

Father, we just thank You. We praise You. We worship You, Father. Father, You are a good God. Your mercy endures forever. Thank You, Lord. Thank You, Father, for this privilege once again. We just want to thank You. Thank You, Father. Lord, there was a perpetual sacrifice that was supposed to be offered – the morning sacrifice and the evening sacrifice. It was a statute forever to all the generations is what You told Your children, Israel, O Lord; that it has to be continually offered – the morning and the evening sacrifice, signifying the sacrifice of Your Son; that it was a perpetual sacrifice. But, Lord, in the New Covenant, You said, Lord, You, in Your Blood, You put Your Blood not in temple made with hands but in the most Holy Place in the Heavens and You have purchased salvation once and for all. And You have perfected us once and for all through the Body, Blood and the sacrifice of Your Son. And we come under that Blood this morning. We come under that Blood and, Lord, I pray, Father, that even as we now wait at Your feet, I pray, Father, that You would speak to our hearts. Anoint us, O Lord, and speak to us. Prepare us, strengthen us, comfort us. Edify us, Father. And prepare us, O Lord, for the days ahead. To that end, I pray that You would bless the meditation of today's teaching. We thank You. We praise You. For in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Last night, we heard that there is a spiritual connotation to everything. There is a spiritual aspect to everything. One of the things that I was thinking about even as Pastor James was sharing yesterday; I was thinking about how many of us are really awake, spiritually. There is a verse, if you turn with me to *Isaiah 29:8-10*,

Isaiah 29:8-10

⁸ It shall even be as when a hungry man dreams, And look—he eats; But he awakes, and his soul is still empty; Or as when a thirsty man dreams, And look—he drinks; But he awakes, and indeed he is faint, And his soul still craves: So the multitude of all the nations shall be, Who fight against Mount Zion.”

Here, there is a powerful prophecy by Isaiah. He says, “Those who fight against Mount Zion.” Mount Zion, of course, stands for the Church and the presence of God. It says that it will be like people who are craving for food and they dream. And in their dream, they feel as if they have eaten by when they wake up, they are still empty; they are hungry. And then, they feel thirsty and, in their dream, they feel as if they have drunk the water but when the reality strikes, they are still thirsty. That's exactly what it is. People are living in a dream world but in reality, whatever they are consuming from this world is making them thirsty and hungry. Let's move on to,

⁹ Pause and wonder! Blind yourselves and be blind! They are drunk, but not with wine; They stagger, but not with intoxicating drink.

It says,

⁹ Pause and wonder!...

Take it say. Pause. Wonder. Think about it. Next verse.

¹⁰ For the Lord has poured out on you The spirit of deep sleep, And has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets...

They are called 'the seers'.

...And He has covered your heads, namely, the seers.

That's what is happening. There is a spirit of prophecy. A spirit of blindness has taken over the Church primarily and because of that, the world. Whether you like it or not, we are the eyes of the world. That's exactly what God told Israel, "You are supposed to be the light to all the nations around you; that all the nations should look up to you and that is where real spiritual wisdom and knowledge and understanding should be emanating from – you, as God's people." But what has happened?

¹⁰ For the Lord has poured out on you The spirit of deep sleep, And has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets. And He has covered your heads, namely, the seers.

They are not able to see; they are not able to hear.

So, this morning, we need to ask ourselves, "Lord, am I under the influence of the spirit of slumber." Let's turn to *1 Thessalonians 5:1-11*. How do I know? Let's read.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

¹ But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.

This is remarkable. This is the first letter, chronologically, that Apostle Paul has written. And he says,

¹ But concerning the times and the seasons...

Chronos and the Kairos. I don't have to write to you. You guys are well aware." And he says, "Why is there no need for me to write to you?" He gives us a reason. He says,

² For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

You have an awareness. Spiritually, you are prepared, knowing that the Day of the Lord will come to you as a thief in the night. Move on.

³ For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them...

That's what we've been exhorted all these years. This is not the end. The end will come when we are not prepared and when we are not awake, spiritually. And it says,

³ For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. ⁴ But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵ You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. ⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. ⁸ But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

You see, faith, hope and love always come together. We will look at that later on.

⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. ¹¹ Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

That's exactly what we are doing, right? Comforting and edifying.

So, this morning, I want to ask us this first question: can Apostle Paul be confident about us if he were writing to us? I don't have to write to you, brothers, because you yourself perfectly know that that day does not come as a thief. Are you perfectly aware that that day does not come as a thief in the night? Are we really a set of people who are prepared? That's the question that we need to ask ourselves – prepared people.

So, how do we know that we are prepared? It says that that Day will come upon us as a thief. That means we are always ready. So, let us look at a few parameters as to how we can evaluate ourselves, whether we are spiritually prepared or not? Let us first turn to one verse. *Revelation 16:13-15*.

Revelation 16:13-15

¹³ And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon...

This is remarkable. We know about frogs. Frogs are unclean spirits.

...out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

These unclean spirits, which are frogs, that's essentially what people are enjoying these days – they enjoy unclean spirits. We are like Pharaoh. When the plague of the frogs comes to Egypt, the soothsayers also come; the magicians come; the Pharaoh also come. What do they do? They make more frogs. That's interesting. They were supposed to alleviate them from the frogs but they create more frogs. Then, Moses asks Pharaoh. "You want to be delivered from this? When do you want to be delivered from this?" "Tomorrow." That means, "Let me enjoy one more night with these unclean spirits." But let's move on. We are not discussing about that. We've studied it long time back.

¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. ¹⁵ "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

Who is that 'they'? 'They' is God with all His angels and all His saints. So, what is the first thing He says? "Blessed are those people who are watchful." How is He qualifying watchfulness in this particular verse? He says, "The person who keeps his garments." So, the question I want to ask ourselves as a Church: whether I'm aware of my spiritual nakedness or not; or am I completely ignorant to my spiritual condition? This is one of the most dangerous signs of these last days – many people are not aware of their spiritual nakedness. So many, absolutely unaware of what their true spiritual condition is. Of course, God is not talking to the outside world; He is talking to the Church and we are preparing ourselves as a Church and the only thing is that – people should come and become a part of the Church. The entire Bible is aimed toward the Church and we need to ask ourselves this question: am I aware? Whether I'm really clothed or not? Is there anything in my life that I will be ashamed of when God comes and when Jesus comes? Question. And therefore, God forewarns us. there's one Church found in the *Book of Revelation 3:14-22*. We looked at this several times. But let us look at it once more.

Revelation 3:14-22

¹⁴ "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write...

So, here, we know very clearly that people are in charge. It is not the Pastor who is in charge here.

... 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness...

It's a remarkable introduction of God to this Church. He says, "I'm the faithful and the true witness. When I look at you, I want to be faithful to you." God is faithful to us, means; when He is faithful, He says, "Blessed are the wounds

of a faithful friends than the kisses of the enemy.” Wounds of a faithful friend are better than the kisses of the enemy and He says, “I’m a faithful Friend.” Faithful, the True Witness,

...the Beginning of the creation of God:

Which is the firstborn. We looked at that the last time.

¹⁵ “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

The first thing He says is, “You are lukewarm.”

¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷ Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

You are not aware of your spiritual condition. Is it possible that we, as a Church, have lost sensitivity to our true spiritual condition? Conviction is gone and Jesus is no longer inside; He is outside. Look at the next verse.

¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed...

You see how He’s talking about it. “I’m coming and when I’m looking at you, boss, you are still not prepared.” And you are completely oblivious to your spiritual condition. Let that not be the case, my dear brothers and sisters. You see, that is the reason why we need people on the outside to tell and speak to us what our true spiritual condition is. That is the reason why we need the Church. We need brothers and sisters, close proximity, who know who we truly are, at least, to a certain extent. We need spouses who will tell the truth about ourselves. We need friends who will tell and speak to us. “See, I see this in you.” Otherwise, we will be caught unaware. What we will have is a form of godliness but we have no power. We have left Jerusalem and we are on the way to Jericho. And thank God, for the mercy of God that He sends thieves and beats us up before we reach Jericho so that we can understand our true spiritual condition, that we are truly naked; that our garments have been gone. The first thing the thief takes is, what? His garments. Do you know? That’s exactly what happens in Luke 10. When he leaves Jericho, the protection of God, the first thing that happens to him – the thief comes and steals his garments. And what happens? He is naked now. Absolutely naked. And the good thing is that the Samaritan comes and tells and speaks to him about his true spiritual condition. The first thing – do we have something that we need to be ashamed of, before God? Are we aware? I’m sure all of us are aware about certain things in our lives that only you also know inside of you, conviction of the Holy Spirit has been coming over and over again but you are just postponing and postponing again for a later day, saying, “No.” God says, “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” First thing, therefore, if you are prepared, you are aware of your true spiritual condition.

Second – how do I know that I’m prepared for His Coming? Turn to *Revelation 3*, again. As we said, we are only looking at the Church, right? Let us go to *Revelation 3:1-6*.

Revelation 3:1-3

¹ “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars:...

Remarkable thing. See, the eyes of the Lord run to and fro, to make Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is stayed upon Him. Another part in the *Book of Revelation* talks about the seven spirits being the seven eyes, that

God is perfect when He looks at you. He looks at all directions and sees whether you are completely clothed or not. And He says,

...‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name...

That’s remarkable.

...that you are alive, but you are dead. ² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.

We will come to that.

³ Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

This is exactly what He is saying. You guys, in the Church of Sardis, you are worried about a reputation. That is the reason why Jesus says, “You Pharisees, you are the people who justify yourselves before men but deep down inside, you are full of dead men’s bones and all kinds of uncleanness. You are like a white-washed tomb.” And we call it ‘eighth wonder’. What is Taj Mahal? It is a marble tomb and what do we have inside? Bones. It’s all camouflaged in beauty. We’re not looking at any Church or particularly pointing at any Church; we are just looking at ourselves. When God looks at us, does He say, “You have a reputation that you are alive”? There is so much of apparent activity but deep down inside, there is absolute spiritual deadness and you are not watchful. How is He qualifying spiritual death? He is saying, “I have not found your works complete or perfect before Me.” That is what He told Abraham. He says, “Walk thou before Me and be thou perfect,” is what other translations will use. KJV uses the word, “Walk thou before Me. I am the One.” I like that word. Abel was praying. He was saying, “Lord, You said that if we, as a people, humble ourselves, repent, turn from our wicked ways, seek Your face...” you know what an amazing verse that is? You know what ‘seeking Your face’ means? “I want to live before Your face, Lord.” It means, “I want to seek Your favor.” “You want to live before My face?” Meaning – “I want to be able to look into Your eyes and when I look into Your eyes and when You look into my eyes, there is absolutely nothing between us, nothing that is hindering our relationship. It’s absolutely transparent. You look at me and You say ‘Vijay, perfect. Blameless. All of yesterday’s sins, you have repented of it’.” Like we keep exhorting you from the pulpit, keeping short accounts with God and you have kept your conscience sensitive and you are looking to complete and finish the work God has entrusted into your life. You are just not looking at outward appearances; you are looking at the inward reality. Works are not complete. In other words, this Pastor in Sardis begins and he never finishes whatever God started in his life. Or maybe, God really didn’t start anything in his life. Therefore, it’s not being completed. You start so many things without asking from God and you are expecting God, “Please finish it.” God says, “I will complete what I have started. I am the Author and the Finisher of your faith. I have started something in your life and therefore, I will bring it to its logical completion.” But the point here is – do we really know what we have started in our lives is started by God? Or now, we have started in our flesh, honestly, so many men of God, sorry to say that it’s a fact – they have started and now, they are struggling. God says, “This is not what I want you to do.” It’s like beating a dead animal. God says, “I’m not in it. It’s not complete before Me. It’s dead.” First thing is – you are worried about a reputation. You are only worried about a reputation but deep down inside, there’s a spiritual reality. You know what? This is what we call as ‘deception’. There’s a powerful verse in *Proverbs 12:27*. I will show you that verse. When you read it in the first glance, primary glance, you will not know the real meaning. But when you understand word by word, it’s very interesting. We will come back to *Revelation 3* again.

