in the areas you are afraid you are weak and helpless.

Day 14 HAND OF GOD WORKS FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO GLORIFY GOD

Hezekiah was the king of Judah. {Remember Israel was divided into two nations : Judah(Southern nation with Jerusalem as capital) and Israel (Northern nation with Samaria as capital).}

In the early years of Hezekiah's reign nation of Assyria attacked and destroyed Israel and took many people into Assyria as captives (Exile of Israel) This is mentioned in the first part of 2 Kings 18.

Assyrians were very powerful and very wicked - they were known for their cruelty. Bent on conquest, they now attacked Judah assuming that it must be much more easy to capture this smaller nation. But they did not understand that this small nation is worshipping the great God!

Read 2 Kings 18:17-19:37

See what Hezekiah did when he read the letter from the Assyrians! He was scared but took refuge in God the almighty. Read his prayer:

2 Kings 19:14-19

Assyrians were boasting that none of the gods of other nations could save those nations from the mighty hand of their king! So they were threatening the people of Judah not to trust Hezekiah when he says 'the LORD will deliver them.

But King Hezekiah had clear understanding that those so called gods were only wood and stone! Read vs.18 They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by men's hands.

Notice Hezekiah's request to the almighty God whom he worshipped: Vs.19 Now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God."

Hezekiah's prayer was not that God will save his nation for his benefit or for his people's benefit but the glory of God!

Notice what he prayed: "deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, O LORD, are God."

He wanted God to act on the threat of the Assyrians and deliver Judah so that all the kingdoms on earth may know that the LORD (YHWH) alone is God!

Isn't it the same desire David had when he attacked the giant Goliath whom the whole nation of Israel feared?

Whenever anyone desires God's name to be glorified, God is pleased with that desire and if anyone prays to Him with that desire he will surely answer that prayer so that His name will be glorified.

How do you pray? Praying for your benefit, comfort and glory? Or are your prayers purely for the glory of God?

Remember: the very reason God created all men is for His glory - (Isa 43:7).

When we seek God's glory we are fulfilling the very purpose of our creation.

As soon as Hezekiah prayed this prayer of faith - God sent message to Isaiah the prophet and this is one most important part of that message:

2 Kings 19:22,23 "Who is it you have insulted and blasphemed? Against who have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride? Against the Holy One of Israel! 23 By your messengers you have heaped insults on the Lord."

God says that Assyrians that it is not Hezekiah or the nation of Judah that they have insulted with their threats but they have insulted God of heaven and he calls it 'blasphemy'! God cannot bear with anyone blaspheming him.

Blasphemy is opposite to glorifying God. God destroys those who blaspheme his name and protects and lifts up those who are trying to glorify him.

Now he raised his hand against the blasphemer - Assyria. See what the mighty hand of God has done:

Read again **2 Kings 19:32-37**

"Therefore this is what the LORD says concerning the king of Assyria: "He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. 33 By the way that he came he will return; he will not enter this city, declares the LORD. 34 I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the

sake of David my servant."35 That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning--there were all the dead bodies! 36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there. 37 One day, while he was worshiping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer cut him down with the sword, and they escaped to the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son succeeded him as king.

God promised deliverance of Judah from the hand of Assyrians and he did it on the same night! One angel of the LORD destroyed 1, 85,000 mighty soldiers who had conquered many mighty nations!

Hezekiah or his army had to do nothing to protect them - they did not have to raise their swords against this mighty nation!

It was done by the MIGHTY HAND OF GOD! Story did not end there - even the king Sennacherib himself was put to death by his own sons - see how God chose the venue for it: he was cut down with sword when he was worshipping his god in the temple of Nisroch!

His so called god could not give him victory over probably the smallest nation he ever attacked and himself from his sons though he faithfully worshipped his god!

- Do you have complete trust in the LORD our God?
- Do you fear anything else other than God?
- Are you living with the primary purpose of glorifying God?
- Are your prayers focused on Glorifying God?

Start praying like Hezekiah and see how God works!

Day 15 : HAND OF GOD BRINGS GREAT REVIVAL

2 Chronicles 30

Remember the Nation of Israel was divided into two nations - Israel & Judah. Israel was steeped in idol worship from their first king Jeroboam. Judah was ruled by the kings who were descendants of David. Ahaz was one of the most wicked kings of Judah. He led the whole nation into idol worship and detestable practices associated with it. But his son Hezekiah was completely different. He loved God wholeheartedly and spearheaded a great revival in Judah. He was so excited about the way God blessed his efforts and how the hearts of people were being drawn to God.

In the 6th year of Hezekiah's reign, Israel was destroyed by Assyrians and many Israelites were killed, some were taken into exile and some were left behind. (2 Kings 18:10 says "So Samaria was captured in Hezekiah's sixth year,"). This happened because Israel rejected God and worshipped idols(2 Kings 17).

For generations the Passover feast was not being observed even in Judah. Hezekiah decided to celebrate the Passover. He sent messengers all over Judah

and even to the left over people in the neighbouring nation of Israel. His desire was to help not only the people of Judah but also the people of Israel to return to God.

See how people responded: **2 Chronicles 30:10-14**

The couriers went from town to town in Ephraim and Manasseh, as far as Zebulun, but people scorned and ridiculed them. 11 Nevertheless, some from Asher, Manasseh and Zebulun humbled themselves and went to Jerusalem. 12 Also in Judah the hand of God was on the people to give them unity of mind to carry out what the king and his officials had ordered, following the word of the LORD. 13 A very large crowd of people assembled in Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread in the second month. 14 They removed the altars in Jerusalem and cleared away the incense altars and threw them into the Kidron Valley.

Some people in Israel ridiculed the messengers of Hezekiah. But some Israelites humbled themselves and went to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Vs. 12 says "Also in Judah the hand of God was on the people to give them unity of mind to carry out what the king and his officials had ordered, following the word of the LORD."

Hezekiah set his heart on spiritually reviving both the nations of Judah & Israel. God was so pleased with that effort so 'the hand of God' was on the people to give them unity of mind to carry out the plans of Hezekiah.

All those whose hearts were moved by the hand of God came to Jerusalem and took part in the celebration as well as destroyed the idol worship in Judah(Vs. 14). They enjoyed the freedom from idolatry and enjoyed the pure wholehearted worship of the living God. (21The Israelites who were present in Jerusalem celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great rejoicing, while the Levites and priests praised the LORD every day with resounding instruments dedicated to the LORD).

They even extended the period of celebration. (vs.23 The whole assembly then agreed to celebrate the festival seven more days; so for another seven days they celebrated joyfully.)

