



NOTICE

All the views expressed in this book are those of the author. If there seems to be any inference to any individual, or to any group of people, it is incidental and not intentional.

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FOREWORD

This book points us to the path that Our Lord Jesus Christ has set before us; the path that all true believers must follow, the road of life and the foundation to building a lasting and indestructible life, the path to ultimate victory.

This book does not give us much choice.

Blessed are those who “Return to the Narrow Path” – the way to everlasting salvation.

Pastor Duke Ajieh
Norway

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

2 Cor. 1:3-4

RETURN TO THE NARROW PATH

THE FOUNDATIONS OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Matt. 7: 13-14

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the **measure** of the **stature** of the **fullness** of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine ...

Eph. 4: 13-14

The greatest need in the body of Christ today is **growth, balance, and maturity** amongst the people of God.

Bob Gordon

Bosun Emmanuel

11th March, 2005

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PROLOGUE

THE CORNERSTONE

1. “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Jn. 8: 32. There can be no deliverance without the truth. Lies produce satanic stronghold and bondage. Therefore, it is only those who are free that can set others free; a prisoner cannot set another prisoner at liberty, neither can a prisoner stand in bail for a condemned man. Only those who know the truth, and stand for the truth, (even when it hurts them), are genuinely free in the church. 2 Peter 2:19 talks of certain Christian workers who, “While they promise them (people) liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.” How can someone in bondage bring liberty to another person? Some “Christian workers” are in bondage to greed, covetousness, pride, lust, unforgiveness, worldliness, and so on. Should they not first face the truth about their spiritual and moral conditions before embarking on the onerous task of bringing salvation to others? Only the truth sets free.
2. What is spiritual stronghold? It can be defined, according to Watchman Nee, as every lie of the devil that man believes. Since the devil is the father of lies, it implies that every lie produces spiritual stronghold because, behind every lie is the spirit of the deceiver. Every Christian that is desirous of ending the Christian race in heaven must consciously separate himself from “whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie: ...” Rev. 21:27. Does not the Word of God warn, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers ...” 2 Cor. 6: 14? “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” Eph. 5: 11. One has heard of people who fellowship in spiritually questionable assemblies and they insist that they are genuinely saved. How can that be? If the fellow is genuinely saved by Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God will take him out of satanic assembly. What saith the Word of God? 2 Cor. 6:17 “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,” The keyword after salvation is separation. That is, sanctification, the second work of grace.
3. If Christians do not speak, and teach, the whole truth, they simply end up transferring prisoners from one prison to another. It only implies that spiritual prisoners are transferred from a prison yard called night-club, (for example) and put in another prison yard called “church”. 2 Cor. 11:13 “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.”

4. There is a phenomenon that is spreading like wildfire in the church. It is called “the social gospel”. Pastor Nuhu Kure refers to it as the “harlot church”. This “gospel” stresses earthly wealth and material acquisition as indices of divine favour. Could this message of materialism be traced to its root? Dr. Cathy Burns in her book, *Billy Graham and his Friends*, (page 145) stated that Professor Ward of the Union Theological Seminary, U.S., “*visited Stalin in Moscow in 1920, and they worked together to form the basis of the Social Gospel, now openly proclaimed by the NCC (National Council of Churches). This gospel was to increase emphasis on the materialistic side and decrease emphases on theology so that in due time Marxism and the Social Gospel may become one and the same.*” (Stalin was the Communist atheist leader who allegedly murdered about 20 million people during his reign of terror over the Soviet Union.) Could this be one of the reasons why the message of the cross and self-denial is increasingly de-emphasized in the church, while earthly prosperity, abundance, and self-fulfilment have taken the centre stage?
5. What is the truth? Truth is the Word of God. John 17: 17 – “*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*” There must be a balanced obedience to the entire revealed word of God. A selective application or selective emphasis of the word of God must be avoided. The central theme of the New Testament is the cross and carrying the cross daily is the precondition to following Christ, while the path to life is the narrow path – the path of self-denial, sacrifice and enduring persecution for the sake of godliness. (Matt. 10: 38; 16: 24; Mark 10: 21; Luke 9: 23; 14: 27; Matt. 7: 13-14. The message of the cross must be emphasized in the church to nullify the drowsy influence of the spirit of covetousness which masquerades as the prosperity message. Luke 12: 15 – “*And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*”
6. Who is the Truth? Truth is a Person. Truth is Jesus Christ. Truth is more than saying what is correct, or factual, it is the manifestation of a Person. Wherever truth reigns, the Spirit of truth is present there. “*...the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: ...*” *John 14:17* The Lord says, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh to the Father but by me”. John 14: 6
7. Lie on the other hand, is more than falsehood, or an attempt to deceive. Lie is the manifestation of another entity. His name is Satan. Wherever lies circulate, Satan is exercising influence there. No matter the religious activities taking place in such a place, Satan is in control. The Lord told the Jews, “Ye are of your father the devil, ... When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it.” Jn.8:44. It is bad enough that a Christian should be deceived. However, it is a cause of great sadness when Christians condone lies and falsehood, for whatever reason that they find convenient. In condoning lies, such people

seldom realize that they are making themselves the children of the devil, and bringing bondage into their assembly. Eph. 5: 8-14

8. Because of the danger of taking a decision that one may regret later, believers should prayerfully endeavour to ascertain the truth before taking important decisions. If a man takes a decision based on lies and falsehood, whether he is deceived or not, that decision is definitely the wrong decision. The right decision can only be taken when one is armed with the truth. In Joshua 9, Joshua and the elders of Israel were deceived by the Gibeonites. The intention of the leaders of Israel was good, but their decision was bad. The whole nation paid for their error many years later, during the reign of David. Nothing good can proceed from lies.
9. Since we all have to stand before God and render account, believers have to handle the truth with care. Christians cannot stand before God and claim that they have been deceived. The Truth never hides. The Truth dwells in the light, open for all men to see. It is falsehood that hides and covers itself with darkness. It is easier to find the truth than to believe lies. Unfortunately, “men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ... But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, ...” John 3: 19-21. Whosoever is interested in the truth shall easily find it. Adam was not deceived; Joshua and the elders of Israel could easily have detected the truth. (Jos. 9: 14) The Spirit of Truth indwells every believer, constantly bearing witness to that which is of the Truth.
10. As the battle rages between the forces of God and the forces of darkness, Christians must be constantly aware that the struggle in Christianity is for WHAT is of the Truth, and WHAT is of the Liar. It is a struggle of recognizing, WHO is of the Truth, and WHO is of the Liar. In doctrines, in relationships, in programs, in worship, Christians must always ascertain, who and what is of the Truth; and they must take a stand for the truth. (Eph. 5: 11) Only those on the side of the Truth shall prevail; because the Truth has already prevailed over 2000 years ago, and there can never be a reversal of His victory.
11. Those who stand for the truth are unpopular amongst men, but they are favoured in heaven. Luke 6: 22-23; Heb. 1:9. On the other hand, those who condone lies are popular amongst men, but unpopular in heaven. Luke 6: 26. Men hate whoever speaks the truth.
12. Whenever men reject the truth, they have no other alternative but to accept lies. There is no neutral ground. Since there is a terrible consequence for taking side with lies, people who become entangled with falsehood should humble themselves, repent, and confess the truth.
13. Taking a stand for the truth involves suffering. Whosoever chooses to follow the Lord in taking a stand for the truth must be prepared to suffer and endure abuse. But, then, what other options exist for a child of God? 2 Tim. 3: 12 *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”*

14. No liar shall make heaven. Rev. 21: 8, 27. Those who do not take a stand **for** the Truth have taken a stand **with** the adversary.
15. Only **matured** Christians can take a stand for the TRUTH. Only matured believers can endure negative public opinion, resist satanic intimidation and take side with what is true and just. The church in this generation is harbouring many Christians who are not committed to the truth. Churches are full, millions in various currencies are spent in the name of the gospel, yet the 10/40 Window remains tightly shut and **2.51 billion** souls have no access to the gospel. While God expects divestment from the world, because the world is passing away, some Christians are massively investing in the world. In the construction of mansions, unbridled acquisition of exotic vehicles, the amassing of fashionable apparels, some Christians indicate that they are not expecting Jesus Christ to return. The Master said, “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”. Only matured Christians can expand the kingdom of God.
16. It does not matter for how long an individual has been in the Lord, the moment he or she shifts from the “narrow path” and strays to the “wide road”, characterized by the “lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”, that individual begins to lose sensitivity to the Spirit of truth. The degree to which an individual shifts from the narrow path is the same degree to which he or she would lose sensitivity to the Spirit of truth. Whatever is of the world CANNOT receive the Spirit of truth. The Lord says in John 14: 17 “... Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: ...” Because the world has a subtle way of sucking the believer back into its system, every child of God must constantly be on guard against worldliness.
17. Everything that God initiates on the earth has a pattern which was first established in the heavenlies. Moses was instructed by God in Exodus 25: 40 – *And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.* 1 Chro. 28: 19 *All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern.* Whenever men deviate from the heavenly pattern, for whatever reason that man finds convenient, confusion and disorder breaks out on the earth. The only remedy is the truth.
18. Why do men reject the truth?
 Thomas Aquinas suggested three reasons:
 One, when it reveals personal flaws, that is, sin.
 Two, when it is a barrier to personal achievement or acquisition.
 Three, when it conflicts with what man wishes was true.¹
 As Aquinas further noted, the common reaction is for men to hate the truth yet, the truth is good and preferable to lies. Why would anyone hate

¹Think Like Jesus – George Barna page 159

what is good?

The truth sets free. Why would anyone hate what would give him freedom and liberty?

The answer could be found in one or more of the three points above.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. John 3: 19

19. Should the truth be **absolute** or **relative**? To a born-again child of God, should moral truth be handled as purely white or black, or should it contain a grey area, like the politically defined “truth” of the world? According to a Barna Research on this issue, only 14% of born-again adults believe that moral truth is absolute.²

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: In our generation, majority of those who follow Jesus Christ, the Truth, neither speak, nor stand by the truth.

Who, then, shall ascend the hill of the Lord?

Could we say, “only 14% of born again adults”?

Frightening.

It is time to Return to the Narrow Path.

Pastor Bosun Emmanuel

March 11, 2005

² Think Like Jesus – George Barna page 21

LET US REASON TOGETHER

In the parable of the wheat and the tares, the Lord made it clear that both the fake and the genuine believers will co-exist in the church. The similarities between both will be so great that it is only angels that can be trusted by God to separate them at the end of this age. This infiltration of the tares is evident in the various “doctrines” that permeate the church. Some doctrines are plainly unscriptural, while some require a sober and diligent dividing of the word of God to ascertain the truth.

A phenomenon described as the “social gospel” is fast gaining widespread acceptance in the church. This gospel, patterned after the Laodicean spirit, (which was severely rebuked by the Lord in Revelation 3: 14-22), in many ways conflict with the gospel of the cross, which stresses self denial, godly contentment, servant hood, readiness to suffer, and if need be, to die for the Lord. The Laodicean church was smug, conceited, self-indulgent and wealth conscious. It was proud on three points while Christ rebuked them on seven points. The focus of this backslidden church was earthly wealth and prosperity.

So, which gospel treads the narrow path, which Christ says leads to life; and which one follows the broad road, which ends in destruction? Is it the social gospel or the gospel of the cross?

Going further in this book, the reader will come to a section in which the author opined that the Old Testament saint was given power to get wealth, (Deut. 8: 18) while the New Testament saint was given power to witness. (Acts 1: 8) Bible scholars agree that there are noticeable differences between the Old Testament saints and the New Testament saints. There are differences in their origin, in their mandate, mode of worship, code of conduct as well as in their reward. (That the power to get wealth is in the Old Testament does not automatically imply that the New Testament saint should claim it. There are many other things in the Old Testament which the New Testament saint does not touch.) The power to get wealth is consistent with the various promises God made to the Old Testament saint to give him a land flowing with milk and honey. The power to witness is also consistent with the mandate of the great commission handed over to the church by Jesus Christ. A church that is given the mandate to reach the entire world with the gospel cannot at the same time be expected to sit down to tend vineyards and olive groves.

What creates the conflict is that the New Testament saint of this generation does not want to witness; he wishes to be a millionaire, like every influential person

in the world. He forgets that he is in the world, but he is not of the world. John 17: 14, 16. If anyone doubts this assertion, let him call a church to go for evangelism, and observe how many members of the church will turn up. The following week, let the same church announce the visit of a man God who has anointing for financial breakthrough. The attendance will prove the point which we are making.

The Lord made two statements that define His purpose and the purpose of every one who follows Him. He stated in Luke 19:10 “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” To those who follow Him, in John 20: 21, He says, “... as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” The church is meant to continue where He stopped, and finish the harvesting of souls into the kingdom of God. Knowing fully well the dangers and the opposition involved in delivering souls from the kingdom of darkness, He promised the church that the Holy Ghost would come after His departure to empower His followers to finish the work.

What one finds interesting about Acts. 1: 8 is the underlying expectation of the Lord. He says, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

The word translated witness is the Greek word “martus” by analogy a “martyr”. In essence, the Lord says, Acts 1:8 “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be “martyrs” unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” A martyr, of course, is someone who is willing to suffer, and if need be, die for what he believes.

To confirm that the Lord expects his followers to live and to die for Him, when necessary, eleven out of the twelve disciples that He personally appointed while He was in the world were killed for His sake; only John died a natural death, after he miraculously survived the pot of boiling oil in which he was thrown into. If the Lord expects Christians to be martyrs for the gospel, then where is the message of earthly affluence and so on, coming from? John Ortberg commented, “The decision to grow always involves a choice between risk and comfort. This means that to be a follower of Jesus, you must renounce comfort as the ultimate value of your life.”

Peter was crucified upside down, Paul was beheaded, Andrew was crucified in an 'X' form, Thomas was thrust through with a spear, James was beheaded, and Luke was hanged on an olive tree; and so on. If the first fruits of the baptism in the Holy Ghost complied with the words of Christ and laid down their lives for

the gospel, why are Christians in this generation preoccupied with wealth, earthly comfort and worldly recognition?

That the Lord expects His followers to lay down their lives for Him is consistent with most of His statements in the scriptures, as well as in the epistles of the apostles. For example:

Luke 9:23-25 And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

2 Tim. 2:11-13 It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: 12If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: 13If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

Matthew 10:38-39 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. [39] He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

John 15:20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

John 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Acts 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

One may even venture a phrasing of Acts 1: 8 thus: “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall die for me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Someone may query thus: “But John 10: 10 says, I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”? That is very true. However, did Peter, James, John, Paul, and all the other martyrs in all the ages possess this abundant life that the Lord promised? If they did, then the Lord could not have been referring to a physical life of comfort and earthly

indulgence. Therefore, we should balance John 10: 10 with 1 John 2: 25 “And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.” This eternal life is the life that the Lord promised; and, the covetous, the greedy, the money conscious and the wealth hoarders shall not partake of it.

In Matt. 5: 48, the Lord commanded us to be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect. When the rich ruler came to the Lord, the Lord gave him the key to perfection. In Matthew 19:21 Jesus said unto him, “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.” It is unbelievable that what God told a man to dispose off, before he could qualify to follow Jesus, is what Christians today are praying, fasting, and decreeing that heaven should give them! The reason could be because people want to shine and be relevant in the world. The simplicity and godly contentment which Christ exhibited and which the early disciples imbibed is apparently not appealing to this generation of Christians. The glory, the pomp and the pageantry of this age has proven irresistible to many Christians.

James 4: 4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Rather than labour and travail to be counted worthy to carry the cross of the Lord, and like the disciples of old, rejoice at having being counted worthy to suffer for His sake, (Acts 5: 41) believers today are expressing unhidden love and affection for the things of the world. Yet, God warned in His word:

1 John 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

When the ambition of a Christian is to have everything he sees in the world, and become influential like the rulers of the world, does he hate the things of the world, or does he love them? When a Christian concentrates his finances on worldly indulgence, where are his treasures? Are they in heaven or on the earth?

What gave Zacchaeus commendation before the Lord? Luke 19:8 “And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.”

By the time Zacchaeus gave out half his possessions to the poor, and restored fourfold to all the people he had defrauded, how much do we expect would be left? Could we compare the repentant attitude of Zacchaeus with the covetousness of the rich ruler and the rich fool (Luke 12: 16-21)? To Zacchaeus,

the Lord congratulated him that salvation had entered his house, and to the rich ruler, the Lord said it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Why would the Lord make giving to meet the need of others the yardstick for perfection? Matthew 5: 45 “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. God is merciful, and He expects His children to be like Him.

When I consider Ephes. 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy ... it seems that God's special treasure is mercy. It is like God measures His riches by His mercies. That may be why the key to perfection, as indicated by the Lord, is for one to share his wealth with the poor, and show mercy to those who lack. It may be the reason why the rich man in Luke 16: 19 was thrown into hell while Lazarus was placed in Abrahams bosom. It may also be the reason why the early Christians were distinguished by their various acts of mercy and sharing. When Ananias and Sapphira tried to pollute it, God judged them immediately.

Therefore, if God materially increases an individual, with His clean and blameless blessing (Mark 10: 29-30), let that individual remember to be merciful. The worldly attitude of “every man for himself” must not be practiced by Christians. Some Christian congregations spend millions of money on building projects without paying adequate attention to street children, the poor and the destitute in their communities, the prostitutes, and so on. In years gone by, churches provided free missionary schools. Today, when churches start schools, in some places, the fees they charge rank amongst the highest in the society.

1 Tim. 6:17-19 “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

Luke 6:36 “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.”

THE MESSAGE IS THE CROSS

If the Lord made His early disciples martyrs for the gospel, has He changed His word and His purpose for the church in this generation? How come that the church in this age is preoccupied with, and consumed with lust for wealth? Could it be that the church has fallen into the trap of covetousness, of which the

Lord expressly warned the church in Luke 12: 15? “And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”

If the Lord rebuked the church in Laodicea severely for exhibiting covetousness and conceit, what gives the present day apostles of prosperity the impression that the Lord approves their message? Would the Lord send the Holy Ghost to empower His followers to lay down their lives for Him, and at the same time send preachers who would inundate them with promises of millions, earthly comfort, and earthly affluence?

Let us reason together; “Is the prosperity message consistent with the message of the cross and self denial which the Lord commanded?” The cliché, “money is the vehicle of the gospel”, where is it written in the Bible? If money was the vehicle of the gospel, then what is the role of the Holy Ghost in the church?

One lesson which we learnt in Europe is that when you make a Christian comfortable and wealthy, you face the risk of putting him into spiritual slumber. At the best, he would become religious. Irrespective of whether it is an individual, a church, or a nation, earthly wealth produces spiritual apathy in Christians. Rarely does one see a rich man who is genuinely carrying the cross of Jesus Christ. The Lord is correct when He said that a servant cannot serve two masters; you cannot carry the cross and carry money!

Do you want to see virile and practical Christianity? Then, persecute the Christian, put him under stress and hardship; he would pray, he would worship in spirit and in truth, he would be holy, he would serve the Lord fervently.

Again, let us reason together. Would the Lord send messengers to put His church to sleep?

In 2 Pet. 2: 1-3, the Word of God warns us about the operation of “false teachers” in the last days. Their characteristics are twofold:

1. Covetousness
2. Making merchandise of the church

2 Peter 2:1-3 “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.[2]And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.[3]And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.”

We live in a world in which billions of souls have not heard the gospel, unnumbered multitude are living in hardship and lack, street children are multiplying, crime rate is on the increase, yet Christians are focused on personal comfort and convenience. Could it be that the salt of the earth is no longer seasoning the earth; and the light of the world is no longer shining for a world that desperately needs light?

One is not saying that Christians should no longer work or run their businesses, however there should be a godly demarcation between godly contentment, (1 Tim. 6: 6); and worldly covetousness. (Heb. 13: 5; Luke 12: 15.) Right now, the scale is tilting too heavily on the side of covetousness and greed. If every Christian should determine to stand by the absolute truth, even to the point of death, the society shall greatly improve. If every Christian refuse to compromise with what is wrong, if every Christian business man or woman refuse to give bribe or gratification, even at the risk of losing a lucrative business or contract, corruption shall die a natural death in the society. The multitudes thronging places of worship are more than enough to change the world. Unfortunately, as discovered in the research conducted by George Barna, only 14% of born again adults believe in absolute truth. That implies, that 86% of born again adults believe in relative truth; truth that is defined by the circumstances.

One would like to recommend Foxe's Book of Martyrs for every Christian to read, particularly, the ministers of the gospel. The book chronicles the history of the persecution of the church from the crucifixion of the Lord till the 18th century. Believers before us laid down their lives in all the ages to preserve and defend their faith. To them, carrying the cross was not optional, it was mandatory. Because of their sacrifices, the faith was preserved till it reached us.

What is the church doing with Christianity, today?

2 Cor. 5:15 "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

CHAPTER ONE

HOUSE ON THE ROCK

“And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard, while it was in building.” 1 Kings 6: 7

This is an amazing account of the construction of the Old Testament temple. In the entire seven years that it took to construct the temple, which at the financial value of year 1997 would cost over 985 billion dollars³, there was no noise. For seven years, the entire construction site was quiet! This is a feat unmatched by today’s construction companies, with all the technological breakthroughs of man.

“The LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.” Hab. 2: 20

What was responsible for this feat? All the stones used in the construction were pre-cut, pre-sized and prepared at the quarry, far away from the construction site. As each stone arrived at the

temple site, it knew its position, accepted it without any struggle, and quietly fitted into its place. The construction supervisors and workers did not attempt to change any decision made at the quarry.

There was no nepotism, no favouritism, no racism, and no partiality. The stones were not self seeking, neither were they self willed. The stone cut to be part of the flooring did not suddenly desire to be the capstone. The stone cut for the back of the temple did not covet the position in the front of the temple. Each stone accepted the decision of the stone cutters.

What was the result of this meek submission? A spiritual house was built without any commotion. No wonder the LORD was pleased to come down in glory to inhabit His temple.

Unfortunately, the exact opposite is the case in the construction of the New Testament temple. There is too much noise! Jostling, pushing, shouting, including smiting with tongues of wickedness. Some of the New Testament stones have turned the spiritual construction site into the semblance of a street fight, to the ridicule and embarrassment of heaven.

Who are these unruly stones?

“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house ...” 1 Pet. 2: 5

Ye also...

³ Dakes Annotated Reference Source

Most of the New Testament stones refused to be broken, cut to size and smoothed. Yet, they show up at the construction site desiring to be the capstone. Christ gave His church the example of servant hood; majority of church members and ministers desire to be executives in the church.

The magnitude of disagreement, indiscipline and division in the church today, is scarcely found in any other institution on the face of the earth.

“Have we not all one created us? Why do we deal against his brother, by fathers?” Mal. 2: 10.

Christ gave His church the example of servant hood; majority of church

father? Hath not one God treacherously every man profaning the covenant of our

What is the result of all temple? It resulted in loss of only institution on the face

these commotions in the credibility and respect for the of the earth that God gave

His own Son to redeem. In an Evangelical Synod in January 2003 in Germany, the chief speaker lamented that a recent opinion poll revealed that the church is the least trusted of all the institutions in Germany today.

The body of Christ referred to in 1 Tim. 3: 15 as “the pillar and ground of the truth”, has credibility crisis in our generation.

PURE WATER IN DIRTY VESSELS

Assume that a visitor comes to your house, tired and thirsty, and he requested for a cup of water. In an attempt to give him pure and clean water to drink, you opened a bottle of purified water, boiled it and filtered it again, making it triple-fold purified. Then, you pour the water into a dirty glass and give it to your visitor. Have you given him clean water?

The water is clean, but the vessel is dirty. No matter how clean the water is, the vessel has a lot to do with the final product. Pure water must be contained in pure vessel for it to retain its purity.

