

Chapter -1-

ME - IN THE AUDIENCE OF ONE

מה אנוש כי תזכרנו ובן אדם כי תפקדנו

*Who am I... that You are
mindful of me?*

Ps. 8:4

Who am I... that You are mindful of me!

Psalm 8:4

“what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?”

God Mindful of Man

“Mindful” comes from the Hebrew word *zakar*, to mark or remember continually, as perpetual incense rising; to set the heart upon; to keep continually in merciful view.

This has been my dilemma every single day as God, in His infinite mercy upholds me with His righteous right hand. What are we, that God should be mindful of us?

God has commissioned me to sometimes travel seven provinces in seven days on missions, sometimes, over night journeys just to reach out to a single family or a single soul. At these moments, I can only but ask, “God, why do I have to travel such distances for just one person?” in asking that question I get my answer, that He is mindful of them!

During one of my outreaches in Sri Lanka, as I was preaching in the open air, I paused for a moment, then went to young man and told him this “you should have been dead, but the Lord spared your life” His mother came from behind and said “yes, he should have been dead as he was shot in the head while serving in the LTTE” I led that boy to Christ, and today, he’s serving the Lord. Who was that boy, that the Lord took a terrorist and turned him into an Evangelist? There have been other rebels whom I had led to the Lord, who now serve as peace officers with the United Nations.

Whether I dialogue with top Police officials, Ambassadors of Countries or Political ministers, I sometimes feel the urge in getting the love and truth about Christ to them. I have found it easier to get the true message of Christ to non believers than in getting the truth to Charismatics who live double standards. My team and I were able to prove the love of Christ to the Indian Ambassador of Kuwait, other political ministers and the President of India, when we rescued an Indian lady who was illegally kept under house arrest in Kuwait. When the man who had arrested the woman asked Nancy our Kuwait leader, why she does what she does, she responded: JESUS!

The Call

During one of my open forum debates on ethics, a vibrant young lawyer argued with me about speaking the truth at any cost. She told me that it was impossible in her profession and that without lies and bribes, it's impossible to be a successful lawyer. During the debate, I was bugged that she had such strong points but it was not of the right view. In the end, I had led her to the truth and that evening, she bowed her head and made her commitment to Christ and vowed to walk in the truth. I started to mentor her and found her to be a woman of truth. I then recommended her to work for one of the largest International justice organisations which rescue bonded labourers, especially children.

Just a few weeks ago I had seen her on National news television rescuing over forty bonded labourers while a mob of over two hundred people had attacked her and her team and surrounded their vehicles. I saw her stand in that crowd without a hint of fear. She had called me from there and she said that she was not scared for she was doing what God had called her to do. You see, God was mindful of this young lawyer that He gave me the patience to reason the truth with her. God had her in mind to rescue those bonded labourers that He was mindful of!

Today, in her mid-twenties, this young lawyer is one of the most influential lawyers around who dialogues with officials in high rank on a daily basis, telling them what's right and what's not.

You may be a drop in the ocean. But every drop adds up to the ocean because God has called every drop to fill up the bowl of the ocean. In the same way, you may be one amongst millions, but God has called you to add up to those millions of people. Since He has singularly called you, He is singularly mindful of you!

The Re-Call

God loves each of us as if there were only one of us. - St. Augustine

Once a missionary, Jaipaul, in the US had gone to a store. At the counter to pay his bill, he noticed that the cashier's name was *Sarah*, so he said "Hi Sarah, Jesus loves you" then said, "even my wife's name is Sarah. Do you know Jesus, Sarah?" Sarah replied by saying that she used to know Jesus, but now is deep into sin. So Jaipaul & his wife invited Sarah for a meal. At the meal, Sarah narrated her story.

She said that her father was a Pastor of a large Church several years ago. One day he fell in adultery and was thrown out of the Church. Everyone in that city had despised the family. The family was so hurt that they all, including the Pastor began to hate God and had become bitter. Sarah's sister had gone into prostitution, her brother into drugs, and she, into a mess.

