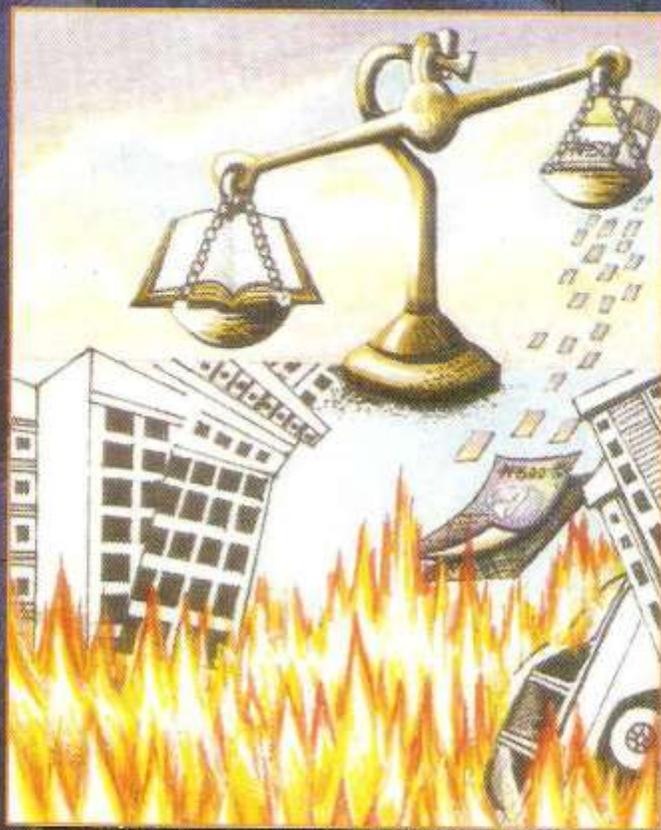


BEWARE
Of
SUCCESS



Calling the Church back to the Narrow Path

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Foreword

This book is appropriate, unassuming, incisive, timely, truthful and spiritual loaded. Since spiritual things are only spiritually discerned, my worry is then: who in these times will be found to believe this report.

Then come Lord Jesus!

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Introduction

The alarm rang suddenly. It rang consistently. It rang loudly. Its shrill tone shattered the stillness of the night until it penetrated into the depth of my sleep. I felt heavy all over, having had a busy day, and wished the alarm would stop. Reluctantly I got up from bed, crossed the room to the top of the wardrobe where experience had taught me to place the alarm clock. In the past, when I placed the alarm clock by the bedside, I used to turn over and switch it off while simultaneously informing myself I was awake. Whenever I did that, I would eventually come awake with a bounce when it was daylight. To solve the problem, since I wanted to wake up at 5:00 a.m. each day, I placed the alarm clock on top of the wardrobe across the room. I figured out that by the time I got up from the bed, crossed the room to switch off the alarm and made the return journey to the bed, I should be wide-awake. It worked.

However this particular day was different. By the time I made the return journey, I still felt very groggy, as if I had barely slept, although I went to bed around 11.00 p.m. Realizing that if I did not leave the bedroom I would miss the early morning fellowship with God, I forced myself into the prayer room, switched on the light and instinctively, glanced at the clock. It read 1.00 a.m!

How could this be? The alarm was set for 5.00 a.m. Out of curiosity, I returned to the bedroom, and quietly, so as not to disturb my wife, I eased myself into the room and brought the clock out checked it and – what?! It registered 1.00 a.m. but the alarm indicator rested on 5.00 a.m. For a moment I was baffled. What could be the meaning of this?

Suddenly, like light piercing through darkness it dawned on me. If you set an alarm clock for 5.00 a.m. and it goes off at 1.00 a.m., it simply means one thing – God wants to talk to you! And it must be very important for Him to disturb your sleep. After all He gives His beloved sleep.

Immediately I headed for the prayer room. As I entered, I heard clearly in my spirit, “3 hours”. No problem, I shall pray for 3 hours. By this time, both the sleep and the tiredness had disappeared. I was wide-awake, curious to know why the Lord had visited me this early morning.

I fell on my knees, resting my chest on the center table that now functions as prayer stool. A few minute after I started praying, my wife entered the prayer room to join me.

After praying for about hour, suddenly the lord spoke very clearly, “Beware of Success”. I picked the pen beside me, which I always placed handy when praying in case the lord spoke, and wrote it down. I continued praying.

About thirty minutes later, He spoke again, this time a proverb in Yoruba language: “Ise Kipa eniyan, ayo lo n’pa eniyan”. A paraphrase of this proverb in English could read “Poverty, suffering, hardship, do not destroy; rather, success, prosperity, joy, cause destruction.” The closest version of this proverb in English is simply “success intoxicates”. I wrote it down also and continued praying.

The next thing I heard was a story about a man who wanted to go into business so he could prosper. I have heard the story before, while in the secondary school; this particular morning, however, the Lord reminded me. The man sold all his belongings to raise the capital and used the money to buy expensive dishes and breakable plates. When the consignment arrived, he stacked everything in his room and started admiring his wise investment and subsequently, started daydreaming.

“When I sell this consignment”, he told himself, “I shall make double profit, and buy double this present stock. I shall sell that one too and make double profit again. Very soon I shall become very rich, with a big shop, and many workers, I shall buy many cars, and build many houses. In fact in this town, I shall be the richest man.”

“Now, whom shall I marry? No, I cannot marry an ordinary woman. Yes, yes I shall marry the king’s daughter. After all I am the richest man in the town, and the King himself shall be honored that I am interested in his daughter” (At this stage the man was completely lost in his fantasy. He had lost touch with reality). “When the king’s daughter comes to my house, I will ill-treat her, beat her, and throw her out. After all I am so rich I can do whatever I want. Yes. When I throw her out, people will come and beg me. I will refuse, until the king himself comes to beg that I should forgive his daughter and take her back. Grudgingly, I will agree, then the king will tell her to come and kneel before me to beg and apologize. To show my disdain for the king’s daughter, as she kneels in my presence, I will kick her in the face like this-!

At this point, the pompous dreamer threw a powerful kick at the imaginary king’s daughter. The kick landed right on the dishes he spent all his belongings to purchase and C-R-A-S-H came down everything. His investment, his future, his success, and his prosperity – everything crashed before he started.

Success destroyed him. He was not even successful yet. He simply imagined himself a success and it destroyed him. The Lord says, “Beware of Success”.

“...the wise shall understand” Dan. 12:10

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Beware Of Success

*“Reading this book will keep you from sin;
Sin will keep you from reading this book”
- Watchman Nee*

One needs to make three points very clear as we go further in this book.

1. The author has no objection to prosperity and wealth so long as such prosperity conforms with Matt. 6:33 *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you”* Emphasis must be on the Kingdom of God
2. If you are not willing to totally surrender to Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life, (that is, your Master, Commanding officer, chief Executive,) do not read this book. It will only infuriate and provoke you to anger.
3. If you are willing to make heaven, no matter what you have to suffer no earth, then proceed.

We shall start by sharing a true-life story.

In 1923 at Edgewater beach Hotel, Chicago, Illinois, eight of the world’s most powerful money magnates gathered for a meeting. These eight, if they combined their resources and their assets, controlled more money than the U.S Treasury.

In that group were such men as Charles Schwab. He was the President of the New York Stock Exchange and Arthur Cotton was a wheat speculator. Albert Fall was a Presidential Cabinet member, personally a very wealthy man. Jesse Livermore was the President of the International Bank of Settlements Ivan Krueger headed the largest monopoly. Quite an impressive group of people!

Let’s look at the same group later in life.

Charles Schwab died penniless. Richard Whitney spent the rest of his life serving a sentence in Sing prison. Arthur Cotton, that great wheat speculator, became insolvent. Albert Fall was pardoned at a Federal Prison so he might die at home. Leon Fraser, the President of that big international bank? He committed suicide. Jesse Livermore? Ivan Krueger? He committed suicide.

Seven of those eight great big money magnates had lives that were a disaster before they left planet earth. What mistake did they make? Thinking that what they and what they controlled belonged to them* (*Illustration Unlimited-James S. Hewett, Tyndale House Publishers)

There is an urgent need to call the church back to the narrow path that leads to life. There is currently in the Body of Christ, a seemingly insatiable lust for money, wealth, and material well being. A random sample of the messages preached in many Christian assemblies and books written by Christian authors, show that a preponderance focus on how to be rich, powerful, influential, wealthy and so on. As a matter of fact, to the mind of many, Jesus Christ died on the cross and resurrected three days later to make them millionaires

Is money then the sign of God's favor? Is the lack of it a sign of Divine displeasure? If money was the indicator of Divine blessing and God's favor, then armed robbers, drug barons, looters of Government treasury, and so on, are favored by God. Conversely, if lack of earthly riches and wealth in a believer is a mark of God's displeasure, and a sure confirmation of complicated spiritual problems, as many preachers would have us believe, then God certainly did not love Jesus of Nazareth; and he hated the apostles Peter, Paul, John and the rest of them. Pastor Erwin Lutzer in his book, *Failure: The Back Door to Success* said "If money is a basis of judging success or failure; it is obvious that Jesus Christ was a failure." There is a lot of greed, covetousness, self-seeking and self-gratification in the Body of Christ of this generation. The closest scriptural similarity to the church of today is the Laodicean church, rebuked by the lord in Rev.3: 14-22.

The Laodicean church said, "I am rich, and increased with goods and have need of nothing". The lord, on the other hand, says "knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Oh, that we would return to the Lord, so that He may anoint our eyes with eye salve, that we may see! That we may see that the Devil is using money to populate hell. That we may see, that a lot of

names hitherto registered in the Book of Life, are daily being erased, because of attachment to mundane filthy lucre. In Matthew 6: 24, the Lord makes a grim statement that oftentimes, we gloss over in the scriptures:

<p>If money is a basis Of judging success Or failure; it is obvious Jesus Christ was a failure – Erwin Lutzer</p>

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and

mammon”

In making this statement, the Lord clearly affirms that there shall be two masters in the

Beware of Success

last days. God is one master; money is the other master. It is incredible that the Lord placed both God and money on the same pedestal! In the hearts of men, money occupies the same importance and reverence that God occupies.

It may be, that you have been looking at money as a means of exchange or denominator of value, but The Almighty God sees money as His rival. The Only thing that directly competes with God for your attention, love, respect, fear, and worship - is money. As far as God is concerned, money is not merely a means of exchange; it is an idol.

The Lord makes it clear that it is impossible to please the two masters, simultaneously. If you please one, you definitely will displease the other.

That implies, every time that God needs your attention or your time, and you decline because of your work or business, you may be showing him who your master truly is.

The amazing thing is that most of the multitude that throng the church now, claiming to be Born-Again and Spirit filled are not interested in God but in money. Try this – pray for believers that God shall send them to the mission field to fulfill His purpose of saving souls, and note the response. Next, pray for that same group of people that God shall make them millionaires. The second response shall confirm whom they are truly seeking in the church. It is an incontrovertible fact that those who are in the church to find money far out-number those who are in church to find God.

Mark this; whoever is in love with money shall go to hell. Many shall end up in hell fire not because they rejected Jesus Christ, but because they fell in love with money, or in most cases, they refused to put the love of money out of their hearts, after they became Born-Again. **(1Tim.6:10)** why do you

<p>Many shall end up in hell fire not because they rejected Jesus Christ, but because they fell in love with money, or in most cases, they refused to put the love of money out of their hearts, after they became Born -Again</p>
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think you are Born-Again? So you can become a millionaire? No. "...He chose you and ordained you to go and bear fruit..." **Jn 15:16**

Since there is so much craze for financial prosperity, let us turn to the scriptures to find out what God says about the rich man. Possibly, we may have a better understanding of how God views earthly wealth.

Why do you think you are Born Again? That you could be millionaire? No. "...he chose you and ordained you to go and bear fruit..."

Jn 15:16

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Lk.6:24 – But woe unto you that are rich! For ye have received your consolation
James 5:1-6 – Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl! For your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten...

I Tim. 6:9 – But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

Prov. 11:28 – He that trusteth in his riches shall fall.

Prov. 23:4-5 – Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

Prov. 28:22 – He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not the poverty shall come upon him.

Ecc. 5:10 – He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.

Ecc. 1:2-3 – Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labor, which he taketh under the sun?

James 1:11 - ...so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.

Mt. 19:23 – Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into kingdom of heaven.

Also see: **Prov. 28:20; Ecc. 2:26; 5:12, 13-15; 6:1-2; Mt. 6:19-34; Jer. 17:11; James 4:13-14.**

We see again and again, in scriptures, that when God talks about the rich man, He seems to be pronouncing a curse upon him. (And this is what many children of God are lusting after!) For example, "woe", "weep and howl", "destruction and perdition" etc. Why? As Matt 6:24 points out, the rich man serves the other master.

You may wish to argue, "but, Deut. 8:18 says 'He gives us power to get wealth', and 3 Jn

2 also says ‘I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper’. What is all this that God curses the rich man?”

Concerning Deut. 8:18, we shall treat that subject in detail in chapter 3, under the topic **The Two Covenants**. For 3 Jn. 2, the word ‘prosper’ in that verse has no direct reference to dollars, pounds or Naira. It simply means, “to go on well in life”. Going on well in life encompasses peace, good health, fulfilling destiny, doing the will of God, making heaven. Money is not the key focus in that passage. (We shall treat this subject in greater details in Chapter 3)

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Is there a danger in focusing ones life on financial prosperity? Yes. Believers need to be aware of this danger. Presently in the church, money has become the yardstick of measuring God’s favor and the lack of it provokes suspicion that the poor fellow is either not right with God or he is under a curse, or a terrible covenant remains to be broken in his life. Even if that fellow is the one doing the will of God, he is not regarded. Certain Ministers of the Gospel have also fallen into this error of using money to assess God’s favor. It is wrong. Let us go back to what God says about the rich man in Lk 6:24

“But woe unto you that are rich! For ye have received your consolation”

The word consolation is the Greek word “paraklesis”, which means a calling alongside (for help). The strength and the security of the rich man, deep

In his heart, is his money. That is why the rich will length

to preserve and increase their wealth, because the richer they are, the more secured they feel. God, by his Spirit, is supposed to be the help of our lives and our soul.

<p>Millionaires seldom smile- Andrew Carnegie</p>	go any
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The Holy Spirit is referred to in Jn. 14:16 as our “parakletos”, (One called alongside) that is, **comforter**. If the rich man has his consolation (helper) here, then he should expect none from above – So, how does he get there? What the Lord is saying by implication is:” Woe to you that are rich, because you already have your helper”

This statement by the Lord becomes more pungent with meaning when we refer to Elk. 16:19-31, the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. Many of us have often wondered what sin the rich man committed that warranted his end in hell. The Lord did not give us much detail about his business dealings. However, Father Abraham in v.25 gave a good indication on why the rich man ended up in hell.

But Abraham said, son, remember that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good

things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented

Please note that Abraham called the rich man in hell, “Son”. He did not call him Man, or friend, or use his name. He called him “Son”

Abraham is calling the rich man “Son”, implied two things:

1. That the rich man was his seed. A true descendant of Abraham.
2. That the rich man was a covenant child.

Yet, neither the descent from Abraham nor the covenant was able to rescue him from hell fire. Father Abraham saw his son in hell and he distanced himself from. Why? Because, “thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things”.

Please, compare this with, “...you have received your consolation”

- The Holy Spirit is our “parakletos” on the earth. Jn. 14:16 And I will pray the father, and he shall give you another Comforter.
- Jesus Christ is our “parakletos” in heaven. 1Jn.2:1 “And if any man sin, we have and advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one:
- Money is the “parakesis” of the rich man.

Lk_6:24 – “But woe unto you that are rich

For ye have received your consolation”

Someone may disagree that money is the strength and security of the rich man. One would suggest to such a skeptic to find a rich man, even if he is a pastor, who has just lost all his money and offer him food. See if he will

Do not let money scare you. It is not capable of making you rich. True wealth comes from seeking God

eat. Of course, he will not. Why? The rich man has lost his strength and his security.

“The rich man’s wealth is his strong city, and as a high wall is his own conceit”. Prov. 18:11

So, when Believers begin to petition and harass heaven for money, God wonders if we have any understanding at all? He seems to be saying to us, “If money was such a good thing to amass, I would have loaded My Son with plenty of it when He came to the earth” Looking at the example of Jesus Christ our High Priest, what was it that made Him great Was it money? No. It was obedience. Therefore, go for uncompromising obedience to God. It shall qualify you as a carrier of the Holy Ghost; and no amount of money in the world can compare with that.

Do not let money scare you. It is not capable of making you rich. True wealth comes from seeking God.

However, if there still are those who remain adamant, that it is money and nothing else,

they may get money, but they may lose something that money cannot buy. Zza Zza Gabor, an American actress once said, “If you marry for money, you will pay the price”. There is a high price to be paid for amassing money.

“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lust, which drown men in destruction and perdition” 1 Tim. 6:9

One prays that the eyes of the church shall open and shall follow the Master in conduct, in doctrine and principle. We should desist from seeking an earthly consolation, if we are truly desirous of making heaven. Let us follow the example of Jesus Christ:

What was it that made Jesus Christ Great? Was it Money. No. It was obedience...shall qualify you as carrier of the Holy Ghost

- When He was to be born, He borrowed the manger
- When He was going to preach, He borrowed Peter’s boat.
- When He was going to conduct a dinner outreach, He borrowed the homes of Matthew, Zaccheus, and Simon the Leper.
- When He was to ride triumphantly into Jerusalem, He borrowed the colt.
- When He was going to have the last supper with His disciples, He borrowed the Upper Room.
- When He died, He borrowed the tomb.

He had no earthly material wealth. It is not so His followers today! Not so! They want everything. The best cars, clothes, houses, land, positions etc.

The less they have the more they want.

The more they have, the more they want.

It is always more, more, and more.

They forget the admonition of the Lord in Lk. 12:24

Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

In Heb. 13:5, the Word of God commands us:

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

- Christ taught us selflessness many Believers are covetous.
- He taught us to give but many of us have only learnt to grab. Even when Believers give, they must first be convinced that they shall receive more in return. That is why, in most assemblies, a mini-message must be preached before the offering is taken. When it comes to giving

to missions and soul winning, some assemblies have to invite a guest speaker to psyche the people of God before they would give anything.

- Christ taught us to reject the world, but Believers want to reign in the world
- He taught us to deny self, but many of us are self seeking.
- Christ taught His church to sacrifice, but the church has learnt to socialize.

Brethren, we are not following the examples of the Master! We have no right to refer to ourselves as Christians if we are not willing to follow the Master in conduct and in

<p>If you marry for money, you will pay the price - Zza Zza Gabor</p>

principle. Some deceive themselves and justify the lust for wealth by saying that the Gospel needs money. They are making money to finance the Gospel.

Pray, who told us that God needs our assistance to finance His church? Did we assist Him to supply manna in the wilderness for forty years? Were we the ones who cooked the food the raven brought to Elijah? Did we place the gold coin in the mouth of the fish for Peter to catch? In fact, how much of our wealth actually ends up in the Gospel? 20%, 30%, 50%, 80%?