In Mass Communication, the phrase, “The Medium is the Message” was adopted. Communication practitioners realised that the response and acceptance that any message receives depends largely on the medium of communication utilized to deliver the message, and not necessarily the source of the message. If an organization utilized a medium of doubtful integrity to publicise its programs and plans, its message will receive a sceptical response. Conversely, if a

... a recent opinion poll revealed that the church is the least trusted of all the institutions ...

reputable medium is used, even if the program is not genuine, chances are people will still believe.

This, then, is the dilemma of the gospel. The Word of God is pure. Everything that is of God is clean and perfect. (Ps. 19: 7-9). However, God has purposed that in this generation, He

will move through man – imperfect, unstable, double tongued and double minded. Realizing these shortcomings in man, the Most High commanded man, “Be ye holy; for I am holy.” 1Pet.1:16

In giving this commandment, God placed as the responsibility of man the task of bringing himself to perfection. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Matt. 5: 48

The crisis of the church stems from the failure of man in striving to attain to this divine ideal.

At what point did the New Testament saint miss the mark of the divine standard? And, more importantly, how can the church be restored into the right path?

A HOUSE WITHOUT FOUNDATION

In Luke 6: 47-49 and Matthew 7: 24-27, Jesus Christ drew attention to two methods one can utilize in building a spiritual house – with or without a foundation. The Lord made reference to two builders, one He identified as a wise man and the other simply as a fool. Going through the scriptures, it can be seen that wisdom is related to the fear and acknowledgement of God (Job. 28: 28), while foolishness indicates a lack of it. (Ps. 14: 1)

From this parable, the following points can be deduced:

1. Every building requires a good foundation. As it is true in the physical, so it is in the spiritual. It is considered madness to commence a building project on the top-soil, without labouring to get to the bed rock; it is equally spiritual folly to commence a spiritual life without labouring to get to the spiritual bed rock.
2. Laying a solid foundation takes time, energy, and expensive materials. For most building projects, the foundation takes the highest amount of money. Such expenses are borne willingly because experience has taught many builders that a poor foundation not only presents the risk of the entire structure collapsing, but also the loss of the lives and the property that are therein. Therefore, to prevent future calamity, great attention is paid to the foundation. The future depends on it.
3. The depth and strength of the foundation determines the structure that can be placed on it. No one will lay foundation for a bungalow and commence a 25 storey skyscraper on top of it. A foundation was laid all right, but it would not be the appropriate one.

When all the above points are applied to the church as a spiritual house, and the individual believers as “living stones” to build a spiritual edifice for God, we identify a very serious lapse in the body of Christ – the lack of good Christian foundation in many believers.

Men of shallow spiritual depth are today occupying sensitive spiritual positions in the church. Those who have never read the Bible through, from Genesis to Revelation, not even once, are appointed church leaders. Men of the flesh, who do not submit to the Spirit of God, are taking spiritual decisions based on the inclinations of the soul rather than the leading of the Holy Ghost. The result, as identified earlier, can only be chaos and confusion.

The common trend in the church today is for people to equate secular success with spiritual maturity. Because a man is a successful businessman, has grown up children, comes to church regularly and is very friendly with the Pastor does not qualify him to hold a spiritual position in the church. There is a wide gap between secular maturity and spiritual maturity.

Whenever a secularly minded individual holds a spiritual office, he tends to apply secular principles to run the spiritual office. Of course, you cannot

<p>No matter how clean the water is, the vessel has a</p>

blame him, since that is all that he knows. When crisis and confusion break out, believers promptly blame the devil.

Because it is so easy to blame the devil for every crisis in the church, the church is no longer engineered to solve problems. Christians seldom analyse situations to find out what is really causing problems in their midst. Most of the problems in the church are not caused directly by the devil, but due to the carnality of those who hold spiritual offices in the church.

Someone may say, “but we have to use what we have available.” This is not a tenable reason for putting carnal and spiritually immature people in sensitive spiritual leadership positions.

Foreseeing that His church would face shortage of manpower, what provision did the Head of the church make to deal with the situation? He said, “...pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest.” Luke 10: 2 The Lord instructed His church to pray to solve the problem of manpower shortage. When the church prays, He would send the right people. It should not be forgotten that the church belongs to God and He has made provision for every genuine need that His church has.

Carnality is rampant in the church, because most believers did not take the pains of laying the right Christian foundations. The challenge facing the church today is that of giving every believer the right spiritual foundation for an effective Christian life.

In this same parable on foundations, the Lord compels a very pertinent question. Why is a good foundation indispensable?

- One, because of storms. The wise man and the foolish man have one thing in common, “... and the floods came, and the winds blew ...” Matt. 7: 25, 27. The wise man did not escape the floods because he was wise, neither did the foolish encounter the flood because he was a

fool. The wise and the foolish, great and small, rich and poor, white and black, male and female – all have one thing in common: storms of life. No amount of praying and fasting can wish it away. “Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” Job. 5:7. “In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: ...” Ecc.7:14.

Storms will come. If anyone has taught that believers in Christ Jesus will not encounter problems and difficulties, the fellow should be branded a deceiver. The Lord never said His followers will not encounter hardships, what He assured them is victory, if they remain steadfast in Him. (John 16: 33)

- Two, storms, when they come, have only one objective – to test the foundation. Until the storms came, both houses of the wise man and the foolish man offered all the facilities and amenities houses could offer. Both houses received visitors and entertained visitors, both had people living in them and both had properties kept in them. As a matter of fact, if there were tenement taxes to be paid, both houses would have paid. Outwardly, both were houses. Then, the examiner came knocking, at a time of refreshing. The rain came first. The fool would have contemplated a bountiful harvest in the field not realizing that the day of examination had come. Storms usually come, when they are least expected. Every Christian must be armed with this awareness: things can go wrong even though they have done nothing wrong. Whenever crisis comes, it is to test the foundation of the individual in Christ Jesus. A real Christian is not known when things are moving smoothly, a true Christian is one who remains faithful to Christ while under the most severe affliction. A true Christian is one who can say like Paul, “But none of these things move me ...” Acts. 20: 24. In James 1: 2-3, the Word of God has this to say concerning floods: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience ...”
- Three, what should be of concern therefore, is not whether storms will come or not. They will come. What matters is the aftermath of the storm. Is the house still standing? Is the believer concerned still faithfully standing in the Lord or he has compromised with sin and the world? Is the believer still faithful to His Redeemer or he has renounced his faith and is backslidden, or in an extreme case become an apostate? After the storm, is the believer still maintaining the purity and sanctity of the Word of Truth or he has yielded ground to “profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith ...” 1Tim.6: 20. What matters is the aftermath of the storm, and not the storm.
- Four, the result of the storm determines future relationship with the Lord. After every examination, if the student passes, promotion

naturally follows. However, if the reverse is the case, what follows is stagnation or in serious cases, demotion.

The church in this generation is harbouring many believers whose poor foundations have been exposed by storms and hardships. Through manifold temptations, persecutions, offences, trials and afflictions, their obvious lack of spiritual depth have been made manifest.

Rather than meekly return to the basics of Christianity, and rebuild the foundation, they passively persist in spiritual stagnation, observing the rhythms and motions of godliness without the power thereof. Spiritually tired and without spiritual fervour, they present no spark to ignite the unbelievers and encourage them to venture into Christianity. Frustrated and without morale, they resort to importing worldliness into the church and a re-defining of Christianity along worldly standards and values, and a deliberate avoiding of the spiritual, which for them, is too demanding.

The result is a curious blend of Christianity and worldliness in which riches replace righteousness, covetousness takes the place of contentment, positions and titles replace servant hood, while personal comfort replaces self denial, which the gospel demands. Carrying the cross is seen as a burden, since the rough wood of the cross is much heavier and uncomfortable than the loose sheaves of a cheque book. Hence, the alluring message of earthly prosperity gradually replaces the demanding and sacrificial gospel of carrying the cross.

**The same
intensity with
which the world
hated Christ is
the same
degree with**

However, the Truth compels believers to remember that the Founder of Christianity made it clear that it is the cross that brings life and walking the narrow path is the way of the cross. Any message of Christianity that excludes the cross has no life. Only the cross gives life. The blood was shed on the cross, the life was given on the cross; sin, death, and Satan were defeated on the cross, and redemption was purchased for man on the cross.

Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, author of the books, "Tortured for Christ", "From Suffering to Triumph" and "Where Christ is Still Tortured", made the following statement to a church in Romania during a visit to his nation, from exile in the United States.

"I come from the West where some preach easy salvation. Just believe that is all. If you believe, you will not only have heaven in eternity but also health and prosperity here. You might escape totally from Communist persecution, but this false western teaching is around the corner to destroy your spiritual life much more than Communism could have done.

To be a Christian means to believe in Him, which is to believe in His sacrifice on Golgotha and His teaching that we too must deny ourselves and follow Him. We are meant to be crucified and buried together with Him, not in a

physical sense (though in southern Sudan Christians have been crucified even in 1990) but in fighting to the uttermost against sin, the world and the devil, and never giving up even if you lose many battles.” “From Suffering to Triumph” Pastor Richard Wurmbbrand, page 47

It is time to return to the narrow path.

Matt. 7: 13-14

This book is written in the hope that those who need a good and solid Christian foundation will find quality spiritual materials to build it and embark on a dynamic personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

In Him is Life.

THE CROSS AND THE CHRISTIAN

It may not be easy to understand the mystery of Christianity without first understanding “sacrifice”. And, one cannot understand sacrifice without understanding the “cross”. In the vocabulary of many Christians today, the word “cross” is seldom mentioned. The same situation is observed in many messages that are preached from pulpits all over the world. Yet, without the cross, there is no Christianity.

What is the cross? It is a mysterious combination of suffering, shame, and death leading to victory. The outstanding significance of the cross is: “shame, suffering, and death”. As appalling and repulsive as these three words are, Christ commands His followers to carry the cross daily! Without the cross, there can be no victorious Christian life.

- “And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” Lk. 9: 23

There is nothing attractive about the cross. For Christ Himself to get there, He had to set His “face like a flint”. Is. 50: 7. In Luke 9: 51 the scriptures record that “he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem”. It takes determination to

<p>The body of Christ referred to in 1 Tim. 3: 15 as “the pillar and ground of</p>

carry the cross of Jesus Christ. It takes determination to be a Christian. This is the message that multitudes in the church in this generation need to be reminded of. Christianity demands the total life of those who believe in Jesus Christ.

The selective 21st century interpretation of the scriptures along the lines of prosperity, healing, deliverance, victory and abundance is not complete. The cross comes first.

Yes, there is victory in Christ. There is joy in Christ, and there is abundance in Christ. However, we must not forget, there is the cross to carry – first and foremost.

Paul in 2 Tim. 3: 10-12 has this to say:

- “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra: what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

Would anyone choose to follow Christ and yet refuse to live a godly life? Nevertheless, once an individual chooses to follow Christ and opts for a life of godliness, scriptures predict “suffering and persecution” for such an individual. The reason is simple; the testimony of the godly convicts the world of sin and unrighteousness.

- “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” Jn. 15: 19

The same intensity with which the world hated Christ is the same degree with which it hates the follower of Christ who is genuinely carrying the cross. Satan does not want to remember the cross and whoever carries it reminds him of his defeat and the victory of Jesus Christ.

Those who believe that they can be Christians and still be popular in the world are self-deceived. The Master actually pronounced “woe” upon those who are popular amongst men, Luke 6: 26, and “blessing” upon those who are hated in the world for His sake. Luke 6: 22.

Foreseeing that to be a Christian is not going to be an easy way of life, the Lord advised His would be followers to prepare well before identifying with Him. Some believers dub this advice C-T-C: Count the Cost.

- Luke 14: 28-30 – “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him. Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.”

It is apparent, seeing the Laodicean attitude prevalent in the church in this generation that many “Believers” did not take this counsel of the Lord seriously. Certainly, if many believers had “counted the cost”, many people would practise Christianity differently than they currently do.

If most believers are aware of the rigorous demands of Christianity, more emphasis would have been placed on laying a solid foundation. Unfortunately, it is the end of the journey that is often stressed in most Christian meetings and not the route and experiences on the way. The outflow of such teachings is that most people are not prepared for the journey to Golgotha with all its various pains, battles, and scars.

Since believers are “living stones”, used to build a “spiritual house” for God, laying a solid Christian foundation is indispensable. The alternative to this is to

build a house without foundation, like the foolish builder referred to by the Lord in Luke 6.

The day that the storm shall blow, the house shall collapse.

WHO IS YOUR OWNER?

Prophet Jeremiah cried to God, (Jer. 10: 23-24) “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in Himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.”

1 Cor. 6: 20 – “For ye are bought with a price ...”

1 Cor. 7: 23 - “Ye are bought with a price ...”

It is well known that after men have undergone a rigorous and arduous period of training to join the army, on the day of their commissioning as soldiers and officers, the men by their oath affirm publicly that they will lay down their lives to defend the territorial integrity of their nation.

With this affirmation, the soldier surrenders his right to live; he surrenders his right to live, as well as any plan for own master. Even if the send him to the wrong place, of his country and it is the determines to which use he A number of important

<p>Every building requires a good foundation. As it is true</p>

soldier surrenders his right to determine where he chooses to his future. He is no longer his politicians miscalculate and he will go. He is the property owner of a property who will apply his possession.

actions took place on that cross at Golgotha on the day Christ was crucified. Man in his characteristic nature “selectively perceived” and “selectively emphasized” the acts of Christ on the cross which favours him and demanded less from him. The act of Christ on the cross which favoured God and demands more from man is rarely emphasized.

A quick review of some of the acts of Christ on the cross is pertinent at this point:

1. Satan and his forces of darkness were defeated. Col. 2: 14-15
2. The sin of man atoned. 1 Pet. 2: 24
3. The sinful nature of man was destroyed and man set free from the sinful Adamic nature. Rom. 6: 6
4. Man becomes the property of a new owner. 1Cor.6: 19.20 – “What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price ...” Acts. 20: 28 “... the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

You were purchased for God through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. You are not your own. You are the property of God. Therefore, God has every right to put His property, (you), to any use that pleases Him.

For example, Stephen was stoned to death, (Acts. 7) while Philip became a mighty evangelist (Acts. 8) with signs and wonders following his ministry. Philip even converted the Finance Minister of a nation and was translated (divine transportation) like Elijah. Philip married, had four daughters who prophesied. He lived long to see his children grow up. We should not forget, however, that Stephen and Philip were ordained Deacons the same day.

If Bro. Stephen was alive today and stood his ground to defend the truth at the expense of his life, believers would have accused him of “over-doing it”. Yet, he stands out as the only man, that at his death, heaven opened and Jesus Christ stood at attention to welcome a faithful believer into glory.

- “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?” Rom. 9: 20-21

It pleased the Owner to smash the vessel called Stephen and to preserve and prolong the vessel named Philip.

The same applied to James and Peter in Acts. 12: 1-9. It pleased the Owner that James should be killed with the sword while Peter was supernaturally delivered by an angel before his execution.

What did Stephen and James do wrong? It simply pleased the Owner to use His properties the way He used them.

In view of the foregoing, anyone who aims to follow Christ must remember: “ye are not your own”. The Master can put you to any use. It is therefore unwise to make plans without the counsel of the Lord.

CHAPTER TWO

FOUNDATIONAL DOCTRINES

Heb. 6: 1-2 “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”

There are six doctrines in the Word of God that are considered elementary doctrines leading to perfection. Those doctrines should be understood before transition could commence from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity. In Heb. 5: 13-14, the Word of God distinguishes between infants requiring milk and

Laying a solid foundation takes time, energy, and expensive materials. For most building

those of full age capable of chewing strong meat. Matured Christians are able to “discern both good and evil” Heb. 5: 12-14, from the perspective of God, and not from that of man.

How does one embark on the journey to spiritual maturity? In other words, what are the foundations of spiritual maturity?

Heb. 6: 1-2 lists six doctrines that every Christian should master:

1. Repentance from Dead Works
2. Faith toward God
3. Doctrine of Baptisms
4. Laying on of hands
5. Resurrection from the dead
6. Eternal Judgment

The main objective of these foundational teachings is to assist believers attain to spiritual maturity. One may wish to know, what is considered to be spiritual maturity? Is it the number of years that someone has been a Christian? Is it the ability to speak in tongues, or see visions, or prophesy? Perhaps it is the endowment with spiritual gifts? Unfortunately, none of the above correctly defines spiritual maturity.

What then, makes a Christian matured?

If a man will not move until God has moved, if a man will not speak until he hears God speak, if a man will not give until he sees God give, then such a one is spiritually matured.

Jesus says,

- “... the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do ...” John 5: 19
- “... my Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” John 5: 17

The Lord moves, when God moves; the Lord works, when He sees God work. When God does nothing, Jesus does nothing.

A spiritually matured “Christian” seeks to ascertain the working of God in any situation before he acts. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Rom. 8: 14.

It is good to have children, but when children refuse to grow, they become a problem and a burden. The wish they never gave birth to When believers fail to grow matured, they become a source warns that He would vomit Rev. 3: 16; the Father would be thrown into the fire. John

**The depth
and strength
of the
foundation
determines**

tendency is for the parents to such a child.

and become spiritually of irritation to God. Christ such ones out of his mouth. cut them off and they would 15: 1-2

The world needs the manifestation of the sons of God to reveal Christ to lost and dying souls. (Rom. 8: 19). There is no alternative to spiritual maturity.

May the Spirit of God challenge you to reach a higher spiritual way of life as you continue reading.

FOUNDATION NUMBER ONE

REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS

John the Baptist and Jesus Christ started ministry making similar statements:

- “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” Matt. 3: 2 (John the Baptist)
- “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Matt. 4: 17 (Jesus Christ)

The foundation of a fruitful Christian life is genuine repentance. The lack of genuine repentance engenders genuine pretension in believers.

What is repentance?

Simply put, it means **confessing** and **forsaking** sin. Charles Finney describes it as “giving up of all controversy with God”. A “conviction that God is wholly right and the sinner (man) is wholly wrong.”

Without genuine repentance, there can be no Christianity in its true meaning. Every one who comes to Christ must be persuaded of, and totally accept a new way of life that demands total and permanent separation from sin, self, and the world. The degree to which an individual has forsaken sin, self and the world is the same degree to which the individual can draw close to God and God to him.

The lack of scriptural repentance, a complete turning away from sin, forsaking self and the world is one of the factors causing much of the problems in the church today. As a result of this incomplete submission to Christ, there are Christians who are outwardly converted but inwardly unchanged. Those are the group of people who say all the right things, but end up doing the wrong things.

If, a supposedly follower of Christ is not separated from sin, he or she will be a gateway for evil to enter the fellowship. If the person is not separated from self, (that is, the flesh), he or she will be a channel of hindrance for the move of the Holy Ghost. If on the other hand, the individual is not separated from the world, a gate has been opened for covetousness, greed and hypocrisy to enter the fellowship.

Those who have never read the Bible through, from Genesis to Revelation, are being

This is one of the reasons why the scriptures command in 1Cor. 5. 13 -

- “... Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”

Repentance must be genuine if an individual is to follow Christ into glory.

Someone may say,

- “But salvation is by grace, not works.”

True. It is given by grace and God commands

- “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” Philp. 2: 12
- “... give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” 2 Pet. 1: 10
- “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you. And will be

a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” 2Cor.6: 17-18

We should never forget that the group of people in Matt.7: 21-23, to whom Christ shall say “I never knew you: depart from me,” were disqualified because Christ described them as “ye that work iniquity.” Iniquity in the life of a believer is a confirmation of unrepentance.

The scriptures say “...when he shall appear, we shall be like him ...” 1Jn.3: 2. If we are to be like Him, when He returns, then one of us has to change. Either Christ will change to be like us, when He returns, or we have to change to be like Him. Since it is impossible for Him to change again, after he has taken our nature to redeem us, it is clear we have to change to adopt His glorious nature. The channel to becoming like Christ is genuine repentance. It is genuine repentance that produces holiness, without which no man shall see God.

One of the great calamities that befell the world in the 20th Century was a political ideology called Communism. To date, communism still enslaves hundreds of millions of people in a forced state of atheism. It succeeded in sending millions into a Christ-less eternity. It is interesting to note that communism came into being because of one man’s religious insincerity.

Years ago in Germany there was a young Jewish boy who had a profound sense of admiration for his father. The life of the family centred around the acts of piety and devotion prescribed by their religion. The father was zealous in attending worship and instruction and demanded the same from his children. While the boy was a teenager, the family was forced to move to another town in Germany.

In the new location there was no synagogue, and the pillars of the community all belonged to the Lutheran Church. Suddenly the father announced to the family that they were all going to abandon their Jewish traditions and join the Lutheran Church. When the stunned family asked why, the father explained that it was necessary to help his business.

The youngster was bewildered and confused. His deep disappointment soon gave way to anger and a kind of intense bitterness that plagued him throughout his life.

He left Germany and went to England to study. He sat daily at the British Museum formulating his ideas and composing a book. In that book he introduced a whole life and worldview and conceived of a movement that was designed to change the world. In the book he described religion as an “opiate for the masses” that could be explained totally in terms of economics.

Today there are billions of people in the world who live under the system invented by this embittered man. His name, of course, is Karl Max.

The influence of his father’s hypocrisy is still being felt keenly around the world. (*R.C. Sproul, Objections Answered.*)

Only God knows how many people like the father of Karl Max are in the church today, pretending to follow Jesus Christ while their lusts and affections are elsewhere.

BIBLICAL REPENTANCE

The second work of grace is sanctification; this leads to holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Since it is impossible for man to live in the flesh and not sin, how each individual treats personal shortcomings and misconducts is what determines how close they would get to God. Genuine repentance is indispensable in the life of Christians.

**The wise man
and the
foolish man
have one
thing in
common, "...**

Three different Greek words are translated as repentance in the New Testament. A closer study of these words show that all repentance mentioned in the Bible is not acceptable to God.

1. Metanoeo
2. Metanoia
3. Metamelomai

Metanoeo (Greek) Repentance

“Not merely forsaking sin, but a total change of attitude and love for it.”

This is the repentance mentioned in Matt. 3: 2 and Matt. 4: 17 – Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.”

God demands that man must not only forsake sin, he must in addition stop any favourable disposition towards sin. It is possible to quit a particular sin and yet, be favourably disposed towards it. In such an instance, the believer forsook sin as a result of doctrinal teaching not as a result of hatred for sin and what it represents. If such an individual is placed in a compromising situation in which other believers are not present, and sufficient pressure or incentive is applied, he may commit the particular sin again. This explains why some people after going to church for years fall again into sin and turn around to blame the devil.

No, the devil is not totally responsible. The individual concerned forsook sin but retained a favourable attitude towards it.

Assume a man used to womanise as an unbeliever. After accepting Christ, he stopped committing adultery. One day, he noticed that a woman took unusual interest in him and sent all the normal signals which he understood. Instead of feeling repulsed by her moves, he laughs to himself and mused, “if not that I’m born-again, I would have dealt with you.”

Outwardly, he did not commit adultery, but inwardly, he retained a favourable attitude towards it. Doctrinal teaching, and possibly the fear of God’s judgment stopped him from the physical act of adultery. If those restraining factors could be suspended or removed, there is every possibility that he would still commit adultery. As far as God is concerned, he is still an adulterer. He has forsaken adultery, but his attitude towards it has not changed.

- “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Matt.5: 28

Another example could be considered. Suppose a man used to party and “hit the bottle” heavily before he got born-again. One day, he happens to see a group of people partying and drinking in a manner he considered crude. Suppose he muses to himself, “these people are not smooth. Ah, in those days when I used to do this, I won’t drink like they are drinking. Ah, those days ...”

Has he repented of drinking and partying? No. He has physically forsaken those acts, but his love and attitude towards them are still positive. Physically he is in the church, but inwardly, he remains an unbeliever. He has not fully repented. What if he was a smoker? He stopped smoking and in his heart was not satisfied with the way someone was smoking at the bus-stop. Suppose he muses to himself, “the way people smoke nowadays. They make it revolting. When I used to smoke even non-smokers admired me.” Has he stopped smoking? Not really.