Proverbs 12:27

²⁷ The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting But diligence is man’s precious possession.

You might say, “What does it mean?” A lazy fellow will buy chicken and put it on the cooking flat and he never cooks it or doesn’t roast it. That’s when you look at it from the outside. But when I actually started going word by word, somehow, I’m a guy who wants to look at it word by word and I wanted to see – what does this word ‘lazy’ mean? It is used interestingly in another point, in another place in the Bible. And I want to show you which place. I want you to guess which other place this is, when I read through those verses. Turn to *Psalm 32:1-2*. I want you to guess which word is rendered as lazy, which is equal to lazy here.

Psalm 32:1-2

¹ Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. ² Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.

Now, tell me, take a calculated guess as to which word, in all these adjectives is the word? Deceit. You guys are brilliant kids. I think I have the best of the flock here. Deceit is the word for lazy. Now, let’s go back to Proverbs 12:27 and replace ‘lazy’ with ‘deceit’.

Proverbs 12:27

²⁷ The (deceitful) man does not roast what he took in hunting...

Meaning – there is rawness in your life but you have covered it with deception. You have a reputation that you are a very hardworking hunter, but deep down inside, there is deadness and decay. Like yesterday, Pastor was talking about the Passover Lamb. It should be roasted, not boiled. Not even eaten raw. That means there is a rawness which he was comparing to legalism; and boiling, he is talking about watering down the Gospel. Both are deception. You have a reputation that you are a powerful hunter but you know what God is saying? “You are incomplete before Me.” And He is telling the Pastor in Sardis, “Boss, don’t you see the deadness in your life? You have a reputation. All that you are looking for is reputation but you are not concerned about your reputation before Me.”

John 5:43-44

⁴³ I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. ⁴⁴ How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God?

It’s remarkable. You see, unless and until we seek honor from the only God and we are seeking honor from every other god, that becomes our righteousness. From example – we are seeking honor from our reputation in the world, that is our God. How do we seek honor by seeking reputation? Let’s say, for example, finding a career. Career is our reputation. Education could be our reputation. Money could be our reputation. Whenever in the university, I did my Ph. D from a university called IIT. We call ourselves a ‘research university’. So, what is research university? We encourage our students, “Please don’t sell your soul to menial software jobs.” Oh, you might be getting one crore pay package from Facebook or Google or Twitter. That’s exactly what they get these days. And you know what we tell and encourage our students? “Don’t sell your souls to Google and Facebook and all these big companies which give you a hefty pay pack. Contribute to the research community. We may not be paying you one crore; we may be paying you Rs. 5000 a month,” or maybe, as a lecturer, I got a little more than that. I don’t want to mention how much I got. But I would look down upon the software people. I would say, “You sold yourselves. You fellow. You did your engineering and you sold yourselves to Google. Look at me. I cannot be bought. I’m contributing to the researching community. Nonsense.” See, both are reputation – one has a reputation among people who are interested in money; one has a reputation on people who are interested in research, knowledge. That is god. What is our god? Peer group. Our peers should say, “Vijay, your research is cutting edge. Wow! Citations from Carnegie Mellon! Charles Hopkins! One of our professors who came from IIT, Delhi; he was a Mechanical Engineering professor. He said, “You know, Vijay, my research paper, hundred citations verse from a professor

from John Hopkins university, the guy was working in DNA Analysis.” Reputation among peer groups. That is the god. That is what God is saying, “If you are seeking for reputation from any other people, that is your god; that is your righteousness. That is what gives you completeness but unfortunately, you are dead. You are not complete before Me. You are not perfect before Me.” Have you seen people running after a reputation? And unfortunately, the worst that can happen to you, if you are running after reputation, is getting a reputation. That is the worst thing. You are running after reputation and if you get a reputation, that is the worst thing that can happen to you. You know why? Because you will be justified in your trajectory. You will be justified in your path. You will not truly know your true spiritual condition. And he says, “How can you believe?” If you are seeking honor from one another but you are not seeking honor that comes from the only God. That is the reason why the first Commandment in the Ten Commandments is, what? “*Thou shall have no other gods before Me. I am the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt. Thou shall have no other gods.*” He is saying, “You think that your reputation in the world has saved you from sin? No.” Can working in a research laboratory save you from sin? Not at all. Can becoming the best doctor and saving lives of millions of people, save you from sin? Not at all. It has only given you a reputation before men. Can becoming the best businessman and become the most successful business in the world can save you from sin? Not at all. It has only given you a reputation that you are a very smart businessman. And therefore, He tells Israel, “I am the LORD who brought you out of Egypt. From the house of bondage, I brought you out. I redeemed you with My own Blood. Your firstborn should have died but My firstborn has died for your sake. Don’t ever forget that.” That is the reason why *1 Corinthians 1:30* will say,

1 Corinthians 1:30

³⁰ But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—

He has become our righteousness now. How can you believe? Running after reputation. This is a huge stumbling block for all of us. Even if you are trying to find a reputation in our own Church for that matter. It’s very hard to do that. Very difficult. We will make it difficult for you for sure because we, ourselves, we don’t want it. If there is anything in our lives, we will confess openly and honestly. Because we know, ultimately, we have to give an account to Him. His eyes matter. We have to seek His face. Is He is your righteousness? Is He your redemption? Some people seek other gods – their wives are their god. Sorry. Your wife cannot save you. That is the reason why He keeps on exhorting Israel, “Israel, Israel, when you go to this land which I am giving you, don’t get tempted to worship their gods.” “How did these people worship their gods? What were the gods that they worshipped? We also want to become like them.” See, their gods put them in four hundred years of slavery and their iniquity increased. “I, in My mercy, have allowed that to happen.” That is the reason why because the sentence against an evil person is not passed immediately, men’s heart is set towards evil. And God is giving us warnings even as we are in the midst of this incredible epidemic that is literally engulfing this planet. God is telling us, reminding us, “What is your reputation? Who is your god?” Who is your only god? That is what matters. He is telling Sardis, “Sardis, did you forget your God?”