"Remember this" said Augustine. "When people choose to withdraw far from a fire, the fire continues to give warmth, but they grow cold. When people choose to withdraw far from light, the light continues to be bright in itself but they are in darkness. This is also the case when people withdraw from God."

After the meal, Jaipaul had volunteered to go and meet Sarah's father. Sarah said that her father doesn't see anybody and that he's always drunk. In obedience to his conviction, Jaipaul went to Sarah's house and her father opened the door with a base ball bat and asked "who the heck are you" Jaipaul replied, "I've come to tell you that Jesus loves you" Jaipaul almost got his head knocked

off. When Jaipaul had seen this man, he recognised him and then paused and asked him this “Are you Pastor Bill, who twenty years ago had come to India?” Sarah’s father, Bill was surprised. Jaipaul further asked “Do you remember a man by the name of Raj in India that you had led to Christ?” Bill thought for a moment and said “Yes, I remember, he accepted Christ and then became a Pastor” Jaipaul replied, “Sir, He’s my father, and I’m a Christian missionary.”

Jaipaul then led Bill to repentance and Bill, today, is Pastor Bill. A restored, Re-CALLED Servant of Christ. Who is Bill, that Christ is mindful of him?

Pastor Bill must have known deep down in his heart as his thoughts wondered that Christ would one day restore him. As Victor Hugo said **“There are moments when, whatever be the attitude of the body, the soul is on its knees.”**

Perhaps you’re a chosen vessel of the Lord and the enemy has stolen your testimony. Yes, I’m talking to you. Christ SHALL restore you. Only repent and come clean with the good Lord. I know your throbbing heart that is wounded, is craving after the Creator of that heart with a vacuum waiting to be filled with His love. As Blaise Pascal said “There is a God-shaped vacuum in every heart.”

He’s mindful of you and His Call and gifts to you are irrevocable.

The Called Witness

In 1901, William Seymour, a preacher hungry for the things of the Spirit, wanted to learn about the new Pentecostal outpourings that were taking place at Charles Parham’s Bible school. Being *black*, Seymour was not allowed inside the building. So he sat on the steps outside and listened through the window. And God touched him. Five years later, William Seymour was the catalyst God used to spark the Azusa Street revival. *William Seymour: uninvited by*

man but welcomed by God! Who was William Seymour, that God was mindful of him?

What about you? No matter who you are, the King welcomes you. No matter where you've been or what you've done, the King says, "Come to Me." Don't let the false rules or misguided perceptions of men keep you from your "throne-zone" experience with the King. Practice the protocols of humility and worship. You will discover that *the door to the King's throne room is always open!*

When the Lord first touched me, so called leaders of the so called mainline ministries tore me apart not knowing that Christ has set me apart. Today, they all look in awe of what Christ has done in my life. He has taken a dirty, rotten no good sinner and turned him into an instrument to bring to Him those who have lost their way and to bring back the lost sheep that have been wounded by these mainline ministries. I was undignified for the Lord that once He had touched me, I would go from street to street and town to town and pull the drug addicts and gangsters and take them to Church. As I did that, people thought that I was one of them. In time, God vindicated! The greater the forgiveness, the greater the love for the Lord!

MoreLove was started four years ago to reach just one person. For weeks I had fasted and prayed for a precious young girl who was in the land of Kuwait. Due to the circumstances being sensitive, I thought that it would be better to write and start a website dealing with youth issues with the hope that this girl would be helped. Within a year, MoreLove had become a glocal (global and local) portal, calling the youth to live pure lives. Every news channel in over thirty six countries had interviewed us as to what drives us to do what we do. I'll tell you what drives us; it's the mindfulness of God for that ONE PERSON that drives us. We have reached over a million people since then. Today, MoreLove is also a respected name by Government officials in the dimension of Social Justice.

