

By the Grace of Salvation Alone!

[Short Word Meditaiton (13)]

James Kim

‘The Valley of Achor’ and ‘The Valley of the Shadow of Death’

Even though this world may be referred to as
"the Valley of Achor" (the Valley of Trouble) (Josh. 7:26)
and ‘the Valley of the Shadow of Death" (Ps. 23:4),
as Christians, we have God who turns "the Valley of Achor into a door of hope" (Hos. 2:15),
and even as we walk through ‘the Valley of the Shadow of Death,’
we do not fear because God is with us, and we rejoice always in hope
(Rom. 12:12).

Love given generously

When I think of Abraham, who did not spare even his own son Isaac for God,
I also think of our heavenly Father, who did not spare his own Son Jesus Christ
but gave him up for us all (Gen. 22:12; Rom. 8:32).

Wife

A husband who obtains a good wife (Prov. 12:4),
a wise woman (19:14), and a virtuous woman (31:10)
receives favor (blessing) from God (18:22).
However, a husband who marries a quarrelsome wife (12:4),
a woman who argues with her husband (21:9, 19; 25:24)
is ...

A husband who doesn't know his wife well?

Husband Elkanah,
He said to his wife Hannah,
"Am I not worth more to you than ten sons?" Yet,
because he loved Hannah,
he seemed completely unaware that his other wife Peninnah
severely provoked and troubled childless Hannah,
He seemed oblivious to why his wife was crying,
why she wasn't eating, why her heart was sad
(1 Sam. 1:2-8).

Beautiful clothes and a pure crown

The Lord has taken off our dirty clothes and removed our sins.
Now, He will clothe us with beautiful clothes and place a clean crown on us
(Zeph. 3:4-5).

No matter how much it may be called a good plan that is as if it were the word of God ...

No matter how much a good plan, even one resembling the word of God, is spoken of...
If God has determined to thwart that good plan, it is of no avail
(2 Sam. 16:23; 17:14).

God listened to David's prayer,
"Lord, turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness" (15:31),
and thwarted Ahithophel's good plan to bring disaster upon Absalom
(17:14).

No matter how beautiful or handsome one may be...

No matter how beautiful or handsome one may be (2 Sam. 14:25),
We must be very cautious of individuals like "Absalom" who, by stealing people's hearts,
make them unaware of all the things they have orchestrated and simply follow along (15:6, 11).

The heart of Father God?

While reading the Bible last night, after God spoke to Joshua,
saying that He had delivered the city of Ai into his hand and instructed,
"... Only its spoils and its cattle you shall take as booty for yourselves," I received grace (Josh. 8:2).
This grace signifies God's heart rejoicing to bless the people of Israel, whom He loves.

Now, the interesting point is, why did God command the Israelites
to "take as booty for yourselves" the spoils and cattle from Ai after capturing it,
whereas after the conquest of Jericho, He commanded,
"the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the LORD" (6:17)?
In other words, why did God instruct the Israelites to
"take as booty for yourselves" the spoils and cattle from Ai
after declaring that everything from Jericho should be devoted to the LORD?

While meditating on this passage, I was reminded of Matthew 6:33:
"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."
I am once again reminded of the lesson to prioritize God.
God commanded that everything from Jericho should be devoted to Him first,
and then, seeing that the Israelites desired to take booty from Ai for themselves,
it seems that if we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,
God desires to add "all these things" to us.
I pray that we may experience the heart of our Father God as we trust and obey His Word.

He knew and also made known.

"The Lord has known His servant," and "has made it known to His servant"
(2 Sam. 7:20, 21).

Two wrongs committed by the people of Ai.

During the war between the people of Israel and the inhabitants of Ai in the time of Joshua, while contemplating the defeat of the people of Ai as they fell into the ambush set by the elite troops of Israel (Joshua 8:6, 16), two mistakes made by the people of Ai come to mind:

First mistake:

All the people in the city of Ai (v. 16) followed after the Israelites, feigning defeat and fleeing through the wilderness (v. 15).

How could all the people have followed after Israel?

Shouldn't some have remained to defend the city?

Second mistake:

None in Ai or Bethel stayed behind; they left their city gates open and pursued Israel (v. 17).

How could they leave the city gates open? In what army does one open city gates to pursue enemies?

I believe there's a lesson for us as we reflect on these two mistakes made by the people of Ai:

We must not fall for the lure or deception of our enemy Satan's ambush or enticement.

We should not only focus on defeating the enemy in the spiritual battle against Satan, the sinful world, sin, and ourselves (the old self),

but also balance our focus on guarding ourselves, our families, our churches, and the kingdom of God.

In the spiritual warfare against Satan and his forces,

we should keep the doors of our hearts wide open, so as not to be vulnerable to Satan's attacks.

Instead, we should open the doors of our hearts wide to our Lord.

Those who still do not know the Lord ...

Beloved my daughter Yeun, who still does not know the Lord,
Although it seems that the word of the Lord has not yet appeared to her,
When the Lord calls her,
I pray that Yeun may say, "Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening"
(1 Sam. 3:7-9).

Could it be that I am still trying to pursue my own will ...?

Even though God's will has already been fulfilled,
could it be that I am now deeply angered by that accomplished will of God,
still praying, hoping, and waiting for my own will to be fulfilled...?"
(Job 3:10-4:5)

Church members who are still living like people of the world ...

Among the church members who are still living like people of the world,
there are jealousy and quarreling (1 Cor. 3:3).

Satan who flatters

When we are in distress and adversity,
Satan flatters us like a dog wagging its tail,
leading us to compromise and sin,
enticing us to take the easy way
(1 Thess. 3:3, Yoon-seon Park).

Evil and righteous

‘The wages of the wicked is punishment to him/her’ (Prov. 10:16)
"The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked" (v. 3)

God ensures that we, as saints
who have been made righteous through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ,
will never go hungry.
Whether physically or spiritually, even in times of distress and poverty,
God provides us with daily bread and also works to refine our faith, making it come forth like pure gold.

To praise the wicked is ...

Praising the wicked is evidence of forsaking God's law,
opposing the wicked is evidence of keeping the law
(Prov. 28:4).

The sin of the wicked

The sin of the wicked is not to reject evil

(Ps. 36:1, 4)

Do not envy the success of the wicked.

We should not envy the success of the wicked
nor seek to be with them.

Instead, we should always fear God.

By doing so, we will surely have a future
and our hope will not be cut off

(Prov. 23:17-18; 24:1).

The poverty caused by wickedness is ...

The poverty caused by wickedness prompts us to cry out to God,
and by crying out, we come to hear God's word.

The contents of that word are:

- (1) The grace of salvation bestowed upon us by God
- (2) Do not be afraid
- (3) Our disobedience (Judg. 6:1-10).

Knowing sin and willful disobedience, and knowing obedience

King Belshazzar of Babylon,
knew that God had deposed him and stripped away his glory
because his father, King Nebuchadnezzar, had acted arrogantly and stubbornly,
and yet Belshazzar did not humble himself
but rather exalted himself and sinned against God
(Dan. 5:20-23).

As a result, although he received praise before a thousand of his nobles
while drinking wine together (v. 1), ultimately he faced death at the hands of God (v. 30).

Daniel, the prime minister of Babylon,
while other high officials and satraps tried to find grounds
for charges against him in his conduct of government affairs (6:4),
deliberately went home and, knowing (v. 10) about the decree that the king, Darius, had signed,
which prohibited praying to anyone but him for 30 days
and would result in being thrown into the lion's den (v. 7),
continued to pray and give thanks to God three times a day facing Jerusalem
from his upstairs room with its windows open, just as he had always done (v. 10).
As a result, although he was thrown into the lion's den (v. 16),
he received salvation from the God in whom he trusted (v. 23).
Belshazzar sinned knowingly, exalting himself against God and facing death,
but Daniel, knowing he would face death, prayed and gave thanks to God, receiving salvation.
We receive a lesson on knowing sin and willful obedience.

If you know but do not correct ...

We have bad (sinful) habits.

Because of them, God warns us (Exod. 21:29).

We must heed that warning and discipline ourselves.

If you know but do not correct ... (v. 36)

King David, who acted cunningly, and King Ahab.

King David, who did evil in the sight of the Lord (2 Sam. 11:27)
["He saw a very beautiful woman bathing" (v. 2)],
he had Uriah killed and took his wife Bathsheba as his own (12:4, 9-10)
and made her his wife (11:27).