How much time do you spend in worshipping God? Do you enjoy your Bible studies and prayer times? Do you enjoy the meetings of the Church? Or do you feel it is burdening and complain it is too long? For these people, whose hearts were turned to God, walking several miles and coming to Jerusalem and meeting for one week seemed to be too less and they wanted to spend another week in worship and fellowship!

What kind of spiritual revival is required in your life, in your family, in your Family group and the Church? It could be destroying the idol worship of greed, worldly pleasures, impurity, selfishness, pride etc.

It can also be a great revival of Evangelism to save souls. Are you willing to spearhead the revival? Do you want to experience the 'Hand of God' working powerfully in your efforts for that amazing revival?

You don't have to be a king or a great leader starts a great revival. We have the greatest example in Jesus - he had no position given by the people in the world for him to start the revival. His heart was moved by seeing the spiritual condition of the people around him.

Matt 9:35-38

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Jesus 'SAW' the needs of people and that aroused his compassion for the lost. Pray to God to open your eyes and ears to see and hear the needs of people (both lost and saved - including you and your family) around you. Write them down and with prayer and dependence on God & with advice from other matured disciples around you and start a revival to meet those needs for the glory of God.

Day 16 : WINNING A WAR JUST BY SINGING PRAISES TO GOD

Read: 2 Chronicles 20:1-30

Three nations got together to attack Judah - Moabites, Ammonites and some of the Meunites. It was a vast army against a small nation with little strength. Jehoshaphat was the King of Judah at that time. He was a good king who trusted God. He had options to either surrender or fight and get defeated or to seek the military alliance of some other nations. But he did not do any of them but turned to God for the help of his mighty hand!

See how Jehoshaphat prayed:

12 O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you."

God answered his prayer of faith through a prophet:

Vs 15-17 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. 16 Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. 17 You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.' "

Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah trusted God's promise even though God did not specify how he will defeat the enemies.

Because they trusted the promise of God - even though a vast army was near them - the first thing they did was to worship God and sing praises to him.

See what military guidance that Jehoshaphat gave his army that went out against the invading vast army:

Vs.21-23 After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: "Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever." 22 As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. 23 The men of Ammon and Moab rose up against the men from Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

See how they won the war! Only thing they did was to sing praises to God. As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. God destroyed them by throwing them into confusion and they killed each other!

What do you do when you face crises? Worrying or praising? Even if you go to God what kind of prayer do you offer? Praying with doubt - "God if you can...." Or do you fully trust God? Do you remember God's promises in such situations?

Do you trust God's promises? What are some promises you have witnessed being fulfilled?

Next time when you face a crisis, face it with confidence in God's promises and offer songs of praises to God and see how God works powerfully.

Day 17 : YOUR STORY - HAND OF GOD IN YOUR LIFE

Psalm 118

Many psalms are written from the experiences of the psalmists.

- Write your story - how the Hand of God worked in your life - How were you saved?
- What are the other miracles God did in your life?
- Write down and see how the unseen hand of God worked in your life; praise God.
- Write down your present burdens and see how the same God delivered you in the past will give you victory over these things as well.
- Praise him for the future victories and live in peace.

Mark 11:24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Day 18 : HAND OF GOD PROVIDES FOR THOSE WHO SERVE HIM

Many times people hold back from serving God thinking that it takes a lot of sacrifice and while serving God their needs will not be met.

Elijah was a great servant of God. He had to live and do his ministry in one of the most hostile nation - Israel! This is the time of kings. Israel was divided into two nations - Northern kingdom Israel and the southern kingdom Judah.

From the beginning of forming the kingdom, Israel turned away from God and started worshipping idols (starting with calf idols in Bethel & Dan set up by the first king Jeroboam).

Ahab was one of the worst kings who rule Israel guided by his wife Jezebel who was probably the wicked woman mentioned in the Bible!

Jezebel was leading Israel to worship Baal and she was bent on killing God's prophets!

Elijah was sent by God to such a godless nation at such a terrible time to bring them back to God.

Deuteronomy 32 talks about what God would do to the nation if it forsakes God and worships idols. One of the punishment predicted is that he will afflict the land with famine!

1 Kings 17:1-6 Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, and there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word." 2 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah: 3 "Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. 4 You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there." 5 So he did what the LORD had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. 6 The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

As God was angered by the idol worship of his people, he told Elijah there will be no rain for 3 years!

Will God punish the righteous and unrighteous together?

Well God had a plan to take care of Elijah - it was an unprecedented plan. He led him to a brook so that he can drink water from the brook and God sent ravens with bread and meat in the morning and evening!

Who cooked them and from where the ravens brought them? We don't know - but the hand of God that brought punishment on the wicked brought blessings to those who followed God! Our God is just – he will take care of those who serve him faithfully.

It was not only Elijah that God took care during this time but also all other prophets and the righteous in Israel.

1 Kings 18:4 While Jezebel was killing off the LORD's prophets, Obadiah had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them in two caves, fifty in each, and had supplied them with food and water.

Is there any reason that you should hold back from serving God?

Are you willing to trust God the Almighty that he will take care of you as you serve Him?

Day 19 : HAND OF GOD WORKS POWERFULLY FOR THOSE WHO GIVE FIRST TO GOD

1 Kings 17:7-24

As we studied before this, in the time of drought, God provided Elijah with water from the brook and bread and meat brought by ravens.

After some time the brook dried up and God told him in vs 9 "Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food."

As usual Elijah obeyed God and went to Zarephath looking for the widow God has planned to provide him with food.

Her life situation shows what people were going through all over in Israel. Because of them rejecting God and worshipping idols, God had brought famine upon the land that was once flowing with milk and honey.

People must have started dying. Even this widow and her only son were planning to bake the last bread and she had no hope that they will survive. From her words in vs.12 we see that she and her son were expecting nothing but death soon after she has this last meal with her son.

That is when Elijah appears the scene and requests her to give him a jar of water to drink. When she goes ahead to get the drink, he also makes another request - "And bring me, please, a piece of bread."(Vs.11b). That is when she reveals her plight we discussed before.

Then Elijah prophesies : 13 Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. 14 For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD gives rain on the land.' "

What will be your response if someone says like this when you are in her situation? I may think: "This must be someone who has come to trick me" or "what if this doesn't happen as he predicts? What if the flour and oil gets over when I bake bread for him? Then what will be our plight?" or "Let me bake a bread for my son first and then if the flour and oil remains I will bake one for this man."

These are all thoughts out of insecurity fear and lack of trust in God!

But let us see how this widow responded: Vs.15,16 She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. 16 For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.