Tobit 3:3 “And now, O Lord, may You be mindful of me...” (c.f. NAB)

In the many things that I’m involved in ministry, it demands emotional and physical elongation. The body becomes fatigue with the travel and the ministry work, sometimes, eighteen hours a day, writing for publications and authoring books, over looking our Radio broadcasts, counselling several mentally ill people plus others. In order to do most of the above, it takes hours of prayers and study in almost every faculty. When all seems complex, remember what Amethyst Snow-Rivers said **“When we can’t piece together the puzzle of our own lives, remember the best view of a puzzle is from above. Let Him help put you together.”**

There are times when this question arise, “Lord, why can’t you call someone else to do these things?” At the end of it, we see the terminally ill healed, families restored, the mentally ill recovered. At this I’m reminded what David Nicholas said **“God’s promises are like the stars; the darker the night the brighter they shine.”**

Because of my commitment to the Lord, I have heard the Lord’s voice and attended to people at infinite distances, just at the nick of time and have prevented a suicide, homicide, even abortions. Do you know why I’m committed to the Lord? It’s because He first committed His life to me.

I’m not sure why God has called me to serve Him. What good did my forefathers do, that made God to choose me to serve Him? A few of my friends have been killed in violence, a few in jail, a few underground. In spite of my atrocities, God chose me. I don’t know why and I’m not going to try and tell you why God is mindful of you. Go figure out. All I know is that He is mindful of YOU!

ABANDONED OR VALUED?

The rejection of men, leads to acceptance from God!

During my daily devotions, I had come across the story of Mephibosheth (Mef-ee-bo'-sheth in Hebrew meaning 'shameful thing' or 'dispeller of shame') and was amazed at the chronicles of his life. In Biblical times, people were given names based on the situation existing at the time they were born. Can you imagine his friends in school calling him 'hey, you shameful thing'? When I had done a Hebrew study, I was even more amazed at what his name meant and what his destiny was. There were two different contrasts.

Mephibosheth meaning 'shameful thing' 2 Samuel 4- 9

Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, and grandson of Saul (2 Sam. 4:4). He was five years old when his father and grandfather fell in the Battle of Mount Gilboa. The child's nurse hearing of this calamity, fled with the boy from Gibeah, the royal residence, and stumbled in her haste, dropping the child on the ground, *permanently paralyzing him* from the waist down (2 Sam. 19:26). He was carried to the land of Gilead, where he found a refuge in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar (dry places), by whom he was brought up.

Permanently paralysing him...

Have you been paralysed due to a certain incident or incidents that have taken place in your life? Perhaps those incidents have ruptured your emotions and behaviour. Perhaps your definition of Church or ministry has become very negative because of those incidents. May be another Christian did something that has hampered your life and even permanently damaged your reputation. Or may be, you're a Servant of Christ and an ordinary Christian has caused disrepute to your name or ministry.

On a different level, may be you're a young widow or you're financially in the dumps or you've been duped and now you're a

victim of a major scandal that's left you on the threshold of despair. What do you do in such situations? Do you blame God for permitting those things to happen? Do you blame people for what has happened? Do you hold a grudge against people?

Mephibosheth reminds me of some of us Christians. The devil dropped him one day and in the fall, his feet became lame and all this time the devil – through people have been telling him, “God did this to you and it's because of God that you're this way, it's because of your sins and the sins of your forefathers. It's because you are cursed that you can't get off the ground. You can never do anything right and you will never do anything right. It's your fault that your family is falling apart. It's your fault for your financial condition. And finally... God is not mindful about you!

When people say such things with grave accusations, I'm encouraged by the Scripture that says “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.” John 9:3

Sadly, the man in the world believes the devil, because he does not even know about the covenant that was drawn up before he was ever born. Does this sound like you? For years, ignorant of what God had done? Blaming God for your situation? Thinking God was the culprit? Sadly, I've seen a lot of people who were serving God as missionaries, are now into the world, worst than people of the world. Why? Because they either blame God for their circumstances or they're still living in Lo-debar, the dry places.

Quit living in Lo-debar, the dry places, move into the land that flows with milk and honey, be planted like a tree that is planted by streams of running waters. Let the running waters of the Holy Spirit fill your being with the love of Christ and the joy that comes from God even in your darkest and driest moment of life.