When God sent the prophet Nathan to rebuke King David,
David confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord" and received forgiveness for his sin,
but the child he fathered died (12:13-14, 18).
King David was old and advanced in years
[1 Kgs. 1:1; "He slept with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David" (2:10)].

King Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord (21:20, 25)
["his wife Jezebel incited him" (v. 25)],
he had Naboth killed and took possession of his vineyard (vv. 15, 19)
to make it his own.

When God sent the prophet Elijah to rebuke King Ahab,
Ahab tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted.
He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly (v. 27).
He humbled himself before God (v. 29).
Therefore, God did not bring disaster on Ahab's reign,
but in the days of his son He brought disaster on his house (v. 29).
King Ahab died in battle at Ramoth Gilead,
and as the Lord had declared, the dogs licked up his blood at the place where the prostitutes bathed,
while his chariot was washed there, licking up his blood (22:29-38).

When the paths of conscience and justice diverge ...

Even when pricked by conscience, if one is still drawn by justice?

How can we cultivate a strong conscience that can overcome human passions?

- (1) The heart should be pierced by the Spirit's sword, which is the word of God (1 Sam. 24:5; Eph. 6:17).
- (2) Possess a good/conscience/clear conscience (1 Tim. 1:19; 3:9; 1 Pet. 3:16).
- (3) Have a faith without hypocrisy (1 Tim. 1:5, 19).
- (4) Speak the truth in Christ (Rom. 9:1).
- (5) Pray for a good conscience and also make prayer requests for it (Heb. 13:18).

How long will I continue to disbelieve and scorn God??

Even after witnessing the many works God has performed in our lives,
to not believe in God
is, in God's eyes,
to despise Him.

Even now, God is saying to us,
"How long will you refuse to believe in Me?"
"How long will you scorn Me?"
(Num. 14:11).

Please show me how to help.

Lord,
Grant me the tongue of a disciple,
So that I may know how to help the weary with words,
Awakening my ear each morning to listen like one being taught
(Isa. 50:4).

How can a woman who is sad at heart...?

How could Hannah, who had been weeping and not eating,
regain her appetite and have the sorrowful expression lifted from her face?
(1 Sam. 1:8, 15, 18)

Perhaps it was because, after pouring out her heart before God,
she heard the words of Eli the priest saying,
"Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him"
(vv. 15, 17-18)

How can we persuade?

In persuading others,
what is needed is patience and a gentle tongue
(Prov. 25:15)

How can we bless ourselves?

Though our bodies may be within the church,
if our hearts stray from the Lord and we love the wealth that worldly people serve,
how can we bless ourselves and say that we will have peace?
(Deuteronomy 29:18-19)

How can we know?

How can we know that God abides in us and we in Him?

- (1) If we are born again (have been born of God) (1 Jn. 4:7).
- (2) If we confess Jesus as the Son of God (v. 15).
- (3) If we love one another (v. 15).

How and why did God die?

How and why could Jesus,
who is the eternal life of God (1 Jn. 1:1, 5:5)
and God Himself (Jn. 1:1, 10:30; Phil. 2:6; 1 Jn. 5:10),
lay down his life (Jn. 3:16) and die on the cross (Phil. 2:8)?
Why did he do so?

A mother's twisted love for her child?

I believe that Rebekah's love for her son Jacob was twisted.

Rebekah showed favoritism toward her second son Jacob over her firstborn Esau (Gen. 25:28), manipulating him to intercept the blessing that Isaac intended to give to Esau before his death.

She overheard Isaac instructing Esau (27:6) and commanded Jacob to bring her two choice young goats so that she could prepare a delicacy that Isaac enjoyed, intending for Jacob to present it to Isaac and receive the blessing after the meal (vv. 8-10).

Ultimately, Rebekah caused Jacob to become a deceiver in Isaac's eyes (v. 12).

While God used Rebekah's twisted love to fulfill His promise to Abraham through Jacob, I believe Rebekah favored Jacob over Esau because Jacob was described as a quiet man (25:27), and Rebekah was troubled by the marriages Esau made with foreign women (26:35), which made her life bitter through her daughters-in-law.

Perhaps God is speaking in this way ...

Perhaps God is saying to us, pastors,

‘There are too many followers for you,’

‘There are still too many followers’

(Judg. 6:2, 4).

I don't want to be entangled.

I don't want to be entangled in things that are not beneficial
(1 Cor. 6:12)

Satan is trying to surround us.

Our enemy Satan is trying to surround us,
just as King Saul tried to surround and kill David
(1 Sam. 23:8, 26),
he surrounds us with fear and doubt,
and relentlessly strives to encircle us.

"Different" yet "the same"!

Various gifts of grace,
Various duties,
Various ministries,
Yet,
The same Spirit,
The same Lord,
The same God!
(1 Cor. 12:4-7)

When facing various trials ...

When facing various trials,
if we endure them with God's grace and assistance,
considering them as tests of our faith,
we will grow in patience and maturity.
We should ask God for wisdom in faith,
and He will generously give it to us.

Alternatively,
if we succumb to Satan's deception,
thinking that we are being tested by God,
and we are misled by our own desires,
falling into sin, it's one of these two outcomes
(Jam. 1:2-8; 12-16).

With various talents and skills ...

In the body of the Lord's church,
there are various gifts, ministries, and effects.
However, the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and God are one
(1 Cor. 12:4-6).

The Lord has called us by name (Exod. 31:2).
And the Lord fills us with the Holy Spirit, wisdom, understanding, knowledge,
and various talents and skills so that we may serve the body of the Lord's church (Exod. 31:3, 5),
establishing and building His church (Mt. 16:18).

Men who do not know women?

Husband Elkanah did not know why his wife Hannah was crying and not eating, and why her heart was sad (1 Sam. 1:8).

Furthermore, the man, Eli the priest, misunderstood Hannah's distress, thinking she was drunk from the wine as she prayed and wept bitterly before God (vv. 10-14).

“Yahweh shalom”

In this situation of uncertainty, in this situation where there is enough to fear, even in this crisis where loved ones may die,

we must enjoy the "Yahweh shalom" that God gives us as we worship Him (Judg. 6:23-24).

The one who opposes the Lord ...

‘The one who opposes the Lord will be shattered to pieces’

(1 Sam. 2:10)

" Is the LORD's arm too short?"

Moses thought it would be impossible to provide enough meat for the approximately 600,000 men of Israel and their families to eat for a whole month, even if all the flocks and herds were slaughtered in the wilderness (Num. 11:21-22). But God caused quail to be driven into the Israelite camp from all around, providing an abundant supply of food for the vast multitude (vv. 31-33).

Philip thought it would be impossible to feed a large crowd of over 5,000 men, even if each person received only a small portion, with just two hundred denarii worth of bread (Jn. 6:7). However, Jesus miraculously fed them all with just two fish and five loaves of bread, and there were 12 baskets of leftovers (vv. 10-13).

"Is the LORD's arm too short?

You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you"
(Num. 11:23).

Eternal Lord God

Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord himself, is the Rock eternal
(Isa. 26:4)

Forever as the bride of the Lord!

The Lord has established His church to forever be His bride,
for the Lord has become our God
(2 Sam. 7:24; Mt. 16:18).

Though we were sinners deserving eternal death ...

Before the holy God, who deserved eternal death,
as sinners, through the death of Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God (Rom. 5:10),
we have been granted the privilege to partake in the wedding feast of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9)
and to receive the glory of being able to dine at the table of the King of kings, our Lord.
How can we not offer thanksgiving, praise, and worship to God?

Spiritual charm and beauty

Physical charm and beauty often pose a risk of adultery (Ezek. 16:15).
Spiritual charm and beauty entail obedience to God's word (Phil. 2:8).

Spiritual fathers (1)

In Christ Jesus, we must become imitators of spiritual fathers who nurture spiritual children through the gospel (1 Cor. 4:15-16).

Spiritual fathers (2)

Spiritual fathers admonish their spiritual children (1 Cor. 4:14).

They correct and warn their spiritual children of their wrongdoing, seeking to guide them onto the right path.

They admonish their spiritual children to change, warning them that failure to heed their counsel may lead to judgment or consequences.

Why do they do this?

It's because they love their spiritual children.

Spiritual fathers never admonish their spiritual children to shame them; rather, they do so out of love (v. 14).