Storms usually come, when they are least expected. Every Christian must be armed with this awareness: things can go

drinking and partying? No. He has stopped buying it and keeping it at home. Nevertheless, whenever he hears old tunes, he would sing along till the end. Has he changed his attitude to worldly music? No. He has merely stopped buying it. Since he still enjoys it, he has not fully repented.

He stopped smoking and in his heart was not satisfied with the way someone was smoking at the bus-stop. Suppose he muses to himself, “the way people smoke nowadays. They make it revolting. When I used to smoke even non-smokers admired me.” Has he stopped smoking? Not really.

Maybe he used to enjoy worldly music. He has stopped buying it and keeping it at home. Nevertheless, whenever he hears old tunes, he would sing along till the end. Has he changed his attitude to worldly music? No. He has merely stopped buying it. Since he still enjoys it, he has not fully repented.

- Matt. 4: 17 – Repent – (*do not merely forsake sin, but change your love and attitude towards sin -*) because the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

God wants believers to see sin the way He sees it.

Have you ever fallen inside mud before? After you came out you had a bath and changed your clothes. There is nothing muddy about you anymore. However, whenever you remember the incident, you cringe and recoil inwardly at the thought. Hurriedly you block out that thought. Your mind has no room for such memory. That is exactly how God wants you to see your old sinful habits. Recoil and cringe inwardly every time you remember them. If a believer sustains that attitude, even if he is offered money to commit the former sins, he would say no. If believers can adopt repentance at this level, there will be a dramatic change in the church that will sharply separate the church from the world. Today, the dividing line between the world and the church is not so clear, because the same attitude is found in both realms.

There is a partial forsaking of sin in the church. Most believers forsake sin as a matter of doctrine and not as a principle. God is not interested in our doctrine; He is interested in our principle, because that is what determines our character.

One does not ignore attacks of Satan aimed at defiling children of God by bombarding their thoughts with immoral and defiling thoughts. His aim of course, is to make the believer unfit to stand before God by first attacking their minds with evil imaginations and turning around to accuse them of dirty thoughts. What does the scripture say?

- “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.” 1 Cor. 11: 12.

Every believer should constantly check his way of thinking and condemn constantly as sin, thoughts that do not glory God. All such thoughts should promptly be confessed as sin and forgiveness sought from God. Whoever lives like this, will maintain a tender conscience before God.

Do not merely forsake sin, but change your attitude and love for it.

Metanoia

“A real change of mind and attitude toward sin and its cause, not merely the consequence.”

The Greek word “metanoia” is translated repentance in Matt. 3: 8; 9: 13; Luke 24: 47

Repentance at this level is the ideal state in which God desires believers to live. Whoever practises repentance as “metanoia” can be truly considered to see sin the way God sees it. Genuine repentance involves “a real change of mind and attitude towards sin.”

How do most Christians handle sin when convicted by the Holy Spirit? Generally, the sin is confessed in the “closet”, the mouth is kept shut, while the heart fervently hopes that people do not know about it. Why? What most people fear is the consequence of their sinful habits rather than the sad reality that the “dog has returned to its vomit.” 2 Pet. 2: 22

If the consequence of the sin can be successfully avoided, (for example: hell, loss of face, shame, loss of ministry, etc.) the individual would most likely persist in sin. What bothers most people is the consequence of their sinful habit.

How does one assess a truly repentant Christian? **If he falls into sin, he will confess to God, obtain forgiveness from Him, and report himself to the church to face the discipline.** (The reader should please note that it is God alone Who forgives sin, and it is to Him alone that confession of sin should be made. The church is only informed for the purpose of discipline and correction). When believers sin and seek to hide it, or secretly hope the sin shall not be exposed, they have not truly repented.

- Pro. 28: 13 – He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy
- 1 Cor. 11: 31-32 – For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.
- Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. 1 Tim. 5: 20

“A real change of mind and attitude toward sin and its cause” will cause much distress and godly sorrow to a genuinely repentant soul such that the consequence will not be feared. What shall matter to such godly individual is the sadness that he has yielded ground to something Jesus Christ gave His life to destroy.

Believers seldom consider that each time they sin; they throw away the victory that Jesus Christ purchased for them at the cross and bring themselves again under the dominion of the devil whom heaven has placed under their feet. In effect, a believer committing sin has become a servant of his slave. It is like an heir becoming the steward of his servant.

A believer armed with this realization will go to any length to have his sinful nature crucified whenever it manifests. Discipline, either directly from God or church authority will be welcomed by such an individual as an antidote to the sinful nature.

... what should be of concern therefore, is not whether storms will come or not. What matters is the aftermath

Assume a brother or sister in the church commits adultery and such a one promptly confesses to God, receives forgiveness from Him, and heads straight for the Pastor and equally **reports** himself or herself, not minding the discipline, shall such a one repeat the sin? When the temptation comes knocking again, such a one would avoid it, knowing fully well that if he yields, he has to report himself and suffer the consequence.

People commit sin because they believe they can escape the consequence. The same principle is behind every theft and every crime. People steal because they have the assurance that they will not get caught. No thief goes to steal or operate in an environment in which he knows he will be promptly apprehended and put in jail. Every thief approaches his evil operation with the assurance that he will not only succeed in stealing, but he would also make a clean get-away.

This same principle is found underlying sinfulness in Christians. No child of God will sin if he knows it will be exposed. None. Those who are flagrant sinners in the church have already, in so doing, manifested their true nature: children of disobedience.

God commands in “metanoia”, when you sin, **receive forgiveness from heaven** and discipline, either from heaven or from the earth to crucify your sinful nature – a painful reminder that the same mistake should not be repeated.

- Heb. 12: 5-6 “... My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.)

It is for this cause that God commands restitution. If you injure anyone, go and rectify the fault. Next time, the offender will think twice before repeating the offence.

For example, if a Christian business man should cheat a business partner in a transaction of, say, 1,000 euro, and if he confesses to God that he sinned yet, he still keeps the money, has he repented? He has confessed the sin, he has received forgiveness, but he has not repented. It is possible to confess sin and yet, not repent of it.

However, if after confessing to God, he goes to his partner and returns the money, we can be rest assured that he will never cheat anybody again in his life.

Why? Why go through the trouble of cheating someone when he knows he will eventually return the money, apologise and lose face!

Why would a minister take part in church conspiracy when he knows he will still face the church, confess his part in the evil, apologise to the injured party and endure discipline?

This is genuine repentance. You commit sin, confess your sin to God, receive forgiveness from Him and report yourself to the church and face the consequence. If believers can adopt this repentance, holiness, love, peace, and unity shall fill the church. Strife, sycophancy, pretension shall all fly out through the window.

God expects this repentance to be the first foundation of every believer. The first foundational doctrine mentioned in the Bible is repentance – “metanoia” Heb. 6:

1

We may read Matthew 3: 8-10 thus:

“Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance (*metanoia*). Do not begin to say to yourself, ‘*we are born again*’, ‘*we are washed by the blood of the Lamb*’, and ‘*we are filled with the Holy Ghost*’. Produce the fruit of repentance (*metanoia*) because the axe is laid to the root of the trees and every tree that does not produce the right fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire.”

Without genuine repentance from sin, there is no genuine Christianity. What therefore should be the first foundation stone of every believer in Jesus Christ? – Metanoia!

Metamelomai

“To regret consequence of sin, not the cause.” Matt. 27: 3

After betraying Jesus, Judas repented and still ended up in perdition.

“Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,” Matt. 27: 3

On the surface, Judas “repented” and “made restitution”, yet he went to perdition. Why was this so? Does not repentance produce forgiveness? The mistake Judas made is still being repeated by some, today, nevertheless, in ignorance.

<p>It takes determination to carry the cross of Jesus Christ. It</p>

The repentance credited to Judas is the Greek word, “metamelomai”. This means, to be sorry for the consequence of sin, and no godly sorrow for committing sin. The man was not sorry that he betrayed innocent blood, he was unhappy that he was exposed. In effect, he was only remorseful. This ungodly attitude to misconduct is prevalent in many in the church today.

Judas probably saw the look on the faces of the other disciples and he knew the stories that would follow. Even though he returned the money, a pseudo-

restitution, he was not truly repentant. What caused him sorrow was not the evil that he did, but the consequence of it to him.

Alas, many believers operate at this level. If Judas had the opportunity of betraying Jesus again, in a more skilful and secret manner, that would have protected his identity, he would have done it again. That is why God sent him to perdition. Children of perdition do not have godly sorrow after committing sin; they are more concerned with avoiding the consequence of the sin, or concealing their identity.

Any believer, who after committing sin became sad that it was discovered and exposed, cannot be considered to be truly repentant. God expects a morbid hatred for sin in His children. Only in this manner can we be partakers of His holiness.

HOW DO I STOP COMMITTING SIN?

Genuine repentance is very good. However, holiness is better than repentance. It is far better not to commit sin, than to keep committing sin, and repeatedly repent.

Every Christian who genuinely desires to serve and please the Lord would have asked this question, at one time or the other –

How do I stop committing sin?

The Word of God assures in 2 Cor. 5: 17

- Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things become new.

It is true. The Word of God is correct. Whenever any individual accepts Jesus as Lord and Saviour, all the record of his sin is completely washed away, and the fellow immediately becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. If the individual can sustain this state of purity, he would be able to say like Jesus, “the prince of this world has nothing in me.” (John 14: 30)

Unfortunately, hell refuses to give up. A fresh assault of temptation is launched immediately against the child of God who, probably, because he is a new convert and spiritually immature falls again into sin. From that moment, the struggle continues.

Most believers would remember that within a short space after being born-again,

<p>Those who believe that they can be Christians and still be</p>

they fell into sin. One has met quite some people who were baffled how this could happen, so soon after they got born-again. It is the devil, struggling to maintain his stronghold in the lives of the believers.

Therefore, one needs first and foremost to see sin for what it is. Sin is more than a weakness of character or a bad habit. Sin is the arrowhead of hell. Before hell can operate in the

life of any individual, family, or a nation, it must first inject sin into that person or body. If sin does not go in first, Satan and his demons cannot enter to perform their threefold task of stealing, killing and destruction. (John 10: 10)

In effect, it is sin that opens the gate for hell to operate. Until believers catch the revelation of what sin is, they will continue to play games with it, while misquoting the statement of the Lord that “the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

It is pertinent at this point to meditate on this Bible passage:

- 1 John 3: 8 – He that committeth sin is of the devil ...

What is God saying?

- He that commits sin belongs to the devil.
- He that sins is on the side of the devil.
- The sinner is in the camp of the devil.
- He that commits sin comes from the devil.

The moment an individual yields ground to sin, he becomes the slave of sin. It is sin that holds an individual captive for the devil to oppress him.

- John 8: 34 – Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

Christians need to have this understanding, that with every sin they yield ground to, they wilfully open the door for the following into their lives:

1. Satanic theft
2. Death (could be physical, marital, educational, career, financial etc)
3. Destruction.

If believers have this understanding, then the determination to be holy will dominate their lives.

Many Christians assume that they can sin, and later ask God for forgiveness. Yes, God will forgive, but the serpent would have bitten. (Ecc. 10: 8)

That is why many keep going forward and backward in their Christian lives. That is one of the reasons why many may not fulfil their God-given destiny and reach their goals in life. The person who sent the temptation to sin (Satan the devil), is waiting to pounce upon the believer once he yields ground to the sin. Even before the individual can confess to God in prayer, the devil has quickly performed his agenda and he would have left.

Many Christians see great things in the spirit realm, but those things do not manifest in the physical. Why? The devil also sees into the spirit realm. He certainly does not see as far as God sees, nevertheless, he sees things in the spirit realm. The forces of darkness see when something good is coming into the life of a child of God. Whenever they seek to frustrate such goodness, they know which button to press.

- Heb. 12: 1 – Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, ...

Besetting sin.

Every individual should be honest and identify the besetting sin in his life. There is no man who can say, “I am pure and sinless.”

- “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Rom. 3: 23

What makes the difference between the sinful and the holy among men is that some have identified areas of weaknesses in their lives and consciously guard against it. Meanwhile, there are others who consider themselves to be “superman”, while there are still some who only complain about their weaknesses but cannot be bothered to do anything about overcoming it.

Every individual has an area of moral or emotional weakness that could be capitalized upon by the forces of darkness to cause the fellow to fall into sin. It varies among men, even as the faces of men differ. For some, it is adultery and lust of the flesh, for others it could be anger, pride, gossip, intolerance, selfishness, greed, gambling, drunkenness, or stealing. In some instances, Satan tries to use a natural endowment, such as beauty or gift to cause a person to sin.

Whenever forces of darkness plan evil for an individual they seek what is called a “legal ground” before they can operate. They usually target the weakness of the individual, because they are fairly certain the fellow would fall in that area.

There are people who sin. They have repented themselves and God on to do it again, but each knocking they fall.

Such individuals should be that temptations come loaded them with a special

steal. Since “he that committeth sin is the servant of sin”, the devil has to look for a way to bring them under his dominion, even if only for a brief moment, so that he can steal what God has given them.

Therefore, such individuals must realize that sin is a weapon of hell. In order to fight back, they also must turn holiness into a weapon of war.

What did Joseph experience? The moment Satan recognized that God had set him apart in his generation to be great, the fiend embarked on series of attacks to destroy the destiny of Joseph. First came persecution at home, from his brethren, then he was thrown alive into a pit. When God rescued Joseph, he was immediately sold as slave into Egypt. Even as a slave, the anointing of God marked him out as someone destined for greatness. Which joker card did the devil play?

**It is the cross
that brings
life and
walking the
narrow path**

It would be recalled that Rachel, the mother of Joseph, was a very beautiful woman. Jacob fell in love with Rachel at first sight; and Joseph inherited the beauty of his mother. According to Finnis Dake, old tradition say that Zuleekha, the wife of Portiphar was formerly a virtuous woman, but when she saw Joseph, she lost all self-control. On one occasion, she supposedly made a dinner inviting 40 of the

most beautiful women of Egypt who, when they saw Joseph, were so moved with admiration that they exclaimed with one accord that he must be an angel.

**You were
purchased for
God through
the sacrifice of
Christ on the
cross. You are**

repeatedly commit the same time and time again, promised innumerable occasions never time the temptation comes

armed with this realization knocking when God has blessing which Satan wants to

The devil wanted to use the natural endowment of Joseph against him. It was the fear of the Lord, a quality rarely found in Christians of today, that kept Joseph from sleeping with Zuleekha. What Joseph did not know then, was that Satan saw the greatness that was about to come into the life of Joseph. It was already close, and it was evident in the spirit realm. If Joseph had made the mistake of sleeping with the wife of his master, he would never have gone to jail, from where he ascended the throne. At the most, he would have died a glorified slave, (as Madam's boy), that is, assuming Satan did not expose him to Portiphar, who would have promptly cut off his head for sleeping with his wife!

Satan had no intention of granting Joseph the pleasure of sleeping with a woman. He only wanted to use sex to destroy his destiny. Till today, the devil has not changed. He still offers Christians sin, in exchange for their destiny.

It should also be recalled that Moses was a man mighty in word and deed. For forty years, Satan was watching Moses conduct one of the most remarkable ministries in the history of human race. Unfortunately, Moses had one besetting sin - anger. Satan waited until Moses got to the border of the promised land before pulling out his joker card in the life of Moses. The rest is history.

So, how do we handle sin?

Be Honest

Identify personal besetting sins. This should not be difficult at all, since all the individual has to do is review personal shortcomings and the sins most frequently committed. It is inconceivable that the devil will tempt an individual with a sin that the person has not been committing before. For example, the devil is not going to tempt someone who has no criminal record to steal a car parked by the side of the road.

Prepare for War

Every individual in Christ Jesus should recognize sin as a weapon of war of hell. Be ready at all times to use holiness as a weapon of war to combat sin. Once a believer is armed with this mind, that sin is sent as a forerunner of spiritual thieves, he will view every temptation as a warning signal that thieves are around the corner waiting to steal something that God has given in the spirit realm.

Temptations to sin do not just come. Pirates do not attack empty vessels. Once believers are fully aware of this, they would be better prepared to resist sin, and gradually reduce the amount of repentance that they need to do.

Destroy Points of Contact

God commands in 2 Cor. 6: 17 -

- Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing: and I will receive you.

In Deuteronomy 7: 26, God commanded the Israelites –

- Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing.

It is still a surprise that people can claim to be born-again and yet, their homes and lives are filled with items that clearly belong to hell. In the homes of Christians are found pornographic materials, worldly music, artefacts that are clearly of satanic inspiration, and so on. It is not possible to keep the property of the devil in ones possession and claim to be free from the devil. So long as one has a property belonging to the devil, there is a point of contact between the individual and the forces of darkness.

There are quite a lot of experiences that confirm that there is real danger in keeping the property of the devil in one's home. Believers need to heed the command of God "touch not the unclean thing" as well as refuse to allow "an abomination into the house", lest it defiles the believer.

One remembers the story of one young believer who desperately wanted to serve God, but was constantly under the pressure of the devil to commit adultery. The pressure on his mind was so great on one particular Sunday after the worship service.

In desperation, he fell on his knees as he got home and prayed asking the Lord for help. Mercifully, the Lord put him to sleep. When he woke up, about three hours later, for no apparent reason, he started searching his wardrobe, not knowing exactly what he was looking for. He came across one white envelope, and wondered what he had put inside it. Upon opening it, he saw it contained a sachet of contraceptives, a reminder of his former sinful life of adultery.

Immediately it dawned on him that the Lord had led him to the link which he still had with adultery. The contraceptive was the point of contact which permitted the demons of adultery to enter his life and put pressure on him to do their will. Immediately he got rid it, the satanic pressure to commit adultery disappeared.

Rebecca Brown shared the story of two American women who suddenly developed the urge to commit adultery. Both were married and were born-again. Simultaneously, they developed the urge to have sex with men other than their husbands. Fortunately they discussed the problem and sought counselling. When they were asked when the sinful urge started, they both reported it started one year before they finally sought matured Christian counselling. So what happened one year ago? Nothing strange, except that the two of them went on vacation together in Japan and bought a Japanese painting of a Geisha woman as a souvenir! Geisha?! Those are prostitutes in Japan!

What happened? The Christians went on vacation and came back home with a property of the devil. Since they now had the devil's property at home, a door was opened for the devil to operate in their lives.

The stories are many on this issue of points of contact. One could mention also the millionaire Christian family that became pauperised because they kept the porcelain figure of a Mexican beggar at home, or the young Christian man that

was nearly possessed by demons of homosexuality because he kept a worldly jazz record at home, which evidently was dedicated to the devil through the abominable Haitian carnival Mardi Gras.

What would one say about the reports of worldly music that were dedicated to Satan? Would Christians keep accursed things at home and not have a link with the devil?

Some people acquired charms, amulets and talisman in the world as unbelievers. Some have occult books and occult materials at home. After they came to the Lord they retained possession of those items and they keep complaining of demonic harassment. They proceed to go from one minister to another, seeking deliverance. How about the accursed things at home?

He whom the Son shall make free is free indeed. However, the Son of God cannot force anyone to destroy points of contact with the devil. That issue is an individual choice. Whoever chooses to maintain contact with the devil shall be troubled by the devil.

When the Ephesians became Christians in Acts 19: 18-20, they brought out all their “curious arts” and burned them. A lot of Christians need to do likewise in this generation.

- “Choose you this day whom ye will serve” Joshua 24: 15
- “... How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him...” 1 Kings 18: 21

If you want to follow Christ, then get rid of items that are evidently the property of Satan. God says, “touch not the unclean thing”.

The Sword of the Spirit

The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. Whenever the temptation to sin comes, fight back with the Word of God. It was with the word that Jesus defeated Satan in the wilderness. Jesus simply told the devil, “It is written...”

Believers are counselled to adopt the same solution.

Whenever temptation to sin comes, remember,

- It is written, for sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. Rom. 6: 14
- It is written, Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world... 1 Jn. 4: 4

Whenever sin attacks, fight back with the Word of God.

REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS

The first foundational doctrine is “repentance from dead works.”

There are two-fold levels of repentance expected from every believer. When the Lord calls him out of the world into the kingdom of heaven, the Lord instructs him:

- “Repent from your sins”

When the believer accepts Jesus Christ and enters the kingdom, he is again instructed:

- “Repent from dead works.”

What are dead works?

- a. Everything man does, and is still doing, before accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour is “dead work”. It has no record in heaven. It has neither eternal value nor eternal reward. Irrespective of how laudable or sacrificial the act is, it is dead work. At the most, it shall be rewarded on the earth, “for whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap”, but it will not endure unto eternity. The reason for this is simple; the doer of the good deed has no “file” in heaven. So, where shall his good deed be recorded? Even though heaven shall take note of his good deed and reward him on the earth, or reward his descendants, it shall carry no eternal reward for him.
- b. After coming to Christ, everything a believer does that God did not instruct him to do is dead work. Every act of a believer, which does not proceed from God through the Holy Ghost, has no life. “It is the Spirit that gives life” Jn. 6: 63; “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Rom. 8: 14. Of course, it should be clear to every believer, that whatever the Holy Spirit does not initiate comes from any of these three sources:
 - The devil
 - The world
 - The flesh

Many of the activities and programs in the church today need to be scrutinized concerning the source of inspiration. Many do laudable and costly work in the church but do not witness lasting spiritual fruit, because only what God doeth, that shall abide forever.

To save believers from wasted efforts, God commands as foundation a principle to depart from any activity that is not inspired by the Holy Ghost. When people complain in Christian assemblies that their labours and contributions are not recognized and rewarded, it may be that God did not assign the particular task, because it is God Who rewards. And, God will only reward what He assigns.

Many of God’s workers need to re-check the source of their assignments and ensure it corresponds with God’s will. God is not interested in sacrifice, but in obedience. It is those who do the will of God that shall abide forever. The Son does nothing except what He sees the Father doing. Likewise, the followers of Christ should follow suit. Do nothing but what the Holy Ghost assigns.

TWO CATEGORIES OF SIN

Every sin that man commits can easily be classified under two broad categories:

1. Not doing what God has said.
2. Doing what God has not said.

According to Watchman Nee, the first is **rebellion**, while the second is **presumption**. Many Christians are sensitive to rebellion, but they are not sensitive to presumption. Both are equally dangerous.

Rebellion refuses to follow God, while presumption attempts to lead God. Rebellion refuses to obey the dictate of God, while presumption dictates to God. It was rebellion that ended the relationship of Saul with God, while presumption ended the life of Uzzah. Both are dead works.

It is crucial that Christians, particularly, the ministers of the gospel, take heed that they do not become presumptuous. We live in an age in which the spirit of negative competition has entered the church, and people have put themselves under pressure to show flamboyant results, in order to be recognized and applauded by men.

The result of this carnality is for people to copy the patterns and methods of other ministries, rather than go to God and light their fire directly from Him. Sometimes results that are applauded by men are produced, but a strange fire could have been lit in the temple.

Spiritual result in the ministry comes only through one method: stay on your knees until you hear, "Thus saith the Lord ..."

EXAMPLES OF DEAD WORKS

There are various examples of dead works recorded in the scriptures. These are actions of men that seemed logical but outside of God's perfect will.

Uzzah

Why did God kill Uzzah? 2 Sam. 6: 6-7.

The man did what any right thinking person should have done. He acted purely based on human instinct. The oxen stumbled and the Ark was going to fall off the cart. Should Uzzah have stood by passively and watch a "disaster "occur"? So he steadied the Ark and prevented it from falling. God's "thank you" was instant death. Uzzah committed "dead work."

God actually wanted the Ark to fall because His commandment was not obeyed by David and the priests. The Ark was to be carried on the shoulder of the priests and not on a cart. Even though what Uzzah did was humanly logical, it was divinely unacceptable.

It was dead work.