Galatians 3:1-3

¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? ² This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

“Are you going to go back to those weak and beggarly elements, the elementary principles of this world – what to eat, what to drink, what to put on? Has that become your focus now or are you perfect before Me?” Read the Book of Galatians and you will see that.

First, He says, “Are you aware of your true spiritual condition.” That is what He tells the Laodicean Church. “You are naked. You don’t even realize that. Unfortunately, I’m not even there inside.”

Second, He tells the Sardis Church, “Your ways are not perfect before My eyes. I have not found your works perfect before Me.” That means – you have a reputation but deep down inside, you have covered yourself. That is the reason why turn to *2 Corinthians 10:4-5*,

2 Corinthians 10:4-5

⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

Do you have it in KJV?

2 Corinthians 10:4-5

⁴ (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) ⁵ Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

In NIV? Look at what it says,

2 Corinthians 10:4-5

⁴ The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Every deception. Pretending is deception. I can pretend very nicely that I’m a great husband but who knows the reality? Constant admonition from my wife is – “Ten percent of your message, if you start applying, it will be great.” A little, if you convert, it would be nice. This is true. Actually, it’s true. Sometimes, we preach more than what we actually are, truly, in reality. That’s the honest truth about so many of us but that does not mean that you are going to stop from preaching because that is where you want to go. If you want to wait till we practice what we preach, you should be like Jesus. We are moving towards that. We want to be like that.

⁵ We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

You see, pretention, you know what it does? It opposes the knowledge of God – pretention opposes the knowledge of God. And what has happened? You have fortified yourself with pretense so that God is not able to get through to you. That is the problem. That’s exactly what happened to David, right? He committed the entire act with Bathsheba. Now, he wants to fortify himself with pretention. So, what does he do? He calls Uriah. “Go.” What does ‘Uriah’ mean? Yahweh is my light. Who is he? A Hittite. A Gentile is going to teach you, a righteous Jew. Yahweh is my light. “I’m not going to go. The Ark of the Covenant, my master, Joab, and all my brothers are in tents, how can I go?” More righteous. He was trying to fortify himself with pretense but God will not have it because his acts were not perfect before God and God, in His mercy, sends a prophet. You can’t fortify yourselves with pretentions, my dear brothers and sisters. What are you pretending? A reputation? Sorry. That is not your god. That is the reason why we have *Psalms 24*. “Oh Lord, we cast down all other idols.” Because every idol is a pretention. Why do you think people run after a career? Why? Simply because their career will justify their life. “How can I justify my existence if I don’t get the gold medal?” What does that mean? The gold medal justifies you.

Preparing Spiritually - 5

Remember Chariots of God? Eric Little. He said, "Sabbath is Sabbath." There were interviews. "I have ten seconds in my life to justify my existence. If I don't win the gold medal, my existence is gone." You know what he says? "I care two hoots about the gold medal. Even if I cannot participate, my God comes first. Reputation is not important for me. I could have an incredible talent." "What a waste of your talent, Vijay!" But my talent is not my justification; my achievements are not my justification. The size of my congregation is not my justification. How faithful am I? We will come to that – He is my justification. First, understand – God is coming like a thief in the night. Therefore, ask yourselves, "Are you naked before Him or are you covered?"

Second – ask yourselves, when God comes and sees, does He see perfection? Does He see completion? Does He see a perseverance towards completion? That's the reason why He says, "Press on towards perfection." What does that mean? If you don't press on towards completion, you know what happens? We will come to a point where we will be satisfied with the status quo and that status quo will be our justification. You see what I'm talking about? He, who have ears to hear, let them hear what the Spirit of the Lord is saying. I have come thus far. But God is saying, "If any man draws back, My soul will not have pleasure in Him." If you are stagnant, my dear brothers and sisters, you are only going back spiritually. You have to press on. This is an upward climb. "Come up and be here," is the call. The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And when John was in the Spirit, the Angel says, "Come up and I'm going to show you." There's always an upward movement in the spiritual realm, not downwards. There is nothing called stagnation at all. You are pressing on towards perfection. You are exercising your body, spiritual senses, in other words) so that you can understand the deeper things of God in your life. You are moving on. If you are moving ahead, you are drawing back. There's no other place in the middle.

Third thing – turn to *Matthew 24:42* onwards,

Matthew 24:42-43

⁴² Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.

Let me tell you something – Master is coming. There is an investment that the Master has given into your life. There is an investment, what we call as the Spirit. The Spirit is the investment. It is what we call as the earnest of His inheritance. He has given us His Spirit, the earnest of His inheritance. And He says, "Guard it with all of your heart. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Don't allow anything of this world to break into those defences that I have set for you."

Turn to *Genesis 1:28*,

Genesis 1:28

²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful...

'Being fruitful' is essentially to bear the fruit of the Spirit.

...and multiply...

What does it mean? Create more spiritual offspring.

...fill the earth...

Don't make them your disciples but fill the Church with the offspring that God has brought forth to you. And finally,

...and subdue it; have dominion...

What is that? Don't let fleshly desires defeat you but whatever God has given you, guard them. Have dominion and reign over them.