Wise and humble spiritual children receive this admonition from their spiritual fathers, repent, and seek transformation.

Through this process, they experience the love of God the Father, reflected in the admonition of their spiritual fathers.

Spiritual maturity for spiritual worship

In order to offer spiritual worship that is pleasing to God, there must be appropriate spiritual maturity as seen by God's perspective (Rom. 12:1; Col. 1:9-12)

A servant of God like Jeremiah?

A servant of God like Jeremiah?

The prophet Jeremiah, a servant of God, was prepared to die and continued to deliver the word of God to all the disobedient Israelites as commanded by God. Jeremiah told them, "Change your ways and your actions, and obey the Lord your God. Then the Lord will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you" (Jere. 26:4-15).

In times like these, we need servants of God like Jeremiah more than ever.

Worship - Witnesses

We should be established as worship-witnesses who, through praising God's presence in worship, proclaim to unbelievers, "God is really among you!" even to the point of falling facedown to worship God (1 Cor. 14:25).

A lazy person in knowing Jesus Christ

The one who is lazy in knowing our Lord Jesus Christ is like a fruitless person who does not participate in holy character, thus, like a blind person who cannot see afar, forgetting that their past sins have been cleansed (2 Pet. 1:4-9).

We who proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ...

We who proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ
must ascend to 'the high mountain' and exert ourselves to raise our voices.
We must not be afraid but raise our voices to proclaim to God's people,
"Behold your God" (Isa. 40:9).

Jesus wept.

The tears of a loved one weigh heavily on my heart,
but when I reflect on the words that Jesus wept (Jn. 11:35),
I find comfort knowing that Jesus sees the tears of those whom He loves.

Because Jesus entered Jerusalem ...

Because Jesus entered Jerusalem (Jn. 12:12),
we have been enabled to enter the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2).

Christians who claim to believe in Jesus

We, Christians who claim to believe in Jesus,
often stiffen our necks like those who do not believe in the Lord,
refusing to listen to God's rebuke and warning,
rejecting His covenant and the words of His commandments.
Instead, we engage in actions that the Lord has commanded us not to do,
gradually practicing injustice, betraying the Lord,
and pursuing worthless things that lead to vanity.
In doing so, we are selling ourselves to evil in the sight of the Lord
(2 Kgs. 17:7-17).

The crown of thorns of Jesus, the thorn of my flesh

Instead of continuously praying fervently to God to remove the thorn in the flesh,
let us humbly embrace that thorn with faith and approach the cross,
relying on the Lord who wore the crown of thorns.
In the midst of suffering,
let us experience the abundant grace and love of God's sufficient salvation
(2 Cor. 12:7; Mt. 11:28; 27:29; Ps. 31:9, 14; 40:13).

Meditation on the Suffering of Jesus (1)

Suffering that comes from nothing impressive or attractive about us
that would draw people's attention (Isa. 53:2) ...

Meditation on the Suffering of Jesus (2)

Jesus was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with suffering.
Like one from whom people hide their faces
He was despised, and we held Him in low esteem
(Isa. 53:3)

Meditation on the Suffering of Jesus (3)

The suffering of Jesus
was what we thought was punishment inflicted by God,
a man who was struck down by Him and afflicted
(Isa. 53:4)

Meditation on the Suffering of Jesus (4)

The suffering of Jesus
was because of our transgressions and iniquities.
He was whipped, pierced, and wounded,
so that by his wounds we could be healed,
reconciled with God, and made to enjoy peace.
He endured the eternal punishment from God the Father
(Isa. 53:5)

Meditation on the Suffering of Jesus (5)

The suffering of Jesus
was because God the Father, like a shepherd,
laid upon him the iniquities of us all,
delighting in and loving the Son, Jesus,
who willingly took on the sins of each of us
who went our own way
(Isa. 53:6)

The prayers of Jesus and the prayers of the Apostle Paul

I found myself comparing the prayers of Jesus and the prayers of the Apostle Paul.

Jesus' Prayer:

"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;
nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will" (Mt. 26:42);

"Abba, Father, all things are possible for you.

Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mk. 14:36).

Apostle Paul's Prayer:

"So to keep me from becoming conceited
because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations,
a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me,
to keep me from becoming conceited.

Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this" (2 Cor. 12:7-8).

When comparing Jesus' prayer and Paul's prayer,

it seems that Jesus and His apostle Paul offered prayers with similar content.

Of course, there is a vast difference between Jesus' "this cup" and Paul's "thorn in the flesh,"
but the essence remains the same.

The similar essence lies in the fact that both Jesus and the Apostle Paul prayed for

"this cup" (Jesus) or "this thing" (Paul's "thorn in the flesh")

to "pass away" (Jesus) or "be taken away" (Paul),

meaning to be removed or departed from them.

In other words, both Jesus and His apostle Paul prayed for

"this cup" (Jesus) or "this thing" (Paul's "thorn in the flesh") to be taken away or depart from them.

However, the difference lies in the response to their prayers.

While Jesus prayed, "Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mk. 14:36),

Paul received the response from the Lord: "My grace is sufficient for you..." (2 Cor. 12:9).

As a result,
Jesus drank "this cup" in obedience to the will of His Father (Phil. 2:8),
willingly shedding His blood on the cross (Mt. 27:50; Mk. 15:37; Lk. 23:46; Jn. 19:30).
On the other hand, Paul found joy in his weaknesses, hardships, persecutions,
and difficulties for the sake of Christ (2 Cor. 12:10).
He even boasted in his weaknesses, finding joy in them (v. 9).

I was reminded of this word of Jesus:

"If anyone would come after me,
let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me"
(Mk. 8:34; see also Mt. 16:24; Lk. 9:23).

As disciples of Jesus,
we are called to follow Him according to this word of Jesus
by denying ourselves and taking up our cross in our daily lives (Lk. 9:23).
Here, denying ourselves means rejecting what we desire,
even if it means "this cup" or "this thing" (in Paul's case, "my thorn in the flesh")
being taken away from me.

And taking up our own cross means carrying our own cross
[in the case of Jesus, "this cup"; in the case of Paul, "this thing," his "thorn in the flesh"]
according to the will of the Lord, humbly and joyfully
obeying His will even to the point of death (Phil. 2:8).

When thinking about the love of Jesus in His incarnation

When thinking about the love of Jesus in His incarnation (1 Jn. 1:1-2; 2 Jn. 1:7),
is my love for my neighbor truly a humble love that lowers oneself,
a love that seeks to serve rather than to be served?

The twofold commandment of Jesus, from the perspective of the Apostle John in his First Epistle

The twofold commandment of Jesus:

"Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God
with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments"

(Mt. 22:37-40)

- (1) "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind"

From the perspective of the Apostle John in his First Epistle,

this commandment corresponds to obeying the words in 1 John 2:15-17:

"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world,
love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—
the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—
comes not from the Father but from the world.

The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever."

Here, doing the will of God means not living according to the transient desires
of "the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"
but rather living in accordance with God's will.

- (2) "Love your neighbor as yourself"

From the perspective of the Apostle John in his First Epistle,

this commandment corresponds to obeying the words in 1 John 2:3-11.

In summary, it means loving one's brother and not hating him.

The life of us Christians living between the first coming and the second coming of Jesus

In the time of Jesus' first coming, "already," Jesus completed salvation.

In the time of Jesus' second coming, "yet," Jesus will complete salvation.

We, who live in the "already" (past) and "not-yet" (future) between,
should live not by sight but by faith,
having confidence in the 'faithful completion' of salvation
by the 'perfect' Triune God who initiated the work of salvation
until the day of Jesus Christ's return (Phil. 1:6).

How should we live as we dwell between the first and second comings of Jesus?

In the past, during Jesus' first coming,
we believe in His death on the cross and resurrection through faith.

Looking to the future, during Jesus' second coming,
we hope to be transformed into glorious bodies
and behold the Lord face to face.

Living between Jesus' first and second comings,
as saints destined for eternal life,
we should love one another with the love of the Lord,
as citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

The only One who causes the church to grow is God.

The only One who causes the church to grow is God (1 Cor. 3:6, 7).

God works through His servants to grow the church (v. 5).

Servants who are called to the mission,
who know that they are nothing of themselves but mere instruments used by God,
who humbly cooperate with one another,
who remain faithful until the mission is completed,
who look to receive their reward from the Lord for their faithful service—
through such servants, God grows His church.

By grace alone!