Moses

Another example could be found in Exodus 2: 11-12. Moses, in a burst of nationalistic zeal, killed an Egyptian in order to defend an Israelite. Yes, God wanted Moses to deliver Israel, but not yet. Moses moved 40 years ahead of God's timing. Dead work. The motive was right, but the timing was wrong.

God had earlier told Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved in a foreign land for 400 years. Moses wanted to commence the act of deliverance before the 400 years deadline. It was a mistake that placed him in the desert for 40 years.

The moment Moses realized his calling; his first action was dead work. To purge him of this frailty of human nature, God sent him into the wilderness for 40 years. After this period followed another 40 years of dynamic power packed ministry.

How did it all end? With another dead work which hindered Moses from reaching his ultimate goal – the Promised Land.

The experience of Moses should serve as a grim warning to modern day ministers of the gospel who believe that they have become infallible and above mistake because they have successful ministries and carry some measure of anointing. Moses started with dead work, he ended with dead work.

David

Mention could also be made of the census of David. 2 Sam. 24: 10. The entire nation paid for the dead work of one man.

The Church in Sardis

The church in Sardis (Rev. 3: 1-2) was rebuked severely by the Lord for being a dead church. To men, it was a living church, but to God, it was dead. Christ chided "I have not found thy works perfect before God." v2.

The believers in Sardis observed all the rhythms and activities of a church, but their works had no life. They incurred divine reprimand "that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

Peter & Co.

"I go a fishing", said Peter. "We also go with thee." (Jn. 21: 3).

And, off went 7 disciples of the Lord. The Bible recorded "that night they caught nothing." When the Master appeared to them in the morning, just a sentence from His mouth produced more result than their combined vigil of fruitless fishing. (Dead works)

Mary Magdalene & Co.

Perhaps, a very instructive example that deserves full meditation is the incident that took place on the resurrection morning. In Mark 16: 1, it is recorded:

- “And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought spices, that they might come and anoint him.”

This is an admirable account of the devotion of these women to the Lord. What exactly did they do?

- a. They risked their lives. Knowing fully well the tide of negative public opinion that led to the death of Jesus, just three days earlier, and also aware of the soldiers guarding the tomb, the women risked their lives by going to the tomb very early in the morning after the Sabbath. Already, the Jewish conspirators who caused the death of the Lord thought His disciples would attempt to steal His body and had arranged for soldiers to be posted to the tomb to attack any disciple that showed up.
- b. The women spent their money. They bought spices to anoint His body.
- c. They inconvenienced themselves. Probably, they were awake long before dawn waiting for the Sabbath to end so they could leave home and head for the tomb.

It was not until they got to the tomb that they realized that they risked their lives for nothing, wasted their money and inconvenienced themselves for no fruitful purpose. Heaven was neither impressed nor grateful. They went through all these troubles to render services that were absolutely irrelevant to heaven.

He is risen.

Yet, He told them clearly, “But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.” Matt. 26: 32. They were expected to meet Him in Galilee on the third day; on the contrary, they made elaborate preparations and headed for the tomb. No wonder the angel corrected them, “he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him:” and perhaps, to wash his hands off any further act of disobedience, the angel added, “Lo, I have told you.” Matt. 28: 7.

What was on the report card of all those who went to the tomb, including Peter and John who ran there? Dead works. As admirable as their motives and actions were, God did not send them. Dead works.

Believers must learn from this incident to avoid acting presumptuously in the service of the Lord. A lot of activities, programs, giving and services are being done in the church. How many of these did the Lord command?

Since every work is going to be judged, and reward shall be given only for those services that the Lord by His Spirit assigned, Christians must be careful to ensure that the services they render is based on “Thus saith the Lord.”

A rather painful observation is that there is a lot of “spiritual dubbing” going on in the church. There is seldom any originality anymore. Ministries now study other ministries and copy their patterns and programs. Is it not better to wait on the Lord and receive direct instructions from Him?

Apostle Paul

How about Paul? Was he immune to this Christian challenge?

Opinions may differ, but the scriptures clearly recorded that on many occasions, he was warned by the Holy Ghost not to travel to Jerusalem. In Acts 20: 22-23, he confirmed that the Holy Ghost warned him “in every city”. In Acts 21: 4, Holy Ghost warned him again through some disciples and prophet Agabus, in Acts 21: 10-12 actually dramatized the warning for him.

Yet, Paul persisted in going to Jerusalem. What could be said about a believer warned several times by God and many witnesses not to embark on a course of action yet remained adamant and went ahead?

Why was Paul so intent on travelling to Jerusalem? He explained in Acts. 20: 24, “to testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Preaching the grace of God is a good thing to do. However, at that time in history, Jews populated Jerusalem and God specifically sent Paul to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews. (Gal. 2: 7-9; Acts 22: 21) So, why was Paul so determined to get to Jerusalem to preach “grace” to the Jews when his call was clearly to the Gentiles?

- Rom. 11: 13 “For I speak to you Gentiles, insomuch as I am the apostles of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:”

Why was the apostle to the Gentiles determined to go to the Jews? Nationalism. Paul had a passion for the Jews. He persecuted Christians to defend Judaism. The moment he realized that God’s promised was fulfilled in Christ, he turned around fully and expected the Jews to do the same. They did not. He became so passionate about the salvation of the Jews that Paul offered to go to hell if that would save the Jews!

- Rom. 9: 1-4 “... I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites: ...”

Since it was clear that God did not want him to travel to Jerusalem, at that point in his life, what happened at Jerusalem? Did he actually preach the “grace”, which he set out to preach, contrary to divine counsel? Maybe. Maybe he preached grace during his defence on the stairs in Acts. 21: 40. One thing is clear however, Paul kept the law! He submitted himself once again to the regulations of the law to justify himself before the Jews. In Acts 21: 20-24, Paul consented to observe the rituals of the law so that the Jews could see that he “also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.” v24.

It is interesting to note what the apostle Paul wrote about Christians who submit to the regulations of the law.

- Gal. 5: 4 “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”

(By the way, whoever is fallen from grace will not make heaven, since salvation is by grace through faith.)

We thank the Lord for His mercy because He still appeared to Paul in Jerusalem, encouraged him before he was shipped back to his mission field - the Gentiles. Nevertheless, we shall have to wait until we get to heaven to see if Paul shall be

rewarded for the beatings he received in Jerusalem, since God told him not to go there.

You and I

It does not matter how spiritual a person considers himself to be, every believer must be constantly careful of dead works. Acting outside the perfect will of God is dangerous. It can be triggered by emotion, favouritism, competition, pride, nationalism, racism, and so on.

Suppose God gives a sister the ability to sing, and she opts for the choir, while Holy Ghost says, “go to the Children’s Church”. If she does not submit to the leading of the Spirit, she will sing in the choir, and people will get blessed, but all her labour in the choir has no reward. It is dead work.

Suppose another Brother wants to be a Pastor, and God sends him to be an Usher. He may persist and head a congregation, people may even get saved in his ministry, but all his efforts are dead works.

As believers progress in the faith, they must continually find out what constitutes the perfect will of God for their lives. The boundary line between doing the will of God and doing dead work is very thin. Since every work is going to be judged (1 Cor. 3: 12-14), and **eternal reward** shall be given to deeds approved by God, great care should be exercised in Christian service.

It is easy to do deeds based on ministry pressures, peer pressure, worldly values (imported into the church) and the fear of man. Oftentimes, it is easy to yield to such ungodly pressures since the perfect will of God is in most instances unpopular amongst men. There are usually oppositions, persecutions, and enmity that rise against whoever desires to do the will of God. To make it more challenging, the perfect will of God may be humanly illogical and humanly unreasonable. Oppositions and logic may even arise from the least expected sources – spiritual leaders!

Jesus cautions in Luke 6: 26

- “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets.”

Serving God to earn the applause of men makes one unpopular in heaven. Contrariwise, serving God to earn the approval of heaven makes one unpopular among men.

- Luke 6: 22 – “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake.”

Each Christian worker has to determine what it considers to be priority – pleasing God or pleasing men. As Paul points out –

“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” 2 Tim. 3: 12.

FOUNDATION DOCTRINE TWO

FAITH TOWARDS GOD

Is it possible to be a Christian and not have faith? No. Everybody has faith. Believers, unbelievers, all have faith. Claiming someone has no faith is like living without breathing.

Faith simply means “trust”. Some trust in their ability, others in their bank accounts, and everyone has a measure of faith on the chair he seats on and the bed on which he sleeps. Who would seat on a chair if not trusting that it can support his weight? Mere seating on a chair is an expression of faith on its ability to sustain the human weight.

The Bible therefore specifically defines the faith that is required of every believer: **Faith towards God**. The trust, confidence, assurance of every follower of Christ, must be focused on God and nothing else. In every instance in which this assurance in God is lacking, the relationship between the believer and heaven is severed.

The road to heaven is narrow, steeply uphill and filled with obstacles. On most occasions, it is difficult to see God or feel His Presence. More often than not, a feeling of desolation and abandonment surrounds the pilgrim making him desperate and forlorn. Paul reminds us in Acts 14: 22 “We shall with much tribulation make our way into the kingdom of God.”

Without a solid foundation of “faith towards God”, fear replaces faith, anxiety takes the place of calmness and doubt uproots confidence. “We walk by faith, not by sight.” 2 Cor. 5: 7

The faith of the believer towards God is so crucial that it forms the focal point of an armada of satanic assault.

- Eph. 6: 16 “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

“**Above all**”. After listing the various parts of the armour of God, available for the believer to wear in warfare against the entire array of the forces of darkness, special emphasis was made concerning the shield of faith. “Above all”. It implies, “if you forget all, do not forget this one.” If you lose any, do not lose the shield of faith because the fiery darts are numerous.

The faith of the believer is crucial for the following reasons:

- a. Salvation is sustained to the end by faith. Eph. 2: 8. Salvation is by grace through faith. The channel through which grace works to save souls is faith.
- b. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Heb.11: 6. Man becomes odious before God once he loses faith in Him.
- c. So long as man has faith, there is nothing that he cannot receive from heaven. The vehicle transporting miracles, breakthroughs, deliverance, answers to prayers and so on, from God in heaven, to man on earth, is faith. “According to your faith be it unto you.” Matt. 9: 29

- d. So long as a man has no faith in God, there is nothing that he can receive from God. James 1: 7

Anyone who has faith towards God shall remain connected to God, while anyone who doubts shall be tormented by fear and come under the dominion and manipulation of the devil.

Knowing how crucial the faith of the believer is, forces of darkness constantly assault the mind of man with “fiery darts”. These are constant barrage of thoughts of fear, desolation, desperation, immoral thoughts, satanic suggestions slandering God and accusing Him of insincerity and unfaithfulness. Whatever junk that hell can rake it seeks to download into the mind of the believer, to achieve just one objective – do not trust God.

The higher one goes in Christianity, the more intense these attacks become. The reason is evident, a matured Christian living a life of faith shall wreck havoc in the kingdom of darkness.

It is in Satan’s best interest that believers do not have faith in God, or at the very most, exercise what John Wesley calls the devil’s alternative – “mental assent”. Most believers exercise mental assent as an alternative to faith in God. Mental assent is acknowledging what God can do without believing He will do it. It is evidenced by having the Word of God in the head without any of it in the heart.

Whenever believers move the Word of God from their heads into their hearts, they become a terror to the devil. Simultaneously, they become valued possessions in the kingdom of God. Hell is frightened of a Christian who has genuine faith in God.

Long prayer is good, so are all the other necessary spiritual exercises like fasting, confessing the Word of God and maintaining purity. However, without genuine and unflinching faith in God, they are futile efforts.

Answers do not come from heaven simply because one has prayed and fasted. **We receive because we believe.** “All things are possible to him that believeth.” Mark 9: 23. It is possible to pray and yet not believe. Prayer does the asking while faith does the receiving. With prayer, man makes his needs known to God, with his faith, he receives the answer. We do not receive because we have prayed and fasted; we receive because we believe.

A story was told of a man who had a vision of heaven and an angel showed him round. At a point, they came to a massive warehouse, the length and breadth of which seemed infinite. The warehouse was filled with wrapped gifts, the way Christmas and birthday gifts are wrapped on earth. They were of various shapes and different sizes, some tiny, some huge.

The puzzled man asked the angel what the gifts meant and to whom they belonged? “To the children of God on earth,” replied the angel. The moment they pray and ask God for anything, God gives it to them. Before it is delivered, some lose faith and the gift is deposited in the warehouse. The day they rise in faith, the gift leaves the warehouse. Since divine timing is essential in every situation, (Ecc. 8: 6 “Because to every purpose there is time and judgment ...”) some have waited for years for answer to a particular prayer and on the day the

answer was being delivered, the angel bearing the answer could be outside the door while they grow weary and lose faith inside – the angel would promptly turn back and deposit the answer in the warehouse in heaven!

Every believer should strive to be like Abraham, “who against hope believed in hope”. Rom. 4: 18

Believers should be aware that the first issue of contention and intensive warfare is their faith. The scriptures warn: “... earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” Jude 3. For this purpose of defeating the saints, Satan fires his “fiery darts” which can only be quenched with the shield of faith. (Eph. 6: 16)

Satan knows that so long as a believer has faith, there is nothing he needs that he cannot receive from God. In addition, there is nothing that God wants that believer to do that he cannot achieve. Conversely, if the believer has doubt and unbelief, there is nothing that God can do for him, or him for God.

Thus, the stage is set for a massive spiritual warfare that only gets hotter as the believers progress in Christianity. The soul realm, in which is found the mind of man becomes the battleground.

As faith is important to God, so is doubt important to the devil. Faith receives from God, doubt hinders God.

- James 1: 6-8 “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

The person doubting God should not think he shall receive anything from Him. v.7 He shall receive nothing!

Christ made it clear, in His prayer for Peter (Luke 22: 31-32) that what believers need to sharpen and keep active is faith. He told Peter.

- “... Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy **faith** fail not ...”

It is amazing that the only divine intervention that Christ believed Peter needed was to pray for his faith to stand. One would have expected Christ to rebuke the devil or send angels to fight for Peter. He did neither of the two. Knowing fully well that Satan was coming to “sift Peter like wheat”. Christ allowed the devil to proceed. This should be a lesson to many believers accustomed to asking God “why me?” whenever crisis strikes. God does not stop crisis from afflicting His children, He expects them to trust Him for victory.

Whether one likes it or not, problems shall come. Every follower of Christ must be prepared that things can go wrong even though they have done nothing wrong. When crisis strikes, personal faith determines the victory or defeat of the believer. It is therefore important that believers should pray to God to strengthen their faith as well as pay attention to how faith comes.

HOW DOES FAITH COME?

- Rom. 10: 17 “so then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

There can be no faith without a word from God or a word from The Word of God. It is important to pay attention to what constitutes faith to avoid falling into presumption – a dangerous situation in which a believer erroneously concludes that God shall do something while God has no such intention at all!

In Heb. 11: 1-2, the Bible calls faith the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Faith has ‘substance’ that a believer can hold on to and put his trust in. That substance is the Word of God. That substance could come directly from the Bible, a prophecy, a Word of knowledge, a vision, a dream, or an inner witness. God could “quicken” a Bible passage that addresses the need of a believer.

It is important that before one starts believing God for something, first find out what God says about that particular situation. When God speaks, faith is released. If God does not speak, there is no basis for faith. The statement of God or from God is what forms the trust, the assurance, the substance that God will do what He has promised. It is on this that trust must be placed without wavering, even if it takes 25 years for it to come to pass.

In every situation, the will of God must be ascertained through prayer before a demand is made from heaven through the expression of faith.

To avoid presumption, particularly in the application of the Word of God, adequate distinction should be made between “**logos**” and “**rhema**”. These two Greek words are used to distinguish between the revealed Word as God, and the spoken word for specific situations.

The entire revelation of the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation is regarded as “Logos”. For example,

- John 1: 1 “In the beginning was the word (logos) and the word (logos) was with God, and the word (logos) was God.

Out of “logos” comes “rhema”. (Of course, God can, depending on the situation, give a rhema outside the Bible.) Rhema is a specific word spoken to a specific individual, at a specific time, for a specific purpose.

What is needed as basis for faith is “rhema”. Logos has to become rhema to an individual before faith can be expressed. Of course, one can pick a word of God and confess it, pray over it, asking God to confirm His word. This is good. However, be sure to have the “substance of faith” before acting on the Word of God. This is necessary, since our main concern is to avoid presumption.

The story was told of a man who fasted and prayed 40 days for spiritual power. At the end of his prayer and fasting, he headed for the zoo at the University of Ibadan, in Nigeria, to prove his spiritual prowess. Despite being chased earlier by the guards, he succeeded in jumping into the cage of the lions. Apparently, he wanted to prove that the God of Daniel was his God. The lion wasted no time in saying the grace before such an unexpected meal. He was killed by the beast immediately.

Did God tell him to jump into the cage of the lion? (Rhema) No. Was such a similar incident recorded in the Bible? (Logos) Yes. Did the man express faith in God? No. He was presumptuous. Yet, he prayed and fasted for 40 days.

Many believers make the mistake of jumping to unrealistic conclusions and expectations of God working in their lives. They end up frustrated and drained of spiritual vitality because they keep expecting God to do what He did not promise to do in their lives. Once an individual enters presumption, he becomes a toy for Satan's games and manipulations.

In the Bible, there are general promises and there are specific promises. There are promises that show the nature of God, there are promises to the Old Testament saints and there are some to the New Testament saints. The key is to take every situation to God in prayer and let Him speak. When He speaks, then, "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."

This is one of the reasons why prayer is indispensable in the life of a Christian. Present the situation and the petition before God, allow Him to speak or provide specific leading, then act on what He says. If He says nothing, then do nothing. It is either He is saying "no" or He is saying "wait". The "hyper-faith" of the 21st Century causes more problem than provide solutions. "Hyper-faith" says, "I asked for it and I must get it now."

It is true that Jesus says in Mark 11: 24 -

- "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

This promise should be **balanced** with 1 Jn. 5: 14

- "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing **according to his will**, he heareth us."

And

- Ecc. 8: 6 – "... to every purpose there is **time** and judgment."

A prayer could be made to heaven and yet heaven remains silent. The one who prays should ask if the request is the will of God, and if it is, is the timing right for God to move? We should always remember that God is working in our lives for His own glory, and not for our glory. It may be to the glory of God to delay the answer to a prayer so that it could be seen that all human efforts have failed.

A good example is the story of Lazarus. Logically, it did not make sense for Jesus to delay before heeding the desperate cry of those He loved. Lazarus was not dead when his sisters started praying. Jesus waited for him to die, and then He waited for him to be in the tomb for four days before He moved.

Why did He wait for four days?

The Jews believed that when a person died, the spirit hovered round his body for three days before finally departing. To convince even the greatest sceptics that Lazarus truly died, Jesus waited for four days before answering the prayer.

The Lord explained to His disciples,

- “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.”

It should be noted that according to Mark 11: 24, “believing” comes before “receiving”. It is an expression of faith in the goodness and faithfulness of God to ask Him for something once, and subsequently thank Him for the answer. Even if the answer turns out to be “no”, sufficient faith has been demonstrated in God that He is a loving Father Who takes the best decision for His children.

For example, if a six year old boy should ask his father for the keys of the car so that he too could drive, should his father give it to him? One has to discuss with one of those young chaps to truly realize how serious they are. At that age, they believe they can do whatever they see adults doing. A loving father will not grant such a request. He knows the implication. Oftentimes, what some Christians ask from God is similar to the plea of a six year old child wishing to drive a car. Some of our sincere requests come at wrong times.

It takes faith in God to continue to thank Him even when the request has not been granted. Such thanksgiving warms His heart and draws the believer closer to Him.

Constant precaution should be taken against presumption in the exercise of Christian faith towards God. Foolishness, such as issuing a cheque for a car, while there is no money in the bank account; because the Bible says “my God shall supply all your needs” should be avoided. Spiritual pranks such as issuing cheque for the tithe of a business deal that has not been concluded; with the hope that God will make the business successful is not faith towards God.

Did God say, “Go and issue a cheque in advance?”

“But”, someone may say, “‘my God shall supply all your needs’ is in the Bible.”

“Yes. It is logos”

“So, is it wrong then to pick a word from the Bible and confess it in time of need?”

“No. However, what should come first. Have you prayed about that need? After you prayed, what did God say?”

What if what you consider to be a “need”, is considered by God to be an indulgence, a luxury that you can do without? What if what you consider a “need” is seen by God to be prompted by covetousness, a desire to have what other people have?

Permit God to give you a word, before you issue a cheque on an empty bank account. Again, it needs to be stressed; this is why prayer is indispensable. Every need, no matter how slight it may be, should first be taken to God in prayer and wait for His leading.

Pastor Yonggi Cho shared the story of three South Korean Christian girls who drowned in a flood. A group of young Christians had a program in a town which they could only reach by crossing a river. Unfortunately, the river at that time was flooded because it was the rainy season, thereby making it difficult for the youths to cross.

Three of girls reasoned amongst themselves that in the Bible Jesus walked on water and Peter, too, did the same. Since they were believers in Jesus, they could do the same. So, they knelt and prayed, in the presence of the other youths, and boldly stepped into the flooded river expecting a miracle. Their dead bodies were recovered three days later.

But, they prayed?

Was God unfaithful to protect those girls who expressed “faith” in God? Why did God not honour their “trust” in Him? Was God unfaithful? No. Unfortunately, the three girls were presumptuous. Their boldness was admirable but their ignorance should neither be envied nor emulated. In Matt. 14: 25-31 the account of Jesus walking on water is recorded. Peter did not just see the Lord walking on water and jumped out of the boat. He prayed:

“Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water”

“And he said, Come.” Matt. 14: 28-29

Peter received a rhema from God, **“Come”**. Because the Lord said “Come”, Peter was able to walk on the water. Did God tell those three girls after they had prayed, “Come”? Apparently, no.

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

It is not sufficient that one has prayed. As important and indispensable as prayer is, after praying, believers should wait for clear signal from heaven before acting. The often repeated refrain “we have prayed” is not sufficient to exercise faith in God. Faith does not come by praying, it comes by hearing the Word of God. God must say something in that situation. If He says nothing, do nothing. It is better to err on the side of caution than to be hasty and be presumptuous. Of course, one should mention that oftentimes, God may not speak directly, but His Spirit can provide leading that the child of God should follow.

If God says nothing, but the individual concerned discerns that God is leading him to take a step or act in any particular manner, he should go ahead. It must be correctly discerned however that the leading is from the Holy Ghost and not an emotional interpretation of circumstances.

For example, a sister was contemplating proceeding on a trip to Israel. She prayed about it but was not sure if it was the will of God for her to go. One morning, she woke up and looked at the bedside clock. The time was 7.47 a.m. Immediately, she concluded God wanted her to go because the aircraft she was to board was Boeing 747!

Christians are often counselled to find a Word of God that addressed their needs and stand on it. Take God’s Word back to Him. Find out from the scriptures what God says about your situation and hold on to that Word. Speak God’s Word, not your own, pray on His Word, confess His Word, stand on His Word until He quickens it (turns it into rhema) for you – if that is His will in that situation.

- Jer. 1: 12 “...for I will hasten my word to perform it”
- Ps. 138: 2 “... for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.”

This spiritual exercise demands a lot of patience – a quality which many Christians seem to have in very short supply. Believers live in a world that moves on the fast lane. Because of this tendency of the world to expect quick results, some Christians too expect God to act like a fast food joint. Whoever wants to receive anything from God must be patient and consistent, because God is never in a hurry.

The key is, never move until God does. If you are patient, the Lord will come. He never fails. Do not worry that time is running out; with God, there is always time, once you are waiting on Him. He knows how to redeem time for His children. Do not permit the devil to strike your mind with anxiety and panic that there is no time. With God, there is always time for those who wait on Him.

- “Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” Heb. 10: 35-38
- “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Rom. 10: 17.