This poor widow had so much trust in God that she obeyed the instructions of Elijah and so God blessed her and her son to be well taken care till the famine ended.

- How are your faith and trust in God tested?
- What is your response when you are tested?
- Do you doubt or trust?
- How about giving contribution/offering to God? Is that your 1st priority after you receive your income? Or do you consider what are your expenses first and consider giving to God later or from the 'left over'?

Satan always want to keep us insecure and worried about our future making us feel like 'you need to take of yourself" no one else will care for you" God and the Church are selfish - they are demanding more from you' etc.

This widow could have thought about the prophet like this 'what a selfish man he is - see what he says "But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son." He wants the first portion - he is not telling - bake and eat first portion and then give me the rest!

Is God wrong in expecting you to give the first and best to HIM? He is not selfish and he can exist without you giving him anything. He was there fully taken care even before you ever existed. But he is expecting you to give first to him for your wellbeing. Because he knows that your whole life till eternity depends on you loving him
with all your heart and giving him the first priority.

Also notice another miracle happened in the same period of Elijah's stay with this widow's family. Her only son became ill and died bringing terrible grief.

Elijah felt the same grief for the loss of this boy and he took the boy into his upper room and cried out to God three times and God brought the boy back to life. Through this she was convinced that Elijah was truly the prophet of God and that he speaks the word of God!

Study Jeremiah 17:5-9 See the blessings and curses from God depends on where we put our trust!

- Are you giving first priority to God?
- What excuses do you make when you compromise and not give first priority to him?
- Do you give the best and first from your income to God?
- Will you do that even if you come across challenging times in your life?

Remember none of us may face the crisis this widow faced and yet she chose to give first to God (by giving to the prophet of God)!

Have you experienced God's faithfulness by way of God taking care of your needs?

Write down those experiences and praise God.

Make a commitment that you will never compromise in giving first to God.

Day 20 : HAND OF GOD THAT TURNED THE NATION TO TRUE GOD

1 Kings 18:16-46

Israel was at its lowest position spiritually when Ahab & Jezebel were ruling it.

God sent Elijah the prophet to turn the nation to God.

Jezebel had succeeded in turning the whole nation to worship pagan Gods of Cananites Baal & Asherah. Jezebel had four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah eating at her table!

Elijah was fed up seeing that they have abandoned the LORD. He challenges the nation in vs.21 Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

Elijah's proposal for this was to have both the prophets of pagan gods & Elijah to bring an offering to their god and call out their god to accept the offering by fire. Whichever god accepts it by fire then it is proved to be true god. Elijah was sure that their god has no power to bring fire from heaven and he was also sure that the Lord of heaven whom he worships is the true God and he will answer his prayer by fire.

The prophets of false gods spent hours chanting, dancing and cutting themselves but their gods did not answer by fire!

Elijah was bold enough to taunt them: Vs.27,28 At noon Elijah began to taunt them. Shout louder!" he said. "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened."28 So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed.

Finally Elijah repaired the altar of the LORD and placed the offering and he did another amazing thing - he dug a trench that could contain more than 14 litres of

water and he got people to pour water on the offering, on the altar and the water even filled the trench. (read:vs.32- 39)

This is unusual because we know if something has to be lit by fire it should not have water! But Elijah was sure of the power of fire that God is going to send that he wanted all the people around to be amazed and turn their hearts to God.

Let us read the most wonderful part of this event: Vs.37-39 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. 39 When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD--he is God! The LORD--he is God!"

People of false gods prayed to their gods for hours but they were not gods that they could not answer their prayer! But here Elijah prays just once in reverence to God and the most amazing thing takes place – fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil and also licked up the water in the trench!

Close your eyes and visualize this event - it is one of the most dramatic events in the Bible - and see the result - vs.39 says When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD--he is God! The LORD--he is God!"

It was not required for Elijah to give a sermon to challenge them to accept the LORD but by the very sight of this event they all fell prostrate in worship and cried out - "The LORD--he is God! The LORD--he is God!"

Not only that these people who revered the prophets of Baal, listened to the instruction of Elijah and seized them all and brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there!

See how the hand of God worked so powerfully to turn the hearts of people of the whole nation to God!

What a wonderful God that we are worshipping!

Are you like Elijah with uncompromising faith and trust in the living God or like the people of Israel who are wavering between false gods and true God?

Where do you take refuge in times of difficulties? In the world, wealth, humans, self or on the living God?

Do you love God with all your heart and mind and soul?

If there is in any way your heart is not fully committed to God make the whole hearted commitment to HIM today! Don't let anything to turn you away from God.

Day 21 : OUR HARDEST THINGS ARE EASIEST THINGS FOR GOD

2 Kings 3

Israel went to fight against Moab.

Joram king of Israel took the help of Jehoshaphat king of Judah and the king of Edom.

After marching for seven days the army ran out of water and they realised they may perish not by the swords of Moabites but by thirst!

Jehoshaphat being a man trusting the LORD, wanted to seek the guidance and help of God.

Read what happened:

11 But Jehoshaphat asked, "Is there no prophet of the LORD here, through whom we may inquire of the LORD?" An officer of the king of Israel answered, "Elisha son of Shaphat is here. He used to pour water on the hands of Elijah." 12 Jehoshaphat said, "The word of the LORD is with him." So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

As we know Israel had rejected God and were worshipping only idols for generations! Even though God sent prophets like Elijah & Elisha they did not fully give up their idol worship! Just because Elisha had respect for Jehoshaphat because he feared the LORD, Elisha offered to inquire of the LORD on their behalf.

So he asked for a harpist to be brought and play the harp.

Vs.16-20 While the harpist was playing, the hand of the LORD came on Elisha 16 and he said, "This is what the LORD says: I will fill this valley with pools of water. 17 For this is what the LORD says: You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink. 18 This is an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD; he will also deliver Moab into your hands. 19 You will overthrow every fortified city and every major town. You will cut down every good tree, stop up all the springs, and ruin every good field with stones." 20 The next morning, about the time for offering the sacrifice, there it was—water flowing from the direction of Edom! And the land was filled with water.

{It is interesting to note that instead of the regular phrase 'Spirit of the LORD came up on the prophet' or 'Word of God came to the prophet' here in Vs15b says 'hand of the LORD came on Elisha'("While the harpist was playing, the hand of the LORD came on Elisha".)}

Then Elisha prophesied that God will fill the valley with pools of water without wind or rain! So that all the soldiers and their animals can quench their thirst. Also vs. 18 says -This is an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD.