By the grace of salvation from the Triune God alone ...

(Eph. 1:3-14)

The God who causes growth alone ...

The God who causes growth alone has appointed us as servants,
using us as those who plant and those who water.

How much gratitude we owe to the grace of God for this!

(1 Cor. 3:5-7)

Because only the Lord knows the path I am taking.

"Only he knows the way that I take ..." (Job 23:10)

Because only the Lord knows the path I am taking,
I continue to live each step, each day, following Jesus in faith.

Only the Lord should be looked upon ...

When we realize our helplessness and ignorance about what to do through the great trials we face,
we should even more exclusively look to the Lord alone
(2 Chron. 20:12)

Even if there is a misunderstanding, how did it come to this extent?

Eli the priest seemed to perceive Hannah,
a woman with a sorrowful heart, as an evil woman
(1 Sam. 1:12-16).

How is it that we pastors perceive female believers in such a way, without even knowing them?

Female believers are being gracious to us.

Let's just be grateful for their love.

Sleep together on the rooftop?

King David,

rising from his bed in the evening, walked on the royal palace rooftop and observed Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, bathing.

He summoned her to him and lay with her, committing adultery (2 Sam. 11:2-4).

His son Absalom,

on the other hand, set up a tent on the palace rooftop for all Israel to see, and there he lay with his father David's concubines (16:22).

Be careful not to be caught in a trap.

We must not be ensnared by following in the footsteps of those who worship other gods and have perished (Deut. 12:30)

Correcting with right words?

Comforting the one who is overwhelmed by unceasing pain with right words is extremely painful (Job 6:10, 14, 25, 26).

Why does God lead us into a situation of being trapped?

Why does God lead us into situations that seem confining to others?

During the exodus from Egypt,

the Israelites appeared to be trapped to Pharaoh by the Red Sea (Exod. 14:2).

David also seemed to be trapped to Saul at Engedi (1 Sam. 23:7).

Perhaps God leads us into such situations to make us cry out to Him, to receive His word, and to demonstrate His power of salvation to us, thus increasing our trust in Him as the God of deliverance.

Why are we so greedy?

In this world, which is like a wilderness,
why are we so greedy and testing God?

The reason is that we quickly forget
the great works that God has done in our lives in the past
and also because we fail to wait for God's teachings.

As a result, our souls have become weak
(Ps. 106:13-15, 21).

Why is God leading us into the wilderness by turning us around?

Our God, who goes before us, works all things for our good,
just as a person embraces their child.

He has embraced us and led us this far along the path we have walked.

Yet, we did not trust Him in this matter.

Therefore, He turns us around and leads us into the wilderness along a different path.

Why does God turn us around and lead us into the wilderness?

Could it be to train our faithfulness? Could it be to purify us from all impurities within?

Could it be to humble us and make us obedient to His word?

Why did Joshua send only two spies?

When Moses sent spies into the land of Canaan,

Joshua was one of the twelve spies (Num. 13:8, 16).

Later, when Joshua himself led the Israelites to spy on the land of Canaan,

besides Caleb, all other ten spies gave a negative report about the land they had spied out, causing the entire congregation of Israel to weep and complain throughout the night (14:1-2).

However, after Moses died,

Joshua became the leader of Israel and sent two spies to Jericho (Josh. 2:1).

Why did he do this?

Surely, Joshua was aware of the negative outcome of sending twelve spies during the time of Moses.

So why did he send only two spies this time?

Presumably, Joshua wanted to gather intelligence about the land of Canaan and Jericho secretly through these two spies (v. 1).

However, it remains unclear why he chose to send only two instead of replicating Moses' approach of selecting one spy from each tribe to form a group of twelve.

The result of sending the two spies to the land of Canaan was that they returned to Joshua and recounted everything they had experienced (v. 23).

They said, "Truly the Lord has given all the land into our hands, for all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of us" (v. 24).

Why is it that we Christians often behave worse than those who do not believe?

Why is it that we Christians, instead of fulfilling our role as light and salt in the world, often behave worse than those who do not believe?

When considering the reasons for this,

I believe one of the causes is precisely as mentioned in Titus 2:1 –

that we Christians fail to learn sound doctrine effectively.

As a result, we are unable to speak sound words (v. 8)

and furthermore, we fail to live a sound life (v. 8).

Why is it that we do not love one another?

Even though we know that we should love one another according to the commandment of the Lord, why do we fail to obey that commandment?

The reason is that we are not experiencing

intimate fellowship with the Holy One, Jesus Christ,

who is the eternal Word of life, and who sacrificed Himself on the cross

as the atoning sacrifice for our sins,

out of great love from our Heavenly Father

(1 Jn. 1:1-3; 2:2; 3:1, 16).

Why has all this happened to us?

Why has all this happened to us when the Lord is with us? (Judg. 6:13)

The reason is that the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord (v. 1).

But Gideon thought, "The Lord has abandoned us" (v. 13).

Why do leaders quarrel?

Our fellow believers in the church, who hold various offices,
why do they fail to maintain the unity of the church and engage in conflicts,
even though clearly they have the same Lord?
(1 Cor. 12:5)

Why God ...?

Why did God lead the Israelites not by the nearby road to the land of the Philistines
but rather by the longer route through the wilderness of the Red Sea? (Num. 13:17-18)
Certainly, if God had led the Israelites by the way of the land of the Philistines,
it would have made Pharaoh's heart hard so that he would chase after them,
and then they would have surely faced being trapped by the Red Sea (14:1-4).

Our instinct prefers shortcuts.

That's why we instinctively turn on the navigation (GPS) when driving towards our destination,
preferring the fastest shortcut to arrive at our destination.

However, it seems that the Lord often leads us not by the short route we prefer,
but rather by a longer, roundabout path.

What could be the reason for this?

The reason why God did not lead the Israelites to the nearby land of the Philistines
is that He was concerned they might change their minds and return to Egypt
if they faced war with the Philistines (13:17).

While a short shortcut may lead quickly to the destination,
it can also quickly lead back to the starting point.

So why did God lead the Israelites on the long route through the wilderness of the Red Sea?

I believe there are three reasons for this:

- (1) To make them fully trust in God,
- (2) To humble them (Deut. 8:2),
- (3) To teach them to live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord (v. 3).

Though the path we are currently walking may not be a shortcut
and may be a long route we did not expect or desire,
and even though it may lead to seemingly impossible situations
like being trapped at the Red Sea,
I pray, like Paul and Silas, praising and praying to God (Acts 16:25).
The reason is that the Lord is my shepherd, and I lack nothing (Ps. 23:1),
and because God, in the midst of great crises,
bestows great salvation and reveals great glory
(Ref.: Exod. 14:4-31; 15).

Why should we listen to the word of God?

God listens and pays attention to our pleas (Ps. 116:1-2),
therefore, we should listen to the word of God (Prov. 23:12).

Why does it have to be inside “a great fish” of all things?

In many prayer locations,
why did Jonah pray to God inside “a great fish” that God had prepared?
(Jon. 1:17; Ch. 2)

Due to “a great wind” that God sent upon the sea,
causing a violent storm in the midst of the sea,
when the ship Jonah was aboard was about to be broken,
even though Jonah could have prayed from the lower deck of the ship,
he was actually deeply asleep (1:4-5).

In short, when Jonah went down to the bottom of the ship,
he did not pray to God,
but when he went down to the roots of the mountains inside the great fish,
then he prayed to God (2:6).

We are not much different from Jonah.
We do not pray inside “the ship,” but we sleep.
However, inside “a great fish”, we pray to God.
The reason is “my distress” (v. 2).

Why would He always tell the disobedient to always obey?

To the Israelites who had always been rebellious against God,
Moses said, "Love the Lord your God
and always keep his commandments, decrees, laws, and commands that he gave you"
(Deut. 9:24; 11:1).

Even to me, who always disobeys the Lord,
the Lord tells me to "always" keep His word.
Why does the Lord tell me, who always disobeys, to always obey His word?