It is rare before you can find someone in the church, today, who gives more than 30% of his income to God – **regularly**. In most cases, when people pay their tithe, all the other financial contributions in the church do not exceed another 10% of their income. That is, offerings, missions contribution (if any), seed faith etc.

Christians have permitted themselves to become ensnared by the distractions of the world. As the income increases, rather than what is given to God, it is the taste for material wealth

that increases. Those who claim their ministry is to finance the Gospel are dodging the real issue and giving God partial obedience.

Nowhere is it written in the scripture that “go ye into all the earth and make money to finance the Gospel”. Yes, we know. Some shall point that certain people supported the ministry of

<p>We have no right to refer to ourselves as Christians, if we are not willing to follow the Master in conduct and in principle</p>

Jesus. (Lk 8:2-3) That is correct. But, what did He say you must do for Him? “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel” This is what He says you must do!

It is not impossible that someone shall say:

“What is this man talking about? We are trying to eradicate poverty from the church. Do you want the people of God to be wretched and pauperized? Does it give you joy to see God’s people suffer and live in abject poverty?”

That is precisely the problem. We seem to be much concerned about making God's people feel good. Aaron had the same problem in the wilderness. The people wanted an idol to make them feel good, he made one for them, without considering if it would make God feel bad.

One has a number of responses to such allegation of promoting poverty in the church.

- One, God never said His people would be pauperized. He however told them to seek His kingdom and His righteousness first, and other things shall be added to them. Obedience to His will is paramount.
- Two, in trying eradicate poverty from church, is it right to replace poverty with covetousness? Whoever is covetous shall end up in hell fire.

What is the mandate of the church? What did Jesus Christ say His Church should do?

1. In Matt. 16:18, He established His church to destroy gates of hell, not compete with unbelievers in the display of material acquisition of wealth.
2. He commissioned His church to "go unto all the earth and preach the Gospel"
3. He encouraged His people that having food and raiment, they should be content. I Tim. 6:8
4. Because the church has shifted from its original mandate, it has not been able to fulfill its assignment with alacrity. In Jn.17:4 Jesus prayed to the Father and said, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do"

How old was Jesus of Nazareth when He prayed this prayer? Just 33 years! In 3 years, He had fulfilled His destiny. He started His ministry at the age of 30 and three years later, He prayed and told God, "... I have finished the work..." The church is over 2000 years old and over 2.7 billion souls have not heard the Gospel. How long should it take the church to fulfill its mandate? Using a simple arithmetic formula, in 32 years, the church should evangelize the whole world. How?

If one disciple devotes one year to raising another disciple:*

1 st year	2	Disciples
2nd	4	Disciples
3rd	8	Disciples
4th	16	Disciples
5th	32	Disciples
6th	64	Disciples
7th	128	Disciples
8th	256	Disciples
9th	512	Disciples
10th	1,024	Disciples
11th	2,048	Disciples
12th	4,096	Disciples
13th	8,192	Disciples
14th	16,384	Disciples
15th	32,768	Disciples
16th	65,536	Disciples
17th	131,072	Disciples
18th	262,144	Disciples
19th	524,288	Disciples
20th	1,048,576	Disciples
21st	2,097,152	Disciples
22nd	4,194,304	Disciples
23rd	8,388,608	Disciples
24th	16,777,216	Disciples
25th	33,554,432	Disciples
26th	67,108,864	Disciples
27th	134,217,728	Disciples
28th	268,435,456	Disciples
29th	536,870,912	Disciples
30th	1,073,741,824	Disciples
31st	2,147,483,648	Disciples
32nd	4,294,967,296	Disciples

*Bob Gordon-Master Builders

In 32 years the whole world would have been discipled!

The Holy Spirit has even gone a step further for some of us. He has specially called them for specific assignments for the Lord, but they refused to budge by giving the excuse that the Gospel needs money, that is why they are still working. To such, one should point out:

1. God does not need our money; He needs our obedience.
2. Obedience is better than sacrifice.
3. God cannot be bribed to change His mind. His gifts and calling are without repentance.
4. Be careful that heaven does not regard you as a coward who has been intimidated by the cares and fears of this world. The fear of what we shall eat and wherewithal we shall be clothed has petrified many people, and rendered them immobile to do the Master's will. We should always remember Rev. 21:8, "But the fearful and unbelieving ...shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

In fact, every Believer should invest his or her whole life in the Gospel, such that when no Believer brings money to finance the Gospel, the reluctant ones among us should Now turn around and tell the Lord that He should not have issued a general command that everyone should go. Subsequently, they should fold their hands and watch Him solve the problem.

I have made many
millions, but they have
brought me no happiness –
Rockefeller

One vital point we must not neglect has to do with what we invest in the business of God. Jesus Christ tells us.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

For where your treasure is there will your heart be also. Matt. 6:19-21

What is the percentage of our wealth that goes to heaven? 20%, 30%, or is it more? Usually, for many, it is not more than 30%. So let us assume that 30% goes to heaven, and 70% stays on the earth. Where is our treasure, then? Where is our heart? Where our treasure is, that is where is our heart is. This determines the state of our salvation. Believers need to learn and cultivate the habit of turning earthly wealth into heaven treasures.

The rich man seems to be in perpetual trouble with the Lord. When he gave, he was in trouble, because he did not give enough –

Mk 12:41-44. If he does not give, God berates him of generosity to himself and stinginess towards God – he can die suddenly e.g. the rich fool. If he spends his money on himself, he goes to hell (the rich man and Lazarus); if however he calls a party and spends it with his friends, God remonstrates with him – he should have invited the poor, the maimed and destitute.

“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, Which drown men in destruction and perdition”

Money must be handled with care; affection for it must be minimal, because love for it is complicity with evil (1Tim.6:10), and no evil, or carrier of evil shall enter heaven. So, what is the rich man to do, in order to please God? Let the rich man use his money to befriend God, and then he is safe. 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.

John Wesley has this to say about money, “I fear, wherever riches have increased (exceeding few are the exceptions), the essence of religion, the mind that was in Christ has decreased in the same proportion. Therefore I do not see how it is possible, in the nature of things, for any revival of true religion to continue long. For religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and this cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger, and love of the world in all its branches. What way then can we take, that our money may not sink us to the nethermost hell? There is one way, and there is no other under heaven. If those who “gain all they can,” then the more they gain, the more they will grow in grace and the more treasure they will lay up in heaven”

The Spirit of God bears witness in this generation that those who are going to be saved are few.

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 into life, and few there be that find it – Matt 7:13-14

For those amongst us who consider financial prosperity as the highest goal in life, please consider what the following millionaires said about money:

1. I have many millions, but they have brought me no happiness- **Rockefeller**
2. The care of \$200m is enough to kill anyone. There is no pleasure in it – **Vanderbilt**
3. I am the most miserable man on earth – **John Jacob Astor**
4. What can I say? I only know I am desolate _ **J. Paul Getty**
5. I was happier when doing a mechanic job – **Henry Ford**
6. Millionaires seldom smile – **Andrew Carnegie**

You may wish to ask, “Is it then sinful to be rich? Every time I pray for God to bless me, am I displeasing Him? Or, are you implying that all those who are rich in the church shall end up in hell?”

No. The only answer to all your questions is found in Matt. 6:33 “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” There is nothing wrong for you to be rich, so long as the kingdom of God and obedience to God take precedence over your riches.

Unfortunately, many Christians do not seem to know the difference between money that is from God and the money that is from the devil. They think money is money, so long as it can make purchase and satisfies their covetousness. One

Squirrel is eating banana, it is rolling its bottom; squirrel does not know it is sweet thing that kill- Yourba proverb

Of our Pastors used to tell us a story that he observed that any time people come to church to do thanksgiving for a financial or business breakthrough, they sing just one song:

What the Lord has done for me
I cannot tell it all.....

He used to tell us that he knows they cannot tell it all. If they should open their mouth and tell us what they did to get that financial breakthrough, the church will scatter. Consider this true story that James S Hewett tells us in his book |Illustrations Unlimited. Rev. D, a Baptist preacher, tells the story on himself about the time he received a call from a woman who was quite upset over the death of her pet cat, Homer. She wanted the preacher to conduct the funeral service for Homer! Rev. D explained that this was a little out of his line and referred her to a friend, a Presbyterian pastor at a church down the street.

Later, Rev. D. learned that the minister, who had referred her to someone else. About an hour later, she called Rev. D. back, still upset. The woman said she was at her wit’s end, couldn’t find a preacher to conduct Homer’s services, and didn’t know what to do. She said she planned to give one thousand dollars to the church of the minister who

performed this service for Homer. Rev. D said it took him only a moment to mull this over, and then he said to her, “Well, why didn’t you tell me Homer was Baptist cat in the first place?!”

Look, there is a difference between the money that is from Satan and the money that is from God. For example, God entrusts a responsibility into your hands or calls you to an assignment. Shortly after, a wonderful business or employment opportunity comes up that hinders you from accomplishing or attending to what God called you to do; and you think you are blessed? You do not even need to be spiritual to know that that money is from hell; and whatever is from hell has only one objective, to take its recipient back to hell with it.

Satan always uses money as a trap. We must distinguish between money that is from God and money that is from the devil. When men set a trap to capture the squirrel, they use a banana. From this practice comes a Yoruba proverb that says, “The squirrel is eating the banana, it is rolling its bottom, the squirrel does not know it is sweet things that kill.”

This tendency of Satan using attractive things to trap man into destruction reminds one of the experiences of a Chief in the eastern part of Nigeria. The Chief was a member of the kingdom of darkness and used to go for their nocturnal meeting in the spirit realm. On one occasion, the Chief was offered a car made of solid diamond. He had never in his life seen anything as beautiful as this car. It was sparking and dazzling. The man fell in love with the diamond car immediately. However, there was just a little price he was to pay, before he could take possession of the car. He was to allow the forces of darkness to kill his first son! Now, if anyone asked the Chief to point to one singular achievement in his life, he would point to that young man. The young man was academically brilliant and grew up to be a successful businessman. His father was proud of him. It was what gave him joy that Satan, his master, wanted to destroy.

The Chief considered the price that he was to pay for the car, and immediately said. No! All right, no problem. Since Satan understood very well human nature and the greed culture in mankind, he knew all needed to do was to wait. The Chief went for the meeting, and after the proceeding returned to his home in the physical realm.

During his subsequent trips to the spirit realm, he would look at the diamond car where it was parked, admire it, then, when he remembered the price, he would shake his head. But, little by little, he started touching the car. From touching, he entered into the car; he had never seen anything as beautiful as the interior of the car. The interior was even more beautiful than the exterior. He wanted the car more than anything, now. But, that would mean the loss of his cherished son. How would he resolve this dilemma?

One day, he could not endure the torture any longer. He nodded his agreement that the boy should be taken. His son was killed in the spirit realm, and he took possession of the diamond car.

Meanwhile, in the physical, the young man died and everybody mourned his death. Friends, relatives, and family members gathered to pay condolence the Chief and sympathize with him. On the other hand, whenever he went for the meeting in the spirit realm, he would drive his diamond car.

One day, the Chief thought to himself that in the physical, people still considered him a village Chief. If only people knew how important he was in the spirit realm. No other person had a car made of solid diamond. In order to show people on the earth that there was no one like him he resolved to transport his car to the earth after one of their meetings.

On this particular day, he waited until all the other satanic participants at meeting had gone home; then, he was the last person remaining. He made incantations to transport both himself and his diamond car to the physical. As he landed in his compound, it was his scream that woke the entire village. Instead of a diamond car, the Chief found himself sitting astride the stem of plantain tree. He killed his most beloved son to receive the stem of plantain tree.

<p style="text-align: center;">God did not save you to be a Sensation; He saved you to be a Servant. James S. Hewett</p>
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and his
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Satan used for him what is called optical illusion. He was deceived to see a diamond car, while in reality; there was only the stem of a plantain tree.

The same optical illusion is what the devil is using to deceive many Believers today. He paints pictures of wealth and ease for them, if only they could have some money. He shows them the beautiful cars, the big mansion built with Italian tiles and Spanish marbles, well cultivated lawn in the front and Olympic size swimming pool in the backyard. He takes them window-shopping to see the latest shoes, clothes, hats, electronics, etc. Everything is waiting for them; if only they could just have the money.

Listen, it is the stem of a plantain tree. Do not be deceived. The Almighty God tells His children, "having food and raiment, with that be content", "Let your conversation be without covetousness and be content with what you have" God warns us: "...they that will be

rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition"

By the time you discover that when you

pray for thirty minutes, you use twenty minutes to ask for blessings, money, breakthrough, prosperity and the remaining ten minutes to bind hindrances to your prosperity; you are treading the wrong path to eternity. The New Testament saint is meant to live a life of sacrifice. The Almighty God gave us a good example in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is our standard; that is why the Word of God tells us to fix our eyes on Jesus the Author and the Finisher of our faith.

Let us ask ourselves two questions:

1. If God needs your attention, and your business has an emergency, where will you go?
2. If you have 5,000.00 Naira and you budgeted it for something important, and a missionary or mission field has a serious need that requires 5,000.00 Naira, where will you apply the money?

An estimated 80,000 unsaved souls die everyday. That is, 3,333 every hour; 55 every minute to face the judgment seat of Christ.

(Keith Green)

When we stand before the Lord, what is He going to ask for, the money we made or the souls we saved?

The honest answer to these question determines what you “seek first” – God or your convenience.

For those who are genuinely interested in seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, but presently are in business or doing secular work, one would advice such

Beware of Success

to wait for the signal of the Holy Spirit. Once He call you, forget what is behind and move. If, however you have been called and money has terrified and cowed you into disobedience, immediately obey. No one disobeys God and gets away free.

Many Christians do not know the difference between the money that is from God and the money that is from the devil.

They think money is money.

“But, but,” stammers the coward, “we are going to suffer. I mean, I do not want to suffer like some Pastors and missionaries that I see. I do not believe that is the will of God for my life”

You are mistaken. Are you interested in making heaven, or not? If you are interested in making heaven, suffering is part of the journey – intense suffering and self-denial. God the Father suffered to save your soul; He sacrificed His only begotten Son. Jesus Christ suffered; Peter, Paul, James, Livingstone, Hudson, Carey, etc, they all suffered. They

experienced self-denial, they learnt to be abased and to abound, and they were pressed beyond measure, such that they despaired of life. You now receive your own salvation and you reject the suffering. Have you not learnt that the Gospel of Jesus is incomplete without suffering? Check the scripture, self-denial is a prerequisite to reaching your goal of making heaven.

Acts 14:22 "...we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God"

2Tim. 2:12 "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him..." 2Tim. 2:3 "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ"

Heaven is not for the fearful, the cowards and the timid. Heaven is not for those who cannot count all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. (Rev. 21:8; Phil. 3:8).

The good thing about suffering for the gospel is that suffering is only for a while – 1Pet. 5:10 "But the God of all grace, who hath called us into his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, **after that ye suffered a while**, make you perfect, stables, strengthen, settle you."

When the Lord said "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel...." Who was He referring to? – All of us; or, some of us?

There are many qualified people who should be serving

God in many nations of the world, bringing in the harvest of souls for the King of Kings, but money had terrified and cowed them into partial obedience to the Almighty God. That is why the task of preaching the Gospel is saturated with many unqualified and unsuitable people, because those who are qualified refuse to do the work at the convenience of God, but at their own convenience. Therefore, God is compelled to make-do with the unqualified, the mediocre and the opportunists, who have tried everything and failed and have finally resorted to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a means of livelihood.

We cannot blame God for tolerating them; after all, if the truly called refuse to respond, the Most High will work through those who have offered themselves. Put yourself in the position of God. If you have spent time training one of your children to take over the running of your business and when it is time for him to assume the responsibility, he refused, on the ground that he has started his own business. If however, you do not mind, after running his business from 8.00a.m. – 5.00pm, he could pop into your office between 6.00pm – 8.30pm everyday and give you the remnant of his time. You should bear in mind that if he has to travel for his business, you must make other arrangements of your own.

While you were still reeling under the shock of what you have just heard, another of your children, whom you have not trained for this business, offers his service. Even though he

is unqualified, will you tell him to go away? NO. You will manage with him. Nevertheless, you are mentally rewriting your will and re-apportioning your inheritance. And why do the qualified refuse? The other “**master**” had a discussion with them. One could imagine that the discussion was like this:

“My friend, where do you think you are going?”

“I have this burden of doing the will of God. I believe that He wants me to do much more for Him than what I am currently doing”

“That means you want to leave my service? Is that what you are saying? I have warned you before that the moment you leave my service I will also leave you”

“Money, Money, you don’t have to get upset, you see....”

“Enough of that nonsense. I have warned you not to use my first name. Am I your mate?”

“Sorry, Sir. I actually meant, Mr. Mammon, Sir. I am very sorry about the slip of tongue, Sir.”

“Anyway, think very well before you act. In case you do not know what will happen to you, you better go and have a discussion with Pastor Wisdom of-this-World. He will enlighten you better. He is quite a clever chap, and a jolly good fellow. He serves me quite well, and, he still does what you want to do; and, he is well paid. There is also Bishop Self Will; he is also a faithful servant of mine. And there is the adorable Deaconess Fashion on-the-Altar; she does her bit in the church and serves me fervently. Well, are you trying to imply that I am not paying you well?”

“You are paying me very well, Sir. In fact, I have no cause to complain”

“That is very good. Just remember that without me, you are nothing. Everything you have, I gave you. The cars, the house, the clothes – for yourself, your wife and children, I gave you everything. Every time you raise your head in your family, and strut before your in-laws, it is because I, Money Mammon, I am with you. The confidence and the self-assurance you have in this generation come from me. I am your stronghold and your refuge. Without me, you are nothing. Capital NOTHING!

Do you understand that?

“Yes, Mr. Mammon, I understand that”

“What did you say?”

“I meant, Mr. Mammon, Sir, I understand that”

“Very well. Just to make things clearer to you and to ease your conscience

from guilt feeling, I am permitting you to go and serve your God in the evening after office work. Of course, I do not permit you to stay there till 9.30pm, or else, you will not be able to work for me very well the following day. On Sundays, I do not bother you. Is that not so?"

"You are correct, Mr. Mammon, Sir. Your Excellency has been very kind to his humble servant."

"Yes. Yes. And, if you behave yourself and drop all this emotional outburst arising out of uncivilized spiritual conviction, you will soon get a mansion of your own at the Lekki Peninsula."

"Mr. Mammon, Sir! Your Majesty, you are not joking with your humble servant, are you?"

"No, No. I am also bringing a juicy and clean deal your way that will give you another house at Victoria Garden City. Included in the package is the new Mercedes "round eyes" for your wife, and a Lincoln Navigator for you.

"I cannot believe this, God is wonderful! God is great! God is marvelous! I am going to share a wonderful testimony in the church. I am blessed?"