It is impossible for us to even imagine such a thing will happen - without rain without any one digging wells, the whole valley being filled with water all of a sudden! But such an unbelievable matter is 'an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD'!

God also predicted that he will deliver Moab into their hands.

All what God promised through Elisha happened and the proud army of Moab was defeated!

There is nothing impossible for the Hand of God to accomplish!

- What are some of your godly desires that are not fulfilled?
- Do you think it is hard for God to accomplish them?
- What is the hardest/impossible thing in your sight today?
- Is that too hard for God or do you want to believe 'it is an easy thing for God'?

Make a list of things that are too hard and unimaginable for you and pray that you will have faith to believe that they are too easy for God!

Pray with newly found faith for them to be accomplished by the Hand of God for His Glory! Witness such things being accomplished by God - praise God and share the work of the Hand of God to others.

Day 22 : WHEN THE HAND OF GOD WORKS ON THE LITTLE WE HAVE

2 Kings 4:1-7 The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that he revered the LORD. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves." 2 Elisha replied to her, "How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house? "Your servant has nothing there at all," she said, "except a little oil." 3 Elisha said "Go around and ask all your neighbors for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. 4 Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side." 5 She left him and afterward shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her and she kept pouring. 6 When all the jars were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another one." But he replied, "There is not a jar left." Then the oil stopped flowing. 7 She went and told the man of God, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left."

This poor widow of a prophet of God was in deep trouble. Her husband had incurred debts before his death. Now the creditor is coming to take her two boys as slaves!

Such terrible things were common in the land of Israel where people have become godless!

She approaches Prophet Elisha for help.

Elisha asks her Tell me, what do you have in your house? "Your servant has nothing there at all," she said, "except a little oil."

By human reasoning what can she do with that little oil that is left in her house?
Nothing at all!

But when you give that little oil you have to the hand of God – we never know how much that can become!

Elisha asks her to collect as many jars from all her neighbors and then close the door and pour that little oil into those jars filling them one by one!

She and her sons obeyed it word by word and when they finished pouring the oil into the last jar, the oil stopped flowing.

Amazingly that much oil was enough for her to sell and pay back the debts and for the family to live on!

What a faithful and powerful God we have!

- Are we willing to seek advice when we are in trouble?
- Are we willing to follow the advice when someone gives advice that does not match our reasoning?
- Are we willing to entrust God with the little we have?
-

In Nov 2013 my son had his birthday. I asked him what does he want for his birthday. He didn't say anything. Later on with hesitation he came to me and said he would like to get a graphic tablet for drawing. Then I asked how much it will cost. He said it will cost Rs.7, 000/-!

That was too much for me! I said sorry I don't have so much money now but let us pray and when I have enough money I will get it. Then I started wondering - my son does not ask anything much and what kind of father I am if I can't give him something when he asks?

The only option for me was to reduce my contribution and buy him the gift. Then I thought it is not right for me to give less to God to give more for my son!

I resolved to give first to God and wait. In that same week the person who stays in the 1st floor of our house requested me to help him fix a window mesh. When I went to help him I asked him about what type of graphic tablet is good because he being a graphic artist I had seen him using one before.

Immediately he said I have one that I am not using you can take it right now!

Then and there he pulled out his brief case and took the tablet and gave me and I asked how much I should pay him! He said - 'nothing'!

I am not saying that we should give to God in expectation of something from God. But the point is to trust God that he is our father who knows our needs before even we see it and he is concerned about us and so he will meet our needs even if we feel like we have only little. And never hold back in giving to God even when we feel like we have only little!

Write down the situations you were in dire trouble and how God helped you. Praise God about that and remind yourself every time you face similar situations in the future that God is in control.

Seek advice in every such situation and follow the advice than following your own ways.

Day 23 : OPEN YOUR EYES AND SEE THE HAND OF GOD

2 Kings 6:8-23

Even though Israel was steeped in idol worship that God hates as adultery, when Israel was in trouble God helped them through his prophet Elisha.

Powerful kingdom of Aram waged war against Israel. But the Hand of God was upon Israel - God who knows the thoughts and attitudes of men revealed the schemes and plans to the king of Israel through Elisha the prophet.

So Israel could have strategic advantage over Arameans. King of Aram was assuming that there are some spies in his camp reporting to the King of Israel. But one of his own officers told the king, "but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom."

So the King of Aram sent a powerful armed troop to capture Elisha in Dothan. They surrounded the city and in the morning when the servant of Elisha got frightened when he went out and saw the huge army surrounding the city.

But Elisha said: vs.16 "Don't be afraid, those who are with us are more than those who are with them."17 And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Do you know there are spiritual forces guarding us? They can't be seen by our physical eyes! Even if an army surrounds us those hordes of angels who are around us to protect are more than those who come against us!

The moment the servant's eyes were opened and as soon as he saw the chariots of fire around him, his fear left and he got so confident!

We may never have that experience but we must have faith that God and his powerful angels are around us fighting the good fight to protect us! When we have that faith we don't panic or fear or worry in any situation. Rather we can be at peace even amidst all turmoil around us. When we trust God like that God helps us with his outstretched arms.

The latter part is interesting - Read again vs 18-23

Elisha prayed to God to strike the army that came to capture him to be struck with blindness and God acted on it at once! Then he led them to Samaria -the capital city of Israel.

So he trapped them in the walled city of Samaria and surrounded them with forces of Israel. Then he opened their eyes! Now who is frightened?

What the king of Israel or the army of Israel could not achieve was achieved by an unarmed ordinary man with the power of God! Then the king of Israel wanted to kill these enemies who were brought into his lap!

But Elijah commanded them to offer their enemies a feast and send them back unharmed and well fed to their own land!

See how the story ends: Vs.23 So he prepared a great feast for them, and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them away, and they returned to their master. So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel's territory.

Notice the ways the Hand of God worked powerfully.

Take note of what could have happened if God did not intervene?

How does God expect us to treat even our enemies?

Read Matthew 5:38-48; Luke 6:27-36; Romans 12:9-21

Day 24 : HAND OF GOD WORKS FOR THOSE WHO HONOUR GOD

One of the saddest times of Israel was when they had forsaken the LORD, they were given into the hands of Babylonians.

Nebuchadnezzar's army destroyed the temple, looted it and took many Israelites as slaves to Babylon.

Read Daniel 1:1-21(Whole chapter)

Vs.3,4 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility-- 4 young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.

From the time of Solomon, other nations were aware that God has given superior intelligence to many Israelites (that is evident even today!).

Nebuchadnezzar wanted to make use of the intelligent men for administration of his kingdom.