FOUNDATIONAL DOCTRINE THREE

DOCTRINE OF BAPTISMS

After laying the foundation of repentance, which enables the believer to share in God's nature of holiness, the believer is expected to place upon it faith towards God, a total dependence on the faithfulness, moral integrity and sincerity of God, that He is Who He says He is, and He will do whatever He has promised. After that comes the doctrine of baptisms.

The word of God teach baptisms, as of many, and not baptism. The general perception is that there is one baptism, which is by water.

What is baptism?

The Greek word translated baptism is "baptizo" which means "to dip, immerse fully". To have a better understanding of what scriptural baptism means, one could, in most instances in which it appears in the scriptures, read it as "dip, immerse fully". This is the baptism which Christ went through.

Out of the seven types of baptism recorded in scriptures, our focus in this section shall be on four. These are:

- Baptism into Christ and into His body
- Baptism by immersion in water
- Baptism in the Holy Ghost
- Baptism by fire

The other three baptisms, which shall not be considered fully in this section, are:

- a. John's baptism in water
- b. Baptism of Christ
- c. Baptism in the cloud and in the sea 1 Cor. 10: 2

BAPTISM IN CHRIST AND INTO HIS BODY

The first baptism every believer experiences, at new birth, is being "dipped, immersed fully" into Christ and into His body.

- 1 Cor. 12: 13 – "For by one Spirit are we all baptized, (*dipped, immersed fully*) into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

It is this baptism that confirms one as a member of the body of Christ. The moment an individual becomes a member of the body of Christ, his position in the spirit realm changes. He ceases to be an earthly being; he is now a heavenly being, a new creation in Christ Jesus. He is therefore expected to cease from carnality and become spiritual.

The agent for baptizing the believer into Christ and into His body is the Holy Ghost. Man has nothing to contribute but to submit to the dictates of the Spirit of God. It is equally the working of the Holy Spirit that places an individual in a particular local assembly, and assigns him his duties while equipping him with the necessary gifts to accomplish them.

Without this basic baptism, the individual concerned cannot make heaven and he is not regarded as a member of the body of Christ. Once an individual accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and saviour, through the testimony of the Holy Ghost, such a one is “made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” Eph. 2: 6; “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” Eph. 1: 21
It is because of this spiritual reality that every believer can confidently expect to overcome every adversity and rise again no matter the affliction that comes. The believer will always overcome, if he stands on this truth. This is confirmed in Rom. 8: 11

- “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

Two issues that should interest every believer are addressed here.

1. The ownership of the believer
2. The resurrection power in-dwelling the believer

On the cross, Christ purchased, (redeemed) man back to God. Henceforth, man ceases to have authority over his life; he is now the property of a new Master – gentle, loving, holy and full of mercy. To confirm, seal, affirm, the new ownership, a stamp was placed on the deed of purchase, that from henceforth, the individual concerned has been delivered from the power of sin, Satan and death, and belongs to Jesus Christ. The stamp is the Holy Ghost.

- “... after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise” Eph. 1: 13

Every believer in Christ Jesus has the Holy Ghost in-dwelling him, as the evidence, the surety, the seal, that he or she is the property of Jesus Christ. Christianity transcends mere trusting in the Lord for salvation and a blissful life on earth and in heaven. Christianity actually implies that the believer is the property of Jesus Christ and every owner has the right to determine what he wants to do with his property.

Many Christians miss this point because the new Owner of their soul is not a dictator. He actually gives His property the option of yielding to His will in love, or to disobey in self-will. Where there is a reluctance to yield, He arranges situations and circumstances in the life of the believer to bring him to the point of surrender to the will of the Lord. This aspect shall be discussed in greater detail under Baptism by Fire.

The other issue dealt with by the in-dwelling Presence of the Holy Ghost is the resurrection power.

When the forces of darkness realized they made a terrible mistake in crucifying Jesus, (*1 Cor. 2: 8 – “Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory)*, all the forces of darkness teamed up in a desperate battle to stop Jesus from resurrecting from the dead.

To accomplish the resurrection of Christ, God manifested the greatness of His power, as if to say, “When I say I Am the Almighty God, it is because I have the greatest power in the universe.”

Eph. 1: 19-21 describes it as:

- “... the exceeding greatness of his power ... according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power ...”

It is this exceeding greatness of God’s power that enabled God through the cross of Jesus to “spoil principalities and powers, making a show of them openly, triumphing over them on the cross” Col. 2: 15.

The best part of this account, for the believer, is that after releasing this “exceeding greatness of his power”, God did not withdraw it again into His store house. Rather, whenever anyone accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, God takes this “exceeding greatness of his power”, and puts it inside him. The same measure of God’s power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is inside every believer in Christ Jesus.

Eph. 1: 19 call it:

- “... the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe ...”

It is for the sole reason of knowing who believers are in Christ Jesus that Paul prayed a Spirit anointed prayer in Eph. 1: 15-23 that each believer may receive the “spirit of wisdom and revelation” in order to know three things:

1. The hope of God’s calling
2. The glorious inheritance awaiting believers in Christ
3. The exceeding greatness of God’s power in-dwelling believers

Rom. 8: 11 reminds believers that since the Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is in-dwelling them, then, whatever believers go through, they shall overcome. This is the basis for the assurance in Rom. 8: 28 –

- “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”
- “We are more than conquerors through Christ that loved us” Rom. 8: 37
- “Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” 1 John 4: 4

In Eph. 3: 20, the word of God clarifies that because of the power in-dwelling the believer, God is able to do “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”

For this purpose, every believer seeking to have a vital and fruitful relationship with the Lord should live with confidence and unshakeable faith that God is working in their lives to fulfil a glorious purpose. Whatever a child of God goes through, in the will of God, it shall turn out for good. The all too often expressed fear, doubt, anxiety, depression and so on, observed in Christians whenever they face adversities, is a glaring manifestation that this faith is lacking in many. Whatever happens to a child of God, even if it is death, it is for good.

This blessing comes about because at conversion, the believer was baptized, (*dipped, immersed fully*) into Christ and into His body.

BAPTISM BY IMMERSION IN WATER

- 1 Peter 3: 21 – “The life figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Baptism is the “answer” of a good conscience toward God. What then is the question? In pointing out that baptism is an answer, the word of God implies that God is asking the believer a question of which the answer is the baptism by immersion in water.

The Lord commands that after salvation, believers should be baptized. That baptism comes after salvation is a confirmation that it does not save. The person being baptized is already saved and redeemed through faith in Christ Jesus.

- “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. Mark 16: 16
- Eph. 2: 8 – “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: “

It makes no sense whatsoever for an individual who has not surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ to be baptized. The decision to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour is taken by a matured adult exercising his or her power of choice. The decision to be baptized cannot be taken by proxy that is, on behalf of another person. No one is born a Christian; one becomes a Christian the day he decides to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. That the parents are Christians does not automatically confer salvation upon the children. Yes, the children are born into a Christian family, but they have to decide either to accept the gift of salvation or reject it.

It is not sufficient that one attends church regularly, and therefore qualifies for baptism. The first criterion is to submit fully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is entirely possible for someone to attend church meetings regularly and yet not be in Christ.

Of what significance then is baptism? First, it is a public identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The one being baptized, symbolically takes part in the experience of Christ through death (dipped fully in water), burial, (covered with water), and resurrection (raised out of the water). It is a physical act expressing a spiritual truth. Col. 2: 12.

- “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”

Second, it is equally a symbolical act of dying to sin. Herein lies the question which God is asking every believer in Christ. Are you finished with sin or are you still interested in it?

- Rom. 6: 7 – “For he that is dead is freed from sin.”

Having redeemed man through the precious blood of Jesus, God expects man to “die” to sin and be alive to righteousness. The symbolic act of death, burial, and resurrection, enacted through water baptism is the answer man gives to God that he is now dead (to sin) and alive to a new nature (righteousness) in Christ Jesus.

- Rom. 6: 3-4 - “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

The one undergoing baptism is publicly expressing the death of the sinful Adamic nature, also called the “old man” and the “flesh”. This sinful nature inherited from Adam cannot be cleansed, purged or refined. It has to be crucified. It is an issue of serious concern to observe that in many believers, the old man is alive and kicking. As a matter of fact, it is the one singular factor responsible for most of the problems and strife encountered in Christian assemblies. The Word of God describes some of the activities of the old man in Col. 3: 5-8

- Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: ... in the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds.

The passage above concerning the old man starts with “mortify”. Oxford English Dictionary describes mortify as “subdue (physical urges) by self-denial or discipline”. Through water baptism, the believer indicates that he has mortified his flesh.

Baptism in water has to be approached in a sober mood, with a full awareness of the demand of God. Anything short of this relegates baptism to a mere religious observance, without any spiritual value, and the believers thus dipped in water merely taking a bath. Baptism by immersion in water is a physical act expressing a spiritual truth.

For this purpose, it is only relevant after salvation and meaningful when one is an adult. The decision to be baptized or not, can only be taken by the person intending to do so. It can not be taken on behalf of another person.

THE CROSS AND THE OLD MAN

Christ accomplished two works on the cross. However, only one of those two works is emphasized in the church.

- One, Christ secured forgiveness of sin for man, through His blood.
- Two, He destroyed the sinful nature through the cross.

Without the destruction of the sinful nature, man will habitually commit sin. It is like sweeping falling leaves from a tree everyday when those constant droppings of leaves have become an unwanted nuisance. The solution is to uproot the tree. Once the tree is uprooted, the problem is finally solved.

The objective of God is to completely uproot out of man the sinful nature. Once that nature is uprooted, every problem associated with sin in man is finished. It is only then that the new nature in Christ Jesus can be fully made manifest. Man

is not a sinner because he sins; man sins because he is a sinner. The nature of unsaved man is to sin. That nature has to be destroyed for man to become Christ-like.

Therefore, on the cross, these two-fold works were accomplished by Christ. Through the blood, forgiveness of sin was secured for man; through the cross, the sinful nature was destroyed. As powerful as the blood of Jesus is, it can only cleanse sin. The blood of Jesus cannot stop the sinner from committing sin again, only the cross can do that. The blood of Jesus will wash away our sin, but it will not stop us from repeating the sin or committing another one.

Through the cross, Christ destroyed the sinful nature and secured eternal release for man from the Adamic nature.

- Rom. 6: 6 - Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. v.7 For he that is dead is freed from sin

The sinful nature, the old man, was crucified, killed on the cross, so that man shall no longer commit sin.

Unfortunately, most believers appropriate the work of the blood, and ignore the work of the cross. Both are important, but God wants us to be completely free from sin so that we can serve righteousness and make rapid progress with him.

The main objective of Christ coming into the world is to destroy sin, not merely to secure forgiveness for man. In Matthew 1: 21, the angel Gabriel told Mary:

- And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

The first sign that an individual has met with Christ; and that the Lord in-dwells him is a noticeable separation from sin in his life. This is sanctification. The current life style of some so-called believers, who claim to be born-again yet, habitually live in sin and engage in moral misconducts, is not consistent with scriptures.

It is either those who live like this are deceivers who have not submitted to the Lordship of Jesus, or they imply by their life styles, that Christ did not accomplish a thorough victory over sin on the cross. Since the latter is not correct, we must conclude that the former is true of those sinful “brethren”.

In John 8: 34-36, Christ made a categorical statement concerning his work of delivering man from sin. He says,

- ... Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin ... If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

The Son makes free from what? From sin! Will Christ claim that He sets free from sin and yet fail to do so? If He says so, it is so. How come then, people claim to belong to Him and yet there is no difference between them and sinful unbelievers? Those who do such are of those “who put their hands to the plough and look back”. In the same verse, (Luke 9: 62) Jesus Christ declares they are not “fit for the kingdom of God.”

It is possible to place one’s hand to the plough and look back. Like the ancient Israelites in the wilderness, whom God took physically out of Egypt, but their

hearts remained in Egypt. They carried the onions, garlic and cucumbers of Egypt in their hearts to follow God into the Promised Land. What happened to them is now history.

Because God created man a free moral agent, with the freedom to make choices, even after giving man the gift of salvation, God still gives man the freedom to choose either to continue with sin or not. The question whether or not to continue with sin is answered by baptism.

Baptism by immersion in water is the answer of a good conscience of the believer to God that he or she is dead to sin and alive unto righteousness and holiness in Christ Jesus. For this reason, baptism must be approached with sober understanding and unflinching commitment to maintain purity of life in Christ Jesus.

How does the cross work in believers to destroy the sinful nature? In much the same way that the blood works to cleanse sin and grace works to give salvation – by faith. Everything of God is received by faith. Concerning the working of the cross on the sinful nature, Rom. 6: 11 says:

- Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The key is to “reckon” oneself dead to sin. Whatever an individual accepts that he is dead to, he can no longer respond to it. Even when it is brought to him, he voluntarily will not respond. The devil cannot force a child of God to sin, because “greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” 1 John 4: 4. However, an individual can exercise his or her liberty to make choices by yielding to sin and later hide behind the ancient excuse of the human race: “the serpent beguiled me”. Gen. 3: 13

Finally, what happens if a child of God falls into sin? God in His mercy made provision for cleansing and restoration through genuine repentance. (Please refer to the section on repentance from dead works.)

BAPTISM IN THE HOLY GHOST

- But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon ye, and ye shall be witnesses unto me ... Acts. 1: 8

The first encounter the believer has with the Holy Ghost is at conversion, when the Spirit baptizes him into Christ and into His body. The second encounter is to endow (cloth, equip) the believer with power to do the works of Christ.

Right from the onset, the difference in empowering the Old Testament saint and the New Testament saint should be made clear. In this age of prosperity message, it is crucial that believers strike a good balance between contentment of the kingdom of God and covetousness of the world. It is undeniable that the Lord desires the well being of His people, but emphases must remain on what constitutes the will of the Lord and the objective of the Holy Ghost in the lives of believers.

In Deuteronomy 8: 18, the Bible says:

- But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he swore unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

It is scriptural that not only Jews but, also, Christians are descendants of Abraham; the former by direct descent, the latter through faith in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3: 29). However, the mandate of God to the Old Testament saint should not be confused with the commission of God to the New Testament saint. Both saints are children of God but with different mandates and instructions.

The Old Testament saint was promised earthly blessings, while the New Testament saint was given an earthly assignment, by God, and promised heavenly blessing. God gave the Old Testament saint power to get wealth (Deuteronomy 8: 18). How about the New Testament saint, what was he empowered to do, by God, and where is his reward?

- Acts 1: 8 – But **ye shall receive power**, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: **and ye shall be witnesses** unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
- Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **to an inheritance incorruptible**, and **undefiled**, and **that fadeth not away**, **reserved in heaven for you**. 1 Peter 1: 3-4

The Old Testament saint was given power to get earthly wealth, the New Testament saint was given power to witness! Herein lays the problem facing the church: the New Testament saint prefers the reward of the Old Testament saint as it relates to earthly wealth. He abandons his own mandate of witnessing, picks that which appeals to him in the Old Testament and intentionally avoids the rigorous demands of the Old Testament rituals of worship and observance of the law. It is a selective application of the word of God prompted by what Jesus clearly warns the church against: “covetousness”. Luke 12: 15; Heb. 13: 5

The Holy Ghost is given to the church to enable believers do the work of Christ, win souls into the kingdom of God and not to accumulate earthly wealth, which shall soon be destroyed by fire! This misapplication of the purpose of the Holy Ghost is pervasive in the church to such extent that few Christians show up for evangelism. Fewer take part in crusades, and much fewer numbers engage in personal witnessing or any form of soul winning. Even when some enlightened pastors produce tracts and materials for soul winning for free, very few Christian pick any to distribute to unbelievers and in most instances, those who pick store the materials either at home or in their Bibles, as page markers.

There are people who have been Christians for years and yet have not won a single soul into the kingdom of God. What do they do with the Holy Ghost indwelling them? They pray in tongues for prosperity, open doors, financial breakthroughs, and better paying jobs and so on. Rarely does one find Christians praying in tongues for God to save souls. When some Christians do, it is usually during special evangelistic programmes which some churches organize annually

to justify retaining the tag “Bible Believing Church”. Once the programme ends, in most cases, the intercession for souls also ceases until the following year.

It needs be stressed over and over, that the main assignment of the born-again Christian is to win souls into the kingdom of God and not to amass worldly wealth. Christ says in John 15: 16

- Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

Christ did not choose anyone to show he is a “king’s kid” by cruising around in a limousine or other exotic cars while souls are perishing. His main aim of coming was to “seek and save that which was lost”. Luke 19: 10. When He was leaving the world, He handed the uncompleted task to His church as the Great Commission, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”. Christ never implied in any of His teachings or statements that His followers should abandon soul winning and concentrate on accumulating earthly wealth and prosperity. Rather, He kept warning them on the dangers of covetousness and the love of money. He assured His followers that if they sought the kingdom of God first, all they need shall be added unto them. (Matt. 6: 33). The apostle Paul echoed the warning of Christ against the love of money in 1 Tim. 6: 6-10, and the assurance that the Lord shall supply all their needs, if believers put God first in their lives.

It is crucial that Christians understand what the Holy Ghost came to do in their lives and the reasons for which the Lord baptizes His followers in the Holy Ghost – it is entirely for the purpose of “witnessing”. Because Christians are not witnessing effectively, we do not see the gifts of the Holy Ghost demonstrated through the church as we ought. Nowadays, emphasis has shifted in most places from populating heaven through conversion and discipleship to building religious empires evidenced by the uncontrolled desire to construct magnificent and costly places of worship, and all the other paraphernalia of earthly pomp and pageantry, in the name of Christ.

Since such construction projects cost lots of money, members of the church have to be encouraged to make more. Christ pointed out that a servant cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6: 24), you cannot serve God and money; therefore, soul winning becomes the casualty at the expense of fat cheque books.

One is not advocating that Christians should no longer work. However, there must be a godly balance between living in the world, and yet not be of the world. Right now, the scale is tilting too heavily on the side of acquisition of earthly wealth to the detriment of doing the express will of the Lord, which is the purpose for which the Holy Ghost came.

WHO IS THE HOLY GHOST?

This is a pertinent question, in view of doctrines and teachings in the world that seek to relegate the Holy Ghost to the level of electricity current. There are three

members in the Godhead: The Father, The Son, and the Holy Ghost. The three beings are in perfect unity that the scriptures say: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD” Deut. 6: 4. This deep mystery is repeated in the union of Christ (as the Head) and the church (as His body). It is also enacted in the marriage covenant in which the husband and the wife are “one flesh”.

- For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery; ... Eph. 5: 30-32

Every time believers share the grace, they are re-affirming the triune Godhead.

- “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost ...” 2 Cor. 13: 14

We received grace through Jesus Christ: Eph. 2: 8 “*For by grace are ye saved through faith*”.

Love comes from God. John 3: 16 “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son ...*”

Fellowship (communion) comes from the Holy Ghost. “*...and the communion of the Holy Ghost ...*” 2 Cor. 13: 14

Communion comes from the Greek word ***Koinonia*** which means “the act of using a thing in common”. This is the basis of Christian fellowship demonstrated in Acts 2: 44-47. It is the Holy Ghost Who makes it possible for people of different cultural backgrounds, different educational qualifications, different nationalities, and so on, to form one congregation of believers in which everyone becomes “brother” and “sister”.

(It should be pointed out, for the benefit of new converts, that the word “Trinity” is not mentioned directly in the Bible. It is a term used by Bible scholars to describe the triune Godhead.)

Everything Christ did, while on the earth was by the Holy Ghost.

1. His birth: “And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee ...” Luke 1: 35. In Matthew 1: 18, the scripture records that Mary “... was found with child of the Holy Ghost.” and the angel told Joseph in a dream “... that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.” Matthew 1: 20. It is undeniable that whoever impregnates a woman is the father of the child. Since Mary “... was found with the child of the Holy Ghost”, how can anyone deny that Holy Ghost is God?
2. The temptation of Christ: “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.” Matthew 4: 1.
3. The ministry of Jesus: “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: ...” Acts 10: 38.
4. His death: “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God ...” Heb. 9: 14
5. His resurrection: “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you ...” Rom. 8. 11

6. Post-resurrection: “Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen.” Acts 1: 2
7. His revelation as the Lamb of God: “... upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” John 1: 33

We have God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost. The plan of salvation of the human race was formulated by God the Father, (John 3: 16) executed by God the Son, and is being administered by God the Holy Ghost. Whatever is to be accepted by God must be initiated and done through the Holy Ghost. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” There is currently going on, a phased relocation of the throne of God from heaven to the earth. The first member of the Godhead to move is the Holy Ghost; He arrived on the day of Pentecost. After Him, Jesus Christ shall arrive at the battle of Armageddon to set up the millennial reign. Rev. 19: 11-20: 4. At the end of the millennial reign, (more about this in the chapter on Eternal Judgment), God the Father shall arrive.

- Rev. 21: 3 “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God”

WE NEED THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY GHOST

If Christ could do nothing without the Holy Ghost, then believers are completely helpless without Him. It does not take too long, for anyone truly desirous of pleasing the Lord to discover that Christian service “is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of hosts.” Zech. 4: 6

Recognizing our helplessness without Him, Christ promised to send to His church the Comforter, the Holy Ghost. It is the in-dwelling Presence of the Holy Ghost that enables believers to do the work of the Lord and witness effectively for Him.

A good example was the apostle Peter, who during the arrest of Jesus denied the Lord to the point of cursing himself. The same Peter, after the baptism in the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, preached and 3,000 souls were won to the Lord. Who made the difference? The Holy Ghost made the difference.

Every believer in Christ must take a firm stand against the confusion deliberately caused by the devil concerning the operations and the Person of the Holy Ghost. Attempts have, and are still being made, to create doubts in the minds of the believers over the relevance of speaking in tongues in the present day church. Some Christian assemblies have placed a “ban” on the baptism of the Holy Ghost with the manifestation of speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues is relevant today as it was on the day of Pentecost. Not only on the issue of tongues is the operations of the Holy Ghost disputed, divine healing is also questioned as well as the other gifts of the Holy Ghost.

In almost every instance in which people received the baptism in the Holy Ghost, it was manifested through speaking in other tongues. (Acts 2: 2-4; 10: 44-46; 19: 4-7). Critics of the gift of speaking in tongues refer to Acts 2 that on the day of Pentecost, the disciples spoke in other human languages, clearly understood by all the foreigners gathered in Jerusalem. Therefore, affirm the critics, speaking in tongues today, which no man understands is not scriptural. What exactly is the correct scriptural truth?

1 Cor. 13: 1 confirms “the tongues of men and of angels”. On the day of Pentecost, Holy Ghost enabled the disciples to speak the tongues of men in order to preach to the various nationals in Jerusalem. This divine enablement has been repeated by God in this generation to enable cross cultural missionaries deliver the gospel in foreign lands. Concerning the other aspect, the Word of God in 1 Cor.14: 2 clarify thus:

- For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

Holy Ghost can enable believers to speak in languages of men, and also in a heavenly language which no man understands. It all depends on the need.

One very important reason why every believer should receive the gift of speaking in tongues is the divine assistance Holy Ghost renders in prayers.

- Rom. 8: 26-27 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered ... because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Yielding to the deception that discourages from speaking in tongues is willingly allowing Satan to steal a precious gift from the child of God. Speaking in tongues is a gift, just as the other eight gifts of the Holy Ghost. Those nine gifts are available for every believer as divine equipping to witness effectively for Jesus Christ and win souls into the kingdom of God.

The Lord instructed His disciples in Acts 1: 4,

- “... wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”

That promise was fulfilled ten days later on the day of Pentecost. (For clarification, the Feast of Pentecost takes place 50 days after the Feast of Passover. After His resurrection, the Lord spent forty days appearing to His disciples, Acts 1: 3, before ascending to heaven. Ten days after Christ ascended, Holy Ghost came down.)