"Yes, you are blessed, indeed. Just make sure you drop all that nonsense of going to put yourself at His disposal, full time. We shall arrange more "blessings" for you from the kingdom of the world. Hey! Where are you going to?"

"Mr. Mammon, Sir, I am returning to my office. I have so much work to do. It is written, 'If any man does not work, let him not eat.'

"That is my servant. That is my obedient servant."

Let us ask ourselves again; when the Lord said "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel....." whom was he referring to? All of us, or some of us? If you say "some of us," did He mention your name as one of those exempted? And if you say "all of us," why disobey?

Lk. 12:47 – And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

So, what about 2 Cor.8:9?

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

The truth is that the New Testament saint has been made rich in Christ Jesus. Where the

misunderstanding lies is that many believers do not know where the riches are kept. The riches of New Testament saint are stored in heaven and are released for him, in just measure to meet his needs. (Phil.4:19) That is why the New Testament saint is told, “godliness with contentment is great gain” 1Tim.6:6. The New Testament saint is also expected to be storing his wealth in heaven, and not on the earth. “Lay **not** up for yourself treasures upon the earth ...But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven ... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” Matt.6”19-21. Even when the New Testament saint has lots of earthly treasures, he is supposed to convert them to heavenly treasures in order to swell and increase his account in heaven. (Phil.4:17)

Because the riches of the New Testament are usually made manifest whenever he has a need, the scriptures tell us:

“We walk by faith not by sight” – 2Cor. 5:7

The life of the New Testament saint is a life of faith, from beginning to the end.

For those amongst us who might disagree, who still insist that riches of the new testament saint are earthly riches, let us examine the life of the man who was caught up to the third heaven and heard things not lawful for a man to utter; the man who received the revelation of our wealth in Christ Jesus and wrote down 2Cor. 8:9 for us, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. How much of the earthly riches were demonstrated in the life of Apostle Paul? After all, if the riches he referred to were earthly riches, he should have been the first partaker. Is it not written, “the husbandman that laboureth must be first

partaker of the fruits”? (2Tim.2:6) Rather, he wrote down for us, “my God shall supply all your needs...”

Let the New Testament saint be assured that he is not to look for blessings he is already blessed. (Eph. 1:3) Because God, through Christ, already made us rich we are not expected to make the search for earthly riches the focus of our lives. The Lord assured us in Mt. 6:31-32, 34 that our needs have been taken care of.

“Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? Or, what shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?

(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things...

Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself...”

God expects the New Testament saint to exercise faith in His word and cease worrying about his needs. This knowledge that God has promised that He shall take care of him should set him free from earthly cares so that he could do the will of the Lord.

Unfortunately, many want to see the riches with physical eyes forgetting that we walk by faith and not by sight, and that without faith; it is impossible to please God. The inability of many Christians to believe the Lord and obey His mandate of Great Commission is the result of **unbelief**. There is a lot of unbelief amongst God's people, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Unbelief is the sin mentioned most in the scriptures and is the basic sin that men commit. Most believers do not trust God enough to hand over their welfare to Him. They know His word, they know His promises, but they do not trust Him to do what He promised.

One remembers the story of a tourist who came close to the edge of the Grand Canyon (USA), lost his footing, and plunged over the side, clawing and scratching to save himself. After he went out of sight and just before he fell into space, he encountered a scrubby bush which he desperately grabbed with both hands. Filled with terror, he called out toward heaven, "Is there anyone up there?" A calm, powerful voice replied, yes, there is." The tourist pleaded, "Can you help me?" The calm voice replied, Yes, I probably can. What is your problem?" I fell over the cliff and am dangling in space holding to a bush that is about to let go. Please help me." The voice from above said, "I will try. Do you believe?" "Yes, yes, I believe!" "Do you have faith?" "Yes, yes. I have strong faith." The calm voice said, "well, in that case, simply let loose of the bush and everything will turn out fine." There was a tense pause and then the tourist yelled, "Is there anyone else up there?"

That is the way most believers are. They confess they believe, they proclaim they have faith, strong faith. Some even preach and teach it, but tell them to let go of their earthly career and secular engagements to do the will of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Great Commission, and they will give you all sort of logical and scriptural excuses why they must continue to seek earthly wealth. It is all unbelief, pure and simple.

Many are giving God partial obedience while some are in outright disobedience to the Most High, all the while claiming, teaching, and preaching, "I believe", I have strong faith." Unbelief hindered many of the Old Testament saints from reaching the Promised Land and the same unbelief is threatening the spiritual Canaan of many New Testament saints. If we doubt the veracity of God's Word, then, we doubt God, and whoever doubts God has severed his relationship with him.

Unfortunately, because many people have erroneously concluded that financial prosperity is a sign of divine approval, they think that God approve of their disobedience because they prosper financially. Beware of unbelief.

Is it possible for us to identify reasons why majority of God's people display apparent doubt of God's Word and His promises?

There is a wide difference between knowing the Word of God and the Power of God. Very few people actually know God.

Jesus Christ told the Sadducees:

“... Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God” Matt. 22:29

We see a very good example in Matt. 2:1-9 after the birth of Jesus. At the demand of Herod, the “chief priest and the scribes of the people”, with unerring scriptural accuracy told Herod and the wise men that Christ shall be born in “Bethlehem of Judea”. Then, they proceeded to quote the prophecy in v.6.

They knew what God said, they were expecting the Messiah to come and deliver them, and they were teaching this truth every Sabbath in the temple and in their synagogues. However, the day they heard that their King had arrived, they informed the wise men about the place of His birth, while they remained in Jerusalem. Had they believed that God was able to do what He promised, they would have gotten to Bethlehem before the wise men to worship and welcome their king. They did not believe that God was able to send the Messiah to come and deliver them; but they knew He promised.

In effect, they knew the scriptures, but they did not know the power of God.

The wise men on the other hand, did not know the scripture, but they knew the power of God.

No wonder, “Jesus said unto them, verily I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you” Mt.21:31, to date, it is true.

Someone may now ask, “Are you saying that unless I become a missionary, I will not enter heaven?”

The Lord said, “Go ye into the entire world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mk.16:15) It is a general command. Therefore, if anyone is **not** going to comply with this commission, he should have received specific counter directive from the Lord. It is therefore the responsibility of everyone to find out the **will** of God for his life.

In our relationship with God, we should remember that God does not think the way man thinks. Man is interested in what is right or wrong, good or bad, logical or illogical. God on the other hand, is only interested in His will. As far as God is concerned, “what saith the Lord” settles every matter.

From man’s perspective, it is right to work for a living, provide for the family, build houses, have a thriving business or practice, prepare amply for retirement and leave a heritage for the children. As far as man is concerned, this is right; anything otherwise is wrong and illogical.

From the perspective of God, 2 Cor.5:15 settle the matter.

“I gave you My life; your life belongs to Me. I do not want you to serve any other master,

but Me.”

Except we understand this, we stand a risk of missing the purpose of God for our lives. Right or wrong does not matter to God; only His will matters

We see this principle demonstrated in two Old Testament accounts. In 1Kgs 20:35-38 we read the account of a prophet who asked another prophet to smite him. “Why should I smite you? It does not make sense.” Immediately judgment came – a lion will kill you for disobeying the word of the Lord. It came to pass.

The prophet went to another prophet, who does not ask questions, but simply obeys. The second prophet smote him and the wounded prophet was able to go and deliver the message God gave him to King Ahab.

The first prophet behaved like many believers today. Why should I strike you? It is not right. It does not make sense. Sorry, it does not have to make sense. Is it the will of God? The second story we shall find in 2Sam.6:5-8. David and the people went to bring the Ark out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah. They set it upon a “new cart”.

When the oxen stumbled, Uzzah did what any “logical person will do – steady the cart and the ark. Why should the ark of God fall? For this “kind gesture,” God killed Uzzah! Why? The Will of God was that ark should fall. The command of God was that the ark should be carried with its poles on the shoulders of the Levites and not on a new cart. 2Chr.15:15. When they did not follow “the due order” of carrying the ark, God wanted to topple the ark from the new cart, and Uzzah “kindly” opposed the will of God.

With God, it is not a matter of right or wrong. It is simply: **What is My Will?**

In the New Testament, we see another example in the case of Peter who would not defile himself by touching unclean animals. (Acts 10:9-16) it was a costly logic. Because of his “Not so, Lord,” his ministry was transferred to Paul. Find out the will of God for your life. If God tells you work, then work. For now, His last word to you is “Go.”

“But, Paul was making tent during his ministry. So, why can’t I do my secular work and do ministry simultaneously?”

Beautiful point. Where did Paul make tent during his ministry, at home or in the mission field? Paul was making tent on his mission field in Corinth, (Acts 18:1-3) so he could present the gospel free of charge (1Cor.9:18). He was later to write that he would gladly spend and be spent for his converts. (2Cor.12:15). Is that what you are doing? Are you doing ministry at home or in the mission field? If you want to practice your profession and do ministry, at the same time, opportunities abound. There are certain nations of the world that are closed to the gospel and one can enter Afghanistan as an English teacher, enter Saudi Arabia as a medical doctor or nurse, while oil industry workers can enter Libya, Iran, and so on.

So, be a tent-maker like Paul. Let your life and your profession be of immense benefit to the gospel. (Of course, those interested in tent making should seek quality training before proceeding.)

Let us purpose in our heart to do the Will of God. Like Moses, let us choose to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

(Heb.11:25). C.T. Studd said, "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him".

Now, that was an outstanding person, Charles Studd. According to Lois Fuller, he was a very wealthy young man. His money, which he inherited at the age of 25, made him a millionaire, but Christ's words, "Sell what you have and give to the poor," made him realize what he must do. He thought about it for a long time, then gave away all of his money. Some he sent to Christian missions, some to Mr. Moody and the rest to an Orphanage that looked after the poor of London. Even the little he tried to give to Priscilla on their wedding day she sent to the Salvation Army in England. Now they had nothing. They must depend on God alone.

What happened to C.T. Studd? One day he read a pamphlet written by a man who did not believe in God. *"If I believed as millions of Christians say they do,"* the man wrote, *"that the practice of religion in this life influences destiny in the next life, I would cast away earthly enjoyments, count earthy cares as foolishness and earthy thought and feelings as worthless. Religion would be my first walking thought and my last image before sleep. I should work in its cause alone. I would count one soul that was gained for heaven worth a life of suffering. I would go forth to the world and preach the gospel at all times and my text would be, what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul"* (Lois Fuller, *Adventures for God, Stories of Missionary Pioneers* Pg. 72, 73)

Friend, an estimated 80,000 unsaved souls die everyday. That is, 3, 33 every hour; 55 every minutes to face the judgment seat of Christ. When we stand before the Lord, what is He going to ask, the money we made or the souls we saved? (More of this in Chapter 3)

A servant cannot serve two masters. Who is your master?

We shall end this section by sharing another story:

William Carey, who is called the father of modern missions, served the Lord in India for many years. He gradually became very concerned about the attitude of his son, Felix. The young man had promised to become a missionary, but he reneged on his vows when the Queen of England appointed him ambassador to Burma. Carey wrote to his friends, asking prayer for his son with theses words:

“Pray for Felix. He has degenerated into an ambassador of the British government when he should be serving the King of kings.”

The Lord says, “Beware of Success”

THE TEST OF SUCCESS

Lk.6:26 - Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets.

This is a very strange statement from the Lord. The man that everyone speak well of must be a successful person, a man of many achievements and personal charisma. Yet, the Lord pronounced “Woe” on such a man. Why?

1. The man that everyone speaks well of must be doing what people like. If he is not doing what they like, they will not speak well of him.
2. The man, who is doing what people like, is in all probability not doing what God wants.
3. In Jn.15:19, the Lord says, “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.” The world will always love its own, and it will always hate that which is of God, and from God. (James 4:4) By the time the world begins to approve of a minister of the gospel, or the minister begins to seek the approval of the world, he should immediately check he is backsliding.
4. “Woe unto you...for so did their fathers to the false prophets.” The world only approves of false prophets. The minister who is not walking like Christ walked; the minister who is not a true earthly representative of Christ is a false servant of Christ. “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” 1Jn 2:6. The marks of Christ are clear; in Mt 11:29, the master says “...learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart...” All these psychedelics and extravagant show of ministry are not of Christ, but they are of the world.
5. As far as the Lord Jesus Christ is concerned, the minister that is doing His will shall be hated by the world. Lk.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.”

Let us with our eyes, conduct a survey of Christian assemblies, and observe what is going on, on the altars, and in the mansions of “men of God”. Servants of Christ rival movie superstars in attire, acquisition of exotic vehicles, palatial mansions, and professionally executed public relations program. It is time to return to the narrow path. James S. Hewett tells us, “God did not save you to be a sensation; He saved you to be a servant.”

Success in life and in ministry must be handled with care and soberness, because for every success that God gives a man, there comes with it the test of success. The bigger the success, the bigger the test of success that shall follow it. Over the years, it has become evident that man is able to manage hardship better than he is able to manage success. Many prominent and successful men in all ages have survived the test of hardship, but woefully failed the test of success.

“God did not save you to be sensation; He saved you to be a servant.”

J.S.Hewett

We shall conduct a brief study of some prominent Bible characters, to learn more about surviving the test of success.

NOAH – The Test of Success

In an age described by God as wicked and evil, an age that made the Most High sorrowful that He created man, one man alone, found grace before God. The Word of God described Noah as “a just man and perfect in his generation,” “a preacher of righteousness,” who preached for a good number of years while building the ark.

Noah also became the progenitor of the redeemed human race and God entered into a covenant with him for “perpetual generations.” In his generation, he was truly the most successful man. His success was attested to, not just by man, but by the Almighty God, Himself.

Yet, the first significant act of Noah after God had finished conversing with him, is that he became drunk, very drunk. Gen.9:20-21.

Why would a “just and perfect man”, “a preacher of righteousness” of a good number of years experienced in the ministry, get drunk? This man successfully conducted ministry for a good number of years, and ended it by becoming drunk. What lesson can we learn from the experience of Noah?

1. The celebration of success is dangerous. Noah had survived the greatest judgment of God upon the entire human race. He was saved with all the members of his household. He spent one year and ten days inside the ark, while riding safely atop the worst flood in the history of mankind. To add feathers to his cap, God entered into wonderful covenants with him, as a representative of the entire human race.

The celebration of success is dangerous You do not celebrate victory while you are still racing.

Are not all these wonderful? Hey, it was time to celebrate! Grandfather Noah forgot that he was still in the race. The celebration of the believer is to take place

in heaven, when the race is over. You do not celebrate victory while you are still racing. No matter the achievement of believers, all forms of celebration and congratulations should be deferred until we get to heaven. Jesus taught us that we should always say, “we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.” Lk. 17:10. Grandfather Noah meticulously planned for the celebration. Since there was nowhere he could purchase wine, he had to plant the vineyard. So, drinking the wine was not an accident, he planned it.

2. As drunkard are wont to do, Noah indecently exposed himself, woke up from his stupor, and compounded the problem by pronouncing curses upon his son, Ham. In cursing Ham, Noah justified his drunkenness but condemned his son for not covering his nakedness. First, Ham had no way of knowing his father was naked inside the tent. Second, Shem and Japheth did what they did because they had prior knowledge of what their father had done. Third, God did not record for us that Ham mocked his father, he “told” his brothers what he saw. Fourth, Ham did not give Noah wine to drink. In cursing Ham, the “preacher of righteousness” saw nothing wrong in his drunkenness. Noah refused to accept responsibility for the unfortunate situation; he shifted the blame to his son. Ham now received the punishment for his father’s drunkenness. That is ungodly leadership. **If you miss the mark, do not pass the buck.** Should a “preacher of righteousness” have gotten drunk? In this case, David showed himself nobler in character than Noah. After his sin with Bathsheba, God pronounced judgment that “..I will raise up evil against thee out of thy own house ...” 2 Sam.12:11. When Absalom rebelled, David had at the back of his mind that he was reaping the consequence of his sin. That is why he pleaded with the army to be gentle with Absalom for his sake. Eventually, when Absalom was killed, David wept bitterly and lamented, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee...” 2 Sam. 18:33. Again, when God judge David for conducting census, and seventy thousand of the people died, David pleaded with God, “...Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father’s house” 2 Sam. 24:17. In these two instances, we see David accepting responsibility for his misdeeds; and that is godly leadership. Not so with Grandfather Noah, he shifted the blame. He got drunk and cursed his son. There are many leaders like Noah still present in the church. Shepherds who misbehave and turn around to blame the sheep. May God deliver His people from them.

<p>If you miss the mark, do not pass the buck</p>

3. Noah walked with God in his generation and preached righteousness for a good number of years. At the end of his ministry, he got drunk. The righteousness he preached for a good number of years, he could not continue to live the righteous life. Are you that kind of a leader? Noah not only got drunk, but in his sanctimonious self-righteousness, he also destroyed the future of his son. Even if his son was wrong, could he not have forgiven him? The grace that God gave him, could he not have extended the same grace to Ham? Unfortunately, it was a case of “How dare you do that to me? Don’t you know who I am?”
4. When we apply the Law of first Mention, God recorded for us the kind of man grandfather Noah was. He lived a total of 950 years, preached righteousness for a good number of years, stayed in the ark for one year and ten days, offered a sacrifice to God after the flood, spoke many words in his lifetime and during his ministry, yet the first recorded word of Noah in scripture was “Cursed” Gen.9:25, that alone speaks volume about this “preacher of righteousness”.

Success intoxicates. Let us learn from the example of Noah.

MOSES – A Little Leaven....

And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh...

Deut. 34:10-11

(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men who were upon the face of the earth) – Num. 12:3

The leaders of God’s people should realize that with God, the end is what matters. How a man ends a race is what matters, not how he starts it.

We have many things to learn from Moses, but chiefly this, it is our responsibility to identify our weakness and overcome them, before Satan uses them to overcome us. Anger was a problem Moses had, and for over sixty years it was suppressed, not eliminated. Satan figured out, that given the right circumstance of provocation, it could rear its head again, with devastating results.

It is quite amazing, that a man described by the Spirit of God as “meek above all the men which are upon the face of the earth” missed the Promised Land due to anger.

They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:

Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with lips.
Ps. 106:32-33

One incidence of anger wiped out forty years of meritorious ministry. A little leaven, leaveneth the whole lump. What is your weakness? Do not pretend you do not have any. Satan will not attack your strong points; he is going to attack your weak areas.

Sophocles wrote in Oedipus Rex:

Then learn that mortal man must always look to his end
And none can be called happy, until that day when he carries his
happiness, down to the grave, in peace.

It is the end that matters.

GIDEON – The Restorer of Lawlessness

Paul wrote in Gal.2:18 “For if I build again the thing which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.”

That is exactly what Gideon did. He started ministry by destroying an idol, (Jud. 6:25-28); he ended his ministry by making an idol.

And Gideon made an ephod therefore, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house. Jud.8:27

What brought Gideon to this point? He tried the route of compromise. If the people seemed so bent on worship of objects, then, give them an object associated with worship of Jehovah. It backfired. The mixing of idolatry with worship of the true God will never work.