Read vs5 The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

The trainees also had to eat food from the king's table. It seems to be a good deal because these men are brought there as slaves - what can slaves expect? But for Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah this was not a blessing but a burden because the Babylonians ate unclean food. These young men knew the Bible and they wanted to hold on to the commands of God even in captivity. Refusing to obey the instruction of the king could even bring death.

But they were willing to risk their life to hold on to the commands of God rather than obeying the commands of an earthly king.

Read again vs.8-16

Vs. 8,9 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. 9 Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, When anyone wants to honor God, He comes down to help you fulfill that attempt. Here God caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel.

This is very unlikely for a Babylonian official to show favor to a Hebrew slave! But with God nothing is impossible!

See what Daniel spoke to the official in Vs12-15"Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see."14 So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. 15 At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food.

Is it possible to imagine that these men who ate just vegetarian food looked healthier and better nourished than any other young men who ate the royal food? But that is what God achieved! Because of this the official took away all the royal food from them so that they could peacefully focus on other things.

Story did not end there: read Vs17-19To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. 18 At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. 19 The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service.

God was so pleased with these men who stood up to honor God above any worldly benefits, that he gave them knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. To Daniel God gave the ability to understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

After the training they were brought before the king and he 'interviewed' them.

Vs.20 In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

See how the hand of God worked so powerfully in the lives of these young men? Even though it was a tough time for them - they had to see their houses burned down, families killed and the temple of the God whom they loved and served burned down - yet they put their complete trust in God of heaven and earth and resolved to obey every command of him irrespective of all possible punishments that can fall on them.

- Do you have such convictions?
- Or do you compromise in situations like this?
- Do you join other worldly people for ungodly speech, ungodly parties and the like? Why do you join the crowd and do ungodly things?
- Whom do you fear? God or people around you?
- Do you compromise fearing of losing opportunities, job, position or friendship?
- Do you believe God can work in the same way he worked in Daniel's life?

Why don't you attempt to be have convictions like Daniel.

Write down the areas you had compromised in the past and see the reasons you had at that time.

Also write about possible temptations you may face in the future and how you will respond differently because you trust God like Daniel and his friends.

Day 25 : HAND OF GOD BRINGS DOWN THE MIGHTY TO THE KNEES

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and he wanted his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed and its interpretation. But they all expressed their helplessness and said "What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men."

Daniel : 2 Chapter

Read vs.12 This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel and his friends were also in the list of wise men who were to be executed. So Daniel requested the king for time for him to interpret the dream. Then Daniel returned home and requested his friends to plead with God for mercy to reveal the dream and interpretation.

During the same night God revealed the dream and its interpretation to Daniel. This made Daniel to burst out in praises to God.

Then he went up to the king and explained the dream. But he never took any credit for himself rather he glorified God and made the king understand there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries and he alone has revealed this.

First he explains the dream in vs.31-35 and then gives the interpretation from vs 36.

Statue that was in the dream is interpreted as powerful empires that ruled most of the world:

- Head of gold = Babylon;
- Chest of silver = Media/Persia;
- Belly and Thighs of bronze = Greece;
- Legs or iron = Rome.

Most important part of the dream which was an amazing prophecy about the future of the world was this: during the times of the last empire, that is Rome, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. (Vs 44)

This is one of the most wonderful prophecies about the coming of Jesus and his kingdom that he will establish which will spread all around the world, which happened around 500 years after Daniel lived (Daniel must have been alive at least till 536BC).

King responded to the interpretation of his dream by Daniel with paying great respect for Daniel and more that that he revered God of heaven whom Daniel worshipped and who revealed these mysteries.

Read Vs46-49 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. 47 The king said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery."48 Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men. 49 Moreover, at Daniel's request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.

Most wonderful effect of Daniel seeking the help of God and interpreting this dream was that God could bring understanding of God to the mighty emperor Nebuchadnezzar. In vs. 47 the emperor acknowledges that: Vs. 47 The king said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery."

What does God want the most? 1 **Tim 2:3,4** This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

John 4:23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

God wants all men - high and low - to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. Also he is always seeking true worshipers who will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

But how does he achieve that? His mighty hand works through people like Daniel and today through you and me!

Today we saw how the hand of God worked powerfully through Daniel to bring a mighty emperor to confess the goodness of God and bring him down on his knees to worship the true God. (As you read ahead in Daniel we see that Nebuchadnezzar did not whole heartedly follow God and so he was not saved - but remember God and Daniel did not fail to do their part well.)

God wants to use you too in doing such things at this time. Are you like Daniel seeking God's mercy to empower you to reveal the greatness of God to your family, colleagues, authorities and neighbors? Do you believe it is possible?

{Samuel's Story}

Samuel came from Bidar to Bangalore several years ago to get a job. His family had much financial challenges. He is an artist. Initially Samuel could not get any jobs. He used to sleep in a park and used to take bath using the water for watering plants in the government park. But he was from a Methodist Christian background and was eagerly seeking God.

One Sunday he was determined to find a Church to worship God. So he started walking from the place he was staying, praying that he will find a great Church to join worship. After walking more than 7Kms, he saw a banner 'Indian Church of Christ - All are welcome'. So he walked into the hall where our Church in Bangalore was worshipping.

Soon after the service brothers started studying the Bible and he responded to the Scriptures and got baptized. Ever since he got baptized, he wanted to reach out to his family members from his village that is 700Kms away.

God blessed him to get a job and soon he started his own business making advertisement boards etc. The business picked up well and he started bringing his relatives one by one from the village to Bangalore and helped them to find job and also introduced the Gospel to many and many of his relatives including 2 of his own brothers became disciples.

Then he kept requesting the leadership to send a mission team to Bidar. No one in Bangalore Church was planning to send a mission team to Bidar.

Initially no one took his requests seriously as the place is so far away from Bangalore and there were plans for planting other churches in the state. As Samuel kept persevering and praying some of us leaders decided to go with him and visit his

village. So in 2006 we visited his village and he arranged meetings in the Methodist Church and we addressed their congregation and taught Discipleship etc.

The response was great. Also they arranged an open air meeting where 100s of visitors came and again the response was amazing. We visited many villages and even though we just walked in to those places without any notice, when someone realised these people came to preach, they informed their families and neighbours and in half an hour 30-60 people would gather together in one place with Bibles in their hands with amazing eagerness to hear the gospel.

This amazing interest among the people made us compelled to remember the very words Jesus spoke in Matthew 9: 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

So we started praying and came back and reported what we experienced to the Church in Bangalore.