‘The alien’

How should we treat "the alien"? (Deut. 1:16)

When the Israelites came out of Egypt and were in the wilderness,
there were alien, or the mixed multitude among them (Num. 11:4).
The Israelites, because these mixed multitude harbored greed,
once again wept and complained (v. 4).
When God, through Moses, designated several cities of refuge for the Israelites,
allowing those who unintentionally killed someone to flee for refuge (35:11),
he said that these cities of refuge would be for not only the Israelites
but also for the alien among them, whether living among them or staying temporarily (v. 15).
Moses, no longer able to handle alone the burdensome and contentious matters of the Israelites,
selected from each tribe individuals recognized for their wisdom and understanding (Deut.1:12-15),
appointing them as captains of thousands, captains of hundreds, captains of fifties, captains of tens,
and officers, instructing them: "When people bring a case to you for judgment,
whether Israelites or an alien, listen to them carefully and judge fairly" (v.16).

We must treat the alien fairly.

A friend like Jonathan

When I am at a crossroads of life,
if even one friend like Jonathan,
who would fulfill any wish of mine for my sake,
is by my side...
(1 Sam. 20:3-4)

Jonathan's love, the Lord's love

When I think of Jonathan's love for David,
I am reminded of the love the Lord has for us.

Throughout our days,
the Lord's kindness is bestowed upon us,
ensuring that we do not perish forever,
and the Lord's kindness does not depart from our homes forever.
The reason is that the Lord loves us more than His own life
(1 Sam. 20:14-15, 17)

Jonah's went down and Jesus's humility

The prophet Jonah, who disobeyed God's command, went down to Joppa and even further went down on a ship to Tarshish (Jonah 1:3), went down to the lower deck of the ship (1:5), and ultimately went down to the depths of the sea (2:3) and to the roots of the mountains (v. 6).

However, Jesus, who obeyed God's will, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped (Phil. 2:6), came down to this lowly world in the form of sinless human flesh, born in a lowly manger in Bethlehem (Lk. 2:7), took the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness (Phil. 2:7), made himself nothing (v. 7), and even went to the extent of dying on the cross (v. 8), bearing the cross's humiliation only to the lowest depths, and Jesus descended lower and lower, even in the heart of the earth (Mt. 12:40).

Prayer of forgiveness

David, who was deeply moved in his heart when he cut off a corner of Saul's robe, which was the Lord's anointed (1 Sam. 24:5), even though he had the opportunity to harm Saul. Later, when he was fleeing from Absalom as king, Shimei cursed him, even though David had not committed any crime worthy of death (2 Sam. 19:21). Despite this, David went as far as to swear to Shimei, "You shall not die" (v. 23).

When God's Son, Jesus, came to His own people, they not only did not receive Him (Jn. 1:11), but they also crucified Him on the cursed tree of the cross.

At that time, Jesus prayed to God the Father, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk. 23:34).

To avoid conflict among us ...

To have no conflict among us and to be completely united,
we all need to embrace the heart of the Lord,
do His will, and speak with His words...
(1 Cor. 1:10)

We must keep it in our hearts.

We must keep in our hearts the words of God that our intellect cannot understand,
and the works of God that our reason cannot comprehend
(Lk. 1:66; Dan. 7:28; Ref.: Gen. 37:11).

We must make an effort to guard our hearts.

We must make an effort to guard our hearts.
To do so, we must be careful with ourselves.
We must not forget what we have seen with our own eyes.
We must be careful throughout our lives not to let those things leave our hearts
(Deut. 4:9).

Evidence that our hearts are becoming proud?

The evidence that our hearts are becoming proud is that we do not repay the grace we have received from God (2 Chron. 32:25).

Our pastor ...

Our pastor,
do not reject the wise teachings of the elders
and instead, make our congregation happy and speak good words to them,
listen to the words of our congregation
and should lighten the heavy yoke for them,
but rather, by following the wrong teachings of young elders,
make the yoke of our congregation even heavier,
so what relationship do we have with our pastor...
(Ref.: 2 Chron. 10:1-16)

Our pastors are foolish...

Our pastors are foolish as they do not seek God;
they are not successful, nor do they act wisely.
Because of this, the flock entrusted to us by God is scattering
(Jere. 10:21).

This is our hope for the future.

When Jesus appears (His second coming),
we will not only refrain from sinning like Jesus,
but we will also become people who have no sin,
not even knowing sin.

This is our hope for the future.

(1 Jn. 3:2-3; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22; 2 Cor. 5:21).

We must make our children and grandchildren aware.

We must make our children and grandchildren
aware of the things that we have witnessed what God has done
(Deut. 4:9, 34).

We must listen to God's word and learn the fear of God throughout our days in this world,
so that we may teach it to our children. (v. 10).

From when our children were young ...

It would be wonderful if our children from when they were still young sought God,
and as they grew up, purified themselves and removed and discarded all their idols
(2 Chron. 34:3-7).

Our house should be built with wisdom.

Our house should be built with wisdom,
become strong through understanding,
and its rooms should be filled
with all sorts of precious and beautiful treasures through knowledge
(Prov. 24:3-4)

Our God ...

God revives and revives the hearts of those who are humble and contrite (Isa. 57:15).
And because of his sin of covetousness, God
Even though they were beaten in the wrath of God, they did not repent and were rebellious.
He heals and heals those who walk in the path of their own hearts (verses 18, 19).
Then God said to us, "Peace be with you."
He says, "Peace be with you" (verse 19).
Our God is a God who is rich in mercy and grace and is a faithful God.

If things don't go as we expected ...

Although the Lord faithfully fulfills what He has promised according to His will,
we resent the Lord when our prayers and expectations are not met as we desire
(Mt. 20:10-14).

When we hate ...

The commandment of the Lord is to love one another (1 Jn. 3:11, 23).

However, there are times when we disobey this commandment of the Lord and do not love each other, but rather hate each other.

The Bible tells us that when we hate our brothers/sisters (verse 15):

- (1) We are like Cain (v. 12),
- (2) The world loves us (v. 13),
- (3) We are still dwelling in death (v. 14),
- (4) We are murderers (v. 15).

In other words, when we hate our brothers/sisters, we are like murderers like Cain (vv. 12, 15).

What appears to us as "the best thing" can actually be "the worst thing".

Being led by greed,
disobeying God's command,
seizing what appears to us as "the best thing"
with a heart of disobedience to God
can actually be "the worst thing" we can do to ourselves.
(1 Samuel 15:9, 19, 21, 23).

We are “Jeshurun”.

By the full grace of God, those who believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we are indeed the "Jeshurun" (meaning 'the upright one') (Deut. 33:5).

This is because we have received forgiveness of sins through the death of Jesus Christ, and righteousness through His resurrection (Rom. 4:25).

If we do not rise, God's storm will arise.

When God commanded Jonah to "Arise" and go to Nineveh (Jon. 1:2),

Jonah "arose" to flee from the presence of the Lord and went down to Tarshish (v. 3).

And Jonah went "went down" to Joppa, “went down” into the ship (v. 3),

and ultimately “went down” to the lowest parts of the ship (v. 5).

Because God sent a great wind upon the sea, a great storm "arose" in the midst of the sea (v. 4).

The sailors were afraid and each cried out (prayed) to their own gods (v. 5).

But Jonah had gone down into a deep sleep (v. 5).

If we disobey the Lord's command to "Arise", we will only go "down" and down again.

If we do not "Arise", God's storm will "arise".

If we disobey the Lord's command, even the unbelievers around us will suffer.

When those unbelievers cry out to their gods, we will be deeply asleep.

What we are good at, what we are not good at?

The Bible says, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today" (Exod. 14:13).

But what we are good at is being afraid, and what we are not good at is standing firm and seeing.

"The word of faith that we preach" is ...

"The word of faith that we preach" is near us, it is in our mouths and in our hearts (Rom. 10:8).

When we plead before the Lord ... (1)

When we plead before the Lord, we should not rely on our righteousness, but rather on the Lord's mercy (Dan. 9:18).

When we plead before the Lord ... (2)

When we plead to the Lord,
instead of seeking an answer to our prayers for ourselves,
we should seek for the Lord Himself to answer our prayers
(Dan. 9:19).

As we follow God's commandments ...

The reason we can be strong and courageous according to God's commandments
is that God is with us.

When we follow God's commandments and keep His words,
our path will be smooth, and we will prosper
(Josh. 1:5-9).

We must understand with our hearts and intentions.

We must understand with our hearts and intentions
that every good word the Lord has spoken concerning us will not fail to be fulfilled,
and not one of them will be left unfulfilled
(Josh. 23:14).

We are blessed people.

We are blessed people.

The reason is that we always sit before the Lord,
listening to His words (2 Kgs. 10:8; Lk. 10:39, 42)

We are blessed people (Numbers 22:12).