God ordained Restoration - COVENANT between David and Jonathan

Some years after this, when King David had subdued all the adversaries of Israel, he began to think of the family of Jonathan, and discovered that Meribbaal was residing in the house of Machir. So he sent royal messengers there, and brought Meribbaal and his infant son (Micah) to Jerusalem, where he resided from that point on (2 Sam. 9).

And David said, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" (II Samuel 9:1) Ziba, a former servant in the house of Saul, tells him of Jonathan's son, "...which is lame on his feet"(2 Samuel 9:3-6).

2 Samuel 9:1-7 David asked, "Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?" The king asked, "Is there no one still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show God's kindness?"

Ziba answered the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in both feet."

"Where is he?" the king asked.

Ziba answered, "He is at the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar."

So King David had him brought from Lo Debar, from the house of Makir son of Ammiel.

When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honour.

David said, "Mephibosheth!"

"Your servant," he replied.

"Don't be afraid," David said to him, "for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table."

Just when Mephibosheth thought that he was written off and that his fate was fatless, and that he would never be known or held in

honour and that the only name he would have was to be called a crippled shameful thing... Mephibosheth. But God showed up and blessed him. Sometimes, just like Mephibosheth, we need to just wait upon God for the duly appointed time for our blessings. David had never forgotten the covenant he had made with Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20.

There are people of honour out there, who keep to the covenant and manifest that covenant even if the world around them collapses. It perhaps may be difficult to believe anyone who says that they would make a covenant with you because of the revoking of covenants in the past and the betrayal of those who have committed and let you down. Some people think that people make covenants because of insecurity, which is a false notion. In our ministry, the leaders have made a covenant and it's because of that covenant we remain faithful to God and to each other. A covenant is made between two or more people or groups. The covenant was God reconciling man to Himself.

The only thing to do is to trust God in all situations. I am so convinced that there is absolutely nothing that can happen to me that is outside the will of God.

Who am I that You are mindful of me, that you hear You me, when I call?

Mephibosheth bowed down and said, "What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?" 2 Samuel 9:8

David made a similar prayer in just two previous chapters. 2 Samuel 7:8

"Who am I, O Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that You have brought me this far?"

Mephibosheth in all awe, asked David the question 'What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?' It is true, dearly beloved, that God is mindful of you, he knows every situation. As David said in Psalms 8:4 "What is man that You are mindful of him, that son of man that you care for him?"

Through every storm, God is always there.

When the good Lord first touched me, I was determined to give the Gospel to everyone I met. I then realised that the Church was divided based on denominational differences. Although I'm a Catholic, I used to go to the Pentecostal Churches simply because I wanted to know more about Jesus. Because I used to go to the Pentecostal Churches, one of the most prominent Catholic ministries in the city decided to mince me piece by piece and to spread rumours of wars against me. They conspired against me in every way possible. Eventually, the Bishop called and asked me to present my youth missions projects to the Christian media leaders of the Province. In addition, when my first book was released, a Vatican official approved the book and the Archbishop released it.

At this point, no one would dare to speak out against me, until an opportune time that is. But the greatest part of it all, is that God has restored me way above what they or I could imagine. Since then, our ministry has represented Christ across all continents. The international secular media had interviewed us and Christ was presented. We are only three years, and God has used us in domains of influence including the setting up of India's only Internet Christian Broadcasting Network.

Conspiracy OR Unfaithfulness

When David was a fugitive, according to the story of Ziba (2 Sam. 16:1-4) Mephibosheth proved unfaithful to him, and was consequently deprived of half of his estates; according to his own story, however (2 Sam. 19:24-30), he had remained loyal to his friend, the king. After this incident he is only mentioned, as having been protected by David against the vengeance the Gibeonites were permitted to execute on the house of Saul 2 Sam. 21:7.

Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, also went down to meet the king. He had not taken care of his feet or trimmed his moustache or washed his clothes from the day the king left until the day he returned safely. When he came from Jerusalem to meet the king, the king asked him,

“Why didn’t you go with me, Mephibosheth?” He said, “My lord the king, since I your servant am lame, I said, ‘I will have my donkey saddled and will ride on it, so I can go with the king.’ But Ziba my servant betrayed me. (2 Samuel 19:24-26)

It is possible that David didn’t entirely believe him, because he divided the estate he had given into two, giving the other half to Ziba, but he continued to protect Mephibosheth until the end of his days.