Pray, is that not what many ministries are doing today through the prosperity message? The people want money, lots, and lots of it. Therefore, use the offer of financial breakthrough to draw them to come and worship God. It will not work because both God and mammon demand worship. Loyalty, and steadfastness. Jesus Christ was equivocal in His comment on this issue: “No man can serve two masters... Ye cannot serve God and mammon”

James S Hewett tell us, “like the eagle that sat down on the frozen ground to feed upon its prey, and when it would have arisen, found its great wings so frozen to the ice that it could never rise again but perished beside its costly pleasures; like the ship that sailed so close to the current that it was not possible to stem the awful tide that drove it over the abyss – so Christian men and women are trifling with forbidden things until they have neither the heart nor strength to rise to their heavenly calling.”

KING UZZIAH – The River That Forgot Its Source

And Uzziah...was marvelously helped, till he was strong.

But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the alter of incense. 2 Chr.26:14-16 .

This was a very tragic story in scriptures. Uzziah became king at age of 16 and reigned for 52 years, longer than every other king before him. Because he sought God with all his heart , God made him very powerful. After he became great, he forgot God who made him great.

Uzziah made a mistake most successful people make. He stepped outside his God-given office. According to Nelson, he was “no longer satisfied to be a mortal king, he desired to be like some his contemporaries – a divine king”. God judged him immediately by afflicting him with leprosy.

It is a lesson to ministers of this generation who desire more than what God has given them. Those who covet positions and titles should remember King Uzziah.

If God ordained you a Pastor, do not struggle to be called a Bishop, Apostles, or Evangelist. If God has not specifically called a man to start a ministry, he should remain under authority.

Remember king Uzziah; do not seek to operate in an office that God has not called you into. Do not assume that because you are successful in your present ministry, therefore, God has called you to be a Resident Founder. Remember king Uzziah; a river that forgets its source shall dry up.

KING DAVID – Brokenness Insured Success

David passed the test of success because he remained broken before God and depended totally on Him. David would have been in serious trouble with God on the issues of Bathsheba and the census that he committed, had he not learnt from experience that if you offend God, you do not conceal your sin or try to hide from him. Just confess and ask for mercy. No matter how far a man has fallen, if he genuinely repents, God will have mercy on him and restore him.

As David himself said, “...let us fall into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great...” 2 Sam. 24:14.

David was always quick to confess his sin and ask for forgiveness. A man like that can never fall out with God.

In this Christian race, we may miss the mark and come short of God’s standard. From the point of view of God, that is perfectly understanding. We were worse creatures when He sent His only begotten Son to redeem us. What God wants to see in us is our acknowledgement of our weakness without Him, our total dependence upon His grace

and our willingness to forsake our sinful nature and be made perfect.

Everyone that desire to run this Christian race successfully to the end must remain broken before God, always. It is of immense benefit if a man consciously prays for the discipline of the Holy Spirit to rest perpetually upon his life.

Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Heb.12:11

2

Precious Possession

There is a very impressive proverb that says, “It is not easy to dodge a stone thrown at the back of your head.” Every attack of the enemy is aimed at one target: Salvation. It is either to hinder a person from being saved, or to steal the salvation if the fellow has been saved.

Usually, the enemy of our soul utilizes indirect attacks at achieving his infernal objective. Many unsuspecting believers assume that the devil is interested in their money, marriage, progress or ministry. The primary objective of the devil is to take every human being to hell with him.

Every operation of the forces of darkness revolves around this objective. Every doctrine of error from hell, every distraction, oppression, every seduction, every manipulation of the forces of darkness, has only one objective – man should end up in hell.

In Eph. 6:17, the word of God commands us to put on the “helmet of salvation”. A sure protection is needed for the head, because of the stone the devil is going to throw it at the back of the head. If a man has a sharp reflex, he could dodge a stone thrown at his forehead, because he sees it coming. How could one survive an attack on the back of his head? He needs the helmet of salvation.

“It is not easy to dodge stone thrown at the back of your head”

A good example was just concluded in Chapter 1. How many of us ever considered that money could damn the soul? Yet, putting our interest in money before the kingdom of God destroys our salvation. Such an interest in money is often disguised as seeking God’s blessing, experiencing breakthrough, and so on. The unsuspecting believer might, unwittingly, be serving the other master, that is mammon,

and all the while praising God for a tremendous business breakthrough.

We cannot afford to go to hell. We just cannot. Every believer

In Christ Jesus must consciously “watch and pray”, always. When was the last time you thanked God for your salvation?

When last did you pray specifically to the Almighty God to save your soul to the end? Can you remember the last time you warred in the spirit against the forces of darkness that are manipulating and subtly working to trap your soul into hell? Chances are you seldom do. However, you pray everyday, and war in the spirit everyday, for your finances, business, marriage, etc.

The ultimate goal of our battle with Satan is over getting to heaven.

When was the last time that you prayed for your salvation?

If believers understand that the ultimate goal of our battle with Satan is over getting to heaven, we will not need anyone to preach or admonish us to be holy, obey God always, surrender our lives completely to Christ, become a living sacrifice, desist from covetousness, wickedness, slander and so no. Alas, many do not have this understanding. The enemy has successfully shifted attention from heaven for many, and kept them busy seeking earthly well-being and material prosperity. Many have departed from the narrow path that leads to life while glibly professing Christ as Lord and Saviour. Unfortunately, leading in this category of the deceived are some ministers of the Gospel, who in turn mislead the flock of Jesus Christ.

Before we go any further, let us confirm whether you are actually saved. This point is very crucial because many assume that they are saved. Many assume that they have been Born-Again because they attended a Christian School; some assume they are saved because they have been going to church all their lives.

How do we get saved? Rom.10:9-10 tell us if we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead, we shall be saved.

Have you done this?

This issue is very important because an incident took place in Nigeria at a Minister’s Conference

The General Overseer of a prominent denomination, was addressing the Ministers of the Gospel present at that conference, on the need to be assured of personal salvation before proceeding to serve the Lord.

Amongst other things, he challenged the Ministers that many of them, at that conference, were not saved at all. What happened to them? They came to church, enjoyed the

Service, but when the altar call was made, they did not respond. However, they kept coming until they became well known. Over a period of time, assignments were given to them and they became part of the congregation. By this time, they had known how to pray, because they hear other people pray, they know how to quote the scriptures, and they understand doctrines. Gradually, they became workers, house fellowship teachers, Sunday school teachers, and then, ministers. Eventually, they were recommended for ordination. But, they were not saved.

He then urged them to settle their salvation first, because he was going to make an altar call. Fortunately, the members of their congregation were not around to see them.

One would have thought, or wished, he was wrong. But, they came out. They were ministers of the Gospel, but were not Born Again. They had been preaching about heaven, but they were not going there. Thank God, they were saved on that day.

So, if it is possible that some Pastors are not saved, how about members of the congregation?

In Phil. 2:12, the Word of God commands us "...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." that is why you have to do something right now.

Please, take a sheet of paper and a pen and write down your birth date. That is, your **biological birth day**. (Please, do it right now, stop reading.)

Next, write the exact day, month, and the year you became Born Again. That is your **spiritual birthday**. After that, write down where you gave your life to Christ, (town, the church or bus, or street, school-whenever it was) and lastly, write down the name or the description of the person who led you to Christ.

It is true you remember clearly your biological birthday. In fact, if you were woken up by 2.00a.m., and asked this question, you will not think twice before you would give the correct answer.

If you so remember your biological birthday, which was passed to you by someone, (even though you were there, yet, you were not aware of what was going on) how could you say you do not remember the date of your spiritual birthday; a decision you took as an adult? It only implies one thing the: decision was never taken!

Out of those three questions, concerning the spiritual birthday, you should be able to remember clearly, at least two. Anything less than that, one will advise you to go and surrender your life to Jesus Christ – no matter who you may be. Comply with Rom.10:9-10.

If you are well known in your local assembly, and embarrassment would not permit you to respond to an altar call there, you are advised to go immediately and worship in another genuine Christian assembly to continue serving the Lord. Why this concession?

The Lord wants to save you; He does not want to embarrass you.

Please, do not wait until you die, or until the rapture takes place (whichever one comes first) before you discover that you are not Born Again. Do not assume you are saved if you are not. Some Ministers of the Gospel assumed that they were saved, but they were not. It took the Grace of God to help them.

Why this very important precaution? Hell is real. It is now a scientific fact that in 1989, scientists discovered hell. How did it happen? A group of scientist in Siberia, Russia were conducting an experiment to record the sound of the earth crust. They had drilled a 9-mile hole when suddenly their drill head started to gyrate, indicating they had reached a hallow place in the belly of the earth. When they lowered their thermometer, the temperature of the place registered 4,000 degrees Fahrenheit (that is 2,480 degrees Centigrade). Stunned at such a discovery, they lowered their sound equipment and distinctly picked up the voices of human beings, in millions, screaming and howling in torment.

When the story came out, the Russian government tried to suppress it, because of the impact it would have on Communist ideology. One of the scientists escaped to Finland and from there, the story was published.

God in His mercy spoke again, this time, through those who most vehemently deny the existence of God and that of hell. God granted this discovery to scientists, not just any scientist, but communist scientists.

Where does this concern us? Simple. Water boils at 100 degrees Centigrade; do you know anyone willing to permit a drum of boiling water to be poured upon him in exchange for, 5 billion dollars? You will not find any. With all the lust for wealth, you will not find any. Why? The fellow knows what happens once the drum of boiling water is poured on him. He dies immediately.

For 5 billion dollars, no one will play games with water at 100 degrees centigrade, yet many are daily living careless lives and facing the risk of spending eternity in a fire that burns at 2,480 degrees centigrade. Many of these careless people are actually Born Again. Some of those, whom the Lord have rescued from hell fire, are permitting themselves to be entangled once again with things that damn the soul, principally, disobedience. Friend, we cannot afford to go to hell. It must not happen. We must shun the lust of the flesh, the lust of eyes, the pride of life, and everything that threatens our salvation.

It is a rather painful fact that many shall spend eternity in hell with some of the demons that they have once bound. We pray that shall not be your portion. No wonder the Lord says, many are called, but few are chosen.

We appeal to you, by the mercies of God, please make your ways right with God today – right now. Repent of every sinful living, retribute any evil you have done and rededicate your-self to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of God to His church now demands three things from every believer:

- Repentance
- Restitution
- Rededication

May God help you to run this Christian race of endurance and self-denial successfully to the end. There is a glorious inheritance awaiting us. In fact, through another scientific discovery, we have another confirmation of what the word of God promised the triumphant believer in Rev,21, The New Jerusalem.

A group of Russian Cosmonauts reported seeing in space a celestial city, beautiful beyond description, slowly descending. The description of what they saw fitted with the city the Word of God describes in Rev.21- the New Jerusalem. As you are reading this book, the New Jerusalem is still descending. God has timed its arrival with the end of this age. May your portion in The New Jerusalem be secured forever, in the Name of Jesus Christ.

You as an individual, must watch and pray to safeguard your salvation. Many of us pray, but we do not watch. Many believers do not watch those who exercise spiritual leadership and influence over them. The result could be that some will end up on the wrong side of eternity not because of their personal sins, but because they followed the wrong teacher.

Friends, open your eyes wide, watch the man behind the pulpit. Jesus Christ says by their fruit you shall know them. Once you are convinced that the man behind the pulpit is not serious about making heaven, pick your salvation and run – you have not sinned. It is dangerous to remain under the spiritual influence of a Minister who is not serious about making heaven. Why?

Every shepherd exercise spiritual influence over his sheep. There is a spiritual transformation that makes the sheep to become like the shepherd. It is called transference of spirit.

- 1) Where the shepherd goes, the sheep follows. If the shepherd turns to the right, the sheep must turn to the right; if the shepherd turns to the left, the sheep must also turn to the left. If the shepherd turns to the right and the sheep goes left, they say that sheep has strayed from its shepherd. Every shepherd ensures that none of his sheep strays. If any does, he goes in search of it to bring it back into his fold.
- 2) If your shepherd does not see heaven, he cannot show you heaven. If he is not

going to heaven, he cannot lead you there. Jesus Christ says; “can a blind man lead a blind man?”

There is a generation of believers springing up that is as carnal as Adam, covetous like Gehazi, unspiritual like Esua, manipulative like Jezebel, Kleptomaniac like Achan, treacherous like Judas Iscariot, vindictive like Saul, immoral like Reuben, egocentric like Diotrefes and lies freely like Lucifer. Watch the man behind the pulpit.

There are Pastors who lie, manipulate, and knock heads together in the congregation, they promote factions and create cliques. You know them! Once you catch your Pastor telling a lie, you should know it is time for you to move, before you your self become a spiritual liar. Rev. 22:15 “Without are...whosoever loveth and maketh a lie “No liar shall enter heaven, whether it is a white lie, a pink lie, or yellow lie.

You may ask how many times should I run? The answer of course is, as often as necessary.

The Lord says you would not run through all the cities of Israel before the Son of Man would return.

Do not joke with our salvation. Prayerfully find a good shepherd. There are good ones still out there. Sanctified, God-fearing, Jesus loving, genuine servants of the Lord, heaven bound saints. They are out there, although they are in the minority, but they are available. Find them. If you truly search for the truth, you shall find the truth.

Someone may say, “But are we not expected to uphold our Pastors in prayer?” Yes, we are. But once you see a leopard that cannot change its spot, pick your salvation and run. Don’t love any man more than your salvation. First run, find a safe place and from there begin to intercede for your former Pastor. We are not saying you should not pray, but from a safe distance where he could no longer exercise spiritual influence over you.

We need to exercise this precaution because of a wrong assumption that every Pastor or minister of the gospel is interested in making heaven. Some enter the ministry for various reasons. We have even heard of an elderly pastor who said he knew he was to go to hell but he had made up his mind to take two other pastors along with him.

Thank God he did not succeed in his quest.

When you see a pastor striving with other pastors, rebelling against church authority, slandering other ministers, inciting members of the congregation, workers, and other ministers to anger, unfaithful in his manner of handling church funds- you should know that is not your pastor, if you are heaven bound yourself.

If all your pastor preaches is prosperity, abundance, divine principles of making wealth, you should know it is time to move. Except of course, you are like-minded.

A very worrisome trend is appearing in the church. Whenever messages are to be

delivered and the man of God is to be introduced, usually now we hear something like:
 “The time has come to hear the Word of God. The time of power, anointing, abundance, breakthrough, prosperity, promotion provision...”

What happened to salvation, truth, sanctification, holiness, consecration, sacrifice”? How come we do not hear these again?

Even the songs of praises we sing in the church are equally affected. When was the last time they sang in your local assembly?

“Only Jesus can save
 Alleluia
 Only Jesus can save
 Alleluia “

Where has the church hidden this wonderful pilgrim’s song?

Alleluia joy, Alleluia joy
 We shall meet on that day
 Joy, joy, joy
 Alleluia joy, Alleluia joy
 We shall meet on that day.

How come we do not hear this song also?

I have decided to follow Jesus (3x)
 No turning back (2x)
 If no one joins me, still I will follow (3x)
 No turning back (2x)
 The world behind me, the cross before me (3x)
 No turning back (2x)

What we hear now, frequently, during praises, is:

Me I no go suffer
 I no go beg for bread
 God of miracle, na my Papa O

And-

He’s the Great Provider (4x)
 He will surely provide for me
 And provide for you

It is time to return to the narrow path. The narrow path is hard, but it leads to life. May you be one of the few that shall find it.

Before we end this chapter, we need to draw the attention of all

Believers to two very important areas Christians need to repent – punctuality and forgiveness. To some, lateness to worship service and church programs is fashionable. As I heard the story from a brother, I shall relate it. (Since then, other people have confirmed the truth of this story). The

Brother died in Ibadan, Nigeria. He was very fervent in the Lord and zealous. His body was placed in the mortuary while arrangements were being made for his burial. On the third day, he returned to life and narrated this amazing story.

After his death, the brother found himself on a wide road with a crowd of people, all of them surging forward involuntarily. At a particular point, the road parted into two – one leading to the right and the other to the left. According to the brother, for each soul that turned right, over one thousand turned left to

You cannot chase two rabbits at the same time - you will catch none.

You cannot pursue the world and heaven simultaneously

hell. He propelled to the right by that same force that was moving all of them.

Presently, he came to a massive gate that was manned by a huge angelic being. The angel had a big register in his front. The brother requested the angel to open the gate for him to enter heaven and the angel declined.

“I am a Christian”, protested the brother. “I paid my tithe, I was zealous for God, and I did not live in sin.

“We know all that”, replied the angel.

“Then, why can’t I be allowed in? The brother demanded.

“Why were you not attending church?” Queried the angel, in response.

“Me? I never missed church service”, came the speedy defense. “There must be a mistake in your records”

“We do not make mistakes here”, the angel calmly replied,

The angel now explained to the brother,

“Because you were zealous for God, and fervent the Most High decided to have mercy on you.

According to our records, you only attended church service on two occasions in your lifetime. It was only on two occasions that you went to church and arrived on time. On all the other occasions that you went to church, you arrived late and it was not recorded here”

The angel now concluded,

“You will now go back and correct that flaw in your Christian service, or else, you cannot come here”

The brother woke up in the mortuary.

Now, how many of us will have a meeting with the president of our nation, or the governor, by 8.30am and arrive by 8.45am? Protocol demands that you should be seated 15 minutes before time. Yet, some come to meet the King of kings and the Lord of Lords, and they arrive late. In 1Sam.2:30, the Almighty God told Eli, "...for them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." Will you honor your governor and dishonor the Most High God? Habitual Latecomers should repent, if they are serious about making heaven.

The second story we are going to share has to do with forgiveness. Believers need to be aware of the great danger in unforgiveness. What is forgiveness? According to Nelson, forgiveness is the act of excusing or pardoning another in spite of his slight, shortcomings, and errors.

Mt.6:14-15

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

But if ye forgive not men their trespass, neither will your Father forgive your trespass

"...forgive and ye shall be forgiven" Lk. 6:37

We need to stress this issue of forgiveness because a lot of people in the church are carrying wounds, inflicted by the brethren. There is a lot of "friendly fire" going on in the church.

The term "friendly fire" refers to unfortunate situations in conventional warfare when a soldier is accidentally killed by his own team, and not by the enemy. A death through friendly fire is always more painful than death in the hands of the enemy.

In this generation, the church stands out as the only army that sustains more casualties through friendly than enemy fire. Believers seem to specialize in destroying one another. The result is a lot of distrust, resentment, pain, and agony in the body of Christ. There is serious problem of disunity in the church as a result of friendly fire. A lot of fellowships that should edify the body of Christ have broken down and believers only relate to one another on the superficial level. In fact, many now wear a mask to church to conceal the true state of their emotions.

We should remember that the Lord said in Matt.24:12 "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold"

V.13 now warns us:

"But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

So, no matter what people have done to you, or said about you, you **must** forgive them. One realizes that some of these provocative experiences are painful because they usually

stem from trusted people within the church. Irrespective of who offended you, and what the fellow(s) did, you **MUST** forgive – if you want to make heaven.