When we were still weak, when we were still sinners, when we were still enemies of God,
Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for us.

Through His blood, we have been justified, and we have been reconciled with God
(Rom. 5:6-10). In this way, God has demonstrated His love for us (v. 8)

We must not listen to words of unbelief.

Regarding the land of Canaan promised by God,
because of the bad report of the evil men (Num. 14:37) which led to complaining (13:32),
the entire congregation of Israel wept all night (14:1),
and they even murmured against Moses and Aaron (v. 2).

Furthermore, the murmuring Israelites went so far as to appoint a leader and return to Egypt (v. 4).

The reason for this was that the Israelites were afraid
because of the bad report spoken by the ten spies (v. 9).

We must be very cautious and vigilant against listening to the words of unbelief
from those who do not believe in God.

The reason is that if we listen to their words of unbelief, fear will arise in our hearts.

We must be very cautious about fear in our hearts
because if fear arises in our hearts, we will rebel against God (v. 9).

We will be exposed and become empty-handed.

When our actions are not commendable and we contemplate the slander of our adversaries, we must act in reverence to our God (Neh. 5:9).

If we do not act according to God's word while revering Him,

He will sweep us away from our homes and possessions.

We will be exposed and become empty-handed (vv. 12-13).

We are the masterpiece of God.

We are the masterpiece of God (Eph. 2:10).

God, through His blood (Acts 20:28), made us His masterpiece, even though we were once dead in sin and guilt.

Furthermore, God has showcased us as His masterpiece in heaven (Eph. 2:6).

The purpose of this is so that we might do good works in Christ Jesus (v. 10).

We are as children of God ...

We have received great love from God the Father and have become children of God (1 Jn. 3:1-2).

Therefore, as children of God,

we must love one another according to the Lord's commandments (vv. 11, 23, 24).

We should love one another just as Jesus Christ, who came in the flesh (1:7),

the Word of eternal life (vv. 1, 2), laid down His life as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (v. 2), even unto death, as He sacrificed His life on the cross.

Satan, who surrounds us?

Satan surrounds us. And Satan says that when we are surrounded,
when we believe in the words heard through the Lord's servant,
Our God will deliver us from the encirclement,'
it is the Lord's servant who is deceiving us, (2 Chron. 32:11).
So Satan says to us about the Lord's servant,
'Do not be deceived, do not be enticed, do not believe in him,' (v. 15).
Satan dislikes us removing all idols and only serving and worshiping the Lord.
Satan tells us that even in our difficult crisis situations, where we are surrounded,
'Your God will not be able to deliver you from my hand'
(2 Chron. 32:14-15; Ref.: v. 17).

The God who blocks us.

God blocks us, so that we cannot be exalted by the enemies of God's people,
and cannot be honored (Num. 24:11).

The God who does not forsake us.

Babylon, like a golden cup that makes the whole earth drunk (Jere. 51:7),
the wealthy Babylon with its abundant treasures that arouses the lust of many (v. 13),
the Israelites suffering in Babylon, though filled with sin for defying the holy God,
they were not forsaken by God (v. 5).
Why is that? Even though sin abounds within us,
God will not forsake us, nor can He forsake us.
The reason is that God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to the cross in our place.

God who comforts us

Right now, God is speaking to us as follows:

'I, even I, am he who comforts you' (Isa. 51:12).

God, who has redeemed us,

comforts us by granting us eternal joy (vv. 5, 6, 11).

When we build our own 'Tower of Babel'

When we seek to avoid dispersion across the earth

by building our own 'Tower of Babel' in our name,

God descends to confound our efforts

and prevent us from understanding each other's language

(conversation, communication?),

causing confusion so that we cannot comprehend one another and scattering us

(Gen. 11:1-9).

Our God who goes before us.

Indeed, as the Israelites suggested,
was it for their benefit that they sent men ahead of themselves 'ahead' of them
to explore the land of Canaan? (Deut. 1:22)
Indeed, was it good to do as Moses said? (v. 23)
What were the consequences of doing so?

The Israelites did not desire to go up to the promised land of Canaan,
and they rebelled against God's command (v. 26).
They complained in their tents, saying,
'Because the Lord hates us, he brought us out of Egypt
to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us' (v. 27).

Is this complaint justified?
No, how can they say that God hates them?
No, how can they say that God brought them out of Egypt to destroy them?
Such a resentful heart does not perceive God's love.
A heart that does not perceive God's love forgets the purpose of God's guidance."

The Israelites, having sent scouts ahead of themselves,
heard the evil report from ten of the twelve scouts,
except for Caleb and Joshua, and became discouraged (Num. 13:28-33),
and furthermore, they complained bitterly to Moses and Aaron throughout the night (14:1-2).
They despised God because they did not believe in Him (v. 11).

The Israelites should have believed in God, who goes before them (Deut. 1:30),
as Moses instructed, and as God commanded them
to go up to the land of Canaan and possess it (v. 21).
They should not have been afraid (vv. 21, 29) or hesitated,
but rather, they should have trusted in God, who goes before them,
guiding them with fire at night and cloud by day (v. 33),
and obeyed God fully, like Caleb (v. 36).

Our God is the God who goes before us.

As we reflect on our individual lives, families, and churches,
we cannot deny that God has led us here before us.

In the future, God will continue to lead us before us.

Therefore, we must believe in God who goes before us and fully obey His word.

We must never go before God.

When we are burdened with worries and our bodies lack strength ...

When we are burdened with worries and our bodies lack strength,
the Lord touches us and strengthens us.

When the Lord says to us,

'Do not fear, you who are greatly beloved, be at peace, be strong, be strong,'

we can pray to the Lord like this,

'O my Lord, You have given me strength, now speak,'

(Dan. 10:16-19).

The heart of God the Father who inclines towards us.

Due to the death of his son Absalom,

David wept and mourned, crying out,

"My son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom!

If only I had died instead of you, Absalom, my son, my son!"

(2 Sam. 18:33; Ref.: 19:4).

His grief caused "the victory that day to be turned into mourning for all the people,"

and they "crept back into the city that day as people creep back

in who are ashamed when they flee in battle" (19:1-3).

Although David's heart was inclined towards his dead son Absalom,

when the people wanted to bring him back to the palace,

David focused on turning the heart of all the men of Judah as one man (v. 14).

The heart of God the Father was also inclined towards us

when His Son Jesus Christ cried out on the cross,

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46).

Therefore, our hearts are now turned together

solely towards the Lord, the King of kings (Rev. 19:16).

The Lord will give us peace.

The Lord will establish peace for us,

for all our works He has accomplished for us

(Isa. 26:12)

We need 'rest'.

Although even God, who created the heavens and the earth,
worked for six days and rested on the seventh day (Exod. 31:17),
it seems we don't know how to rest on the seventh day, after working for six days.
When it's time to rest, we should rest. We need 'rest'."

Our ears, eyes, and hearts

Our ears should quickly listen to the voice of God,
but instead, we are quick to listen to human voices.
As a result, we are unable to make right choices based on God's wisdom and discernment.
This choice is precisely not 'receiving sound doctrine'
but having 'itching ears' and following teachers who cater to our own desires (2 Tim. 4:3).
We should incline our ears to sound doctrine.
We should listen to the voice of God.

Our eyes are not fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (Heb. 12:2).
Instead of looking to the Creator God who controls the storms of our lives,
we are fixated on the storms themselves.
As a result, we walk by sight, not by faith (2 Cor. 5:7).
We should look straight ahead with our eyes
and fix our gaze directly before the Lord as we walk (Prov. 4:25).

We are not guarding our hearts, the source of life, properly (v. 23).
We are not keeping God's word in our hearts (3:21).
As a result, we are losing vitality and even compromising our physical health (v. 22).
Above all else, we must guard our hearts diligently (4:23),
for it is the source of life (v. 23).

Our speech and our preaching ...

Our speech and our preaching are not done with the demonstration of the Spirit's power, but rather with persuasive words of wisdom, so that the faith of those who listen is not in the power of God, but in the wisdom of men (1 Cor. 2:4-5)

Our example

In the past, God disciplined us for our sins because He was not pleased. This served as 'our example,' to prevent us from craving evil things as they did (1 Cor. 10:6)

Our twofold calling

The twofold calling of all Christians, outwardly, is to testify to the gospel (Acts 20:24), and inwardly, is to live lives worthy of the gospel (Phil. 1:27). However, the Korean church places too much emphasis on the outward calling of testifying to the gospel, while not emphasizing enough the inward calling of living lives worthy of the gospel. As a result, while the gospel may be proclaimed with our lips, our lives become stumbling blocks to the spread of the gospel.