...over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

This is basically what blessing is. The first word 'blessing' has got five connotations. It's Telugu, it's very interesting. It says, "Be fruitful." Abhivrudhi. You know what abhivrudhi is? Grow. Vistharinchu. Multiply, expand. Nindinchu. Fill. Loparichuko. That means – have dominion. That's a very interesting thing. What does 'loparichuko' mean? Don't succumb to any desires of the flesh. It says God blessed Isaac that he came so blessed. You want to see that? You know which verse I'm talking about, right?

Genesis 26:13-14

¹³ The man (Isaac) began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous;

Kya bhaat hain! That is Isaac. That is our destiny, that we will prosper; we will continue prospering spiritually and we become very prosperous,

¹⁴ for he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants. So the Philistines envied him.

Look at this – we will prosper until the time the world becomes envious of us. it is become of envy that they put Jesus on the Cross. How do we know that the world envies us? Because they begin to persecute us. we become so spiritually prosperous that the world looks it at and says, "There is only one option with these fellows. Crucify them." But what happened to this guy? What happened to his prosperity? One weakness in his flesh. What is that? For that food, if you want to get Isaac's blessing, you have to feed him. He is no respecter of person, as far as your blessing is concerned. Whether you are a firstborn or a second-born, "You want my blessing, feed my belly." What a state! See? He had all these but one thing, he didn't have – dominion. And therefore, he was broken into. Think about it, my dear brothers and sisters. God loves to prosper us. He wants to prosper us in both ways but the thing is that – I love when Zac Poonen made this fantastic statement; he says, "The greatest difficulty with God is to bless one man spiritually or physically and to keep him humble at the same time." Very difficult, that he could not be broken into; that he will not sell his spiritual blessings for stupid things in this world, like Esau, who sold away his birthright.

Let's go back to *Matthew 24:43* onwards,

Matthew 24:43-50

⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

That's exactly what we were exhorted yesterday. With your staff in your hands and be ready to leave Egypt in haste.

⁴⁴ Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Think about it; many of the things in your life, when you were prepared for it, it didn't happen to you. That's what I tell a lot of people, "If you do not want rain to come, carry an umbrella." That day, rain will not come because you were prepared. You wouldn't believe it; something funny happened. I was going to the Tuesday Bible study and it

was rainy season. I looked at the clouds and I said, "Okay, it's not going to rain." I was on my bike, zooming nicely. And then, suddenly, I came to the Balanagar circle. I just took a left towards the Fatehnagar thing, right? And just before I took the turning, it started to rain. I said, "Shucks, man!" Then, my eyes went to the store next door. It was selling raincoats. And I parked my bike, bought the rain coat. The moment I put on the rain coat and started riding again, after 5 minutes, the rain stopped. It was a very incident. The thing is that – be prepared. Whenever you are prepared for a quiz, that day, your professor will not give you a quiz. Did you realize that? You are right. Everybody knows it. "These guys are prepared. I will not give. I'm waiting for these fellows, when they are not prepared. Then, I will give." That is all evil professors. But God is not an evil professor. He warns us before time, "I'm sending you rain. I'm sending you test. Test is coming. I don't know when. I also don't know." The problem is that. "Only My Father knows. The angels also don't know." He is preparing. Be prepared all the time.

44 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

You least expect Him, that is when He is going to come, my dear brothers and sisters. That means everything will be so normal. You will be so engrossed in what you are doing but hopefully, what you are doing is what God wants you to do. That is what you should be doing. "I'm doing what God wants me to do." That's the reason why Paul says, "Absent in the body, present with the Lord." What confidence! You know why? "Because I'm doing what He wants and I'm engrossed." What do I have? Morning, I get up and pray and the read the Word. The only thing I'm thinking about is Church. My sin, perfection, Church; what should I do with the Church; where should I go for the ministry? What is engrossing me is the work of God. I'm engrossed in the work of God. It's like I'm doing my mathematics every day. 100 problems a day. That's what I told Abigail, "100 problems a day every day now." "Daddy, please, no, Daddy." "100 problems a day. Nonsense!" That's what my dad told me, "100 problems a day." So, I'm also telling my child. Come on. 100 problems a day! See that? I tell Abigail, "You should be prepared for anything. If I give you the question in whatever format, you should be able to decode it. You are prepared. You are not taken by surprise."

44 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. 45 "Who then is a faithful and wise servant..."

This is wise, wisdom.

...whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? 46 Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing.

That's what I said – he is engrossed so much in the work of God. He is like this Pastor. He is preparing and preparing. He is devouring the Word. He is studying the Word. He is meditating upon the Word and he says, "Lord, I want to give the best to my congregation. They should be fed well." Studying and studying. Studying and giving the studying. That is all that he is engrossed in. There is no other avocation. He is not distracted by any other thing. And God says, "Blessed is that servant." That's exactly what Paul says, right? "Bring back my parchments." He tells Timothy, "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." And he tells Timothy, "Bring those parchments." "What are you going to do, Paul?" "I'm going to study till I die. I want to die studying. That means – when I enter into His presence, I should be entering into His presence, meditating upon His Word." Kya bhaat hain! Whether absent in the body or present in the body, I want to be busy with the work of God in my life. Understood, everybody?

So, are we faithful and wise?

...whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?

Honestly, we are not boasting, okay? We study the Word. That's the only thing that we do. Sometimes, I get really frustrated, "Lord, I'm being paid to study Your Word. I was getting paid for something else." I find it very ironic, sometimes. But God says, "You do not know which season I'm going to use you." For example, Pastor called me at 7 in the morning and he said, "Vijay, you are preaching." I was preparing for evening. I said, "Okay. I have time. I've got my thoughts ready and I'm going to prepare my Sermon, make a PPT and all that." That's what I was being prepared for. I was mentally preparing myself for that and suddenly, he said, "No, you are doing it." What should I say? If I'm not faithful to my earthly master, so to speak... that's what he says, right? "If you cannot love the brother whom you see, how can you say that you love God whom you do not see?" If you cannot be faithful to the master who has appointed you, whom you can see... that should be our aim. You know what is our salary? Doing the work of God is our salary.