Without the divine empowerment of the Holy Ghost, it is not possible to be an effective witness for Christ. The devil is working to ensure that believers do not accept this gift of God. It is the right of every believer in Christ Jesus to receive the baptism in the Holy Ghost with the manifestation speaking in tongues. It is relevant today as it was on the day of Pentecost.

The baptism in the Holy Ghost comes simply through prayer. This is not a prayer asking God to send the Holy Ghost, but a prayer of readiness of the believer concerned to receive the gift of God. The gift has already been given. The believer praying is simply telling God, "I am ready to receive the baptism in the Holy Ghost."

- Luke 11: 13 – If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

The baptism in the Holy Ghost gives the believer access into the following areas of divine grace:

1. Power and boldness to witness. Acts 1: 8. Most Christians complain of inability to witness and win souls into the kingdom of God. Like Peter, that story will change once the Holy Ghost arrives with His gifts.
2. Release of spiritual gifts. 1 Cor. 12: 7-11. Certainly, every believer would like to operate in the realm of the miraculous. Praying for the sick and seeing them healed, praying for the blind and seeing the sight restored, raising the dead back to life, giving accurate prophecies, and so on. All those manifestations of the power of God are only possible after baptism in the Holy Ghost has been received.
3. The believer is also divinely enabled to pray accurately and with greater effectiveness. Rom. 8: 26
4. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." John 4: 23-24. Baptism in the Holy Ghost enables the believer have a closer intimacy with God. Such a believer worships with the spirit-man.
5. Holy Ghost is the Spirit of truth. He gives understanding and revelation into the word of God. John 16: 13; 1 Cor. 2: 9-16. One person may read the Bible, and it is like a story book, while another person picks the same page and chapter and begins to bring out deep spiritual truths. The difference between both: The Holy Ghost.

Every believer in Christ Jesus must be baptized in the Holy Ghost. There is no other alternative to a fruitful and vibrant Christian life.

BAPTISM BY FIRE

Why do we suffer intensely after becoming Christians? Why does a loving and compassionate God permit so much suffering in the lives of His children?

In Eph. 5: 25-27, it is written that Christ gave Himself for the church, "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

If the church of Jesus Christ is to be spotless, glorious, without wrinkle and without blemish, then, the individual members must be thoroughly purged of every defilement and moral misconduct. If man cooperates with God in this

regards, there would be no problem in bringing man to the ideal state of holiness and righteousness that God has in mind. Unfortunately, “every man is a deceiver.” Not in the sense of deliberately telling lies, but few people will agree that they have moral flaws. Therefore, to show man his true perverted and depraved nature, God applies a little pressure, again and again, to reveal the true character of man and areas that require refining.

There is a difference between the personality of man and the character of man. Personality is what a man shows when people are around, character is who he is when he is alone. Character is the manifestation of the true self. God is not interested in man’s personality; He is interested in man’s character.

However, it is not easy to discover true character. It is never revealed when the going is easy or when life is joyful and all prayers are answered. True character is revealed under pressure. Put a man, or a woman, under pressure, and the true character will be exposed.

It is a sad reality of life that many relationships in the world are built on human personality. Many friendships, marriages, clubs, churches, are built on human personalities. Whenever crisis strikes and people are put under pressure, it becomes shocking to discover that someone erstwhile rated as being honest and caring is nothing but a hypocritical self-seeking monster. Others discover that an erstwhile close confidant is nothing but a treacherous, untrustworthy, back-biting perverted individual.

Some wives discover, too late, that the Prince Charming is nothing but a handsome devil, while some men discover that their Queen of Hearts has no heart at all. When pressure comes, true character is revealed.

In putting His children through pressure, God shows them clearly the areas of flaws and shortcomings that He wants them to correct. Some Christians easily learn the lesson and make rapid progress with God. Others cling tightly to those obnoxious character traits thereby forcing God to keep hammering at the same spot year after year.

There are Christians who have been experiencing the same trials, afflictions, problems, year after year. It simply shows that the lesson God wants them to learn is yet unlearned. With God, man cannot jump the examination bar. If man fails, he will re-sit. Unlike man’s examination, the re-sit of God is tougher than the first examination, and it keeps getting tougher as man continues to re-sit.

Therefore, having problems or difficulties should not be the concern of believers. Problems and difficulties will come. What should matter to children of God is what they have learnt from what they have suffered. If a man, or a woman learns nothing from what he or she has suffered, such individual has suffered in vain.

Some people are naturally greedy; some are covetous, while others could be gossips, busy-bodies, arrogant and so on. For each individual, God arranges examinations that will hit at the core of the flaw. For example, the covetous could suffer a loss of all material possessions, and the means of acquiring them, until he develops a godly attitude of contentment. To the prideful, God could

arrange a loss of position and privileges, until he learns godly humility. To the prayerless, and the spiritually careless, God could arrange fiery trials and tribulations that will drive such a one to his knees until he develops a prayerful and watchful attitude.

Every believer must understand the way God is moving and operating in his life. Every experience that a child of God goes through has a divine purpose. Nothing is wasted by God.

There are three key experiences that believers need to pay attention to, and understand the source and purpose in order to be able to deal with each one appropriately.

1. Temptation – This is an inducement to sin and do evil. James 1: 13-15. It never comes from God, but from the forces of darkness.
2. Persecution – Attacks on the believer for bearing the testimony of Christ. John 15: 20. It comes from the forces of darkness and could be channelled through church members who are not totally sanctified. The most painful ones come from Church members while it also comes from opposing religions like Islam, and worldly ideologies like Communism.
3. Trials – God’s method for making believers perfect. James 1: 2-5; 1Peter 4: 12

It should be noted that God takes note of a believers handling of these three experiences and actually rewards the believer who overcomes temptations with promotion. James 1: 12. He also permits persecution of His church because persecution makes the church stronger and dynamic.

In view of the above, every believer has to live with an ever ready consciousness that things can go wrong anytime – even when they have done nothing wrong. Believers have to live constantly with the awareness that situations and circumstances will not always work out the way that they expect. This is where the faith of each individual comes in, that even in the most distressing situation; God is working out His best plan for the lives of His children. God expects believers to respond with thanksgiving at all times.

- “In all things, give thanks.” 1 Thes. 5: 18

One major goal of purification by fire is to bring the believers to the point of “brokenness”. This is a term adopted for the crucifixion of the flesh of man, otherwise called the old man. An unbroken Christian will not differ much from unbelievers. It is a cause for concern to observe professors of faith in Christ Jesus eliciting similar behavioural tendencies like worldly sinners. When Christians lie, cheat, steal, and are malicious and hateful, prideful and arrogant, immoral and lustful, they announce publicly that they are unbroken. They are still living in the flesh. (Gal. 5: 19-21) and are yet to surrender to the life of the Spirit of God in-dwelling them. (Gal. 5: 22-25)

In Jn. 12: 24, the Lord gives a profound insight into the need for brokenness. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” The chaff of the wheat contains precious life-multiplying seed on the inside. So long as the chaff

is intact, that life bearing seed cannot come out, reproduce and nourish man and animal alike. So it has to die by burial to force the life bearing seed to germinate and reproduce.

The same illustration could be applied to an egg. The outer hard shell contains the white matter and the yoke. The life forming part of the egg is the yoke. The shell has to break open for the chick to hatch. Subsequently, the shell loses any relevance. It is thrown away. If the shell refuses to break, the life inside shall suffocate and die.

In this illustration, the shell could represent the flesh of man, the white matter the soul and the yoke the spirit man. Jesus has this to say concerning the flesh and the spirit of man:

- It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. – John 6: 63

Bringing out this life is not an easy task. The flesh of man is stubborn and resistant to everything that is of God. It cooperates willingly with everything that is of the devil, and every matter that is opposed to godliness. The reason for this is not far fetched.

- Gen. 2: 7 – And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground ...” The flesh of man was made from the dust. That was why God told Adam, “... for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” Gen. 3: 19. When Adam fell, and the LORD God pronounced judgment upon the man, the woman, and the serpent, representing the devil, God told the serpent.

- “... upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.” Gen. 3: 14

The life sustaining nourishment for the serpent (devil) is the dust (the flesh of man). So long as man has flesh, the devil shall be in business. It is the flesh of man that nourishes satanic activities. That is the main reason why scriptures say, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God ...” 1 Cor. 15: 50. For this reason, God has to change the flesh of man before man can enter heaven.

- 1 Cor.15: 51-53 “Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ... for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

For now, the flesh serves the purpose of housing the spirit of man, thereby enabling man to operate on this physical plane. When the spirit and soul of man depart (commonly called physical death), the flesh begins to disintegrate and return to dust. (Jas. 2: 26)

The purpose of God is that man must crucify the flesh and its passions and reign over it by his spirit. This ideal state enables man to live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit. At this point, the life of God in the believer shall flow out.

As pointed out earlier, because the flesh is resistant to godly change, and man rarely sees the flaws in himself, God gives a helping hand, in a painful way. Without this dealing of man by God, no man can fulfil the divine program of God for his life.

- 2 Cor. 4: 7-9 “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.

There is treasure deposited by God in each believer. All the problems and difficulties that children of God go through have only one objective, to break the flesh and release this treasure in their generation. This is the reason why the scripture assure believers in Rom. 8: 28

- And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

When you go through difficulties, afflictions, persecutions, trials of faith, it is wise and prudent to ask God for light, in order to understand what he is taking you through, and why. In every situation, God works for the good of His children.

FOUNDATION DOCTRINE FOUR

LAYING ON OF HANDS

It is interesting to note that the first three foundational doctrines focused on the individual believer excluding other people. From repentance, through faith on to baptisms, the doctrines concentrate on the individual's personal sanctification, personal relationship with God, personal enduement with power and personal purification.

In the fourth doctrine, the focus shifts from the believer being a recipient of the various workings of God, to becoming a channel which is being used by God. Herein lays the main purpose of striving to attain to spiritual maturity: becoming a channel through which God's grace and power shall flow to bless and equip other people. Unfortunately, many stagnate before reaching this point. After years of being in the Lord, many believers are still at the level of receiving.

The call of God upon every believer in Jesus Christ is to attain to spiritual maturity and become channels of God's working in their generation. Emphases must shift from self to others, from receiving to giving, and from being blessed to becoming a blessing. The measure of a man's worth is not how much he has, but how much he gives out. In Christianity, a blessed individual is not known by how much he has accumulated, but by how much he distributes. God's promise to Abraham was to bless him and make him a blessing.

How much joy you have is determined by how much joy you bring into the lives of other people. How much money you have is determined by how much you are able to give out. How much strength you have is determined by how well you strengthen other people.

If your blessing is sufficient for yourself alone, you cannot be considered truly blessed. If you are the only person who benefits from your joy, you cannot be considered truly joyful. The measure of your worth is not how much you have, but how much you are able to give out.

The Lord demonstrates this kingdom principle in the account of the widow's mite. (Mark 12: 41-44) He categorically stated that the poor widow gave more than all the other people because she gave out of her poverty, but they gave out of their abundance. In the records of God, the "poor widow" was richer than all the "rich people" who brought gifts to the temple.

Believers need to understand that God does not measure the wealth of His children by how much they hoard and keep within their grasp, but by how much they give out. The Lord actually warned against the dangers of covetousness. "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Luke 12: 15.

Luke 12:16-21 *And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:*

17And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

18And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

19And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

20But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

21So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

It is a principle of the world to hoard and keep, even when one is faced with glaring needs in the lives of other people. It is totally opposite the principle of the kingdom of God. Hoarding wealth for personal enjoyment while ignoring the acute need and lack in the lives of other people was the main reason the rich man in Luke 16: 19-31 went to hell and Lazarus the beggar ended up in Abraham's bosom.

With the Laodicean characteristic (Rev. 3: 14-22) which many believers elicit today, it is frightening to imagine the number of "believers" that will end up on the wrong side of eternity due to failure to give. The ability or the inability to give is the yardstick for separating the sheep from the goats in Matthew 25: 31-46

Hands of Blessing

Laying on of hands featured prominently in both old and new testaments, as means of imparting definite spiritual blessing, it is accompanied by prayer and, or, prophetic word. From the days of the patriarchs, hands were laid on people to bless and confirm covenants. By Lev. 1: 1-5, a new dimension was introduced, in which hand was laid on the scapegoat and the sin of the nation of Israel was transferred to it.

On this point, believers should be cautioned, with justifiable reasons, to be selective in submitting to the laying on of hands. Bible scholars believe that there is a spirit to spirit contact when hand is laid on someone. Since he who blesses is greater than he who is being blessed, there could be the possibility of transfers of spiritual traits from the greater to the lesser.

Hebrews 7:7

And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

While one does not disregard that "greater is he who lives in you than he that is in the world." (1 John 4: 4), "watch" and "moderation" are equally stressed in the New Testament. What people seek, in submitting to hands being laid on them, are impartations of blessings, spiritual gifts, healings and deliverance. No

one prays for transference of sins or becoming a partaker of other men's iniquities.

- 1 Tim. 5: 22 cautions, "*Lay hands suddenly on no man neither be partaker of other men's sin, keep thyself pure.*"

However, every believer, as a member of the body of Christ should function as an extension of Jesus Christ in the world. As and when the need arises, and the Spirit of God approves, (For as many as are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God – Rom. 8: 14) believers should pray for people, (believers and unbelievers alike), lay hands on them and pronounce blessings. James 5: 14-16 confirms that such prayers of faith in God will be answered.

Channel of Anointing

The head of man is regarded as the seat of the anointing, while the hand is oftentimes used as the channel through which the anointing flows out. Examples abound in the Bible of instances in which the laying on of hands was used to impart special blessings. Some of those instances shall be considered.

Gen. 48: 14 – Transfer of Covenant. Jacob laid his right hand upon Ephraim and Manasseh to bless the children of Joseph. It should be noted that Jacob deliberately crossed his hands in order to place the right hand upon Ephraim, who was the younger, thereby prophetically declaring him the greater of the two children.

Deut. 34: 9 – Divine Commissioning. Moses officially commissioned Joshua as his successor through the laying on of hands. The spirit of wisdom was imparted to Joshua through the laying on of hands. The same impartation was given to Timothy through the laying on of presbytery in 1 Tim. 4: 14 and through the hands of Paul in 2 Tim. 1: 6.

Healing Anointing: The Lord imparted healing in many instances through the laying on of hands. In Luke 4: 40, it was recorded that "divers diseases" were healed through the laying on of the hands of the Lord. In Mark 16: 17 believers were actually empowered and commissioned by the Lord to lay hands on the sick and heal them.

- Mark 16: 17-18 - And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; ... they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover.

Having been given this divine authority, believers in Christ Jesus, even young converts, should boldly step out in faith, pray and lay hands on sick people. This ministry is not reserved for Pastors or ministers of the gospel alone. It is given to every believer in Jesus Christ.

Release of Blessing: Jesus laid hands on children to impart blessings, as recorded in Matthew 19: 13-15; Mark 10: 13-16. In Rev. 1: 17, the Lord laid His hand upon the apostle John to strengthen him, while the angel Gabriel laid hand on Daniel in Daniel 10: 10, 18 to strengthen and revive him.

Baptism in the Holy Ghost: Three specific instances are recorded in the scriptures in which Peter, Ananias and Paul prayed for the baptism of Holy

Ghost and laid hands on the recipients. All these are examples for believers to follow, whenever the need arises.

Call into Ministry: Like Joshua, Barnabas and Paul were both released into specific ministries through prayers and the laying on of hands. (Acts 13: 2-3) In like manner were Stephen, Philip, and the five other deacons that were in Acts. 6: 1-6 treated. They were released by the church into specific ministries through prayers and the laying on of hands.

It would appear, from the examples seen in the scriptures, that there are instances in which prayer alone is not sufficient. The spirit to spirit contact established through the laying on of hands seems to be an important factor in imparting spiritual grace. However, as it is in all cases, moderation should guide the practise of the laying on of hands. There are people who are averse to anyone touching their heads. The believer is advised to discern each situation correctly in order to avoid creating an offence.

THE ANTIDOTE TO POVERTY

At the beginning of this chapter, it was pointed out that the fourth foundational doctrine shifts emphasis from the believer to the needs of other people. The purpose of Christianity is to produce people who shall be Christ-like in words, thoughts and action. One noticeable relative attribute of God is giving. God gave His Son, the Son gave His life. God is always giving, and He expects His children to do the same.

Unfortunately, not many people realize the blessing that is inherent in giving. The world has taught people not to give. It is the practise in the world that if one wants his wealth to increase, he should save his money, invest it, and give as little as possible in order to preserve what he has. The exact opposite is the principle in the kingdom of God. The way of increase is by giving. A giver does not become poorer; on the contrary, he gets richer because whatever he gives is a seed sown. There is an everlasting law which God made in Gen. 8: 22

- While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and days and night shall not cease.

Assuredly, day and night, summer and winter are permanent. So is sowing and reaping. Whatever a man sows, he shall reap. Therefore, if a man sows nothing, he shall reap nothing.

Every income that a man earns, whether it is salary, dividend from shares, rent from houses, or sales of property, falls into two categories:

- Category A: Seed
- Category B: Bread

2 Cor. 9: 10 -

- Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness.

God supplies bread, as well as seed. The bread is to be eaten, while the seed is to be sown. Unfortunately, most Christians turn all their income into bread. They

spend everything on their needs and wants, without sowing (giving out). Incidentally, God does not multiply the bread, He multiplies the seed. Since some refuse to sow, during harvest, they do not reap. Their incomes remain stagnant and there is no visible increase in their lives.

If one considers a farmer, one would learn a lot of wisdom about sowing and reaping. No farmer eats all his harvest, no matter how bountiful it may be. He keeps back the best, the choicest part of his yield. Why? So that he can have something to plant again and reap another harvest. If a farmer does not do that, he has signed a contract with poverty.

A farmer can clear his farm, remove the weeds, pray over the farm, if he likes, wail and travail over it, conduct deliverance for the land, and bring intercessors for a vigil of prayer. But, if he does not drop a seed into the ground, what shall he reap at harvest?

Many Christians pray, fast, wail, and travail for financial and material blessings but do not give. Many people in the church are stingy. As you progress in Christianity, learn very early that your blessings are tied to your giving. Cultivate the godly habit of generosity. Lift your hands and begin to give.

Brewster, an American multi-millionaire was quoted as saying, "Go through life with an open hand; if you keep a clenched fist, no one can put anything into it." You receive as you give. As the law of sowing and reaping is in the physical, so it is in the spiritual, you always reap more than what you sow. You do not need a whole orange to plant an orange tree. All that is needed are two to three seeds. However, the oranges that shall be produced shall run into hundreds from year to year.

Believers should seek to avoid the error of turning all their income into bread. Take time to give, sow regularly. As income comes, separate the seed from the bread.

- Prov. 11: 24 – 25 - There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

The author has observed that this Bible truth is true concerning individuals as well as nations. In Germany where the author lives, the amount of giving done by the State is incredible. Every child is paid "Kinder geld". (Children's Money). This is paid every month from birth until the child is eighteen years old. The least amount paid to each child is 154 euro monthly. A woman who gives birth is paid 307 euro monthly for two years. The unemployed is paid monthly by the State. Those not qualified to work are paid by Social Welfare to cover important needs. Those who are working, who require rent subsidy are given money by the State to enable them live in good houses. All these funds are not loans; they are free, for citizens, as well as for legal immigrants.

It seems all that the country does is just giving out free money. Yet, the German economy is the third strongest in the world. The country rose from the ruins of the Second World War to become a major economic power. How? They are givers. Because they give, ideas and intelligence that produce wealth was given to them by God.

- It is written, “A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.” John 3: 27
- Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights ... James 1: 17

The exact opposites of Germany are African nations. Which African nation gives anyone a cent, free? Which African nation is wealthy? Even the one that is endowed with incredible mineral resources ranks amongst the fifteen poorest nations in the world. Because they do not give, they do not receive good ideas from above. Because they do not give, they are not gifted with visionary leaders. The Queen of Sheba told Solomon,

- “... because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice.” 1 Kings 10: 9.

Even good leaders for a nation come from above. God told King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4: 32 –

- ...the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

A nation that gives shall prosper. The same goes for individuals. Whoever gives shall increase, and whosoever withholds, shall come to want.

- Prov. 11: 24 – 25 - There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

The easiest way to break free from poverty is to start giving. A miser does not have the Spirit of God, for giving is of God.

FRUITFUL LAND

The Needy

To whom does one give? Where should one sow? It is clear that not all ground is fertile. If a farmer sows in the desert or in a marshland, he should not expect a harvest. Where should a Christian **avoid** sowing his seed?

- Pro. 22: 16 - He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich shall surely come to want.

Whoever gives gift to the rich the Bible says he shall come to poverty. Alas, is this not how the world has taught people to think, and to act? People give gifts to the rich and to the influential, hoping to receive favours in return. Unfortunately, most people do not realize that it is God Who blesses, and not man. No man can make another man rich; neither can any man make another man poor. God is the Judge.

One has to observe this fruitless giving in churches to see how Christians put themselves in trouble through ignorance. Suppose two women give birth in a Christian assembly, one rich and the other poor, whom do you suppose will receive more visitors and more gifts? The rich woman of course, who apparently has enough, will receive more, while the poor woman will be neglected.

(The statement of Jesus in Matthew 25: 29 that “For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be

taken away, even that which he hath” has to do with management and utilization of talents and gifts and not with administration of giving and helping other people.)

Concerning giving to the poor and needy, God says,

- Pro. 21: 13 - Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.
- Pro. 19: 17 – He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

You give to the poor? You have loaned God money and He will repay you. One gives to the rich? God says the person shall come to poverty. Much of the giving in the church is done by the rich to the rich, and by the poor to the rich.

One cannot say exactly if this is what affects a number of Christians, however, one has heard some Christians complain that after coming to the faith, their finances plunged downwards, and as usual, the blame was put on the devil. Maybe they have been sowing to the rich and reaping curses.

Missions

The next fertile ground is giving to support missions. The heartbeat of God is missions, and whoever gives to support missionaries and missions is endearing himself to God in a special way. It is a sad reality that the most neglected group of people in the church today are the missionaries of Jesus Christ. The amount of money the church squanders in the name of building projects is criminal when placed side by side with the pittance that goes to those who are actually building the spiritual house that Jesus Christ gave His life to redeem.

The salaries of some missionaries are not paid. Most are working without any form of financial or material support. Opting to become a missionary of Jesus Christ is tantamount to consign oneself to wearing second hand clothing. Such is the plight of the labourers of the Lord.

Yet, why did God bless the Philippians with the verse in 4: 19? Paul explained in Phil. 4: 15

- Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

The Philippians responded again, and again, to the needs of a missionary; God promised to supply all their needs. Believers today, generally ignore the labourers of Jesus Christ, they keep confessing Philippians 4: 19 and, what happens? What does the Bible say about the salary of the labourers kept back by fraud?

- James 5: 1-5 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you ... Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth ...

When believers convert all their income to bread without sowing the seed into the lives and ministries of the labourers of Jesus Christ, is that not fraud? What did God say about those who do not pay tithe in Malachi 3: 8-12? He calls them robbers. In refusing to pay tithes, Christians deny the ministers of the Gospel their salaries.

Can one explain why Believers do not respond to the financial and material needs of missionaries, pastors, and other full time workers of the gospel? It may be possible to venture two opinions.

In the secular, salaries are paid to motivate, reward, and meet needs. So, if a gospel worker is not paid, he is not motivated, he is not rewarded, neither can his material needs be met. The result is that he loses interest in the work, becomes demoralized and may eventually abandon the job. That suits the devil fine.

Secondly, since the Believer is not sowing, he does not reap, so, he does not increase. He hears messages about the goodness of God but he does not experience it. So, he becomes frustrated, finds no joy in Christianity, and gradually abandons church or remains there passive and inactive. That also, suits the devil fine.

How then should a believer handle the situation?

Simply give to the ministers of the gospel. Ensure that the salary of the Pastor is paid, ensure that adequate money is sent to the mission field, and scale down the size and cost of the church building project so that more money can be sent to missionaries on the field.