All the disciples were excited about the plan to send the mission team to Bidar. That year end we organized a Christmas Carnival to raise funds to support the mission team and the Church raised up around Indian Rs.3,50,000/-

By then we were praying for God to raise up people who can go on the mission team. 4 of them came forward from Bangalore and another 4 from Hyderabad.

Mission team was sent in April 2007. Philip & Pramila who were singles at that time led the team. David & Monica went with the team and trained them for couple of weeks. In 30 days the team with the amazing help of God baptized 8 people and so the group literally doubled in a month's time. One of them who got baptized in the first month was Samuel's brother Santhosh. Soon his mother also got saved.

In just few months a house church was started in Samuel's house in the village called Anadur.

In the first year (April 2007 to Dec 2007) they had 20 baptisms and the Church membership was 25 by the end of 2007.

In 2008 also God blessed the Church with 20 souls being added even though some of the mission team members went back to the mother Churches.

In 2009, 13 souls got saved and the membership reached 50.

Now the Church has 123 members. In that 15 are campus students (by July 2014).

Write down names of people whom you feel difficult to approach and

Share your faith and pray with faith for the hand of God to work powerfully to give you opportunity, courage and wisdom to share the gospel to them and have their hearts to be opened to accept the gospel.

By faith make great attempts. May the God of Daniel give you also victory.

Great missionary William Carey who came and spread the Gospel in Bengal said this: "Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God."

Let us do the same & experience the hand of God working powerfully in our life time.

Day 26 : HAND OF GOD THAT SAVES YOU FROM FIRE

Book of Daniel is a great book in the Bible to study to deepen our convictions.

Hope you have been making great attempts to bring glory to God after studying the 2nd chapter.

Read Daniel 3

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon made a gigantic image of gold. A decree was issued to all the people in Babylon that everyone must bow down to it as the music is played. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace. Then they found out Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who were Jews and companions of Daniel did not obey king's command!

Furious king summoned them and questioned them. He gave them another chance to save their lives by bowing down to the idol!

He also told them if they do not worship it, they will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. He asked them "what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?" Read Vs.16-18 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.

These men knew the Ten Commandments and the first command was that we should not worship any idols and even in a foreign land were they had been brought in as slaves they would not disobey God. They have witnessed how powerful the King of Babylon is as he attacked and conquered their nation of Judah!

Now they are serving as high officials in Babylon and were personally known to the king and the king himself was impressed with their abilities and wisdom. Now they are losing all that they had including their lives if they made a choice to obey God rather than men!

- What kind of choice you would have made if you were in their place?
- What situations have you been tempted to compromise?
- How have you been disobeying God because you fear men rather than God?
- Have you disobeyed God because of the desire to get favors from men?

- What are you afraid to lose? Is it your job, promotion, favor of your boss or family, property share from your parents, friendships?
- Are you afraid to share about Jesus to your colleagues?
-

Not many of us are threatened to be thrown into fiery furnace! Yet you see how easy it is for us to compromise!

See the convictions they had -

1. They believed God is powerful enough to save them from the fire.
2. Even if God does not save them, they were not willing to disobey God.

What gave them this conviction?

1. They trusted the power of God.
2. They loved God more than their very lives.
3. They also wanted to share their faith in God with deep convictions to the pagans knowing that only the faith in true living God can bring salvation for these pagans.

How powerful is God according to you?

What if he does not stretch his arms to save you from troubles, will you still trust and obey God?

Read again vs.19-30 and see the outcome of them standing up with deep convictions! Even though the furnace was heated 7 times, when these men were thrown into that blazing furnace they were unharmed - flames of that fire killed those strong soldiers who threw our brothers into the furnace. But these 3 men of God were well protected in the blazing fire. King was amazed to see now there are 4 men in the furnace and all of them were walking around in the fire unbound and unharmed. The fourth person looked like a son of the gods to the king.

May be it was an angel or Jesus himself came into the fire to encourage and fellowship with these truly courageous men of God!

When they were pulled out from the furnace and examined they found out that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them.

This made the king to change his mind and accept his mistake and realize the God these men worshipped is truly powerful God and he praised the God of heaven. Read vs.28-30 Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way."30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

See how his attitude changed from anger to amazement! Now he is appreciating them for willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except

their own God! The king was so impressed with them and he promoted them and issued another order through out his kingdom that serious punishment will be meted out to anyone who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

- Are you willing to take risks to show your love and faithfulness to God?
- Are you willing to trust God and let go of the job if that stops you from being a committed disciple?

Singles - are you willing to marry a disciple? What if you don't find some one suitable soon? Will you compromise and think of marrying someone who is not a disciple? Or will you stand up against the pressure from families or from your own sinful desires and say – my God is capable of giving me a disciple to marry me and even if he does not give I will still be a zealous Christian for rest of my life?

Let us love and serve our God with all our hearts willing to give up everything we have, knowing that he was willing to give up even the precious life of his only son to save us.

Day 27 : HAND OF GOD THAT VINDICATES THE INNOCENT

Read Daniel 6

While Daniel & his friends were in Babylon, Medes and Persians defeated Babylonians and took over the entire empire. Even the new king Darius the Mede was also so impressed with Daniel & his friends and appointed them as rulers. But Daniel stood out among all the Satraps - see vs.3"Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom."

How do you feel when your colleague is going to be promoted to be over you? Unless you are godly, you can be filled with jealousy & envy!

Other satraps who served the king with Daniel were filled with envy.

They wanted to get rid of Daniel. But remember anyone in such position can be ousted only if he is found to be corrupt. They watched every step of Daniel to find fault with him so that they can get the king to oust him.

Vs.4b They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.

Will the people around you be able to say that about you? This is the real test of our integrity as followers of God.

Remember Jesus asking people around him: John 8:46"Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?"No one could find fault with him even though they were always making every effort to trap him!

Realizing that they can find no fault with Daniel in his work they decided to change their tactics - they knew that he will never compromise his devotion to God. So they compelled the king that he should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to the king, shall be thrown into the lions' den(vs.7).

King agreed and issued the edict. Soon they found Daniel praying to God three times a day as was his practice. He did not worry about losing his life but was unwilling to compromise his devotion to God even when his life was threatened. Will God intervene and help such a person! Well God is always pleased with such people and comes down to help them with his mighty hand.

Daniel was thrown into the lion's den. King felt so sad about it that he could not eat or drink or sleep the whole night. Early in the morning the king rushed to the lion's den and found that Daniel was safe!

Hear what Daniel spoke to the king from the lion's den: Vs.22 "My God sent his angel and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty."

See how the hand of God works - God stretches out his mighty hand to save those who are found innocent in his sight even when the powerful forces are against them.