⁴⁶ Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. ⁴⁷ Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods.

Kya bhaat hain! You see? That is what God is going to do. "Because you are faithful in what I have called you to be. I have called you to be something. Just be faithful in that."

⁴⁸ But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,'⁴⁹ and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, ⁵⁰ the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of,

Look at this. This is very important, my dear brothers and sisters – be engrossed in the work of God for your life. You know what the work of God is for you.

Turn to *1 Peter 4:8-11* and I will tell you exactly what the work of God is for all of us. It could be different for different people.

1 Peter 4:8-11

⁸ And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."⁹ Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰ As each one has received a gift...

You have received a gift. You will not receive a gift. God has already given you a gift.

...minister it to one another...

Like Sister Apu, we have found a sister who is giving us a spread of our meal these days. Fantastic. That is your gift.

...minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹ If anyone speaks...

What should he do?

...let him speak as the oracles of God...

He is talking to all of us, "If you are speaking, you are the oracle of God." That means – you should speak as if who is speaking? When Vijay speaks, God speaks. That is exactly what happened to Samuel. None of his words fell to the ground. From Dan to Beersheba, everybody knew that he was an appointed man of God. None of his words fell to the ground. Oracle. When Samuel comes to the town, everybody's huddled. Everybody's shivering. "Did you come in peace?" "Yes, I've come in peace." Because when the oracle of God comes, they all are shivering. That is the kind of authority he had. And he is telling, "If those who speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." And this

is the challenge for all of us who are called into the teaching ministry – are we people who have the confidence that when we speak, we are the oracle of God? Or do we go when God has said, “I have not spoken to you”? That’s exactly what the false prophets were. They prophesy and say, “Thus says the LORD,” when the LORD has not spoken to them and they steal their words, one from another. We should have that confidence. As servants of God, as ministers of the Word, boss. And you should pray for your Pastors too. “Lord, let our Pastors be faithful. Let there be no error that is coming from the pulpit.” It’s not a bad prayer to pray. It’s a prayer that we all need because we are all vulnerable. We are not exalting ourselves and calling ourselves better than the others. No, we are all vulnerable and we are vulnerable to the same kinds of passions other people go through. And therefore, we need to be more careful. That is the reason why James will say, “Not many should be teachers because you will be worthy of tougher judgment,” and also, greater blessing.

And then, he says,

...If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies...

ESV will say, “With the strength that God supplies,” so that in all things, who may be glorified?

...that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ...

When you are truly an oracle of God, one thing happens – the glory of God comes.

...to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

So, are we faithful in our calling? That is the third thing we looked at.

Fourth thing. Turn to *2 Peter 3:10-11*. Our technical team is fantastic. They have put a monitor for us. Now, we don’t have to turn our heads. It’s right in front of our eyes. I was telling them. I said, “The more gadgets you give us, the greater the responsibility.” Because everything is there. If the Word is not there, everything falls flat. What’s the whole point in having all these and there is no Word. That’s the problem with so many places. They have lighting and they have huge things but they have no Word. So, I said, “You put all these gadgets around me. I get more tensed because I have to be more efficient in my preaching.” Look at what it says,

2 Peter 3:10-11

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away...

You know what Peter is saying? “Just take a good look around.” All the things that you love, favorite holiday destination – Bali. Favorite destination, favorite place that you want to immigrate to. I don’t want to name the place because so many people are going to different places now. Now, nobody wants to go anywhere. It’s very interesting how one virus has changed things. In fact, everybody wants to come back to India. That was interesting. Immigration has become a very interesting thing. The diaspora is coming back. See, the thing is – take a good look around. One of the favourite destinations for me is Banff National Park, Canada. Alberta. Those days, I told Jacinth, “Two things I’m not going to visit – Niagara, without you. Banff, without you.” So, I stayed in Canada for three and a half years. I could have gone to Niagara but I never went. But I regret it now. If you are watching, sweetheart, take it easy. Niagara. They say about Niagara, that it is one of the most incredible sights in the world. The volume of water that falls. It’s a beautiful thing. It’s only the description which my friends gave me. I said, “I’m going later.” I didn’t tell them. I never came. Take all those, the best places of this world that you want to be; or maybe, the Grand Canyon or whatever. You know what God says? “Look at all these things. Everything is going to disappear. Your dream destinations, your dream job, your dream everything.” And if you have dreams in this world, nothing will happen. The heavens are going to go. All the things. It says, “Heavens will pass away with a noise.” It says in

Isaiah, “He is going to roll up the heavens like a scroll.” Isaiah, he understood Einstein’s theory of relativity – that we live in a space-time continual. Without doing all the research, God gave him the revelation. That is better. What do you want – research or revelation? Thank You, Jesus! I gave up research. Pastor says, “I gave up research.” Revelation. Revelation, God gave. “I’m going to roll up the heavens like a scroll. Space-time continuum. I’m going to roll it up.” Just imagine – everything is going to be folded and thrown it aside. Think about that. So, he is telling us, “Look at all the things that are happening.” These are going to get destroyed.