Once that is done, the minister of the gospel is motivated to do a better job, and the Believer begins to reap bountiful harvest that will enable him to sow much more.

Christians should be on the guard against the lie Satan whispers into their minds:

- “We do not have enough”

Giving has nothing to do with the amount one has, but with the heart. This is the reason why Jesus declared that the poor widow of Luke 21: 1-4 gave much more, with her two mites, than all the other people who gave in the temple.

Besides, God is interested in the little so that He can multiply it. The widow of Zarephath who housed and fed Elijah in 1 Kings 17: 8-15 released the little which she had before God could bless her in time of famine. The little boy of John 6: 1-13 released his five loaves and two fish for God to feed 5,000 men; not counting the women and children.

In 1 Cor. 9: 7-14, God commanded that they which preach the gospel must be sustained by the gospel. In Gal. 6: 6-7, God commands members of the church to minister material things to the Pastor and ministers, assuring the Believer that what he gives shall be multiplied by God back to the believer. In 1 Tim. 5: 17-18, God commands that double honour must be given by the church to those who minister the word of God.

The church must return to its primary responsibility of financing the gospel and taking care of missionaries as well as Pastors and other workers of the gospel.

The author remembers an incident which took place in 1994 in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Dayspring Parish of the Redeemed Christian Church of God was given an assignment to conduct a crusade and plant a church at Eleme. The cost of the program was estimated at 25,000 Naira. While raising the funds in the church, the Pastor challenged the congregation that one individual could donate all the 25,000 Naira.

The following Sunday, one of the Ushers gave the Pastor an envelope containing 25,000 Naira. The donor concealed his identity. While informing the church about the generous donation, the Pastor prayed asking God to restore the 25,000 Naira back to the giver with 500,000 Naira.

A month later, a member of the church came to meet the Pastor as he arrived in church on Sunday morning. The man was smiling broadly, with a bulky envelope held close to his chest.

“Pastor, God answered the prayer”, the man said, obviously very happy.

He was the secret donor of the 25,000 Naira, now coming to pay a tithe of 57,000 Naira. In just one month, God opened a door for him to do a business that gave him a profit of 570,000 Naira. He was then not a businessman; he was an employee in a company. (God made the money 570,000 Naira so that by the time the brother paid tithe, he would still have 500,000 Naira.)

From the moment that testimony was shared in the church, no one could stop that congregation from giving to the gospel. Within three years, that congregation supervised the planting of thirty six new churches, coordinated opening of Bible Colleges, and adopted missionaries and so on. And as they gave, they kept increasing.

The way of increase is by giving.

Believers are expected to lay hands to impart spiritual blessings, and equally lift their hands and give generously.

- 2 Cor. 9: 6-7 - But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully ... for God loveth a cheerful giver.

(Those who wish to give to missions could visit www.gfa.org and www.capromissions.org)

FOUNDATIONAL DOCTRINE FIVE

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

In 1 Thess. 4: 13, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians,

- But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

God hates ignorance. Twice, in Isaiah 5: 13 and Hosea 4: 6, God lamented that:

- My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

The main objective of spiritual maturity and the operation of the five fold ministerial offices in the church are to equip the saints with sound knowledge. Ignorant is destructive and Satan plays on the ignorance of people to deceive, ensnare and enslave them.

Eph. 4: 11-14 makes clear:

- And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ... that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

If there is one area in which believers need to be more enlightened, it is in the area of resurrection from the dead. What happens when a believer dies? Should Christians wail and sorrow when a loved one, who is in Christ, dies? At death, is there a difference between a believer and an unbeliever? Physically, both bodies are put in caskets and buried in graves. Is that the end? More importantly, on the day of resurrection, (and, when is that?) who or what shall resurrect?

What is resurrection?

It simply means a standing or rising up. There shall come a time when all the dead in the graves shall rise again to commence eternal existence. Some shall rise to everlasting life, while others shall rise up to everlasting shame and contempt. Man must not forget that he is a creature of eternity, and not time. The dispensation of time is given to man by God so that man can prepare for eternity. The first time any dead person was brought back to life was recorded in 1 Kings 17: 17-24 when Elijah resurrected the son of the widow of Zarephath. Two additional resurrections took place in the Old Testament when Elishah raised the son of the Shunamite woman in 2 Kings 4: 32-35 and after his death, his bones brought back to life the dead man recorded in 2 Kings 13: 21.

In the New Testament, Jesus raised three people back to life from the dead. They were:

- Jairus daughter – Mark 5: 35-43
- The son of the widow of Nain – Lk. 7: 11-17
- Lazarus – John 11: 1-45

Peter raised Dorcas back to life in Acts 9: 36-42, while Paul raised Eutychus back to life in Acts 20: 9-12.

All the people recorded in the scriptures as having been resurrected once, died again. There is only one Person Who died, resurrected and He is still alive till today, and He shall live forever – Jesus Christ.

The resurrection, therefore, which believers are looking forward to, is that patterned after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Col. 1: 18 describes it thus:

- And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.

Christ rose from the dead and lives forever. Those who die in Christ shall also rise from the dead and live forever.

However, it should be pointed out that resurrection applies only to the body and not the spirit and soul of man, both of which are indestructible.

At the point of death, the spirit and soul of man go to heaven or hell, as the case applies while the body goes into the grave. On the day of resurrection, the body alone is raised from the dust, or sea, or wherever it has decomposed and shall be re-united with the spirit and the soul. The difference is that for the believer, it is now a glorious body, not made of dust, but a glorious one like that of Jesus Christ after His resurrection.

After resurrection, Christ had flesh and bones. (Luke 24: 39); ate fish (Luke 24: 41-43); yet could appear and disappear whenever it was necessary (Luke 24: 36-37). All these shall apply to resurrected saints for it is written:

- Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. – 1 John 3: 2

There are three types of resurrection that shall be considered further, in this section:

- The resurrection of Jesus
- Spiritual resurrection of believers
- Resurrection of everyone in the grave

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

In Matthew 28: 6, the angel told the women who came to the tomb:

- He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

It should be noted, that while the body of Christ was in the tomb, His spirit and soul went into hell, where He collected the keys of hell and death from the devil.

- Rev. 1: 18 – I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

In Ephs. 4: 9-10, the scriptures says –

- (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth. He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

To further confirm that it is only the body of man that is inactive at physical death, Christ after His death even preached to the rebellious spirits in hell. 1 Pet. 3: 18-20 –

- For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah ...

On resurrection morning, after defeating Satan, death and hell, the spirit and soul of Jesus re-united with His body in the tomb and the Son of God walked out into a glorious new beginning.

On the day that the Lord shall fulfil John 14: 1-3, (In my Father's house are many mansions: ...) two significant events shall take place on the earth.

When the "trump of God" (1 Thess. 4: 16) shall sound in heaven, those who died in Christ, shall resurrect first. Secondly, in a twinkling of an eye, the believers who are still alive shall be changed, (given a new body), and shall disappear from the earth to meet the Lord in the air. This act is refined to as the "rapture" of the church.

It should be pointed out, for the benefit of new converts, that the word "rapture" does not appear directly in the Bible. The word translated rapture in 1 Thess. 4: 17 is the Greek word "harpazo" which is rendered in the Bible as "caught up".

1 Thess. 4: 15-17 explains it thus:

- For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1 Cor. 15: 50-53 also explains the mystery thus:

- Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION OF BELIEVERS

- Eph. 2: 4-6 – But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved); And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

In the previous section, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as a pattern of the physical resurrection of believers was considered. In this section, attention shall focus on the spiritual resurrection of everyone in Christ.

Resurrection was defined as a standing up, or a rising up. In the Bible passage above, as well as in Col. 2: 13, the word of God makes it clear that all men were “dead”; not in a physical sense, but spiritually. All men were born dead in sin.

In Genesis 2: 17, God warned Adam that on the day he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, on that day he shall die. After his disobedience, Adam still lived for more years before he finally died physically. But, God did say,

- “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”.

Adam died spiritually the moment he disobeyed. It was spiritual death that ultimately produced physical death which since then has plagued the entire human race.

What is death? In the scriptures, death does not convey the idea of unconsciousness but “separation”.

There are three types of death mentioned in the scriptures:

1. Physical death
2. Spiritual death
3. Eternal death

Physical Death

Physical death occurs when the spirit and soul are separated from the body of man. From that moment, the individual loses the ability to operate in the physical realm. As pointed out earlier, he continues to exist in the realm of invisibility either in heaven or in hell. The idea or belief that once a person experiences physical “death”, the fellow vaporizes or loses total consciousness is not scriptural.

- James 2: 26 – For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

On the day of resurrection, God shall bring the body back to life.

Spiritual Death

Every human being was born spiritually dead. Because of the inherited sin of Adam, the entire human race was born separated from God. Since God is life, whatever or whoever is separated from Him has no life. For this reason, the scriptures point out that “we were dead in sins”. Eph. 2: 5.

In Matt. 8: 22, we read the following strange statement from the Lord:

- But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.”

How can the dead bury the dead?

Let the **spiritually dead**; bury those who are physically dead.

In 1 Tim. 5: 6, the scriptures point out that some are alive and yet, they are dead.

- But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.

Whoever accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour receives spiritual resurrection. The spiritual life is restored immediately an individual accepts Christ. He or she is reconciled back to God.

This spiritual resurrection is taking place right now all over the earth as individuals come to Jesus Christ for salvation. Even though they “were dead in sins”, they are “quickened” (*made alive*) together with Christ”.

Eternal Death

This takes place in the life of an individual, who at the time of physical death has not received spiritual resurrection. Whoever is not “quickened together with Christ” at the point of physical death is eternally separated from God.

- Matt. 10: 28 – And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Rev. 20: 14-15 sums it up, thus:

- And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

For this purpose, every believer should make haste to ensure that all loved ones, and indeed the entire human race, hears the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. The final destination of every unsaved soul is the lake of fire – that is eternal death.

RESURRECTION OF EVERYONE IN THE GRAVE

- John 5: 28-29 – Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live ... Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

There are two categories of physical resurrection of the dead that shall take place in future. One shall take place at the rapture, of which a little of it had been previously considered. The other category of resurrection shall take place 1,000 years after it. The two are called:

- Judgment Seat Resurrection – Takes place at the rapture
- White throne judgment resurrection – Takes place 1,000 years after the Judgment Seat Resurrection.

Judgment Seat Resurrection (Or Resurrection of the Righteous) – This is the resurrection referred to in 1 Thess. 4: 16

- For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

It is also recorded in 1 Cor. 15: 51-53

- Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

This first resurrection of the body is restricted to the righteous dead only, in other words, those who died in Christ and qualify to make heaven. Their bodies shall rise from the graves to be re-united with their spirit and soul which already are with Christ in heaven. Then, the rapture saints (believers who are still alive at the time of the rapture and qualify to make heaven) shall be changed “in the twinkling of an eye” and shall equally join them and they shall all proceed back to heaven with Christ.

At this point, Christ came **“for”** the saints. He shall return to the earth **“with”** the saints seven years later for the battle of Armageddon and to establish the 1,000 year reign, or as it is commonly called, the millennial reign.

While in heaven, the saints of Christ, throughout all ages, shall partake in the marriage supper of the Lamb and receive rewards for whatever they have done for the Lord.

At the resurrection of the just, rewards shall be based on the quality of the work. All works shall be tested by fire.

- 1 Cor. 3: 11-15 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Those who shall enter heaven shall do so through faith in Christ Jesus, but there shall be rewards based on the services that saints render unto God. For this purpose, Christians should be diligent and sincere in their services for the Lord.

White Throne Judgment Seat

- Rev. 20: 11-15 - And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged every man according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death
And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the
lake of fire.

After the 1,000 year reign of Christ on the earth, (more about this in the next chapter), all the unsaved souls shall be resurrected to receive judgment. Up till that time, their souls have been in hell while the bodies lay in graves. Everyone involved in this second resurrection certainly is damned.

It is interesting to note, in verse 12 that the “books were opened”, “and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books...” Those damned would be so many, it would take books to record their names, while those who are saved would be few, compared to the unsaved, it would require only one book to record their names.

- Rev. 19: 7-9 - Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

Now is the time for saints to ensure personal sanctification, holiness and righteousness, that they may be accounted worthy to be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. The purpose of Christianity is to do the will of God and make heaven. A Christian is not expected to flow with the crowd; he takes the narrow path. Undoubtedly, the narrow path is difficult and painful, but at the end of it is life.

- Rev. 21: 7-8 - He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

FOUNDATION DOCTRINE SIX

ETERNAL JUDGMENT

So far, we have studied five foundational doctrines of Christianity. The last doctrine, Eternal Judgment, sums up the preparation of the believer before spiritual maturity can commence. Looking back at the previous doctrines, it could easily be discerned why the fruit of Christianity is not evident, today, in many professors of religion. From genuine repentance to genuine faith towards God, (which is the exact opposite of presumption, a malady in many lives); on to doctrine of baptisms with its four-fold aspects; and on to laying on of hands, exemplified by giving; to resurrection of the dead, which is the hope of the righteous; it is evident that a lot of corrections and quality adjustments need to be made by many Christians.

The final foundation doctrine, eternal judgment, teaches man first and foremost to live in the fear of God. If there is one quality that is lacking in the world today, and sadly, lacking in the church also, it is the fear of God. In many assemblies, there has been a gross imbalance in stressing the love and caring attributes of God to a dangerous de-emphasizing of the disciplinarian and judgmental attributes of “the consuming fire.”

Many believers over stress the love and mercy of God forgetting that the God of love is also the consuming fire; the Lamb of God is also the Lion of the tribe of Judah; the Prince of Peace is also Jehovah Sabaoth, the LORD, the man of war. God, Who said, “I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy”, is also the same God Who said, “vengeance is mine, I will repay”.

There should be a balance in the doctrinal belief of Christians to avoid a situation in which people begin to take God for granted because only the love attributes are emphasized. At the same time, a master-slave relationship has to be avoided, which could result from over emphasizing the disciplinarian attribute of the Most High God. As Bob Gordon puts it, “the greatest need in the body of Christ today is growth, balance, and maturity amongst God’s people.”

If there is one thing that is certain, as heaven is certain, it is judgment. The self deceived, who claim that God is not wicked, He cannot throw people into hell fire, are toying with issues having disastrous consequences. One just has to remember that it was the God of love Who cast into hell one third of the heavenly host, flooded the whole earth with water, and destroyed an entire generation saving only eight souls. This same God of love rained sulphur and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah, killed Nadab and Abihu right inside His Tabernacle, and in the New Testament, killed Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5: 1-10.

Indeed, it is true that God is not wicked, but He is the God of judgment.

- Rom. 2: 6-9, 11 – Who will render to every man according to his deeds:
To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and

honour and immortality, eternal life:

But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile...

For there is no respect of persons with God.

That judgment is coming is certain; God gave a clear signal that is irrevocable. Every hidden work, every evil thought, every action and work shall be judged. The clear signal given by God is the resurrection of Jesus.

- Acts 17: 31 – Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

For this purpose, man should always live in the fear of the Lord. It is the fear of the Lord that keeps a man from evil. If a man does not fear God, there is no evil that he cannot commit.

- Pro. 16: 6 ... and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.

Wherever one meets an individual who does not fear God, then one is looking at a tool in the hand of the devil. No matter how morally upright he presents himself to be, there is no evil that such a one cannot commit, when he is pushed to the wall, or put under pressure. The scripture makes it clear that for Jesus to be an acceptable sacrifice for the sin of man, God endowed Him with seven spirits, the seventh of which was "... and of the fear of the LORD". Isaiah 11: 2. Why would the Son of God require the spirit of the fear of the LORD, if not to keep Him from evil, (Pro. 16: 6), the foremost being the sin of disobedience and rebellion.

Those who live carefree lives, as if God shall not call them to account, are cautioned to remember the admonition in Heb. 10: 30-31 –

- For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The LORD shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Ecc. 12: 13-14 cautions man in clear terms:

- Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Seeing that judgment is determined by God upon the entire human race, it should be the aim of every Christian to intercede for unsaved souls and do everything possible to support, as well as participate in global evangelisation and soul winning. Current statistics reveal that an average of 100,000 unsaved souls die daily. Before now, the average was put at 80,000 unsaved souls daily entering into a Christ-less eternity.

Waiting to face the wrath of God are the following souls:

- 1.2 billion Muslims

- 860 million Hindus
- 360 million Buddhists
- 240 million traditionalists
- 260 million atheists
- 1 billion non-religious

If all these souls should die without Christ, they face the judgment of spending eternity in the lake of fire with the devil and his demons.

What Is Eternal Judgment?

As pointed out in the previous chapter, eternal death simply implies eternal separation from God. The most painful aspect of eternal judgment is for man, who was created in the image and glory of God to be eternally separated from Him. While man is alive, there is still every hope that he can be saved through faith in Christ Jesus. Once a man dies in the state of apostasy, he can never be reconciled to God again, for there is no repentance in the grave.

Of course, whoever is separated from God shall keep company with devils. It is an everlasting shame and contempt for those who could have enjoyed eternal bliss in the kingdom of God, eternally cohabiting with foul spirits. Jesus Christ describes it as a situation in which:

- "... there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. 25: 30

Because of the fear of judgment, those who have been saved are admonished to constantly

- "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" Philp. 2: 12.

Slothful and carefree Christian living must stop. Worldliness and covetousness, the two-fold bane of Christianity in this generation must come to an end, while holiness, sanctification, self-denial for the sake of Jesus Christ must become the pattern of living of Christians.

It is worse enough that unbelievers shall not enter into the kingdom of God. However, much worse than that is for those who have tasted of the goodness of the Lord, being rejected because of sinfulness and evil doing. Heb. 6: 4-6 makes clear concerning those who first believed, and later threw their faith overboard.

- For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,
If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

As a matter of fact, it is because of the Bible statement above that the Word of God outlined the six foundational doctrines that Believers should study and master. (Heb. 6: 1-3). Every believer must constantly remember that judgment is coming and every work shall be brought into judgment.

Because of ungodliness and unrighteousness in the world, there must be judgment. It is not a comforting thought for the unrighteous, but it is a decree of the Most High which cannot be revoked.

Since it is inevitable that eternal judgment awaits those who disobey God, believers in Christ must fearfully ensure that they are found in Christ always. Only Christ can deliver man out of the judgment that is coming.

- "... even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." 1 Thess. 1: 10

The Judge

There are three categories of judges.

- God
- Jesus Christ
- The saints

God is the "the Judge of all", Heb. 12: 23, however, he has chosen to execute judgment through Jesus Christ, and has given assurance of this to all men through the resurrection of Christ. Acts. 17: 31.

- John 5: 22 – For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."

Interestingly, the saints are also going to judge both the world and angels. This responsibility is yet in the future, but it is worth waiting for.

- Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life. 1 Cor. 6: 2-3

Types of Judgements

- Past
- Present
- Future

Past Judgments

The judgements of God upon His creation are divided into many categories and phases. There is a judgment that has been concluded and done away with. This judgment is in the past. In John 16: 11, Jesus Christ says:

- Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

Satan has already received judgment from God for every evil he has done, or is yet to do. The eternal portion of the devil is in the lake of fire. Unlike the devil and his forces, every living man has the opportunity to be saved and escape partaking in the judgment of the devil.

The world has also been judged by God. This world shall pass away and a new heaven and a new earth shall replace it. John 12: 31 makes clear:

- Now, is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

Every Bible student will remember the word of the Lord that “heaven and earth shall pass away”.

- Rev. 12: 1 – And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

It is also interesting to note that God has pronounced judgment on man, while at the same time; He gives man the opportunity to escape the judgement. In John 3: 18, the Lord says,

- He that believeth on him (the Son of God) is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

The judgment of God on man is simply this: any man who does not accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour shall not enter the kingdom of God, but shall have his part in the lake of fire.

- Rev. 20: 15 – And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

All these judgments have been concluded and finalised by God. To this extent, they could be considered to be in the past.

Present Judgment

While eternal judgment is still in the future, there is a judgment currently taking place. The responsibility for executing this judgment is placed upon every Christian. As part of the requirements for genuine repentance, God expects every Christian who falls into sin to pronounce judgment on his or her act of sinfulness. Without this self examination, there can be no repentance, since an individual can only be expected to confess and repent of what he considers misconduct. Whenever anyone fails to do this, God has no other option but to execute His own judgment.

- 1 Cor. 11: 32 – For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. Whenever a believer pronounces judgment on any personal misconduct, it definitely leads to godly sorrow and repentance which of course, brings about God’s forgiveness and justification. However, as pointed out in the section on “repentance from dead works”, **reporting** oneself to a trusted Christian leader or the church **after confessing to God and obtaining God’s forgiveness,** is an integral part of judging one’s sinfulness.

Future Judgment

The first in the series of future judgments is that of believers. This judgment shall commence immediately after the rapture when the works of each believer shall be judged. This judgment of believers does not affect the salvation of believers since they shall be in heaven, by then.

However, every work, thought, word, as well as motives shall be passed through the fire so that rewards can be given to the saints.

- 1 Cor. 3: 11-15 – For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

It is at this judgment that crowns shall be given to believers depending on how they lived and served Christ in their generations. James 1: 12 mentions one of those five crowns as follows:

- Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

It is pertinent at this juncture to cast a quick glance at the five crowns awaiting believers in heaven.

Crown of Rejoicing: 1Thes. 2:19—Soul winners crown. This crown is reserved for those who win souls into the kingdom of God. Daniel 12: 3 confirms that soul winners shall „shine as the brightness of the firmament. “

Incorruptible Crown: 1 Cor. 9: 25–27. Winners crown. For those who live victorious Christian life, over sin and the flesh.

Crown of Righteousness: 2 Tim. 4: 8. Over comers Crown. For those who reach their God given goal in life, specifically, those who fulfil their destiny — the purpose for which they are created.

Crown of Glory: 1 Pet. 5: 4. You have to be a Pastor to win this crown. It is reserved for those who shepherd the souls of the people of God.

Crown of Life: Rev. 2: 10 Reserved for those who lose their lives to serve Jesus Christ. It is the martyr's crown. Recipients of this crown include Paul, Peter, James and many other saints who were killed for bearing witness for the Lord.

In view of the coming eternal rewards, every believer should make haste and do the works of the Lord while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.

The Judgment of the Nations

After the seven year period separating the day of the rapture and the battle of Armageddon, when Christ shall return to the earth to set up the millennial reign, the judgment of the nations shall commence. The judgment of the nations is not

a global judgment. The nations to be judged are those involved with Israel and the basis for judgment is how those nations have treated Israel. Till the end, God remains true to the Abrahamic covenant. God promised Abraham in Gen. 12: 3

- And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee:

The judgment shall be an individual judgment of all the nations and according to Matt. 25: 31-32, each individual shall render account.

- When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:
And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divided his sheep from the goats.

The book of Joel 3: 2-8 highlights the charges of God against the nations that ill-treated the Israelites.

- They are accused of casting lots for Israelites.
- The nations sold an Israelite boy for an harlot.
- They sold an Israelite girl for wine.
- The nations lived in drunkenness.
- The silver and gold of God, they took. (Probably when they looted the temple)
- The nations were also accused of taking the pleasant things of God into idol temples.
- The nations sold Israelites as slaves.

The nations of the world, as of the time that Jesus Christ shall return with the saints, shall be judged for whatever good or bad thing they have done to Israel. It should be borne in mind that Christians are not involved in this judgment since they would have raptured seven years earlier and the tribulation saints would equally have joined them during the seven year period between the rapture and the second advent of Christ. (The second coming of Christ.)

Those found guilty during this judgment of nations shall go to hell, while the justified ones shall enter the kingdom of God, (Matt. 25: 31-46).

As of this time, Satan is already bound and he is in the bottomless pit.

- Rev. 20: 1-3 – And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.
And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.
And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

The White Throne Judgment

This is the final judgment of the unbelievers and it will take place at the end of the 1,000 year reign of Christ. It is at this point that the resurrection of the ungodly shall take place.