You must release the offender from the guilt, pray for him/her, and go out of your way to be reconciled. Remember Heb. 12:14

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”

Peace and holiness come before heaven.

After releasing the person who offended you, when the devil comes to remind you of the offense, stand your ground and tell the devil you have forgiven the person. It is easy to forgive and reconcile, but at times, it is very difficult to forget.

This issue of forgiveness must not be glossed over. One would counsel you to make a list of all those who have grieved you, in the church, in your family, your spouse, in-laws, business associates, friends, and begin to pray for each person. Specifically mention each person and the offense before God, forgive them, and release them. Then ask God to forgive them.

Jn.20:23- Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.

You need to pray a lot before you even reach out for the reconciliation, because when you eventually do, some of them would insist they did nothing.

What is advisable is that you should pray for them, forgive them, release them, visit them, and buy gifts for them – without mentioning the offense. After all, you have told God in prayer that you have forgiven them. Besides, raising the issue would be tantamount to re-opening old wounds, which could ultimately lead to accusations and counter accusations. The only person that would leave that meeting happy is the devil.

There is a story that confirms all that we have been saying about forgiveness. It was an experience of the founder of a prominent denomination, when the church was newly founded. This founder came across a tract published by another denomination. He liked the tract, and without obtaining the permission of the church, reprinted it and used it for evangelism.

Shortly after, the original publishers of the tract discovered what he had done and summoned him. He went to meet them, apologized for not seeking their permission before re-printing the tract. Subsequently, they informed him to go and bring the remaining tracts. He obediently did so. When this founder returned with the remaining tract, they were collected from him and set on fire.

What pained him most was that the tracts were destroyed. He would not have minded if they were used for evangelism.

Thirty-eight years later, Papa went to be with the Lord. When he arrived in heaven, an angel met him and took him round, and eventually brought him to a beautiful mansion having four crowns. He asked the angel, “Who is the owner of this mansion?” The angel replied that it belongs to him.

Papa was about to make a dash into the mansion when the angel restrained him that he could not go in. In fact, he could not even stay in heaven. “Why?”

Thirty-eight years ago, he had a misunderstanding with some people over tracts, and he had not forgiven the leader of the group. Except he forgives that man, he would not be allowed to stay in heaven. Because he was a chosen vessel of God, the Most High decided to give him another chance to go back into the world, settle with that brother, who then, was still alive, before he could eventually be permitted to stay in heaven.

He came back again to life, wrote a letter to the brother, and settled with him. Not too long after that, he finally went home to rest. (Warrior of Righteousness by Dr. Ajayi)

So, when are you going to make that list of all the people you need to forgive?

Once again, please do all that needs be done to make your calling and election sure. Do not imitate the unserious and compromising majority in the church who wrongfully believe that they can pursue the material things of the world and heaven at the same time. You cannot chase two rabbits at the same time. You will catch none.

As many as desire to make heaven, look at Jesus and imitate Him. The standard He has set is the standard we are to follow in obedience, holiness, prayerfulness, humility, love compassion, discipline, sacrifice living, etc.

The Spirit of God bears witness to this generation, that those that shall be saved are few. May God count you worthy to be amongst them.

“...but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.” Dan. 12:10

3

The Two Covenants

*“It may safely be said that the Judaizing of the Church has done more to hinder her progress, pervert her mission, and destroy her spirituality, than all other causes combined. Instead of pursuing her appointed path of separation, persecution, world-hatred, poverty, and non-resistance, she has used Jewish Scripture to justify her in lowering her purpose to the civilization of the world, the acquisition of wealth, the use of an imposing ritual, the erection of magnificent churches, the invocation of God’s blessing upon the conflicts of armies, and the division of an equal brotherhood into ‘clergy and ‘laity’ – Schofield**

The word of God makes it clear that Christ left two examples for us to follow. On these two examples, the entire New Testament is based, as confirmed by the lives and experiences of the early disciples. If the Believer in this generation wishes to fulfill the purpose of God and end the Christian race in the presence of Christ, he must follow these two examples.

The first one is found in John 13:13-15

Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, yet also ought to wash one another’s feet.

For I have given you example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

The first example that the Master left for us to follow is the example of servant hood.

The second example He left for us is found in 1Pet.2:21

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an **example**, that ye should follow his steps.

The second example is suffering.

Underneath the prosperity craze that has engulfed the church is the desire and the determination not to suffer. Because the church has largely rebelled against following Christ in these examples of servant hood and suffering, very few Believers are willing to do the will of the Master. Living sacrifices are hard to find, and those who stick their

*The First Scofield Ref. Bible Page 1591

Necks out to obey the Master are derided and discouraged by other Believers.

Christ our Leader and Savior did not leave us with examples of covetousness, overflowing bank account, and material wealth that are the passion of many believers today. Neither in his Words, nor in His lifestyle did He imply this, in any way.

Where then did these teachings come from? Besides, could one justifiably prove that the prosperity message as it is being preached today is in error for the true disciple of Christ?

An understanding of what went wrong with the doctrine of the church shall take us back into the scriptures for an in depth comparative analysis of the Old Testament and the New Testament. We need to find out the mandate of God for the New Testament saint. Is the mandate of God for the New Testament saint to be found in the New Testament scriptures or in the Old Testament scriptures, or in both?

Heb. 8:7-8

For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

Having considered the various limitations of the old covenant, the Almighty God proceeded to institute a new and better covenant with its own distinctive characteristics of mandate, conduct, origin, reward, mode of worship, responsibility, and so on. However, for the new covenant to take effect, the old covenant must be done away with.

V.13 says:

In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old, (obsolete, NIV). Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

When God said he was instituting a new covenant, it implies that there shall be a new mandate, a new responsibility, new promises, and new rewards. The new is no longer new, if God instituted a new covenant with an old mandate and an old responsibility. Jesus Christ told us that we could not put new wine into an old wine bottle. For the new to be truly new, everything about it must be new.

The major problem the church is having is that it is not adhering strictly to its New Testament mandate. The church is picking the favorable portions of New Testament and Old Testament to make a whole. In effect, the church would sometimes talk spirituality like the New Testament saint is expected to and manifest carnality as the Old Testament saints.

Jesus Christ makes it clear that is impossible to mix both or combine both.

Lk. 5:36-39

The Two Covenants

And he spoke also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.

And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish.

But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved.

No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, the old is better.

The Old Testament is old garment; the New Testament is new garment. The Old Testament is old wine; the New Testament is new wine. The Lord says you cannot mix the two-which is precisely what the church is doing and it has resulted in the Judaizing of the New Testament church.

Please note carefully, verse 39. “No man, also having drunk old wine straightway **desireth** the new..” That is the problem, because the man says, “The old is better”. For the man to drink the new wine, when the old wine is available, you have to force him. Why? The Old Testament satisfies the cravings of the carnal and physical man, but the New Testament is entirely a spiritual life that must be lived following spiritual principles that are absolutely at variance with carnality.

We need to point out, again, that the Lord said, “No man... immediately desire new wine”. In saying “no man”, the Lord implies that every one of us, without exception, desire the old wine. For us to turn our back to the old wine, and embrace the new wine, we must overcome the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life and purpose in our hearts, that no matter what we shall suffer, we shall do the will of the Master and make heaven.

Anyone who determines in his heart, that come what may, he must enter heaven, shall soon discover that the keys to the Kingdom of God are in the New Testament. A man who wants to make heaven cannot be treating his adversaries with the injunction, “an eye for an eye.” He shall discover that he must comply with the new commandment, “bless them that curse you.” The man who wants to make heaven must not sit down like the old testament saint to tend his vineyard. He would realize that he must count all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ and go into all the earth to preach the gospel. He must realize that he must not be looking for a goat to transfer his sin to and later sacrifice it, like the Old Testament saint; but he himself must become the living sacrifice. Let us proceed into the scriptures for a comparative analysis of both the old and the new. God’s method of dealing with both differs. For example, the incentive for godliness for

the Old Testament saint was a land flowing with milk and honey. On the other hand, the incentive for godliness for the New Testament saint is the mansion in heaven – “what eyes have not seen, nor ear heard....” “The Old Testament saint was to obtain his reward if he arrives in the land of Canaan; the New Testament saint is to receive his reward if he arrives in heaven. If the New Testament saint now begins to pursue the milk and the honey, (which is going on now), he has missed his mandate. Check the scriptures, God did not promise the New Testament saint a land flowing with milk and honey. Rather, he told the New Testament saint, you are a “pilgrim” and My “Ambassador”. *Have you ever heard of a German ambassador buying land in Nigeria, or starting a factory in Lagos?* So, why is the New Testament saint breaking his head seeking earthly material wealth, if he truly desires to return seeking earthly material wealth, if he truly desire to return home?

Now, to the scriptures:

CONDUCT of both the OT saint and the NT saint:

OT saint - Ex.21:24-25

Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

(Also see: Deut. 7; 1-2; 21:18-21)

NT saint – Lk. 6:27-30

But I say unto you which hear, love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

And unto him, that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also.

Give to every man that asketh of thee, and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.

(Also see – Rom. 12:17-21; Mt. 5:38-39, 44-48; Lk.15:20-23; 1Cor.4:12, 1)

ORIGIN

Origin of OT saints-Rom.9:4-5

Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption and glory, and the covenants and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

(Also see Rom. 3:1-2)

The origin of the OT saint is traced back to the fathers.

Origin of the NT saint: Eph.1:22-23

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all Things to the church which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all

(Also see-Eph.5:29-33; 1Pet.2:9)

The OT saint originated from the fathers, while the NT saint originated from Christ.

CALLING

For the OT saint: Gen.12:1

“Now the LORD has said unto Abram, Get thee out of the country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee”

The OT saint was called to inherit a land. Deut. 8:7-9 further makes it clear that the land is of material wealth and abundance

The NT saint on the other hand, is called unto

1Pet.2:21- “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps”

Herein lies the bedrock of the dilemma of the NT saint. He is called unto a life of self-denial, like Christ, so that he can inherit heaven, but he prefers the prosperity and the fatness given to the OT saints; of course, without having to undergo the tedious requirements of the law.

Heb.3:1 further clarifies the calling of the NT saint:

“Wherefore holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus”

Even in Mt.11:28-29 when the Lord said; “come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest.” He added, “Take My yoke upon you...”

RICHES

OT saint: Gen. 24:34-35

“And he said, I am Abraham’s servant.

And the LORD hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses.”

For the NT saints –Mk 10:23

“And’ Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God’

James 2:5 - Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promise to them that love him?

Also see Mat. 6:33, 1Cor.4:11

OPPOSITIONOT saint – Deut. 28:7

“The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways”

NT saint –Jn.16:2

“They shall put you out of the synagogue: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

Jn.15:20- “...The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you...”

(Also see Jn.16:33)

POSITIONOT saint – Deut. 28:13

“And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shall be above only, and thou shall not be beneath...”

NT saint – Mk. 10:34-44

“But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister:

And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all”

Matt.18:4

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

WORSHIPOT saint. Lev.17:8-9

And thou shalt say unto them, whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers which sojourn among you that offereth a burnt

offering or sacrifice, and bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto the LORD; even that man shall be cut off from among his people.

Also see Num. 3:10, Lev.17:3-4

NT saint. Matt. 18:20

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in midst of them.

Also see Heb.10:19-20; 1Pet. 2:5

INHERITANCE

OT saint Jer. 32:37-38

Behold, I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely.

And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Also see Lk.1:31-33; Acts 15:14-16

NT saint Jn.14:2-3

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.

Also see Phip.3:20-21; 1Jn3:2

PARENTAL DISCIPLINE

OT saint Deut. 21:18-21

If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son, who will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them:

Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place;

And they shall say unto the elders of his city, this our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard.

And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shall thou put evil away from among you; and all shall hear, and fear:

NT saint Lk. 15:11-33

v.20 – And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great

way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

VENGEANCE

OT saint – 2 Chr.24:21-22

And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD

Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon it, and require it.

NT saint – Lk.23:34

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do...

Acts 7:60 – And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.

And when he had said this, he fell asleep. ***

“Instead of obedience bringing the reward of earthly greatness and wealth, the Church is taught to be content with food and raiment, and to expect persecution and hatred and it is perceived that just as distinctly as Isreal stands connected with earthly temporal things, so distinctly does the church stand connected with spiritual and heaven things.” – Schofield*

Is one then advocating that the church should do away with the OT and concentrate on the NT only? No. The Word of God makes it clear:

“All scriptures is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in rightness” – 2 Tim 3; 16

In addition, the LORD makes it clear that He has not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. (Matt. 5:17) The OT is useful in every way but we must divide the Word of God correctly and not engage in what psychologist refer to as “selective perception”

Christ left for us two examples to follow in the NT, examples of servant hood (Jn.13:15); And of suffering (1Pet. 2:21). What example then, did the Word of God give us from the OT? The amazing discovery is that the Word of God specifically commands us not to follow the OT saints.

1Cor. 10:6, 11

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should NOT lust after evil things, as they also lusted.....

Now all these things happened unto them for examples; and they are

written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

It is very important that the church understands this. We must divide the Word of God correctly to enable us know when to apply the OT and when not to, so that we may avoid departing from the NT mandate and subsequently loose heaven.

The Lord helps us in this regard in so many ways, to enable us draw a line between the OT and the NT. For example, Matt.5:31-44

“It hath been said, (OT) whosoever shall put away his wife...But, I say unto you (NT) that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for...

Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shall not forswear thyself, (OT)

But I say unto you (NT) swear not at all....

Ye have heard that it hath been said, ‘an eye for an eye’ (OT) But I say unto you, (NT) that ye resist not evil...

Ye have heard that it hath been said, ‘thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy (OT) But I say unto you (NT) love your enemies”

We should remind ourselves of Heb. 8:13-“In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old ... “(obsolete) Twice, the scriptures give examples of Christ that we must follow, and twice, the scriptures tell us not to follow the examples of the OT saints.

What then is the mandate of the New Testament saint?

We cannot understand what Christianity is unless we understand what sacrifice is. Neither can we understand what sacrifice is unless we understand the cross. The cross is an object of shame and suffering. Jesus Christ carried it and has commanded all those who genuinely follow Him it carry it, DAILY.

Lk. 9:23-24 – 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: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.

Also see Mt. 16:24-25

We are Christians today because somebody sacrificed yesterday. And, there can only be Christians tomorrow if we agree to sacrifice today. We cannot offer to God an acceptable sacrifice or serve unless we offer to carry the cross, daily; for it was on the cross that our Lord was sacrificed and it is only by following His example of carrying the cross that we also can offer an acceptable sacrifice to God. Here then is a great problem. Majority of Christians reject the cross because it implies shame and suffering, but they claim the salvation that comes by the cross.

It has been observed that many come to Christ without understanding the full implication

of the relationship they are entering into. In most cases, it is a foundational problem; caused by the message of salvation that they heard. In an attempt to have as many converts as possible, preachers often preach the gospel of comfort and not that of combat. Many come to Christ, having heard the Gospel of employment, prosperity, abundance, instant solution to protracted problems, and so on. The fellow coming to the Lord has at the back of his mind, “no more problems”. Then, you tell him to go and carry the cross. Of course, he will refuse. The problem that the church has is foundational; that is why we must return to the message of the cross.

It is only when people understand what Christ has done for them; and what Christ expects of them, as believers, that genuine Christianity can be birthed.

Majority of those “in Christ” today do not understand what it means to be a Christian.

Lk. 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 happy, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him.

Friend, did you count the cost? Have you ever considered what it shall cost you to follow Christ and reach heaven?

Maybe you are not even aware of the cost. **Try this-**

Lk. 14:26-27 – If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren and sister, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

v.33 – So, likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.

Can you forsake all for the sake of Christ? Can you forsake your job, career, money, houses, cars, lands, business, family, comfort, convenience, and so on? Can you?

A man came to Jesus the other day, and said, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. The Lord replied him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nest; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Lk.9:57-58). You want to follow me? Come along, but accommodation is not guaranteed.

The present call of God on the Christian is for patience and endurance to possess the kingdom. Get the gospel right, the kingdom is not now. (More in next chapter). God is presently sorting out those who shall possess the kingdom. That is why many are called, but few are chosen.

Consider the experiences of the early disciples who through faith and patience possessed the Kingdom.

“Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and re naked, and

are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place;

And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it.

Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day” – 1Cor.4:11-13

It is apparent that these experiences do not fit into the modern day psychedelic doctrine of the church. That why the Word of God warns us in 2Tim.2:11-13

It is faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him.

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

If we believe not yet he abideth faithful he cannot deny himself.

“If we believe not what?” Remember that 2Tim.2 is talking about enduring hardness for the sake of Christ. If you do not believe His Word, He will not change it to suit you. He remains faithful; He will not deny what He has said.

You either “ship in, or “ship out”. There is no middle ground.

For the fainthearted who are troubled by the cares of this world, what shall we eat, drink, wear, and so on, please read Matt.6:25, 33-34. You shall find grace to strengthen your soul.

That brings us to a very important passage in the scriptures, which summarizes the relationship between the savior and the saved. Upon this Word rests the entire New Testament doctrine of what Christ did for the sinner, and what the sinner now saved, is expected to do for Him

2Cor.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.

Christianity is a life full of exchanges. On the cross, God exchanged His only begotten Son for us to redeem us from sin, death, and Satan. Upon His resurrection, Christ gave us his life in exchange for our own. Once we accept the life of Christ, we must hand over our own to him. His life becomes our life; our life becomes His property. He can do whatever He wants with it. From the moment we accept Him as Lord and Savior, we are no longer expected to be in control of our life.

So, who are you living for? Who is at the centre of your life? Christ or yourself? Whenever Christ calls you, do you answer straightway or you first cast a glance at your employer or your business to see if they approve? Are you living daily seeking what might please the Lord, or what He might do to please you?

Remember, He died for you so that must no longer live for yourself but for Him. Who are you living for? Because believers have abandoned their mandate of living sacrificial lives for their savior, and have gone in search of the onion, garlic and cucumber of Egypt, the church has not been able to make the expected impact in this generation. The primary responsibility of the church as stipulated in Mt. 28:19 is largely unattended to.

According to Barrister Emeka Nwankpa, in his book **Redeeming The Land**; the primary responsibility of the church is to destroy the “gates of hell”. (Mt 16: 18) Barrister Nwankpa correctly points out that Jesus Christ established His church as an institution of spiritual violence to assault the gates of hell. Forces of darkness are roaming free all over the world, because the church, which is God’s answer to satanic activities, has abandoned his duty post in search of the onions and the garlic of Egypt.

The greatest culprits in this act of spiritual misunderstanding are the ministers of the gospel who regularly tell believers that God’s purpose for them is prosperity, power, breakthrough, wealth, and so on. One favorite passage of the church is Deut. 8:18 – God gives power to get wealth. That statement is true, but what is often not stated is that the power to get wealth is conditioned on the obedience of the person concerned. As it is true in Old Testament, so it is in New Testament. For example, healing and freedom from sickness is based on obedience, Ex15:26, similarly, Deut.28:1-14 repeatedly used the word ‘if’ as a pre-condition to receiving the blessings of God. As a matter of fact, Ps. 24:3-5 states clearly the criteria one must possess before God can bless him.