...with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

Let us ask these questions: what are the works that we are doing? Wood, hay, stubble or gold, silver and precious stones; what is it? He is asking all of us. What are you investing your life into? Gold, silver, precious stone; or wood, hay and stubble? That’s exactly what happened to Lot. He had no clue and there was only one man. It’s amazing, isn’t it? It says, “Can I hide from Abraham what I’m about to do?” So, where do we put our hope in? Some of you might be saying, “Lord, what am I doing in this world, Lord? I have tried everything.” There is no success which is coming in your life. I’m telling you something – thank God, please. Because I know so many successful people who have left God. Success is a stumbling block for them to come to God. Their riches and success have become a defence for the Gospel. That is the reason why it says, “It is so hard for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” It’s amazing. It doesn’t matter what kind of a miracle you give a rich man. That fellow will not come to Heaven. That’s what the rich man says from hell, right? “Please send Lazarus to my brothers so that they will not end up with me in hell.” You know what God says? “They have the law and the prophets.” “No, if somebody raises from the dead and goes, they will believe.” “If they have the law and the prophets and they have not believed, even if somebody raises from the dead, they will not believe.” That is the rich man. The problem is – the rich man is like that. No miracle is going to touch them. They are fortified. They are like a fortress to the Gospel. And you know what? We need to consider ourselves privileged that, somehow, we found mercy in the sight of God.

¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

Means – you have to be a set of people where your conduct should just not be pure; your conduct should be like a people who are set apart. If any man cleanses himself, he will be a vessel set apart for what use? Honorable use and godliness.

2 Peter 2:12

¹² But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand...

So, are we prepared? Do we understand that this world is not our permanent place? Our eyes are not here. Our ears are on God. Turn to *Colossians 3:1-4*,

Colossians 3:1-4

¹ Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

He is seated at the third Heaven. The first heaven and the second heaven will be rolled up like a scroll and thrown. That’s exactly what Pastor was talking about yesterday – at the right hand of God.

² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Heart and mind. It's just not your mind but your heart is Lamborghini. No. Both your heart and your mind. For where your treasure is, there your heart is. That is what he is saying. So, are we prepared? Are we awake? Do we know that that day is going to come as a thief in the night? Therefore, are we prepared? I have showed you four parameters, at least. There are so many other things.

Let's go back to *1 Thessalonians 5:3*,

1 Thessalonians 5:3-7

³ While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ⁴ But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. ⁵ You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. ⁶ So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober.

Self-control. You know what? The hallmark of an individual who is prepared – he is self-controlled. There is something in his life. He knows when to say 'no' to things. It could be good things too.

⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night.

We are not of the night; we are of the light. So, how do we know that we are not of the night but of the light? *John 3:18*,

John 3:18-36

¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. ¹⁹ This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved...

You know what the word of 'love' over here is? Agape-ed. They had unconditional love for, what?

...darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

The question to all of us is: do we love our sin or do we hate our sin? If you are a person who loves what you are doing – sin, there is no hope for you. That is the reason why, for 38 years, that fellow was in the Pool of Siloam and God has to come and ask him, "Do you want to be made whole or do you like it?" Do you like your bitterness, your anger and your jealousy and you love it? Or do you hate your sin?

but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the light...

That is the reason why they hated Jesus. Pastor was telling yesterday; he said, "Daniel did not have to do one thing. He just emanated light and people hated him." You don't have to do one thing; people will hate you and you will wonder, "Why are they hating me? Why are these people hating me? What did I do to them? Why this bitterness and anger? Look at your life. You are so successful in your life. Everything is going well with you but you hate me. What is the reason? What did I do to you?" You just have to stand there. You don't have to do one thing. You just have to emanate light. That is how you know who are of the night and who are of the light. Those who are of the light, you know what they would do? They would say, "Thank you, brother." Confess your faults one to another so that you may be healed.

Ephesians 5:7-14

⁷ Therefore do not be partners with them. ⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)

This is what we call as 'faith'. You have more light.

¹⁰ finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.

That is the reason why he asks, "Are you ashamed? Do you have to be ashamed of what you are doing in your life or can you bring them to light?"

¹³ But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. ¹⁴ Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."

Do you have light? Do you have light about God? It says in Isaiah, "They do these things because they have no light in them." They have no light. That is what I told you, right? What is 'Levi' called? He is called a priest, right? And what is a priest supposed to have? He's supposed to have two things. He has to have the Urim and he has to have the Thummim. You know what 'Urim' means? Lights. And Thummim means perfections. Urim means – He has light about who God is and he is growing in that. Thummim means – to the light that he has got, he also has obedience, perfection. That is what we call as 'blamelessness'. Today, you may not have light in certain areas in your life. God is not saying, "You should be perfect in those things which you do not know but are you clean in the things which you already know?" That is light. We are of light. Do we have light? Are we priests? Do we have light about God? Are we ignorant? What does 'light' mean? You are not ignorant. I'll tell you why this is important, my dear brothers and sisters. Why is this important? Turn to *Hebrews 6:4*,

Hebrews 6:4-8

⁴ For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift...

You had light once. You were ignorant. God showed you exactly who He was and what you were in His sight and He did not condemn you. God did not send His Son to condemn but that, through Him, that you should be saved. Don't think that the ministry of the pulpit is the ministry of condemnation. No, the ministry of the pulpit is the ministry of conviction so that you can set your hearts straight with God because He is coming one day.

⁴ For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. ⁷ For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God;

Don't ever think – once saved, always saved. Yes, if you continue. That's what Paul tells in the *Book of Romans*. They were cut off because of their unbelief and you were grafted in because you believed. Take heed and continue. Otherwise, you will also be cut off. We are not saying – once saved, always saved. I'm just reading these two parts of Scripture and I'm not even interpreting it. I'm reading it as it is. If I don't continue, therefore, are we cut off?

⁷ For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; ⁸ but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.

You are there.

⁹ But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.