If we do not act according to what our mouth has spoken

If we do not act according to what our mouth has spoken,
our sin will surely find us out
(Num. 32:23-24)

Because of our sin

Father God desired that the sinless only begotten Son, Jesus Christ,
should suffer and bear the punishment for our sins
(Isa. 53:5, 10)

Our strength is ...

Our strength is that God is with us
(Judg. 6:14, 16)

We swagger.

Within the church,
those who exalt themselves in arrogance
swagger before their brothers and sisters
(Ref.: Judg. 9:1-13).

Resentful heart or Grateful heart

A resentful heart longs for the past amid dissatisfaction with the present (Num. 20:3-5), while a grateful heart, through our Lord Jesus Christ, looks forward to the future and finds joy in the present amidst hope (Rom. 5:1-2, 12:12).

A resentful heart gradually longs for the past.

The Israelites, who had quarreled with Moses at Kadesh, said:

- (1) "If only we had died when our brothers fell dead before the Lord!
Why did you bring the Lord's community into this wilderness,
that we and our livestock should die here?" (Num. 20:3; Ref.: 16:31-25).
- (2) "Why did you bring the Lord's community into this wilderness,
that we and our livestock should die here?" (20:4).
- (3) Eventually, they said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place?" (v. 5).

The progression from (1) to (3) shows that the Israelites, from their perspective, gradually moved from the more recent issue (1) to the more distant past (2), and finally, in (3), they expressed resentment towards Moses for bringing them out of "Egypt," which is the furthest past.

In this progression, a resentful heart gradually turns back to the past. If we harbor resentment, we gradually regress to the past, longing for the sinful life in "Egypt" or a similar worldly life before believing in Jesus.

A person of God who is used in the midst of crisis ...

A person who is highly used by God in times of crisis is someone who, in God's appointed time for the salvation work of God, does not remain silent but advances with a readiness to obey, even risking their own life, from the position given by God, without violating the law (Esther 4:14-16).

God's people used in times of crisis?

Our position or status may perhaps be for 'such a time' as this? Shouldn't we speak up and not remain silent 'at such a time'? (Esther 4:14)

Beneficial suffering?

Pain drives us to earnestly seek God.
When we earnestly seek God,
He speaks to us and reveals to us the cause of our pain, our sin.
Therefore, pain is beneficial
(Job 5:7; Ps. 119:67, 71)

The mind governed by the flesh ...

Not only is the mind governed by the flesh unable to submit to God's law,
but it is also hostile to God; it does not and cannot submit to God's law
(Rom. 8:7)

A person who lives according to the flesh ...

A person who lives according to the flesh lacks spiritual discernment,
so they cannot understand or accept the things that come from the Spirit of God;
they consider them foolishness
(1 Cor. 2:14).

The benefits of physical suffering?

So as to no longer live the rest of one's time in the flesh for human desires, but for the will of God.
Would we not then be thankful even for the physical suffering endured,
which helps us cease from sinning?
(1 Pet. 4:1-2)

To revive me, as one dead or a flea

King Saul sought to kill David, who was like a dead dog or a flea (1 Sam. 24:14), but Jesus Christ, the King of kings, came down to this low and humble world to save someone as insignificant as a dead dog or a flea, and died on the cursed tree of the cross.

The one who bestows grace ...

The one who bestows grace to the one who seeks it, and cares for them, speaks comforting and joyful words to the heart of the one who seeks that grace (Ruth 2:2, 10, 13).

He bestowed grace.

Ruth, who desired to find favor with someone (Ruth 2:2), ultimately sought favor from Boaz (v. 13).

Boaz instructed Ruth to sit beside the harvesters and eat the bread, and he also gave her roasted grain, so she ate until she was satisfied (v. 14).

Furthermore, when Ruth rose to glean, Boaz commanded his young men not to rebuke her while she gleaned among the sheaves (v. 15).

Boaz instructed his young men to deliberately drop some bundles of grain for Ruth to glean without reproach (v. 16).

In this way, Boaz did not cease to show favor to Ruth, who sought favor from him (v. 20).

Music Therapy?

When God is present and a man of God, deeply moved by the Spirit of God,
plays an instrument and praises God with his hands,
not only do the listeners feel refreshed,
but even those troubled by 'the distressing spirit from the Lord' are refreshed,
and the evil spirit departs from them
(1 Sam. 16:13-15, 18, 23)

Immorality and restraint

To avoid immorality, one should marry,
and after marriage, spouses should fulfill their marital duties to each other.
They should not deprive each other,
except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time,
so that they may devote themselves to prayer.
Then they should come together again
so that Satan will not tempt them
because of their lack of self-control
(1 Cor. 7:2-5)

What does the phrase ‘Doing what is right’ mean? (1 John 2:29)

Doing what is right means seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness, who is Jesus Christ, the righteous King of that kingdom (Mt. 6:33). In other words, doing what is right means to live as Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, does (1 Jn. 2:1), just as He Himself instructs us to (v. 6). As believers living in Christ, we are called to live according to the way Jesus lived (v. 6), which entails obeying His commandments (vv. 7-11).

Jesus's twofold commandment:

"Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Mt. 22:37-40).

First, doing what is right means loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind, as commanded in the first part of Jesus's twofold commandment. In the context of 1 John, this means obeying the instruction found in 1 John 2:15-17: "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever." Doing what is right, therefore, means not living according to the fleeting desires and standards of this world but rather living in accordance with the will of God. In other words, doing what is right means living not according to the passing desires of this world or the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life that are present in this world,

but instead living according to the will of God (1 Jn. 2:15-17)
["For this is the will of God, your sanctification..." (1 Thessalonians 4:3)].
Furthermore, doing what is right entails loving our neighbor as ourselves,
as commanded in the second part of Jesus's twofold commandment.
To obey this commandment from the perspective of 1 John means
obeying the instruction found in 1 John 2:3-11,
summarized as loving one's brother and not hating him.
By obeying Jesus's commandment and loving our brother,
"God's love is truly perfected in us" (v. 5).
And by dwelling in the light,
there is nothing in us that could cause stumbling (v. 10).

The righteous and God

The righteous person faces many troubles (Ps. 34:19).

The righteous person cries out (v. 17).

The righteous person's heart is broken, and they mourn deeply (v. 18).

God hears the cry of the righteous (v. 17).

God listens to their pleas and delivers them from all their troubles (vv. 17, 19).

God saves them (v. 18).

When the righteous receive grace ...

When the righteous receive grace from God,
they learn righteousness and also practice it,
so they should reflect on the majesty of God
(Isa. 26:10).

The righteous' way

The path of the righteous is upright.
You, O Lord, make level the way of the righteous
(Isa. 26:7).

This world ...

This world is a dark world (1 Jn. 1:5, 6; 2:8, 9, 11),
a false world (1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 21, 22; 4:1, 6, 20),
a world of hatred (2:9, 11; 3:12-15; 4:20),
and also a wicked and unjust world (1:9; 2:2, 13, 14, 16; 3:12; 5:17, 18, 19, 21).
And everything in this world is characterized
by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 Jn. 2:16).

Therefore, as those born of God (5:1, 4), those who believe in the born-again Jesus Christ (3:23),
we do not love this world or the things in the world (2:15).
Instead, we fight and overcome the world through faith (5:4, 5),
believing in Jesus Christ, the will of God (2:17), and loving one another (3:23),
so that we may enjoy eternal life even in this world (2:17).

We should choose what is better ...

While serving in the church,
we become busy and our hearts are overwhelmed with many tasks
(Lk. 10:40).

Consequently, we may resent the brothers and sisters around us
who are not helping as much as we'd like.

In our dissatisfaction, we may even go to the Lord in prayer, complaining,
"Lord, do you not care that they have left me to serve alone?" (v. 40).

The Lord responds to us, saying,

"Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things,
but few things are needed—or indeed only one" (vv. 41-42).

The Lord desires us to be like Mary,
sitting at His feet and listening to His word (v. 39), obeying His will.

However, we often have the desire to be busy with many tasks
in order to bring much glory to God.

Despite the Lord's reminder that only one thing is needed (v. 42),
we find it difficult to be satisfied with doing just one thing.