- Have you ever doubted God and compromised?
- How do you want to lead your life ahead?

Write down the situations similar (may not be of same magnitude) to what Daniel faced that you may face in the future.

Write down how you will trust God and take similar steps in such situations.

Teach and train others who may also face similar situations in life to be like Daniel & Jesus.

Day 28 : HAND OF GOD THAT DISCIPLINES AND RESTORES

Read Jeremiah 25

People of Judah sinned against God even after many warnings. They forsook God who saved them from the slavery in Egypt and established them in the Promised Land where milk & honey was flowing. After forsaking the LORD they started worshipping pagan gods. God sent many prophets including Major Prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah to turn them away from the wickedness and bring them back to God. Even though they spent several years pleading with them to repent they did not heed the warnings.

As the people refused to return to the LORD God pronounced judgment on them. God predicted that they will be taken into exile by Babylonians. Prophecy of Isaiah

and Jeremiah was fulfilled and in BC586 Babylonians destroyed the Temple and Jerusalem, killed many and took many as captives to Babylon.

God is patient, merciful but he is also God of justice. He had to bring just punishment upon them. But his punishment was for disciplining them and to get their hearts to turn to God. So he also predicted the restoration of Judah after 70years of captivity.

Jer 25:11 This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

Remember Jeremiah prophesied for around 40 years (approximately BC 626-BC 586).

God also laid out plans of restoration and informed people well in advance. Isaiah prophesied such events by around BC 700 (Isaiah began his prophecy by BC 740s and he continued to prophecy for around 64 years) and they were fulfilled by BC 536.

Isaiah 44:28 who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid." '

Isaiah 45:13 I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness: I will make all his ways straight. He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free, but not for a price or reward, says the LORD Almighty."

Prophet Jeremiah also prophesied the return of exiles in 70 years.

Jeremiah 29:10-14 This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. 11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. 12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the LORD, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

Read Ezra 1 to see how Cyrus the king sent back the exiles to rebuild the temple of God in Jerusalem after 70 years of captivity. (70 years is calculated from the time first captives were taken in to Babylon – these captives included Daniel and his friends. This occurred in BC 605 and the captives returned with Ezra by BC 536)

See how the hand of God disciplines his people when they sin but also restores them out of his incredible love and grace. We also see how mighty and sovereign is our God - he rules all nations and so he uses them to accomplish his plans of discipline and restoration. Also we see how God is so faithful to his promises - no power can stop him from fulfilling his promises.

- Do you like discipline? How is your response to God's discipline?

- How have you faced God's discipline in the past?
- How did God restore you in such times?

Day 29 : HAND OF GOD THAT BUILT THE WALL IN 52 DAYS

Read Nehemiah chapter 1 & 2

Ezra had already been in Jerusalem with Zerubbabel and Joshua to rebuild the Temple. Years later in BC 445 Nehemiah was serving as a cup bearer for the Persian king Artaxerxes.

Those were the days the enemies of kings would poison the king through food or wine. Cup bearer is someone whom the king personally chooses as he is a truly trustworthy person.

In chapter 2 we read: One day as he brought wine to the king, he noticed Nehemiah is very sad so he asked "Why does your face look so sad when you are not ill? This can be nothing but sadness of heart.

"Nehemiah was very much afraid, but he said to the king, "May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?" Then king wanted to know what Nehemiah desires to do for his home town. In this passage we notice that every time Nehemiah prayed and he expressed his desire to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

Such a request can be considered even as treason by the kings and they can even execute the cup bearer accusing of treason! It was a very risky step Nehemiah took by asking permission to go and rebuild the walls. Even though he had fear he kept praying for God to work and move the heart of the king.

Nehemiah did not stop there - he asked for letters to the governors of Trans-Euphrates, so that they will provide him safe-conduct until he arrive in Judah. Also he asked for a letter to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, so he will give him timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall and for the residence he will occupy.

Read vs.8b and because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests.

Story did not end here - the king was so concerned about the wellbeing of his humble cup bearer that he also sent army officers and cavalry with Nehemiah for his protection.

Can you imagine how far a king of an empire like Persia has gone this far to help one of his servants? If the hand of God is upon us there is nothing impossible! But think why the hand of God was upon Nehemiah? I believe that it was because he was concerned about what was concerned about - the glory and honor of God.

Whenever we set our heart to glorify God he will do everything with his mighty hand to accomplish it. Bible is full of such amazing stories.

From chapter 3 we read about how Nehemiah planned well and executed the work even when he and his people faced serious threats and opposition. Work was really extensive, he did not have expert builders to do the job but he employed men of different professions and families for each location of the wall to be rebuilt.

Let us see the conclusion in Nehemiah 6: 15,16 So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days. 16 When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.

It was humanly impossible to rebuild the walls of such size in such a short time - 52 days! Even his enemies realized that this work had been done with the help of God of Israel. See how this work – work that seems to be menial - brought honor and glory to God! People in surrounding places understood that God of heaven is helping the people of Israel all over again. So they lived in fear!

This is what happened when Israel came from Egypt and occupied the Promised Land - the land of Canaan several centuries ago. All the people heard how the hand of God worked in opening the red sea, breaking down the walls of Jericho and they realized that no giants can stand against such a God who works hand in hand with this nation! Same fear of God is reestablished by the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

How do you respond when you hear of a situation where God's name is dishonored or despised? Do you have sadness and indignation? If not you don't love God or honor him!

Do you want to glorify God? What do you do about it? Do you pray for God's mighty hand to help you accomplish it? How?

In 2011 New York church set an amazing plan to glorify God. They set a goal to baptize and restore 100 people in 100 days. God blessed their faith the church was able to baptize 87 people and restore 16 people and so altogether 103 people saved in 103 days!

Trichy Church in Tamil Nadu does not have full time workers for years. Andrew & Rachel moved in there and Andrew has a strenuous business to take care for his living. Yet they took the leadership of the Church seriously and by faith. Membership of the church was around 50. They prayed that God will make the Church grow beyond the membership of 100 for the glory of God. Now the membership is 120 and is still growing without any full time workers! They even have a campus ministry with disciples from prominent institution like NIT!

Do you want to see the mighty hand of God working in your life and ministry? Set specific goals to bring glory to God, write them down and pray for God's mighty hand to accomplish them.

Like Nehemiah - share with others what the hand of God has accomplished so that others can also gain faith.