In the New Testament, God restates His demand in Matt.6:33 – “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness...” then, He shall add other things to you. Of course, seeking the kingdom of God involves fully complying with the commandment of Jesus to the New Testament believer.

In effect, it should be clearly understood that one is not saying that the New Testament saint shall be wretched or pauperized by God, but as the New Testament saint complies with the New Testament mandate, God shall exercise His prerogative of blessing him. Then, the believer shall receive the blessing of God that does not add any sorrow to it.

However, because the church has placed the cart before the horse, and is now running after what should be running after it, the gates of hell are not confronted, Satan is not checked, sin is not curtailed and innocent souls are dropping into hell everyday. May God send fire into His church today, in the Name of Jesus?

Let us go back to the issue of the gate of hell. Knowing fully well the phobia of the church for witches and wizard, someone may now be wondering, “since the New Testament saint is meant to bless them that curse him, how do I treat all the enemies of my progress?”

“Destroy them”

“Destroy them? Is that not a contradiction of what you have been saying?”

“Not at all. Let us ask this question: who is your enemy?”

The question is very relevant because most warfare prayers in the church target mother-in-laws, step-mother, colleagues, neighbor, business partners, bosses, and so on. Therefore, we need to ask the New Testament saint, “Who is your enemy?”

Eph.6:12 – For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Because our enemies are spiritual, that is why weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to pulling down of strongholds.

Please note. The Old Testament saints fought physical enemies; the New Testament saint spiritual enemies. God mandated the Old Testament saints to fight and destroy the Canaanites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Jebusites, Amalekites, and so on. The New Testament saints are mandated to fight principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, wicked spirits in heavenly places, as well as contend with Satan by resisting him.

Unfortunately, when believers go into “spiritual warfare” they fight physical enemies. One effective strategy of the devil is to shift attention from himself and focus people’s attention on human adversaries: mother-in-law; stepmother; brothers; sisters; etc.

By manipulating believers to use spiritual weapons to fight physical enemies, Satan achieves three things:

- 1) He is free from attack and arrest from those God has empowered and authorized to attack and arrest him so, he continues to operate, with his forces, unhindered.
- 2) He renders them powerless to punish satanic disobedience. 2Cor. 10:6
- 3) He manipulates believers into fighting at an “illegitimate battleground.”

Let us explain the term “illegitimate battleground” the way a brother once shared an illustration with us. Whenever “Iron” Mike Tyson enters into the boxing ring, he pulverizes his opponents, shatters into the boxing ring; he knocks some of them out, and turns others into punching bags. When he has finished defeated his opponents, they pay him millions of dollars. The same Tyson threw the same punch at someone outside the ring, and he was thrown into jail. Why? He fought at an illegitimate battleground.

Whenever believers “war” against human opponents, they are fighting at an illegitimate battleground and consequently committing sin, because our Lord has commanded us:

Bless them that curse you and pray for them which despitefully use you.

He was referring to human adversaries.

So, Satan craftily gets believers into problem with God while the believers are thinking that God is on their side, fighting for them! “Aside from Satan, the Lord has no enemies, only potential friends”; Watchman Nee once said “if you succeed in prayerfully killing that human adversary, you have not destroyed your enemy, but you have killed a potential friend of Jesus Christ. The only enemy that you and the Lord have is Satan.”

Another person may wish to ask, “now that you say we should not pray against human opponents, but we should bless them, how then do we conduct spiritual warfare?”

The answers to this question are two-fold:

First, the word of God says in the New Testament “bless them that curse you...?”

Second, we all used to do spiritual warfare in this manner:

Every enemy in my family, (referring to human adversaries); household wickedness that is fighting against my progress; I command the fire of God to consume you. You those witches and wizards, I command the fire of God to consume you. Every arrow you fire at me, I command the fire of the Holy Ghost to heat your arrows seven-fold and I send them back to you. It is written; he who digs a pit shall fall into it etc.

This manner of prayer is okay, if you are an OT saint.

For the New Testament saint, to whom God has given spiritual weapons, and has been instructed to fight evil spirits and bless human adversaries, something like this should be okay:

In the name of Jesus, I take authority over every evil spirit that is behind household wickedness in my family. Every evil spirit that is behind the witches and the wizard in my family, I bind every one of you in Jesus Name. I decree that everyone you have taken captive in my family and in my village, to do your will, be set free in Jesus name. I decree liberty from satanic bondage and satanic deception to every wicked person in my family. I nullify the operation and the manipulations of those evil spirits against me in the Name of Jesus.

The church is meant to set the captives free. That is why Jesus Christ came and He has commanded us to follow in His steps. Had Jesus destroyed all the wicked when He came, then you and I shall not be alive today. Some of us in the church were, and are still more wicked than some unbelievers. The point Jesus Christ is making is this, the devil has taken man captive to do his will. The role of the church is to get angry at the devil, destroy his works, and release his captives. So far, His church in many instances, have

been joining the devil to destroy his captives. Then, we say we are fighting a spiritual warfare, not, knowing that we are committing spiritual murder.

In Rom. 12:14, 17-12, it is written:

Bless them which persecute you: bless and curse not.

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceable with men.

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; If he thirst give him drink: for in so doing thou shall heap coals of fire on his head.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Think about it. The Word of God says do not let evil overcome you, but you overcome evil. Think about it. What can overcome evil?

Evil cannot overcome evil

Hatred cannot overcome hatred

Violence cannot overcome hatred

Malice cannot overcome malice

Anger cannot overcome anger

Curses cannot overcome curses.

If evil is used to repay evil, then evil has been multiplied. If curses are used to repay curses, then curses are multiplied. Whose interest is being served then? That of Jesus or that of Satan?

Think about it. It is only good that can overcome evil

Love will overcome hatred.

Only peace can overcome violence. Ask the nations of the world. When they fight bitter and destructive wars, they ultimately sit at a round table to discuss terms of peace.

Yet, they never learn! Violence can never overcome violence.

Friendship will overcome malice.

Gentleness will overcome anger

Blessings will overcome curses.

1 Pet. 3:9-10, 13- Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

Therefore, when you enter into spiritual warfare, bless your enemies, and deal with those evil spirits. Which one is better? That your mother-in-law should die, or that she comes to you on her knees asking for forgiveness, while requesting that you take her to your God? Let us consider this in another way. Assume witches are attacking you, and you prayerfully kill them, have you solved the problem? No. The evil spirits behind the witches will promptly look for other human beings to possess and continue with their attacks. So, what is the right thing to do? Do what the scriptures says fight those principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, and wicked spirits in the heavenly places. Once you deal with them in the Name of Jesus Christ, witches will stop attacking you.

If we concentrate on dealing with those evil spirits, they will begin to respect us. There are believers that evil spirits do not joke with. Join that rank of believers. If Satan knows that any human adversary he raises against you ends up getting blessed and delivered, he will stop sending them! The reason he keeps multiplying your human adversaries is because he knows that when they curse you, you too will curse them. So curses keep flying all over the place, in the churches and in the covens.

Let us return to the New Testament gospel.

Let us remember that the power that God has deposited in the New Testament saint is so potent and mighty that it stops Lucifer and his hosts of darkness any day. Consider it - you now unleash that power against a human being! You have destroyed that fellow.

One is certain that God has been intervening and diverting most of our dangerous prayers. If God has not been intervening, there probably would not remain any human being on the earth. After fighting unbelievers, we certainly would have turned our weapons on each other in the church. Denomination against denomination, pastors against pastors, ministers against ministers, members against members. God have mercy on all of us.

We pray for a revival of believers so that we can all understand and accept the mandate of heaven for the church. Revived believers, who, when they wake up in the morning, Satan shall be afraid, and hell shall quiver and trembled with fear.

Can heaven count on you to be one of those believers? Confront the devil and his host directly. No gate of hell shall prevail against you in the Name of Jesus. We all must begin to intercede for our human adversaries so that God can work through us to save by grace, sinners who need salvation-just as we ourselves were.

This issue of salvation brings us to the next point we are to discuss-global soul winning, the true assignment of the church. 2Cor. 5:18-20.

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not Imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ...

God gave us the ministry of reconciliation, He committed unto us the word of reconciliation, and He appointed and designated us as the official representatives of Christ to reconcile the world to Him, the same way Christ came to reconcile us to God.

Friend, what is your contribution towards the evangelization of the world? Does heaven regard you as a true ambassador of Christ, or are you one of those referred to in Phil. 2:21? *For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*

Keith Green in his FINAL MESSAGE draws our attention to a number of important facts. For example, only 9% of the world's population speaks English, and yet, 94% of all ordained preachers in the whole world minister to the 9% who speak English. And 96% of all Christian finances are spent in the United States on 6% of the world's population. Only 4% of Christian money is spent on missionary efforts to reach the other 94% of the world's population.

Not only is there imbalance in the funding of the gospel, there is also imbalance in the allocation of the labourers. There are over one million Christian workers in the United States while one-half of the world's population (comprising three major groups – Moslem, Hindus, and Chinese) 2.2 billion souls, have only 2,417 full time Christian workers.

In the United States of America, there is approximately one Christian worker for every 230 people, while those who have never heard the gospel, even once, have one worker for every 450,000 people!

Worldwide, there are 85,000 workers on the mission field- working mainly among those who have heard the gospel before. This figure includes missionaries from all over the world of every nationality. When you compare this number with that of Americans selling Avon or Amway products, it is staggering. Just in America alone, there are 435,000 Avon sales people with 1,280,000 worldwide, and over 750,000 Amway products distributors with over a million world wide. The two companies combined have 14 times more representatives in the United States alone than the church of Jesus Christ has in the whole world outside America.

The result? There are over 2.7 billion people, who have never heard the gospel at all and

there are only 5,000 to 7,000 missionaries working directly with totally **unreached** groups of people. That means, there is approximately one missionary for every 450,000 of the unreached!

There are over 16,000 different and distinct cultures, people groups – even whole countries, where not one single church is in existence. There are 7,010 distinct living languages and 5,199 of them still have no Bible or scripture translation available in their own language.

Daily, an estimated 80,000 unsaved people die, approximately 3,333 every hour, 55 people every minute to face the judgment seat Christ.

- 1.9 billion people who identify themselves as Christians***
- 1.2 billion Moslems**(Islam is the fastest growing major religion, largely as a result of a high birth rate)
- 1 billion non-religious people**
- 811 million Hindus, largely in India***
- 360 million Buddhists**
- 240 million in folks and traditional religion**
- 23 million Sikhs***
- 260 million people who identify themselves as atheist**

Except these souls are saved, almost 6 billion souls shall enter eternity without Christ. No wonder, the bible foretells, “Therefore hell hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measures...” Ish.5:14

With this dismal scenario, it is baffling that the body of Christ gathers every Sunday to consider spiritual principles that shall make them millionaires! The church is stretching Grace too far.

Perhaps, the most critical needy part of the world as far as the gospel is concerned today is often referred to as the 10/40 Window. This is unique expression for the part of the globe covering an area from 10 degree – 40 degrees north of the Equator. The window stretches from Cape Verde in West Africa to Japan. Also included is part of southern Spain and Portugal, northern Nigeria, a large portion of China, the entire Middle East, and the entire India sub continent. ***

In the 10/40 Window are some of the world’s strongest spiritual strongholds – Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, communism, and so on. Over 2.4 billion souls are trapped by the devil in the 10/40 window. Like Nero, who was fiddling while Rome was burning, the church largely occupies itself with acquiring the mundane material things of the world while precious souls are dropping into hell every minute. May God set a fire to His church today.

With the seeming proliferation of churches, it is apparent that the church is yet to make significant impact amongst unbelievers, particularly those living in Christian nations. For

Beware of Success

example, the church has not dented attendance at the mosques, prostitute have not reduced rather, their membership has significantly increased with more women joining the ranks of unofficial prostitutes. Armed robbers are increasing at geometric proportions, drug addicts and drug couriers are increasing at an alarming rate as if Satan applied fertilizer. Secret cults and ritual murder continue unabated as if Christ has no representative on earth; the destitute are not taken care of, and the beggars have no good news preached to them.

From where then is the increase in church growth? Simple. Recent researches into church dynamics have shown that 80% of all church growth result from people moving from one congregation to the other. The noticeable increase in attendance, particularly in the Pentecostal churches can be attributed to two factors:

- Movement of people from the orthodox churches to the new generation Pentecostal churches.
- People who were born into “Christian” families but were not attending church before have started attending church.

Spurred by the barrage of “Pentecostal Publicity” and the alluring offer of instant million at the Name of Jesus, the latter group enthusiastically agreed to leave the beer parlors and discotheques and attend church on the condition that they carry their jamboree along. Those who were addicted to football matches came with their whistles.

The churches are full, but the work is not done. The Moslems, Buddhists, Hindus, prostitute, robbers, and juvenile delinquents are not evangelized. The money that heaven releases for the propagation of the Gospel is, in most cases, misapplied to undertakes grandiose building project, white elephant projects that shall become desolate the moment the rapture of the church takes place.

It should be an interesting research topic to find out how much of God’s money has been wasted in building “God’s house”, where God is not living in. The most elementary student of the Bible knows that in the New Testament, God does not dwell in houses built with stones and wood; unlike He did in the old Testament. The temple of God in the New Testament is the believer. Therefore, whoever wants to build a house for God should concentrate on winning souls and nurturing them to become genuine disciple of Jesus Christ.

We are not saying local assemblies should not have buildings they should; but **functional**

building is what is needed. **FUNCTIONAL** - A roof, solid floor, simple walls; that is all. By the way, how many hours do we spend in a week to congregate as a church? There are 168 hours in a week. The most we spend to congregate, as a church, is not more than 10 hours. This includes Sunday worship service, mid-week service, and prayer meetings. So, why should we spend millions of God's money on building projects, at the expense of soul winning, which is our real mandate?

If you see some church building, they are architectural masterpieces, from the point of view of man. From the point of view of heaven, they are architectural monstrosity.

Only heaven knows how many souls go into hell as a direct result of those grandiose building projects. Some church buildings are so beautiful and tastefully furnished you will think the worshippers will not go home after the service.

For God's sake, have we forgotten that we are pilgrims?

No one is going to be rewarded by the Lord for building a gigantic edifice in His Name. Jesus did not die to sprout buildings; He died to save souls. He specifically commanded the church to bear fruit, and that those fruit should remain. (Jn.15:16)

Instead of spending so much money on grandiose building projects, why not invest in rehabilitating prostitutes? Worldwide, there are over 22 million women engaged in prostitution. Everyone involved in outreach to the prostitute realizes that winning the soul of the prostitute is no problem; it is rehabilitating them that is a big task.

Once that lady accepts Christ as Lord and Saviour, she must be provided with accommodation, a job to keep her busy, and money to spend. If these are not done, she will return to the only business she knows. What makes it worse this time around is that it is not a sinner that is prostituting, but a saint.

If a church now has about 10 million, and they decide to use it to buy cement and iron rods, to build a "befitting house for God", while prostitutes in the same neighborhood are going to hell, do you think Jesus will tell that Pastor: "well done, thou good and faithful servant," or He will say, "depart from me, I know you not, you worker of iniquity"? Which one do you think He will say?

The reason often adduced for these building projects is that the rich and the affluent will not come to church if the place of worship is not tasteful. You see, Jesus Christ said so. The probability of the rich man getting to heaven is very slim. The rich man will not even humble himself and seek his creator unless his earthly indulgence is catered for. If the wise men could travel across hot, dusty and dry desert to seek Jesus, and gladly worshipped Him in the humble surroundings where they met Him, the rich man of this generation and his apologists have no excuse before God.

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Erwin Lutzer once said, “It is almost impossible to develop true worshippers in affluent surroundings”

Jerry White also added, “Christians have never worn the clothes of affluence well”.

Preoccupation with wealth and love of money distorts spiritual vision and drains spiritual energy. David Barrett told a story that several centuries ago one of the popes, an avid patron of the arts, is said to have surveyed the vast artistic riches he had amassed and to have gloated: “No longer can the church of Jesus Christ say, ‘Silver and gold have I none.’” And a subordinate replied, “But then neither can she now say, ‘Rise up and walk.’” It is impossible to combine both. You cannot eat your cake and have it, at the same time. No matter how spiritual a minister of the gospel is, once he falls in love with money, he begins to reduce in spiritual power. Why? Because a servant cannot serve two masters, and they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts... (Mt.6:24, 1Tim6:9) What then is the way out for the rich in the church? Simply this, they should convert their earthly wealth into heavenly treasures.

Brethren, even if we are not going to the mission field, yet, let us contribute sacrificially to support missionaries and fund mission fields, so that the unreached could be reached with the message of the Gospel. Many mission agencies are around, which are in dire need of the funds that believers spend on vanity. At least let it be on record, in heaven, that we used our money to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ in the right places.

It is time for us to stop preaching the gospel of the Old Testament. Let us concentrate on the gospel of the New Testament. That is the true gospel.

How can we easily differentiate between what is old from what is new? In other words, what is the difference between what is of the earth and what is spiritual in man’s relationship with God?

The carnal, unspiritual, and earthly asks for what he can receive from God, while the spiritual and heaven asks what he can give God. Heaven always gives, while earth always receives. God gave His only begotten son; and the Son gave His life.

In Gen 15:2, Abram asked God, “...LORD GOD, what wilt thou give me...” In Acts 9:6, the moment Paul encountered Christ, he asked, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

Those who are serving God with an eye on what they can receive in return are operating an earthly ministry. They are of the sort who rejoice in material blessings as evidence of fruitful service to God. Those who operate a heavenly ministry always want to give expecting nothing in return. They say like Paul, “..I will very gladly spend and be spent for you...”

The Two Covenants

Remember the wonderful hymn:

The Old Rugged Cross

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross
 The emblem of suffering and shame
 And I love that old cross where the dearest and best
 For a world of lost sinner was slain
 So I'll cherish the old rugged cross
 Till my trophies at last I'll lay down;
 I will cling to the old rugged cross
 And exchange it some day for a crown

Whosoever you may be, God needs you. In his eternal program, you are very important and you have a crucial role to play. It is our prayer that God shall not replace you because you refuse to totally yield yourself to Him

In their article, **God's Choice of Men**, Dr McCain and Rev. Dr. Mike Oye point out two principles regarding God's working on the earth.

- 1) The first principle is that whenever God works on earth, He always works through men.
- 2) The second principle is that whenever God works on the earth, He normally works the hard way, the slow way, the difficult way, the progressive way, the way that is opposite to the way man would do things.... The kind of people God used were men who were committed, who suffered; men who put their ministry/vision ahead of their own personal ambitions and men who had normal human frailties and weakness.*

Can God depend on you?