The king spared Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, because of the oath before the LORD between David and Jonathan son of Saul. 2 Samuel 21:7

David made a covenant and he kept that covenant. In times when Mephibosheth was accused, he remembered the promise he had made to his beloved friend in the presence of the Almighty God. When David had heard of the accusations about Mephibosheth, he did not say ‘I heard things about him that scare me’, instead, he kept his word. Jonathan, whom David had made the covenant with, was rest assured that David would keep his word for David was a person of noble standing even though he was a murderer, an adulterer and what not!

No matter what happened, God proved Himself faithful.

The same faithful God is there for you, to restore you. Go, seek Him, love Him, and make Him known.

How much are YOU WORTH

A picture is worth a million words!

Have you felt belittled or put down? Have you felt that the emotion of feeling belittled was a lie from the devil? Have you relied on your own understanding instead of the wisdom of the Lord? Well, this sounds all too familiar. Let's see how the world's greatest Philosopher and Moral Educator, *Jesus de Nazareth* handled His issues of self worth.

Then the devil took him (Jesus) to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Matthew 4:5-6.

The Scripture says that the devil took Jesus to the highest point. In this narrative, the devil did not physically take Jesus to the pinnacle, but he drew a mental picture for Jesus.

Inasmuch the same way, satan draws mental pictures in our minds. Being a Christian, the main area of our attack is the mind. The enemy brings depressions and discouragement with feelings of low self worth. As John Stott said "The Christian's chief occupational hazards are depression and discouragement."

Having reached out to hundreds of thousands of Christians, I have identified that the main attack is on the mind. When your mind is upset, all is upset. While growing up, I often heard the proverb "An idle mind is the devil's workshop" What then, must we do? St. Jerome gives the answer "Be ever engaged, so that whenever the devil calls he may find you occupied."

A rich business man walked into a posh hotel and saw a beautiful custodian woman cleaning the floors of the hotel on which the rich and the famous trampled upon. The businessman looked at the woman and said 'woman, I would give you a million dollars, if you would spend the night with me' to this she replied 'O, no way

sir, I would never do something like that'. As the man proceeded to his room, reason came riding on her mind as she thought, 'what can I do with a million dollars?' She replied to herself, 'I can get outta this town and outta this poverty and have a good life'. Having reasoned herself out of dignity, she called out to the man and said, 'sir, I will do it'. He said, 'ok; meet me at five in the evening.'

At five in the evening, a limousine showed up at the hotel, the businessman took the woman in the car and proceeded to the best beautician in town, then to the most lavish clothing store and then to the most expensive jewellery store and then to a sumptuous dinner. After the meal was over and as they were on their way to the hotel, this time, reason came riding on the business man's mind. He said to her, 'look, I've been thinking, a million dollars is a lot of money, how about I just give you a hundred dollars instead?' The woman replied, 'Sir, what kinda cheap woman do you think I am?' The business man replied, 'you don't have to tell me how much you are worth, I already knew how much you were worth, the moment you agreed to spend the night with me in bed'

The story of the woman in the above narration speaks volumes. It speaks on the lack of self worth she had and how she was deceived. Have you been duped by evil schemes where you thought that what was drawn in your mind seemed exciting but you ended up being deceived? This deception happens with the damsel, with the married and with every single human being that is not vigilant.

Dear friend, how much are YOU worth? Is the enemy drawing you false promises of satisfaction with the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life? Don't be deceived by his schemes. He has nothing to offer you, but the destruction of your soul. Walk in the truth and live the truth that you may discern the schemes of the enemy. "The best evidence of our having the truth is our walking in the truth." - Matthew Henry

If you have walked falsely, turn back to Christ, He knows your struggles for He Himself was tested. As Scripture says: *For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those*

who are tempted (Hebrews 2:18). For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).