Ultimately, instead of obeying the Lord's will,
we serve in the church according to our own desires.

"Mary has chosen what is better" (v. 42) ...

Do you believe in this truth?

Does anyone or anything have the power to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

Do you have confidence in this truth?

(Rom. 8:38-39)

If we understand this love of God, then ...

When we were still sinners, God loved us (Rom. 5:8).

God laid all our sins on Jesus Christ (Isa. 53:6).

And God forgave all our sins (Col. 1:14).

God made us die to sin (Rom. 6:2, 11).

If we understand this love of God,

we should forgive our neighbor's sins (Mt. 6:12).

If we are not forgiving our neighbor's sins right now,
can we truly say that we understand this love of God?

The blessing of a wilderness with neither this nor that.

In the wilderness, there is no place to sow seed,
no figs, no vines, no pomegranates, and no water to drink (Num. 20:5),
except for the heavenly bread or manna provided by God from heaven (Ps. 78:24; Ref.: Num. 21:5)
and the water flowing from the rock (Num. 20:10-11; Ref.: Ps. 105:41).

Why did God make it so that there was no place to sow seed, no figs, no vines,
no pomegranates, and no water to drink in the wilderness (Num. 20:5)?

Perhaps it was to lead the prophet Habakkuk to make this confession:

"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
he enables me to tread on the heights ..." (Habak. 3:17-19).

Perhaps God intends to make us realize That man does not live on bread alone
but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord
(Deut. 8:3).

Jesus also says:

"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?'
or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

For the pagans run after all these things,
and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow,
for tomorrow will worry about itself.

Each day has enough trouble of its own
(Mt. 6:31-34).

The God who also relieves the distress of such individual.

Even to a person like me who try to manipulate my own desire by praying,
'Please do not do as God desires, but as I desire,'
God prepares "the vine" of my life to alleviate my distress
(Jonah 4:6).

Love is better than this knowledge.

Love that builds up virtue is
better than knowledge that causes arrogance
(1 Cor. 8:1)

May we be enabled to practice such love of God.

The God of love not only covers our sins (Prov. 17:9),
but also does not see our iniquity (Num. 23:21).

However, Satan today continues to tempt us, trying to make us blind to our own faults
while constantly reminding us of the faults of our loved ones and neighbors,
and even trying to expose them.

As we remember the grace of God's salvation, which resurrected us with Christ (Eph. 2:5)
and covered our sins (Ps. 32:1), let us pray that we may execute the love of God,
which covers the sins of our neighbors, with His great grace (Prov. 17:9).

Let's believe without doubting that it will come true.

Let's believe without doubting that the promise of the words given to me by the Lord in John 6:1-15 and Matthew 16:18 will come true. And let's hold onto those promises, pray to the Lord, and believe that what we have asked for has already been received (Mk. 11:23-24).

Gnashing of teeth

The hypocrite will weep bitterly and gnash his teeth.
The worthless servant will gnash his teeth
(Mt. 24:51; 25:30).

While living between what has already been accomplished and what is yet to come.

The God of the covenant has already accomplished salvation (at the time of Jesus' crucifixion) (Jn. 19:30), and will accomplish salvation completely (at the time of Jesus' second coming) (Rev. 21:6), and is presently working towards that salvation.

Living between the salvation already accomplished by God and the salvation yet to be fully realized, we must walk in obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14) and work out our present salvation (Phil. 2:12).

The dream and interpretation of the pagan enemy were also used by God.

Even the dream and interpretation of the Midianite were used by God to give courage to the fearful Gideon and to make him believe in the promise of God, "I have given it into your hand" (Judg. 7:9-15).

The unbelief of the Israelites, and the faith of Rahab

During the exodus from Egypt, the Israelites witnessed firsthand all the miraculous deeds that God performed before their eyes in the land of Egypt, including the acts against Pharaoh, his servants, and all his land (Deut. 29:2). Yet, despite witnessing these events, they did not believe in God and even scorned Him (Num. 14:11). On the other hand, Rahab, a Canaanite woman living in the land of Canaan, only heard about the miracles God performed for the Israelites, such as the parting of the Red Sea and the destruction of the Amorite kings Sihon and Og on the other side of the Jordan (Josh. 2:10-11). Nevertheless, she believed in the God of Israel, acknowledging that He is the God in heaven above and on earth below, as she declared, "Truly, your God, the Lord, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath" (v. 11). How could it be that the Israelites, who witnessed firsthand all the miraculous deeds God performed in Egypt, did not believe in Him, while Rahab, who only heard about these events, could believe in God?

Two Bible verses come to mind:

- (1) Romans 10:17 - "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."
- (2) Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God."

These verses emphasize that faith comes from hearing the word of God and is ultimately a gift of God's grace.

Rahab's faith demonstrates that belief in God does not necessarily require firsthand witnessing of miracles but can come through hearing and receiving God's word with an open heart.

Love is like the dew.

Our love for God is like the morning clouds or the fleeting dew (Hos. 6:4).

Just as the morning clouds and dew disappear after a short while,
our love for God is brief and momentary.

Therefore, instead of offering God what He desires—love and knowledge of Him—
we offer Him what we desire—sacrifices and burnt offerings.

In spite of this, God loves us with an everlasting love that never fades away.

It is indeed by His grace.

I don't even want to live anymore.

Because of my soul's anguish, because of my heart's torment,

because of the gnawing pain in my heart,

I would prefer choking and death (Job 7:11, 15).

Now I don't even want to live anymore.

‘What is mankind that ...

you should set your heart on him,

that you should even visit him every morning

and test him every moment?’

(Job 7:16, 17, 19)

‘Now, do not be lazy.’

Those who have a mind to turn away God's fierce anger from us
should 'Now, do not be lazy' (2 Chron. 29:10-11).

It shouldn't be wasted in vain ...

Life, which accompanies like a shadow,
If one only busies oneself with futile matters and amasses wealth in vain,
How much of this short life is wasted in vain?
(Ps. 39:6).

The woman who tasted the bitterness of life ...

Naomi, the woman who tasted the bitterness of life, had no hope (Ruth 1:12).
She went to the land of Moab and sojourned there,
where not only her husband died but also her two sons (vv. 1, 3, 5).
She was too old to marry again (v. 12),
implying that she could no longer bear sons (v. 12).
She thought that the hand of the Lord had dealt harshly with her (v. 13)
and that the Almighty had afflicted her severely (v. 20).
Having lived plentifully in Judah Bethlehem (v. 21),
she moved to the land of Moab due to a famine (v. 1),
but claimed that the Lord had made her return empty (v. 21) to Judah Bethlehem.
She believed that the Lord had punished her
and that the Almighty had brought affliction upon her (v. 21).
Therefore, Naomi asked not to be called "Naomi" anymore
but to be called "Mara" (v. 20).
["Naomi" means "my delight," and "Mara" means "bitter" or "sorrow."]

Life is like a ship ...

Life is like a ship in the midst of a sea where winds blow,
so we are living a life of rowing hard.

Because of the various winds blowing in the sea of life,
our ship may even face the crisis of almost breaking.

At that moment, the Lord walks on the sea.

And to us, who are in fear, He speaks:

"Take courage; it is I. Do not be afraid."

As the Lord comes aboard the ship, the winds of our lives cease
(Mk. 6:45-52).

Rather than a thousand burnt offerings?

King Solomon went to Gibeon

and offered a thousand burnt offerings on the great altar there (1 Kgs. 3:4).

However, as he grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods,

and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God (11:3-4).

He disobeyed God's command.

Reflecting on this, I had this thought:

"While we may think that offering 1,000 worship services to God would please Him,

Satan may use his 1,000 servants to deceive us.

From our perspective,

offering 1,000 worship services to God might seem like something that would please Him,

but from God's perspective, He delights more in our obedience to His first commandment.

Lips and hearts should serve the same purpose ...

With our lips, we adamantly declare
that we will never forsake the Lord and serve other gods,
but in our hearts, we are serving money.
The reason is that, in our eyes,
loving money seems more appealing
than loving the Lord.
So we have chosen to serve money over the Lord
(Josh. 24:14-16).

With our lips, we speak affectionately, but in our hearts ...

We must beware of neighbors with tongues like arrows that kill.
The reason is that "they always speak lies, and with their mouths"
they "speak kindly to us, but inwardly they" set "traps to catch us"
(Jere. 9:4, 8).