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. – 2Tim.2:3-4

...**“The wise shall understand” Dan.12:10**

4

The Two Kingdoms

In Mt. 3:2 and 4:17, both Christ and John the Baptist made similar pronouncements as they commenced their ministries:

Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. However, in Matt. 6:33, Jesus Christ says:

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness...

The kingdom of heaven is at hand, but you are to seek the kingdom of God. What then is the difference between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God?

Simply put, the kingdom of heaven is at the realm of profession of religion, while the kingdom of God is in the realm of possessing the kingdom. What this means is that everyone in the kingdom of heaven is professing Christianity while those who enter the kingdom of God are those who actually belong to the kingdom.

Dake described kingdom of heaven as “kingdom from the heavens, headed by Jesus Christ for the purpose of re-establishing the kingdom of God over this rebellious part of God’s realm. Only found in Matthew because it is the gospel of Jehovah’s King. It is a dispensational term and refers to Messiah’s Kingdom earth.*

In effect, all those who are in the church on the earth right now - the bishops, pastors, ministers, workers, baptized members, new converts, church goers, - are all in the kingdom of heaven. No one has entered the kingdom of God – yet. We are all professing Christianity. Those who are truly Christians, according to God’s unchanging criteria, shall enter and **possess** the kingdom of God.

In Matthew chapter 13, Jesus Christ gives us in parables seven mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, which, when studied, explain fully well the problem with the family of God on earth. The problems that the church is having on the earth are associated with the kingdom of heaven, not the kingdom of God. In the kingdom of God, there are no tares, but the “spirits of just men made perfect.” Heb.12:23

*Dake Annotated Ref. Bible, Page 3, N.T., note j.

In the kingdom of heaven, we have a mixture of just and wicked men, liars, thieves, adulterers, swindlers and so on. Some of the imperfect men in the kingdom of heaven shall cooperate with the Holy Spirit and be made sanctified to enter the kingdom of God; many shall reject the discipline of the Holy Spirit, and subsequently go to the other side of eternity. Still, there is the third category, which can never be made perfect.

Mt. 13:47-50

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew o shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.

So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just.

And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

This is a straightforward parable. The kingdom of heaven is like a net that gathered in all sorts of creatures – sinners, saints, demons possessed, wild animals, liars, scoundrels etc. Everybody is in the church. The sorting out is going on. Some are sorted out when they die, others shall be sorted out when the Lord returns. The important thing is that they “gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away”, where? “...Into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

This scriptural statement can further buttress the point we are making: the kingdom of heaven is at the realm of “many are called,” “few are chosen”

We need to point out these mysteries of the kingdom of heaven to the church because of an equally very important parable in Mt.13. The parable of wheat and tares. (Please read Matt.13:24-30)

We mentioned in Chapter Two of this book, that we are witnessing a generation of believers who are “...carnal like Adam, Egocentric like Diotrephes..” and so on. We also advocated that once a believer detects lack of commitment to reaching heaven in a minister of the gospel, he should pick his salvation and run. Someone might have felt very uncomfortable with these views and probably considered them as extremes or unjustifiable condemnation. Well, they are not.

If we take time to study what the Lord is telling us in this parable of wheat and tares, and compare it with what we see going on in the church, it is evident that there are more of Satan’s people in the church than those who belong to Jesus Christ. “How can that be? Someone asks?

Let us highlight some points from the parable of the wheat and tares. (In your private

The Two Kingdoms

study, you will discover a lot more than what we shall mention here.)

- 1) The wheat and tares are very similar. To the untrained and the undiscerning, it is very difficult to differentiate between the two. According to Bible scholars, the tares referred to here by the Lord Jesus look every inch like wheat, but instead of producing nourishment, it produces poison. According to Finnis Dake it is “a grain that looks like wheat while growing, but when full grown and ripe has ears which are long, the grains being black and poisonous.”

This sounds like the seemingly committed, humble, and dedicated Workers who only begin to show their true color after they have been made pastors. Nobody will ordain a quarrelsome, manipulative, and egocentric fellow as a pastor. In most cases, as Dake explains, “when full grown”, the true nature begins to manifest.

Also, the genuine and the fake Christian outwardly look alike. They sing together. It has to take someone who received a revelation from the Holy Spirit to discern who is actually who.

- 2) How did the tares appear? The enemy waited for the Farmer to sow the good seed in his field before introducing his own tares. This implies that in every assembly of believers, the children of the evil one are also present. Do not assume that every one in the church belongs to Jesus Christ.
- 3) Weeds multiply faster than true seed. Every elementary student of agricultural science shall confirm, if you plant a seed, the moment it germinates, the weeds appear. For every true seed, tens of uninvited weeds sprout. If they are not checked, by uprooting them, they will outgrow the true seed. And in this case, the Farmer said they should not be uprooted, until the end of the age; so, they are multiplying faster than the true seed.
- 4) The angels saw what was happening and quickly protested to the Lord of the harvest that the weeds should be removed from the church. “No”, responded the Lord. “Why?” if the angels start uprooting now, they might uproot some of the true seed. So, the Lord of the harvest defers the final separation till the time of harvest – which as we mentioned earlier, could be the time of death, for individuals, or the return of the Lord for the church.

Because the Lord deferred the sorting out of the weeds from the wheat, both exist in the kingdom of heaven – the genuine and the fake, with the fake outnumbering the genuine.

- If you consider yourself a true seed of Christ, and you are reading this, please be informed that weeds surround you. Now there is no point guessing, you may be wrong. Just do what Christ says, “watch and pray”. Some of them have been planted by Satan to offend and provoke you bitterly to unforgiveness so you can be damned. Some are in church to set bad example for you, by telling you “it does not matter, Christianity is in the heart”. You should be aware that if it is the heart, it must show outside, because out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh. So, if it does not show outside, it is not in the heart.
- 5) The similarity between the wheat and the tares is so great; only angels can be trusted by God to separate them. Except the Holy spirit gives a specific revelation, even the most anointed of all men cannot identify a single tare. God in His mercy provided for us a sure way of escape – follow Jesus Christ. It is written, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” Jn. 8:12. Since we are all in the kingdom of Heaven, and do not know for certainty, who is a tare, we need to comply with the instruction of the Lord: “And take heed to yourself... watch ye therefore and pray always...” Lk21: 34-36 Watch and pray. Christians, it is time to wake up. The party is over. Remember that hymn?

Christians seek not yet repose
 Cast thy dreams of ease away
 Thou art in the midst of foes
 “Watch and pray”

Principalities and powers
 Mustering their unseen array
 Wait for thine unguarded hour
 “ Watch and pray”

Gird thy heavenly armour on,
 Wear it ever night and day
 Ambushed lies the Evil One
 “Watch and Pray”

The Two Kingdoms

Hear, above all, hear thy Lord,
 Him thou lovest to obey
 Hide within thy heart his Word
 Watch and Pray”

Watch as if on that alone
 Hung the issue of the day
 Pray that help may be sent down
 “Watch and Pray”

- 6) Weeds have a capacity to suffocate the true seed if the seed is not well rooted. They compete with the seed for the soil nutrients, the sun, air, and water. Therefore, the seed that will survive in the midst of weeds must be determined to survive. In like manner, the Christian that will make it from the kingdom of heaven to the kingdom of God, must be deeply rooted in Christ. Those who practice superficial Christianity are disqualified from the race into the kingdom of God.
- 7) No amount of prayer, fasting, teaching, admonition, can turn a tare into wheat. The son of perdition cannot, and will not, change his father. Similarly, no wheat can become a tare, but the tares can suffocate the life that is in the wheat and render it fruitless. Subsequently, it is not fit for anything but to be gathered and burned. In Jn. 15:5-6, the Lord says, “I am the true vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me, ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” Believers and ministers that do not make soul winning a priority are in grave danger. Beware, when people around you begin to discourage you from active soul winning. One of the functions of the weeds is to hinder the true seed from being fruitful.
- 8) Even though it is Lord Who planted the wheat, is only useful if it bears good fruit. No farmer will gather into his barn a stalk of wheat that has no wheat. In farming, we have come across a stalk of maize, that is very tall but has no corn. We have

seen some that have cobs but no maize grain on the cob, though it was harvest time. They are thrown away and burned. In Jn. 15:16, the Master says, “ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should remain...” A sure way of making God’s calling and election sure in one’s life is to join the Lord in the ministry of seeking and saving that, which is lost.

- 9) In Genesis 1, we see that God’s purpose is that created and reproductive agents should reproduce “after their kind.” Wheat is what the farmer planted; wheat is what is expected at harvest. If wheat was plant and barley surfaced at harvest, that field shall be cursed. Nobody shall touch such a weird harvest. In His field, the Lord sowed the seed of salvation in the New Testament saint. He is not going to settle for a harvest of financial prosperity, or a gigantic edifice as the fruit of many years of ministry labor. He sowed salvation; He must reap souls that have been saved.
- 10) What that farmer need are strong and healthy fruits not sickly ones. For Example, in Gen. 41:22-23, Pharaoh saw “...seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good: and behold, seven ears, withered, thin and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them.”
The Lord of the harvest needs a harvest of good, strong, healthy and robust fruits, ministries that pack large congregation of people who are spiritually sick and diseased through sin, greed, covetousness, slothfulness, spiritual immaturity, and spiritual barrenness, have no fruit to present to the Lord of the harvest. Ministers who evade the “hard sayings” for fear that the people shall stop coming to church, or pamper and indulge people with what they delight to hear, under the guise of drawing them close shall be surprised, when the Lord of the harvest returns. We have the pattern of the Lord to follow. He fed 5,000 men with five loaves and two fish, yet, when it was time to send out disciples, only 70 were available to go out two by two. (Lk.10.1) Only 12 disciples remained with Him full time, out of which one was the son of perdition. On the day of Pentecost, only 120 disciples were waiting on the Lord in Jerusalem. Why did the crowd reduce? Because He told them hard saying. Ministries should return to the pure new testament teachings of discipleship, self-denial, holiness, and messages of the cross.
- 11) Satan’s power of deception is so great that the tares even considered themselves wheat. That is why it is of no use pointing at any human being as manifesting the characteristic of a tare; you will only produce strife. Just take heed to yourself. It will take a direct confrontation with the Lord to convince in Mt.7:22-23

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” The tares will present themselves to the Lord as wheat, but the One who cannot be deceived, whose names is The truth, knows the difference.

- 12 If one carefully examines the fruit of a tare, it shall be seen that it is “black and poisonous.” The Lord says, “Ye shall know them by their fruits”. (Mt. 7:16) The Lord commands us to watch the fruits, not just listen to the utterances. There are many in the church that profess love, holiness, obedience, and humility and so on; some even preach it, but their actions deny what they profess.

Watch the fruits. Observe attitudes and conducts.

You shall know who to avoid. Some people must be avoided, because bad communication corrupts good manners. Pro.22:24-25- Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go; Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

It is your responsibility to make sure you enter the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit will do everything possible to help, but your cooperation is of paramount importance. That is why you must not rebel against the discipline of the Holy Spirit. Pray God to teach you a lesson, to destroy bad habits, to make you perfect where you are not perfect, to bring out every contrary experience in your life. Remember that He is in control of everything. He said through Ish, “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.” (Ish.45:7) Unfortunately, the believers of this generation have a contrary perception of suffering. The slightest inconvenience that they suffer, they begin to shout demons, witches, ancestral covenant, curses, manipulation, and so on. That is why deliverance ministers are thriving in the churches, particularly amongst the women folks, who seldom consider issues from an objective perspective, but see things through the eyes of emotion.

Heb 12:5-8 – “...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.

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.”

In bringing us to spiritual maturity, God arranges something for us called the “discipline of the Holy Spirit” Just as a good parent creates good conduct in the children, through floggings, punishment, rebuke, discipline, and so on, so our loving Heavenly Father, creates perfection in us through the discipline of the Holy Spirit. All of us, without exception came to the Lord with terrible natures that we inherited from Adam, and many more that we picked up from the world. Now, this sinful nature cannot enter heaven, neither can it allow us to do the will of the Master. The process of shedding off these negative conducts is what is referred to as the discipline of the Holy Spirit.

This discipline is meant to produce in us a new nature that is called “brokenness” This is a state in which we have lost all forms of self consciousness, pride, ego, selfish ambition, covetousness, self seeking, and so on; and we have become meek and gentle like Christ. It is only at this stage, that God finds us useful. Watchman Nee says, “It takes time to ripen a fruit and **it takes hard times to mature a Christian.**

That is why we must never try to escape the discipline of the Holy Spirit”

In John 12:24, the Lord tells us, that, “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.” There is LIFE in each of us. Christ is Life. Jn. 10:10, He says, He has come to give us life, and to give it to us more abundantly. For that life to be made manifest, the Holy Spirit must deal with us, and destroy the carnality that we were born with, grew up with, and spent our lives learning from the world.

In 2 Cor. 4:7-9, the Word of God makes it clear:

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 a treasure in each one of us. Everyone that is Born Again has a wonderful treasure that God has deposited inside of him. We are the earthen vessels. For this treasure to come out, we must be broken. Our sinful nature, otherwise called the flesh, must be destroyed. That is why we are troubled on every side, perplexed, persecuted, and

cast down. Because there is a treasure that God wants to release; something that shall positively impact our generation and bring glory and honor to the name of Jesus Christ.

Again, for this treasure to come out, we must be broken, for us to be broken, we must endure the discipline of the Holy Spirit; and for us to endure this discipline we must have a positive perception of suffering.

It is rather unfortunate that many Christians lack this understanding. Once they see someone going through a crisis period, they begin to accuse, “he must be a sinner” “he is under a curse”; “It is his family, they have many witches there.” “It is ancestral covenant.” Those that wish to be helpful will direct the fellow to a deliverance minister, to cast out the demons that are operating in the life of the individual. Of course, trust the devil, he loves deliverance ministrations. Why not? He is the center of attention; and Satan loves playing to the gallery of human ovation. They will discuss with him, a lengthy conversation:

What is your name?

How long have you been here?

How did you get in?

Who invited you?

Where are you from?

Of course, the devil will tell them everything but the truth. Jesus says the devil is a liar, and father of lies. Have you ever seen a demon that tells the truth? If he has his base in the locality, he will say he is from India. If he came in the previous week when the patient committed adultery, he will say he came in when the fellow was a child. If his name is Giripa, he will say his name is Gende, if he is living in a refuse dump, he will call himself the queen of the coast. (All right, all right, we know. Someone would say, but Jesus discussed with the demon named Legion. Yes, he did, to show us that a human being could carry thousands of those foul and unclean spirits. That is all. But, remember, he said cast them out, not discuss with them.) By the time a fellow sits down with devils to converse, you should know that fellow himself needs deliverance.

Why do we have this scenario in the church? People, generally, do not want to suffer. Most people are looking for the easy way out. Sorry, there is no easy way out. If we are going to be useful to God, we must be prepared for the discipline of the Holy Spirit. That means make a generous allowance in your life that things can go wrong, seriously wrong, after you become born again.

That is why James 1:2-4. tells us:

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;
Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience, but let
patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting
nothing.

Rom. 5:3-5 says:

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation
worketh patience;

And patience, experience and hope:

And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in
our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Have a positive attitude to suffering. Nothing comes your way without God permitting it. Remember, our Master is the one who opens a door, and no man can shut it; and He shuts a door, no man can open it. Whatever he wants to do in your life, He will do it. What He has not done, He does not want to do. When He moves, no one can stop Him.

So, instead of fretting, complaining, and worrying because you are suffering, or going through a severe lack in your life, turn to the Holy Spirit and ask Him, "Holy Spirit, what are you teaching me, through this experience I am going through?" For every experience, there is a lesson to be learnt. If you remember, some of the best lessons you have learnt in your life, you learnt them because you suffered. Many of us learnt not to steal, because when we stole as children, we were severely flogged. Those that were not flogged graduated to armed robbery. One of my aunts has a proverb in Yoruba, which when translated into English, says "you have never suffered, and you say you are wise; who is your teacher?"

Stop fretting. There is nothing you need that God will not give you. Remember, what you need; not what you want. God does not support your vanity and your covetousness. He will meet your needs, but you need to learn your lessons.

Rom. 8:32

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall
he not with him also freely give us all things?

Could you imagine what would have happened to Joseph, if he lived in our generation? (That young man spent 13 years in the school of the Holy Spirit). Nearly every deliverance minister and covenant breaker in town would have had sessions with him. He would have been led to curse his forefathers, Abraham and Isaac, for telling lies in Egypt and Canaan, respectively. He would have been told to dissociate himself from the

wrestling between God and Jacob at the Jabbok River. He would have been told to condemn his mother and dissociate himself from her for stealing the household gods of Laban, and so on.

Yet, all God was doing then, was to prepare the young man for the greatest honor in his generation! Thank God, carnality was not in Joseph. He remained spiritual and submissive to God, throughout his period of discipline. The same experience goes for David. He too, was severely tested. And, in the same way God is testing and preparing you for greatness in your generation. But, are you cooperating? The slightest inconvenience, people start screaming, and grumbling, as if God is treating them unfairly, and He has forsaken them. Do you want to be a winner without fighting a battle? You want miracles without problems? You want a victory without an enemy? You want to be an over comer without having to overcome any obstacle?

Go and cool down. Satan is not your problem. Ancestral covenants are not your hindrances. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2Cor 5:17 (we are not by the statements above denying the reality of spiritual warfare. But, we operate spiritual warfare from the position of victory and boldness, knowing that Christ has overcome the enemy and greater is He Who lives in us than he that is in the world.)

Now, let us answer a very important question. If Satan is not the problem of the child of God, then, what is his problem? Disobedience destroyed Adam, and laid the foundation for the travails of the human race, it destroyed king Saul, delayed God's promised to Abraham, hindered Moses from reaching old testament saints

The problem with many believers is that in doctrine, they follow Jesus, but in principle, they follow Lucifer. God is not interested in your doctrine; He is interested in your principle- W. Nee

In the wilderness, and so on. Disobedience hinders the new testament saint from carrying the cross, as the Master commanded; hinders men from being content, after having food and raiment, and so on. Now, as Watchman Nee explains, there are two principles operating in the universe, the principle of obedience, as well as the principles of rebellion. Jesus Christ symbolizes the principles of obedience, while Lucifer symbolizes the principles of rebellion.

The problem with many believers is that in doctrine, they follow Jesus, but in principles, they follow Lucifer. God is not interested in your doctrine; He is interested in your principle. As far as God is concerned, Christianity transcends mere professing Christ as

Lord and Savior; it is a matter of obedience.

Lk.6:46 – And why call ye me, Lord, Lord and do not the things which I say?

John 15:14- Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Since we were all born rebellious and self-willed, God has to work in us and through our circumstances, to destroy that principle of rebellion in us. We are not the first to be treated thus by God. In fact, our Lord and Savior Jesus was treated exactly in like manner by the Most High. Heb. 5:8

Though he were a Son,
yet learned he obedience by the
things which he suffered.