Day 30 : ARM OF GOD - JESUS OUR SAVIOUR

Deuteronomy 5:15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

Out of amazing compassion God saved the Israelites out of slavery from Egypt with his outstretched arm. This happened 1000s of years ago. Our God's heart is still the same. His heart melts when he see his people suffer. Like a father stretching out his arm to rescue a child, our father in heaven stretches out his arm to rescue us in our times of troubles. That act was a sign of what he will do in the future for the entire mankind.

Mankind became slaves of sin! This slavery is much more painful than the slavery in Egypt. This slavery leads us to eternal suffering in hell. Even though it was our because of our fault, our merciful and gracious father could not sit there and leave us to suffer. God sent messengers or prophets to tell the mankind his plan of saving them from the slavery of sins. Isaiah was one of those prophets who brought the message of God's love.

Read Isaiah 52 & 53 (2 chapters)

Prophet Isaiah speaks of the arm of the Lord. These are some passages in Isaiah mentions arm of God - the arm will rule for God (Is. 40:10); Arm will bring justice to the nations (Gentiles) (Is. 51:4,5); the arm will redeem (Is. 51:9,10); and the arm will provide salvation (Is. 52:10).

Isa 52:10 The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

Isa 52 & 53 describes the 'arm of God' as the Messiah who will come. (John 12:37,38)

Many years ago I fell off from a canoe while crossing a river and I was drowning because I had no idea about swimming. As I was going down to the depth of the river, I saw an outstretched hand approaching me and I did not know whose hand it was but suddenly grabbed that hand knowing that this is the last resort. Only after getting back to the canoe I realized it was the hand of my cousin who had quickly jumped into the river to save me. I am so grateful that God reached out to me through the hand of my cousin to save my life.

Prophet Isaiah is painting a beautiful picture of God of heaven stretching out his mighty arm and revealing it to us and rescuing us when we were drowning in our sins. That mighty and loving arm is our savior Jesus Christ. Isaiah prophesied these incredible facts about our savior around 700 years before Jesus was born. As we

read chapter 53 we see how this 'arm of God' Jesus had to go through so much of suffering to save each one of us.

Vs.4 Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

- Do you see Jesus as the arm of God that is stretched out to save you through his incredible suffering and sacrifice?
- Are you grateful for the outstretched arm of God -Jesus Christ going through all that sufferings to save you?

Meditate on the verses of these 2 chapters and pray through them experience the love of God and rejoice in it.

Share with a non-Christian friend today about how the arm of God reached out to you.

Day 31 : HAND OF GOD THAT PLACES THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Read Acts 9:1-31

Saul of Tarsus was a persecutor of the Church. But Jesus appeared to him and turned his heart to him. Once when he understood that Jesus is the Messiah that all the prophets spoke about, Paul started preaching boldly about Christ whom he hated before. God used him to be a great Apostle and missionary in many nations to turn the hearts of 1000s of Jews and Gentiles.

He explained what made him to live such a life in **2 Cor 5:14,15** For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

As we understood from the last lesson, Paul was so convinced compelled by the love of Christ. That sacrificial love made him stop living for himself but to live only for Jesus his Lord who laid down his life for all of us.

How is your life today? Are you compelled by the love of Christ? How do you know that?

One way to know is to see if in any way you are still living for yourself! Those who are convinced by the love of Christ will live only with one goal in life - 'pleasing God' - (**2 Cor 5:9** So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.)

Almost towards the end of his life he writes to Timothy his son in faith.

2 Tim 4:6-8 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. 7I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

These few words describes how Paul lived for Jesus and what was he looking forward to.

In the last lesson we saw how our Savior poured out his life for us. All of us who are following Jesus must have the same attitude to imitate him and pour out our lives for Jesus by serving one another.

Here Paul says that he poured out his life as a drink offering. In the Old Testament times when the priests used to pour the drink offering on the altar they took the vessel that contained the offering and poured it out fully till nothing was left in the vessel. That is the picture in Paul's mind when he writes these words here.

Jesus poured out his life for all of us even though we lived as his enemies! Paul poured out his life for others in response to the love of Christ.

Most people's favorite Scripture that they memorize is this verse in the Bible - John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Truly this is a great Scripture to memorize and trust. This Scripture reminds us of what Jesus has done for us and gives us hope that we can be saved. But what is our response to that love and gift of eternal life?

John the Apostle writes again in his letter how we should respond to that love: 1 John 3:16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for one another.

Is this your favorite Scripture? Is this the way you live your life? Do you remember how you learnt and experienced real love? Isn't from Jesus and his very sacrifice? What was the message of the Cross? Just as Christ sacrificed his life to bring salvation for us, we must lay down our lives for others. This is how all the Apostles lived. They were willing to go anywhere do anything and give up everything in their lives out of love for Christ & others.

How are you living now? Are you pouring your life out like a drink offering? How was your evangelism this month? Have you given your best? How do you want to live the rest of this year and life ahead?

Or do you make excuses why you don't have time to share your faith or disciple someone or care for another disciple or serve the Church?

What reward was Paul expecting from Jesus for this kind of sacrificial life?

2 Tim 4:8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

He was so confident that Jesus is waiting in heaven to award him the crown of righteousness. Paul is also confident that the same Jesus is waiting to give the same crown to all those who are longing for the appearance of Jesus.

Do you want to receive that crown? What does it take to get that crown from the hand of God?

Longing for the appearance of Jesus - not just belief - there are so many in the world believe in Jesus but only few are longing for Jesus.

Which one are you? Longing for Jesus means that you should be so much in love with Jesus like a girl who is engaged is longing for the day of wedding to be able to go and spend the rest of her life with the love of her life. That is why Bible explains our relationship with Jesus as bride and bridegroom. When we get baptized we got engaged to Jesus. Wedding is yet to take place.

Revelation 19:6-8 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. 8 Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's people.)

On the Day of Judgment when Jesus returns, wedding of the Lamb will take place. Till then our responsibility is to prepare ourselves to be the bride worthy for the King of Kings.

Are you preparing yourself like that? Remember Jesus comes to give salvation only for those who are longing for his appearance. (Same message is in Hebrews 9:27,28)

Let us remember that Jesus is waiting in heaven prepared to place the crown of righteousness for all of us. Let us not miss the opportunity to receive that. Rather let us eagerly look forward for that amazing blessing by having genuine and sincere wholehearted love for Jesus and prove that love by pouring out our lives as a drink offering – living a life fully for our Savior and Lord Jesus. Let us prepare ourselves every moment remembering that Jesus can come any moment and do only what will please him when he appears.

Let us also prepare all others around us for that day and for that crown.

List out and make it a point to practice, the different ways in which you are specifically going to prepare yourself to receive the crown from God.