After Satan shall be released from the bottomless pit, he shall go out to deceive the nations that are in the earth, again. Surprisingly, after experiencing the 1,000 years of the reign of Christ, people shall still follow the devil once more.

At this point, one may ask, who are these rebellious people? Where did they come from? It should be borne in mind that even though the New Jerusalem has descended out of heaven from God and it is physically on the earth, and the saints of God are living there with Jesus Christ, there will also be on the earth people who are not Christians. These people did not qualify for the rapture. During the great tribulation, not everyone in the world would be killed. It is from those who survive the seven year reign of the anti-Christ that the nations of Matt. 25: 31-46 shall be judged. Those who do not partake in this judgment of the nations because they have no dealing with Israel will continue to live on the earth, governed by Christ and His saints.

It is from these people that Satan shall once again raise a mighty army after his release from the bottomless pit, to fight Christ and the saints and drive them out of the New Jerusalem.

- Rev. 20: 7-9 – And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.

And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

All those who support the devil in this final rebellion shall be consumed with fire. Thus, the end shall come for the rebellious and of all the children of disobedience.

After this final rebellion and the total destruction of all the rebellious in the creation of God, the final resurrection of all the ungodly dead shall now take place.

- And as it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment. Heb. 9: 27

All the rebellious shall now resurrect to face the final judgment of God. It is clear at this point that the number of all the rebels in God's creation is complete, and then comes the execution of the judgment which has been determined by God against the ungodly, starting with the devil.

- Rev. 20: 10 – And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever.

After the case of Lucifer is completed, then all the ungodly, from the **days before the flood of Noah** till the end of this age, shall stand before God for judgment.

- And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for

them.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

The final destination of the ungodly is the lake of fire. Death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire. Once God has finally judged all the wicked and the ungodly in His creation, then shall come a new heaven and a new earth.

May you be counted worthy to be part of the new heaven and the new earth in the name of Jesus.

- Rev. 20: 6 - Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

EPILOGUE

Let us assume that a young man escaped from a war torn country and arrived as a refugee in Germany. He has no valid residence permit, no job, no home and he faces the risk of eventual deportation. However, wishing to be gracious, the German government agreed to give him a probation period of six months and a job.

The young asylum seeker must fulfil some conditions during the period of probation. He must not break a single law, he must discharge all his duties at work, and he must not receive a single query or come too late to work.

At the end of the probation period, if he is found blameless, he will receive German nationality, a good job and a personal house. How would the young man respond to this offer? He will work with zeal and determination to succeed, of course. Even if the temperature should drop to minus 20 degrees, he will not arrive late at work. If a colleague should offend or provoke him, he will remain calm and unprovoked. Whatever he is asked to do, no matter how menial or degrading, he will not complain. Why? He can see the reward that is waiting for him at the end of the probation period.

In Eph. 1: 17, the apostle Paul prayed a spirit anointed prayer for believers:

- That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

In verses 18-19, Paul explained why every believer needs the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God:

- The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power ...

There are three things that every believer must know. For this purpose, every Christian needs to pray for God to give him the “spirit of wisdom and revelation”.

1. The hope of His calling
2. The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.
3. The exceeding greatness of His power in-dwelling believers.

If believers in Christ Jesus can catch the revelation of what is waiting for them in heaven, Christianity would be practised differently from the way many people practise it today. No sacrifice would be deemed too great; no price would be too high to pay, just to lay hold on what is waiting in heaven. Just as that young refugee in the illustration will endure every hardship for six months, just to lay hold on German passport, so would Christians spend their pilgrimage here on earth to do the perfect will of God.

He is considered a wealthy man, who has a ton of gold. For that amount of gold, men would labour and travel to the ends of the earth. How much more should believers labour for what God has promised them?

- 1 Pet. 1: 4 – To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.

There is an inheritance waiting in heaven for every FAITHFUL follower of Jesus Christ. For this purpose, every believer should endeavour to have the right foundation so that they can have a balanced, fruitful, and reward able Christian life. The reward that is waiting in heaven far outweighs every labour and hardship that Christians go through in the world.

- 2 Cor. 4: 17 - For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

The road to heaven is narrow and filled with difficulties. It demands self denial and a constant carrying of the cross. Whenever a believer is burdened and pressured into giving up or slacking the hands, in the service of the Master, it is recommended that such an individual read aloud Rev. 21: 9-27.

Like father Abraham, believers also “look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”. Heb. 11: 10. Like our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”, Heb. 12: 2, so must Christians fix their spiritual eyes on the reward waiting in heaven and fulfil the purpose of God in their generation.

Your labour is not in vain.

BIBLE STUDY OUTLINES

This section contains the teaching outlines for the six foundational doctrines.

REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS

1. Heb. 6: 1; Eph. 2: 10; Jn. 14; 23–24

2 calls of God – a) Sinner: Repent from sin – Matt. 3: 2;
4: 17

b) To Someone Born Again: Repent from dead works.

Repentance:

- Repent consists of two Latin syllables, – **re** + **pent**. **re**: *again*; **pent**: *think* = think again. Change the way you think. Philip. 2:5. First step in Christianity is to change the way you think. Rom. 12: 2; Eph. 4: 22–24; Jn. 17: 26
- The **first** general command to man after “400 silent years” (Btw. Malachi & Matthew) is **REPENT**. Matt. 3: 2; 4: 17
- One of the **last** admonitions to the church is **REPENT**. Rev. 3: 19
- It means Confessing and forsaking sin
- Charles Finney: Giving up of all controversy with God. God is right, sinner is wrong.

- “Repentance is not feeling bad because we got caught doing something wrong. True repentance comes when we change our mind about our sin so our actions will not continue to be the same.” Mark Cahill. 1 Pet. 4: 3–4; 1 Jn. 2: 15–17
 - Two Hebrew words for repent: *kha-zah-rah* and *tshu-vah* both mean “to return”. Return to God with all your heart and shun the lusts of the world.
 - Repentance in Yoruba is “*Ironupiwada*”. “Change your thoughts to change your conducts”.
 - Without genuine repentance, there can be no genuine Christianity.
2. Three key Greek words are translated repentance in N.T.
Gr. Metaneo – Not merely forsaking sin, but a total change of attitude and love for it. Matt. 3:2; 4: 17
Gr. Metanoia – A real change of mind and attitude toward sin and its cause, not merely the consequence. Matt. 3: 8, 11; 9:13; Lk. 24: 47
Gr. Metamelomai – To regret the consequence of sin; not the cause. Matt. 27: 3
3. True repentance involves:
- a. Godly sorrow 2 Cor. 7: 10 – see sin as God sees it. 2 Pet. 2: 21–22
 - b. Confession of sin – Ps. 32: 5; 1 Jn. 1: 9
 - c. Willingness to give up sin – Pro. 28: 13
 - d. Having a hatred of sin – Ez. 20: 43–44
 - e. Restitution – Luke 19: 8

PART II

4. **Dead works** – anything that we do, that is not initiated by God. E.g. ministry; giving; visiting; etc. **Presumption**. It is result of ego, pride, self, ministry competition, ref. Rom. 8: 14. That is why every work shall be judged – 1 Cor. 3: 12–14
- Two types of dead works:
- a) Everything we did before conversion: (No file in heaven before conversion.)
 - Gal. 5: 19–21 Works of the flesh
 - 1 Jn. 3: 8 Works of the devil
 - Religious/church activities. Christ’s atonement is what justifies.
- Eph. 2: 8–9

b) Everything we did after salvation that Holy Ghost did not initiate. It has no record in heaven, it carries no reward, and it has no life of God. Jn. 5: 19; Matt. 6: 10

- Sardis church Rev. 3: 1-2
- David's census 2 Sam. 24: 10
- Moses killing Egyptian Ex. 2: 11-12
- Uzzah steadying the Ark 2 Sam. 6: 6-7

5. We have no excuse for dead work

- Jn. 14: 16 Spirit of truth is with us Jn. 16: 13-14
- Jn.5:19; 7:16; 8: 28 Jesus is our example

Many believers remain immature - they would rather receive than give. Many are unable to discipline themselves. God is looking for:

- Disciplined people to wait on Him
- Spiritual leaders others can imitate because of their faith, obedience, godliness
- Those to aspire to maturity in Him

Removing dead works and true repentance is starting point.

Pray and release yourself to the Holy Spirit.

FAITH TOWARDS GOD

The series started with a study of repentance from dead works. A genuine Christian life starts with repentance and turning away from dead works.

1. **“Turn from”** dead works and **“turn to”** God in faith. Heb. 11: 6; Rom. 14: 23
Faith: having trust, assurance or confidence in another person and that person’s word. Gr. Pistis
John Wesley: “Faith is not mental assent”
Faith is not sheer optimism. It is trust based on God’s word that He is

Who He says He is, and will do whatever He says. If one doubts His word, he calls God a liar.

2. How does faith come? Rom. 10: 17 – **word “rhema”** Gr. Rhema implies, *“specific word to a specific individual, at a specific time, for a specific purpose.”*

What gives you faith, is what God says to you, or quickens about your situation in His Word.

Two categories of the word: a) **Logos** Jn. 1: 1; 1: 14 Revelation of God thro the Word

b) **Rhema** Lk. 1: 38; 3: 2; Jn. 6: 63 specific to a person.

Logos reveals who God is, while Rhema tells you what He wants to do for you. Wait for rhema before “claiming” God will do this or that. (Is. 40: 31) Let God say what He wants to do, before you start believing Him for it. Avoid **hyper-faith**. (I claim it, I confess it, and I get it)

Faith is not **presumption**. (Illustrate. Three Korean girls and Prophet in Ibadan) Cmp. Mt. 14: 25–31

There can be no genuine faith without God’s word or a statement from Him.

3. Rhema can come through: scripture, prophecy, dream, vision, word of knowledge, inner witness. The key is to pray first and allow God to respond. Remember, NO is an answer.

Prayer and study of the Word are crucial to having faith.

4. How faith towards God develop:

– Realize faith has substance and reality. Heb. 11: 1. It is not wishful thinking.

– Realize faith is a gift of God. Eph. 2: 8; I Cor. 12: 7–9

Holy Spirit must place ability to believe God in our hearts.

– Faith develops through our knowledge of God. You cannot trust someone that you do not know. The following are needed for faith to grow:

Study of the Word

Prayer

Meditation on the Word of God

God dealing with us

Experiences, particularly the fiery ones.

– Right attitude of mind. Firm persuasion – 2 Tim. 1: 12

– Faith involves humility and submissions to God’s will Philip. 2: 5–8

- Faith grows as we remember the previous faithfulness of God.
 - 5. Faith involves moving from the sense knowledge to revelation knowledge - the truth of the word of God.
- There is no substitute for a vibrant Christian life. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." Heb. 11: 6

THE DOCTRINES OF BAPTISMS

Baptism: Gr. baptize - dip, immerse fully

1. There are four different kinds of baptism for believers:

Baptism into Christ	Position of believer
Baptism in water	Public confession of believer
Baptism in the Holy Ghost	Power of believer
Baptism with Fire	Purification of believer

2. **Baptism in one body** - 1 Cor. 12: 12-14; Eph. 4: 4-5

This is foundational baptism. Without this, there is no heaven for the individual.

It takes place at conversion. At this point, Holy Ghost enters. Rom. 8: 9; Eph. 1: 13

Holy Spirit places new convert into the body - selects actual assembly, and suitable functions for the believer.

Therefore:

- a) Believers should be content with their positions. Phip. 4: 11. It is immaturity and lack of contentment to jump from assembly to assembly or from one pastor to another.
- b) No loneliness in the body. We are members of a universal body. Eph 3: 15
- c) No insecurity. Christ is the head and loves the body. Eph. 5: 25

- d) No independence, but inter-dependence.. 1 Cor. 12: 25–26
- e) God does not judge believers by their congregations, or denominations. Christians should avoid schisms and discriminations amongst themselves. Eph. 4: 11–16

3. **Water baptism** – Physical act expressing spiritual truth. Col. 2: 11–12
 – 1 Pet. 3: 21 Baptism is the answer; what is the question? Many jump into the answer (water) without understanding the question God is asking believers?
 Rom. 6: 2–4 Question – Are you still under sin? Are you willing to be a consecrated vessel?
 Rom. 6: 7 Death delivers from sin. That is why:
 Baptism is a symbol of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ.
 Rom. 6: 10
 – Water baptism is symbolically dying to sin, old nature buried and believer is alive in Christ – new nature – Gal. 2: 20
 – Water baptism does not save. The person being baptized is already saved, before being baptized.
 Sin washed by blood of Jesus Rev. 1: 5
 Cleansing by the Word Jn. 15: 3
 Water does not save 1 Pet. 3: 21
 – Water baptism is outward confession we are finished with sin. Rom. 6: 14
 If a believer is not ready to forsake sin, he should not be baptized.

Many believers send conflicting signals into the spirit realm.

4. **Holy Spirit baptism into power for new position.** Acts 1: 8; Jn. 1: 33
 First presence of Holy Spirit is to confirm sonship. 2 Cor. 1: 21–22;
 Eph. 1: 13–14
 The baptism of Holy Spirit is for the following:
- a) Power and boldness to witness. Acts 1: 8. **Witness** is Gr. martus. By analogy, “martyr”. The baptism in the Holy Ghost is to enable believers live and die for Jesus. 11 out of the 12 apostles were martyred for the Lord. “Fox’s Book of Martyrs” details martyrdom of saints. 2 Tim. 2: 11–13; Rev. 12: 11;

- b) Luke 9: 23–25 If believers understand the rigorous demands of the cross, compromises with the world and sin shall greatly reduce in the church. Without the power of the Holy Ghost, it is not possible to live like Christ.
- c) Release of the gifts of Holy Spirit. 1 Cor. 12: 7–11
- d) Greater effectiveness in prayer. Rom. 8: 26
- e) Enables true worship Jn. 4: 23–24; Eph. 5: 18–20
- f) Fresh understanding of and love for word of God Jn. 16: 13; 1 Cor. 2: 9–16

All believers need to be filled.

Seek it by faith. Gal. 3: 2–5 (No struggle, begging, agonizing. It is a free gift.) Luke 11: 11–13 just ask.

5. **Baptism with fire** Matt. 3: 11–12

One may ask: why does God permit so much suffering in the lives of His children? Why would the God of love fold His hands and watch His children suffer intensely?

Many believers have backslidden because they do not understand purification by fire.

Chaff is necessary for growth of wheat, but must be destroyed at a stage. God brings situations our way to purge and purify us. Jn. 15: 1–2

- a) True character is revealed under pressure. Financial, marital, ministry. Deut. 8: 1–3. God is interested in our character; not in our comfort. There is difference between character and personality. Personality is what you are when people are present; character is what you are when people are not. God is interested in character not personality. Man's personality is deceptive. Many believers manifest personality; not character. Affliction reveals our character to help us know where to change.
- b) All disciples need to go through it, to be like Jesus. The Lord did not bring obedience from heaven. He learnt it on the earth through suffering. Heb. 2: 10; 5: 8; Is. 48: 10. After much suffering, he became meek and obedient unto death. That is God's purpose for each believer. Jn. 12: 25–26
- c) There is spiritual treasure in each believer that the flesh hinders from manifesting. The flesh has to be broken for the life of Christ to flow out. John 12: 24; 2 Cor. 4: 7–9

- d) Baptism by fire is purifying process. 1 Pet. 4: 12–19; 2 Tim. 2: 3; Rev. 2: 10; Pro. 17: 3
- e) There can be no spiritual maturity without intense sufferings and afflictions. Jam. 1: 2: 4; Rom. 5: 3–5. One reason why spiritual immaturities abound in the church is Christians abhor any thought of inconvenience or discipline, talk less of joyfully accepting suffering.

LAYING ON OF HANDS

1. Mk. 16: 17–18; 2 Tim. 1: 6; 1 Tim. 5; 22
 Call of God is go on to maturity.
 Laying hands redirects attention from self to others – believer becomes instrument of blessing. God expects believers to be channels of His power and blessing.
 Aim to be a giver of blessings, prayer, healing, grace, and not a collector. Lk. 6: 46; 2 Cor. 9: 6–7; Acts. 20: 35

Laying of hand is done with definite spiritual purpose – accompanied by: Prayer, Prophetic word.

Head is the seat of the anointing. (Believers should be careful who lays hand on them.)

Hand is the channel through which anointing flows out.

2. Examples in OT – Lev. 1: 1–5 Transference of sin

Gen. 48: 14 – Jacob imparts blessing to Ephraim and Manasseh

Deut. 34: 9 – Joshua commissioned by Moses (Num. 27: 22–23)

New Testament reasons for laying on of hands:

Lk. 4: 40; 13: 13 – Jesus imparted healing

Jam. 5: 14–16 Elders to anoint with oil

Mk. 16: 17 – Believers to lay hand

a) To impart blessing

– Mt. 19: 13–15; Mk. 10: 13–16 Jesus imparted blessing to children

– Rev. 1: 17 Jesus to John, do not be afraid

b) To impart baptism of the Holy Ghost – Acts 8: 14–17; 9: 17; 19: 6

c) To impart spiritual gifts – 1 Tim. 4: 14; 2 Tim. 1: 6

d) To set people apart for a specific work – Acts 13: 2–3; 6: 1–6

3 Three-fold caution:

Lev. 1: 1–5. There is spirit to spirit contact when hand is laid. Do not be a scapegoat.

1 Tim. 5: 22 – Do not be in haste to lay hands. Be led by the Holy Spirit.

1 Tim. 3: 6 – Avoid consecrating immature and unprepared believers into spiritual offices.

- To avoid transference of sinful habits, avoid indiscriminate laying on of hands – either on you or by you.

4 Importance in the church

a) For service to others. Impart blessing, healing. Basis of Christian ministry is service.

b) For giving – Ministering life of God within us to others. When we give, we get more. Lk. 6: 38

c) For enabling call. It is to commission men and women for service. Acts 13: 1–3

- 5 Four vital areas in which believers are expected to “lift” and be a blessing:
- Lift your hands and give Philip. 4: 15–17 Give to support missionaries.
 - Lift your heart and pray Luke 10: 2 Pray for laborers into the harvest.
 - Lift your eyes and see John 4: 34–36 See the harvest – prostitutes, drug addicts, un-reached people groups, etc
 - Lift your feet and go Matt. 28: 19–20; Mk. 16: 15; be part of the global evangelization to build the kingdom of God.

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

It is interesting that after laying foundations of repentance, faith, baptisms, and service through laying on of hands, God rounds up the doctrines with resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. One gets the impression that God looks at the end of our faith and gives a glimpse of the future for the faithful (resurrection of the dead) and the faithless (eternal judgment). Hence, Rev. 22: 11–12 rings a bell of warning.

Heb. 6: 1–2; Jn. 5: 24–29; 1 Thes. 4: 13–18

Resurrection: A standing or rising up. We live for eternity, not time.

1. OT resurrection: 1 Kgs. 17: 17–24 Widow of Zarephath’s son
 2 Kgs. 4: 32–35 Shunamite’s son
 2 Kgs. 13: 21 Man on Elisha’s grave
 NT resurrection: Mk. 5: 35–43 Jairus daughter
 Jn. 11: 39–44 Lazarus
 Acts 20: 9–12 Eutychus
 Lk. 7: 11–17 Widow of Nain’s son
 Acts 9: 36–42 Dorcas

All resurrected and died again. Our resurrection is patterned after Christ – Col. 1: 16–18

2. **Teaching in 3 parts:** (Note: Resurrection is of the body; not spirit and soul.)

a) Resurrection of Christ

Past

- b) Spiritual resurrection of believers in Christ Present
- c) Ultimate resurrection of all who are in the grave Future

3. Resurrection of Jesus Christ – Mt. 28: 6; Lk. 24: 36–40; Acts 1: 3
- Jesus Christ is supreme Mt. 28: 18; Eph. 1: 17–23
 - Future judgment is assured Acts. 17: 31
 - Jesus is Son of God Rom. 1: 4
 - Believers are justified Rom. 4: 25; 6: 8–9; Heb. 10: 12; 1 Pet. 1:

3

4. Spiritual resurrection of the believer in Jesus Christ – 2 Cor. 5: 14– 17; Gal. 2: 19–20; Col. 2: 12; Eph. 2: 4–6 – dead in sins

Death indicates **separation**. There are three types of death –

- Physical death – James 2: 26. When spirit man departs, man is physically dead.
- Spiritual death – Matt. 8: 22; Col. 2: 13; 1 Tim. 5: 6. All men were born spiritually dead. Life comes when one is born-again and reconciled to God.
- Eternal death – Matt. 10: 28; Rev: 20: 14–15; 21: 8. Whoever dies without reconciliation to God is eternally dead.

Evidences of spiritual resurrection:

New purpose in life Col. 3: 1–4

New Master is obeyed 2 Cor. 2: 15

New life is manifest Rom. 6: 4

New attitude Rom. 6: 11

5. Ultimate resurrection of all in grave.

a) Rev. 20: 4–6, 11–12

b) 1 Cor. 15: 35–38, 42–44, 51–52

c) 1 Thes. 4: 13–17

6. Pray for grace to be part of the first resurrection. Lk. 21: 34–36.
Remember that it is only those that endure till the end that shall be saved. Live daily with the consciousness that any moment, the trumpet shall sound. Be sober, be vigilant. Be HOLY

ETERNAL JUDGMENT

Heaven is certain; so is eternal judgment. Rom. 2: 5–11; 2 Pet. 3: 3–15; Heb. 10: 24–39; Matt. 25: 31–46.

1. Judgment: Bring to account; bring to trial; sentence; call to account; etc
 Eternal judgment certain: Acts 17: 30–31; Is. 2: 19; Rev. 6: 16–17
 Reasons for teaching on eternal judgment:
 - a. We should be continually grateful – Rom. 5: 8–9; 1 Thes. 1: 10
 - b. Live in the fear of God – Heb. 10: 13; 1 Pet. 1: 17; Mt. 10: 28
 - c. Intercede for the lost
 - d. Present the gospel as it is – Rom. 1: 16–20; 2 Pet. 2: 9–22

2. What is eternal judgment?
 - a. Thrown into eternal fire of hell Matt. 18: 8–9
 - b. Being in company of devils Matt. 25: 41
 - c. Weeping and gnashing of teeth Matt. 25: 30
 - d. Shame and everlasting contempt Dan. 12: 2
 - e. Eternal separation from God Matt. 25: 41; 2 Thes. 1: 7–10
 - f. Second death Rev. 20: 14–15

3. Why must there be judgment?
 - a. Because of ungodliness 2 Pet. 3: 7
 - b. Unrighteousness 2 Pet. 2: 9
 - c. Unbelief and evil John 3: 18–19
 - d. Trespass Rom. 5: 18
 - e. Sin against God Is. 24: 5

4. Who is Judge?

God	Acts 17: 31; Rom. 3: 6; Heb. 12: 23; 1 Pet. 4: 5
The Son	John 5: 22–27; Acts 10: 42
The saints	1 Cor. 6: 2–3

5. Principles governing divine judgment:
 - a. The Word of God Jn. 12: 48–50
 - b. Personal conducts 2 Cor. 5: 10; Rom. 2: 5–6; 1 Pet. 1: 17
 - c. Motives and thought life 1 Cor. 4: 5; Rom. 2: 16
 - d. The gospel 2 Thes. 1: 8
 - e. Personal responsibility Rom. 2: 12–16; 14: 12

6. When does judgment occur?

Past:

Satan is judged Jn. 16;

The world – Jn. 12: 31;

Man – Jn. 3: 18; 5: 24

Present: Christians 1 Cor. 11: 31–32

Future: After death Heb. 9: 27;

Last day Jn. 12: 48; Rev. 20: 11–15;

2 Thes. 1: 8–10; Rev. 11: 18

7. Believers have 2 tasks:

a. Ensure right standing with God

b. Rescue the lost and perishing through witnessing