Do you see that? Jesus did not bring obedience from heaven, He learned it here, and the method God used to teach Him obedience is Suffering. That is why you also are suffering, Even though you are Born-Again. God is teaching

If you cannot stand the trial of
the cross, you cannot become a
useful instrument. I is only the
Spirit of the lamb that God
takes delight in: the gentleness,
the humility, and the peace
Margaret Barber

you obedience. Stop running away from suffering; you are hindering God's purpose for your life. You need to develop the attitude of the cross, and remain broken before God, so that you can be useful to Him in your generation. Some Ministers of the Gospel have lost wonderful opportunities to grow in grace, because they rejected discipline and correction. Instead of meekly accepting discipline, even if it was unfair, like Christ did, they proceeded to go from house to house from one member's to another justifying themselves. Some even leave to go and establish ministries of their own. They are still in the church, though, preaching the gospel of obedience with the principle of rebellion. Every time you are humbled, or disciplined, either justly or unjustly, or your right and position is unfairly taken from you and given to someone else, you are passing through a test of grace. If you reject the experience, and "fight for your right:, to claim your rightful position, or clear your name from slander and lies, you have lost grace. If you meekly accept the injustice, in the spirit of Christ, and in humility commit yourself to God. First, the spirit of glory and God rest on you. (1 Pet. 4:14) Second, God gives you more grace. He resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. What is grace? Unmerited favour. God increases the favour that you have with Him. If you begin to fight to defend yourself, you lose the favour of God, and to make it worse, He begins to resist and oppose you Himself. Margaret Barber said, "If you cannot stand the trials of the cross, you cannot become a useful instrument. It is only the spirit of lamb that God takes

delight in: the gentleness, the humility, and the peace”

For Jesus to become our Savior, God has to make Him perfect through suffering. Heb.2:10.

For it became him, for whom
Are all things and by whom are
All things, in bringing many sons
Unto glory, to make the captain
Of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

<p>If we learn nothing from what we have suffered, we have suffered in vain.</p>
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Our Master was perfected through suffering; why are we afraid to carry the cross as He commanded us?

Finally, in this chapter, we need to mention, that suffering is not the ultimate. We still need to go a step further and make sure we learn something from what we have suffered, or are still suffering. The purpose of God is to teach us obedience through the trials and tribulations that He brings our way. If we learn nothing from what we have suffered, we have suffered in vain. That experience shall be repeated. Many do not make progress in their Christian lives, they keep experiencing that same problem again and again, and they stagnate and are hindered from moving forward. Instead of meekly turning to the Holy Spirit, and learning what lesson He is teaching them, and submitting themselves to the will of God, they begin to strive with men, that men are opposing and hindering them. No man is opposing you; no man can hinder you. Your disobedience is your hindrance. Before you begin to run from pillar to post, seeking spiritual consultants for solution to a protracted problem, turn your face to the Holy Spirit, and ask, “Lord, what have you been teaching me, in the past 10 years?” (Or less, as the case maybe.)

Just some example, to help us understand better.

A sister may be getting advanced in years, and no suitor has surfaced. She may have prayed and fasted, and nothing has happened. All that God may be teaching her is for her to humble herself. Most likely, she has in her heart over valued herself and set unrealistic criteria for who shall marry her.

A brother may be having repeated business failure. He too may have prayed and fasted and nothing has happened. All that God may be telling him is to forgive and release his first business partner who duped him, years ago.

A wife may be exasperated with her housemaid. She cannot do without the maid, since she needs her assistance, and all her prayers for God to change this pest of a girl has gone unanswered. God may be teaching the woman patience and tolerance.

A Pastor may be having problems everywhere he is posted to. There is nothing wrong with the people he is meeting; God is telling him to check himself.

Brethren, God takes us through the fiery furnace, so that we can come out shinning like Gold.

Take heed to your self.

5

The Principal Thing

In Ecclesiastes 2:3, the Preacher sought to find out "...what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life." After all we have discussed in this book, we need to find out what is good for man. What is the key word, or phrase that can guarantee that we shall make heaven? At the end of everything, that is all that matters – heaven.

Since our generation dotes so much on prosperity and wealth, we may wish to study the life of the richest king the world has ever known - King Solomon. At today's cost, the temple, which Solomon built for God, would be valued at over 164 billion U.S dollars. By the time a man doled out 164 billion dollars to build a temple, you can imagine how much he had in his bank account.

The wealth of Solomon is not as enigmatic as the choice of Solomon to ascend the throne of David. Humanly speaking, he was the most unqualified of all the children of David. His mother was an adulteress who caused the death of the first husband. Under the law, she should have been stoned to death, if not for her boyfriend, King David, who pulled sufficient strings and connections to save her life. Not only was the mother of Solomon bad, even the father was more terrible. David broke over five out of the Ten Commandments in his affairs with Bathsheba, Solomon's mother.

Knowing fully well that God does not change, one would have expected Him to visit the iniquity of David upon Solomon, and upon Solomon's children, to the third and the fourth generation. But God did not. Rather, He placed Solomon on His throne, the throne of David, made him the richest king the world has ever known, and gave him incomparable wisdom.

What did God see in Solomon? We need to identify that key. One is persuaded that if we can locate that key do what Solomon did, then God shall do for us what He did for Solomon.

David had many sons, Amnon, Absalom, Kileab, Adonijah, and so on. God skipped all the older brothers of Solomon in appointing a successor for the throne. Why?

Looking back at the conduct of the sons of David, one could easily conclude that though David was a might warrior, an astute statesman and a man after God's own heart, he was a poor disciplinarian. David was like many rich men of today who use their wealth and

position to pamper and spoil their children. Even though David killed Goliath, he was unable to battle successfully the enemy in the house called juvenile delinquency.

Let us recollect some of the incidents. Amnon raped Tamar his half-sister David did nothing. Absalom waited a year for his father to take action, when it was apparent David would do nothing, Absalom murdered Amnon. Still, David did nothing. Absalom ran away, David did not chase him. Next, Absalom came back and planned a coup against his father. He actually drove his father out of the Promised Land across the Jordan back towards Egypt, the house of bondage. Still, David wanted Absalom protected. When Absalom was killed in battle, David wept bitterly for his son; he grieved more for his death, than for the treasonable offense his son committed.

Adonijah on his own woke up one day and declared himself King, even though his father, David, was still alive. The word of God recorded for us that Adonijah grew up without parental discipline. 1kgs. 1:6 - "And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?"

All the older sons of David were not qualified for the throne because they lacked discipline. A child that will not obey his parents will definitely not obey God. To be fair to the sons of David, they were largely undisciplined and rebellious because their father did not train them.

By the time David realized what was happening, nearly all his heirs had fallen out of favour with God. Apparently concerned that the discipline he had not given his children can be remedied with this last one, he proceeded to train Solomon. It was the training that Solomon received from David that is recorded for us as the Book of Proverbs.

In training Solomon, David gave him the key for success with God, which shall produce good success in life. Pro.4:1-8

Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.

For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.

For I (Solomon) was my father's (David) son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother he taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live.

Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not, neither decline from the words of my mouth.

Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee, love her, and she shall keep thee.

Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding exalt her, and shall promote thee: she shall

bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her.

Very early in Solomon's life, David taught him to seek two things; **wisdom and understanding**. Wisdom, when found, shall preserve, keep, promote and honor. What more does one need in life? The Yoruba's have a saying: "You are searching for money and you meet honor, what are you still searching for? When you get money, what are you going to use it to buy, is it not honor?"

One could easily imagine David sitting on his throne and young Solomon sitting at his feet. David had been speaking and suddenly in verse 7, he grabbed Solomon at the shoulders, shook him to get his full attention and the full import of what he was to say next.

"Solomon, wisdom is the principal thing"

"Listen, young man, I am a powerful man. Right now, I control the most powerful nation on the face of the earth. I am a successful warrior; I have never lost a battle in my life. I am very wealthy, I am very popular, and I am a man of God. I am a king and a prophet of the Most High. People struggle to get my attention, women scramble for me to notice them. But, Solomon, it is not money. Wealth is not the key. Do not go through life seeking money, wealth, fame, and position. No. Solomon, do not. Wisdom is the principal thing. Get wisdom."

David shook Solomon again as he repeated, "Solomon get wisdom. Once you get wisdom, every thing shall fall into place. "Young man, wisdom is the principal thing!"

Solomon grew up with the terse instruction of David ringing in every fiber of his being.

"Daddy told me to get wisdom. Where can I get wisdom?"

Let us pause for a moment, and talk to the Christian parents of this generation. David taught his son to seek wisdom, what are you teaching your children? Mother, what are you teaching your daughter?

Now, back to Solomon. He grew up seeking only one thing in life – wisdom. It was therefore not surprising that when the LORD appeared to him in Gibeon and told him, "Ask what I shall give thee", Solomon asked for wisdom and understanding. Why? Because his Daddy said,

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."

"You got it" exclaimed the Almighty God.

"Solomon, you have the key to lasting greatness"

1kgs. 3:11-4

You are searching for money and you meet honor, what are you still searching for? When you find money, what are you going to use it to buy, is it not honor?

Yoruba Proverb

And God said unto him, because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment;

Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee, before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honor; so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days and if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my status and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days.

Because Solomon asked for wisdom, God gave him wisdom and in addition, gave him all the other things he did not ask for. In a similar vein, Jesus Christ says, “seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.”

As it is usual with God, His blessings come with conditions. In verse 14, He told Solomon, “if thou wilt walk in my ways....” Unfortunately, Solomon who once possessed wisdom lost it for a while.

Finally, he repented in the book of Ecclesiastes.

The lesson is simply this; a man can possess the wisdom of God today, and lose it tomorrow.

That is why, “The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning” Ecc. 7:4, where there is soberness and deep reflection.

A wise man once said,

“You will remain a wise man so long as you are searching for wisdom; The day you think you have found it, you become a fool” Wisdom is the principal thing the you must seek all the days of your life.

Now, what is Wisdom? Is wisdom the ability to say clever things, or give good counsel during crisis? What is wisdom? What is understanding? Job 28:12-17

But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?

Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living.

The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, it is not with me.

<p>You will remain a wise man so long as you are searching for wisdom; The day you think that you have found it you become a fool –</p> <p>Anonymous</p>

It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.

It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire.

Verse 20-21

Whence then cometh wisdom? And where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air.

Verse 20

God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof.

Verse 28

And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.

Straightforward statement.

The greatest problem that man has, and seldom recognizes it is lack of the fear of God. Man fear the President of his nation, man fears the Police, man fears his General Overseer, man fears the devil, but man does not fear God.

The only stabilizing factor in the life of any individual that can compel him to do right and shun evil is the fear of God. If a man does not fear God there is no evil that he cannot commit. That is why, during marriage counseling, we advise sisters not to look for money, position, or status in a man, but to look for the fear of the Lord. You are safe with a man who fears the Lord.

The major problem that the people of God have is the paucity of the fear of the Lord in the church. That is the major reason God has not been able to move as He wished in the midst of His people.

Let us consider some examples. If the President of Nigeria declares a curfew, no one will go out, irrespective of pressing business engagements. But, if God tells a man to close his business and run some errand for Him, the man will retort, “ who will look after my business?”

<p>If a man does not fear God, there is no evil that he cannot commit</p>

If men have a meeting with the President of their country by 8.00 a.m., they shall be seated, latest by 7.45 am. When men have an appointment with God by 8.00am, some arrive by 8.30am; others stroll in 5 minutes to the end of the worship service

When people commit adultery in secret, they hide it from their pastor but are not bothered that God knows everything.

When people gather to slander and plot against others, they are not bothered that God hears everything. However, they go to great lengths to conceal their plans from other people, particularly those who shall, directly or indirectly, be affected by their plots.

When men appear before their president, they stand with their two hands behind their backs and a sober look on their faces, even though, inwardly they are very happy to have access to the president. They have joy, but they moderate it. When men appear before the King of all kings, some come chewing gum, some come blowing whistles and others tell the man delivering God's Word, "fire on," "ride on men".

Will they say that to the representative of their president while he is delivering an address?

When men address their president, they say, "Mr. President, Sir." When they address God, some call Him "the old man upstairs"

The fear of the Lord is Wisdom.

The Word of God also says, "to depart from evil is understanding". Why?

Because, whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap. You do evil to somebody; you are not injuring that person but yourself, in the long run. There is no way that you will escape reaping what you have sown. And, as it usually happens, what you reap is a lot more than what was sown.

For some people, if they are fortunate, they shall reap what they sow here, while for others, they shall reap it hereafter.

Therefore, a man of understanding should diligently guard his ways to avoid doing evil to another person.

Going through the scriptures, we see that most of God's blessings are tied directly to the fear of the Lord. It is apparent that God has reserved His blessings for those who fear Him.

Ps 128:1-4

Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways.

For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.

Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the side of thine house; thy children like olive plants round about thy table

Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.

Five priceless blessings are reserved for the man that fears the Lord. Can you identify them?

We usually read this passage for newly weds. It is okay for us to read it during weddings, but the Most High knows, in whose life He shall bring it to pass.

Ps. 34:7

The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and he delivers them.

The angel of the LORD does not encamp round about everybody or those who quote Ps. 34:7 or Psm 91. The angel camps round those who fear the Lord. (Please note that the angels set up a camp, not a resident, so that the day the fellow stops fearing the LORD, he dismantles the camp and returns to heaven)

Ps. 25:12

What man is he that feareth the LORD? Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.

Divine guidance and divine counsel are reserved for those who fear the LORD.

Verse 14

The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.

Ps 31:19-20

Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that **fear** thee..

Malachi 4:2

But unto you that fear my name shall Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

Search the scriptures, and you shall discover many more. The church must return to the fear of the LORD. Ps. 19:9 – “The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever...”

After playing around with wisdom and foolishness, what did Solomon come up with?

“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.” - Ecc.12:13-14

Beware of God

“...the wise shall understand” Dan. 12:10

CONCLUSION

I recall the incident vividly. I was delivering a message on holiness and as I surveyed the faces of the members of the congregation, it was as if I was delivering bad news. The entire assembly was quiet and mournful looking. After the message, I tried to cheer the people and get them to smile.

The moment the worship service ended, a brother walked up to me brimming with righteous indignation.

“Don’t you ever do that again. Why did you sound apologetic after the message? Until the Word of God cuts the people to the heart and they gnash their teeth at the pastor, the way the Jews gnashed at Stephen, the true message has not been delivered. Don’t do that again.”

I never did

The Lord is calling His people back to the narrow path. Many have strayed to the wide and broad road that leads to destruction. Christianity is not tea party, but a war; a serious war against three deadly enemies that can never be reconciled with God. These three enemies have sworn that man shall spend eternity in hell. They are:

- The devil and his forces of darkness
- The flesh
- The world

Whoever is going to make heaven must overcome these deadly foes by walking the way Jesus walked. He is our example, and we are meant to follow Him.

At the root of the spiritual complacency of the church in this generation, is unbelief. This is the most basic sin in the Word of God. Unbelief hindered the Old Testament saints from reaching the Promised Land. The same malady is working against many New Testament saints. Unbelief is holding many back from releasing themselves totally to the Lord. The fear of what shall we eat, drink, wear, and what the future shall bring, has petrified many and cowed them into giving God partial obedience.

This same unbelief that the Lord shall judge

Do you feel too much at home in this world, a world that Jesus told us lies in the lap of the evil one?

- Watchman Nee

Jesus rejected the glories of the world when Satan offered them to Him. Why then, are Christians accepting the world from the devil if they truly belong to Jesus.

encourages sinfulness, worldliness, and carnality in the church. It is time to awake out of the slumber. The Lord shall judge His people. It is time to return to the Message of the cross. Our safety as Christians lies in following the New Testament mandate. It must not be diluted. Let us save all the souls we need to save and return home. Let us forget all this nonsense about earthly prosperity. What is waiting for us in heaven far outweighs whatever the world has to offer.

Jesus rejected the glories of the world when Satan offered them to Him. Why then, are Christians accepting the world from the devil if they truly belong to Jesus? Watchman Nee asks a very important question, "Do you feel too much at home in this world, a world that Jesus told us lies in the lap of the evil one?"

The group that needs to be most careful in the church is the ministers of gospel, particularly those who the Lord has given tremendous breakthrough to. The Lord expects those souls in heaven and the Lord equally expects that all the money He releases bring in souls. The minister is only cleared if he has done all that he is capable of doing and it is the sons of perdition that refuse to change their destination.

We must not forget that the two examples we have to follow are the examples of servant hood and suffering. We should always remember that the Lord has no vacancy in His church for executives; He only need Labourers. Our willingness to suffer and endure hardship for the sake of Jesus Christ must not diminish. I remember a story that we were told by A General Overseer about seven Christians young men arrested by the Communists for their faith. The seven young men were taken to lake that was freezing cold and stripped naked before being thrown into icy water to freeze to death. Meanwhile, their captors lit a bon fire on the shore and invited the Christians that whosoever among them was willing to renounce his faith in Christ Jesus should come out of the lake, wear his clothes and warm himself by the fire.

All the young men declined and slowly, but steadily, life started ebbing out of them. Suddenly, one of the seven young men decided to renounce his faith and live. As he was coming out of the water, God opened the eyes of one of the soldiers, and he saw seven angels, each holding a crown of gold as they hovered above the seven young men, waiting for them to die, so they could crown them into glory. However, as the young man was coming out of the water, the angel bearing his crown turned around, to return to heaven.

When the communist soldier saw what was happening in the spirit realm, he threw away his gun, started removing his uniform, at same time running into the lake, shouting as he

<p>God did not save you to be a sensation; He saved you to be a servant - James Hewett</p>
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ran, “Angel, wait for me, I want that crown; Angel, wait for me, I want that crown...”

Will you allow another person to take your crown?

“... be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”

Rev 2:10

For those who are spiritual leaders, and men are shouting Hosanna after them, they must remain broken before God. Why? Success intoxicates. You are of no danger to yourself until you become successful.

The Romans solved the problem posed by success in a unique manner. In those days, when the Roman army went to war and they defeated their opponents, they usually held what was know as a victory parade.

<p>You are of no danger to yourself until you become successful.</p>
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All the spoils of war and the captives were paraded before a cheering crowd. The triumphant army also paraded and last of all came the General that led the campaign. By this time, the jubilation and accolades of the people would have reached a deafening crescendo that will swell the head of any man, no matter how humble he might be.

On this occasion, however, the General would ride his chariot with a slave beside him; the only occasion that a slave would be allowed to ride a chariot. What was the function of the slave? As the jubilation and adulation continued, the slave was whispering to the General:

Remember, General, you are only a mortal

Remember , General, you are only a mortal

There may be someone out there, who needs to be reminded:

Remember, General, you are only a mortal

Beware of Success.

Success intoxicates

Success provokes envy

Success multiplies enemies

Success shall lure many into hell

The Lord says, Beware of Success.

“Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.”

Dan. 12:10

*Final Message –Keith Green “Why You Should Go To The Mission Field”

**David Barret- “Status of Global Mission” Bulletin of Missionary Research 1990

***World Christian Encyclopedia

***OCCUPY Magazine Vol.18 No.2 Page 6 (CAPRO)