That's the shepherd's heart of this author. He is speaking like this but he is saying, "I hope it's not true in your case." And we are confident. Did the Hebrews really take heed? I don't know. Sometimes, when you read the *Book of Hebrews*, why do people not want to read *Book of Hebrews*? Because of all these dangerous things. We conveniently ignore them. My dear brothers, we are light. We are enlightened people and once we are enlightened, we press on towards perfection. And when we are pressing on, He says, "If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best of the land." It is God in you who works in you to will and to obey and to do His good pleasure and therefore, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. "You work out and I will work out. We are a partnership but the moment you are cooperative, my goodness, I'm more than cooperative." If I have a good student, I will be so excited. If one student is not interested, "This fellow is not interested. How should I get rid of him?" But if it is a good student, "I want to teach him. This fellow is responding. I want to teach him more." You see that?

So, let's go back to *1 Thessalonians 1:7*,

1 Thessalonians 5:7-11

⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. ⁸ But let us who are of the day be sober...

What should you do? Protect yourself.

...putting on the breastplate of faith and love...

Both these things are important. If you are in Christ Jesus, circumcision does not matter; uncircumcision does not matter. What matters? Faith expressing itself through love. All that matters. That is your protection. Not your reputation, whether you are circumcised or uncircumcised; you are a Baptist or a Pentecostal; whether you have faith expressing yourself through love. That is your expression. And what do you have?

...and as a helmet the hope of salvation.

You see faith, hope and love coming together? Why? He gives us the reason.

⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

In order to achieve it, verse 11 says something to us. He asks us to do two things. What are those two things?

¹¹ Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

Two things, they need to continuously do. You know what we are doing? We are comforting. You know what 'comfort' means? It does not mean, "Oh, my dear brother. It's okay." That is not comfort. You know what comfort means? Come alongside and fortify. I'll tell you what 'comfort' means. Peter is here, labouring in God's vineyard all by himself. And he says, "Lord, give me somebody to share my burden." And then, suddenly, in his ministry, God will raise up somebody who grasps his vision and he comes alongside Peter and says, "Peter, I'm with you. I'm going to work alongside with you." You know why? Because we are co labourers in Christ. Isn't it amazing, that God says, "You come alongside with Me and you work with Me; you comfort Me. You come alongside with Me and you fortify Me." That's exactly what they did in Nehemiah's time – each one, one part of the wall; one person after the other, fortifying one another and building the temple of God and the walls of Jerusalem. This is the time when people come together as a Church, grasp the vision of God as a Church for every Church, whatever vision that God has given us. For us, He has given us this vision – our 20-20 vision. *2 Chronicles 20:20*,

2 Chronicles 20:20

²⁰ So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper."

You know, the word in Telugu is very interesting. The word for prosper is – you will pass the exam. That's the word. I'll read the verse in Telugu for those people who understand Telugu and I will translate it also. When you start falling in love with your own language, it's beautiful.

అంతట వారు ఉదయముననే లేచి తెకోవ అరణ్యమునకు పోయిరి; వారు పోవుచుండగా యెహోషాఫాతు నిలువబడియూదావారలారా, యెరూషలేము కాపురస్థులారా, నా మాట వినుడి; మీ దేవుడైన యెహో వాను నమ్ముకొనుడి, అప్పుడు మీరు స్థిరపరచబడుదురు; ఆయన ప్రవక్తలను నమ్ముకొనుడి, అప్పుడు మీరు కృతార్థులగుదురనిచెప్పెను

"This will not pass muster a judgment." You know that phrase, right? What is 'passing muster a judgment'? It will not cut it. It's got a cut-off mark, right? What is the cut-off mark to get into IIT? 95. It's not there. You want to get the cut-off marks? Believe in the Lord, believe in the prophets. You know what the prophets come and do? They fortify you and they edify you. You know, unfortunately, there are so many people in the Kingdom of God. There are only few labourers and a lot of eaters and consumers. Who are those people who will fortify, my dear brothers and sisters; who will come alongside you and work in the ministry of God?

First thing – comfort.

Second – edify.

Build each other up. Speak words. That's the reason why – seek the gift of prophecy. You know why? Because prophecy edifies. Seek love because love edifies. Knowledge puffs up; love edifies. So, if you love, you know what you will do? This is what you will do.

1 Corinthians 10:22-23

²² Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He? ²³ All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.

Netflix could be lawful for you but at this moment, it is not beneficial.

²³ All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. ²⁴ Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.

Things which will edify; things which will fortify them; things which will edify them. Two things we are asked to do – comfort and edify.

So, how many of you are prepared for the Lord's coming? How many of you are sober? The time that we have spent is sufficient.

1 Peter 4:1-4

¹ Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, ² that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. ³ For we have spent enough of our past lifetime...

Till the quarantine has started in India, with all kinds of senseless, useless activity.

...in doing the will of the Gentiles—when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.⁴ In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.

1 Peter 4:7

⁷ But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

ESV will say, “Because of your prayers.” Both. Be serious, be sober, be watchful. This is the exhortation that I want to give you this morning, my dear brothers and sisters. Are we ready? Can Paul be confident that you know perfectly well that that day is going to come as a thief? Do you know? If you know that His Day is going to come as a thief in the night? Are we prepared? God is giving us opportunities during these hours and these times when the times and really not conducive for us. Now, He has given us this time as a Church in His mercy to be able to listen to His Word. Therefore, let us prepare ourselves. Let’s pray.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we just commit ourselves once again into Your hands. I pray, Lord Jesus, that You would continue to burn Your Word in our hearts. Burn. Continue to burn Your Word into the deep most parts of our inner man, that it will become a part of us, Lord; that, Lord, You said in Your Word that we, in the New Covenant, would write Your law in the tables of our heart. We are ministers, not of the letter but of the Spirit. But, Lord, I pray, Lord Jesus, that You would write Your law by Your Spirit on the tables of our heart and upon our mind and cause us to walk in Your ways. To that end, I pray, Lord Jesus, even as we meditate upon Your Word by faith, You would fill us with the power of Your Holy Spirit that we will not just be hearers and doers; and You would empower us in the days to come to walk with You – blameless and upright, without spot, without wrinkle. We thank You. We praise You. For in Jesus’ Name we pray, Amen.