”If you are the Son of God”

The devil tried to place a doubt in the mind of Jesus with the word “If you are the Son of God” satan was challenging Christ’s credentials. Jesus did not try to prove to His credentials to satan by throwing Himself down or by turning stones into bread, instead, He held on to His identity of being from the Father when He quoted what the Father said of Him: “This is My Son” Mark 9:7.

You are worth every drop of the Blood of Jesus, because He died for you. Carry His word within you. As Jesus relied on God’s will and not on things that will perish, He submitted in humility and declared the mighty works of God. He was the Word of God. Mary, the mother of Jesus, carried the word of God, from HER womb, to HIS tomb! She fought a good fight.

Know your worth.

Chapter -2-

FOR THE AUDIENCE OF ONE

מזמור לדוד בהיותו במדבר יהודה אלהים אל
אתה אשחרך צמאה לך נפשי כמה לך בשר
בארץ ציה ועיף בלי מים:

*O God, you are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you,
my body longs for you...*

Psalms 63:1

LOVING THE AUDIENCE OF ONE

The command of Jesus was: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ (Matt. 22:37)

When we’re in love, it’s all about that person. We sacrifice more than we have to and we go out of the way to love that person. We would even die for that person. Living for Christ, is the same. Jesus loves you so much, that He would have come to redeem you even if you were the only person He had to redeem. So much was His love that He chose to live for you even through all the pain and agony that He bore on that Cross. His love for you and His obedience to the Father is what kept Him from evading death.

Mahatma Gandhi said this of Christ: He said that He was “A man who was completely innocent, offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others, including His enemies, and became the ransom of the world. It was a perfect act. “

Wasn’t that an amazing view, that a man known as the Mahatma or the Great one? If Gandhi, a pantheist could say this of the Absolute being, what should we, followers of the Absolute Truth say about Him for He said, I am THE Truth?

One day I just went down on my knees and said “Lord, the way a boy chases after a girl whom he loves, let me chase after you.” If a boy chases after a girl even though she rejects him, how much more should we chase after a God who has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us and that He loves us with an everlasting love?

John Knox remarked this of Christ: No one else holds or has held the place in the heart of the world which Jesus holds. Other gods have been as devoutly worshipped; no other man has been so devoutly loved.

Simon son of John, **do you truly love Me?**” John 21:16

When Christ asked this question to Simon, it was a searching question. Christ was searching Simon’s heart. Christ was allowing Simon to search his own heart. That is why the Psalmist cried to the Lord and said “Search me O God, and know my heart” Life is dead without the love for Christ.

It was T. Austin-Sparks who said that Christianity is not a doctrine, not truth as truth, but the knowledge of a Person; it is knowing the Lord Jesus. You cannot be educated into being a Christian.

I have seen the wretchedness of mankind where we dispel all of our energies on things that seem to fade away in the twinkling of an eye. In vain efforts we continue to pursue that which should not be pursued. We embrace that which should not be embraced. A young man who is a Christian pursues a young lady, does so without a second thought, he substitutes his prayers and daily devotions just to speak to her on the phone. He would forfeit Church service just so that he could be with her. In doing so, the young man arouses the jealousy of God.

I have one passion. Says Zinzendorf - It is He, only He.

Sometimes you have to watch somebody love something before you can love it yourself. It’s as if they are showing you the way. That’s what the body of Christ should be on earth. A model of loving Christ.

Love the Lord, that you may please Him ‘...but showing love to a thousand {generations} of those who love me and keep my commandments’ Exodus 20:6

Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold. Matt 24:12

It is true, that when we have wickedness within us, it is difficult to exercise purity. When we are sinful and indulging in wrath, it is a challenge to come before God. When we hide our sins and don't confess it, we're turning away from the love of God. How can we feel the love of God if we don't love Him? Because if we truly love God in the first place, we would never dwell in our transgression, though we may occasionally stumble and perhaps fall.

The word of God and the principles of life stand true to the concept of sowing and reaping. Each of us reap what we sow. "... A man reaps what he sows" Galatians 6:7.

If we sow in righteousness, we reap in righteousness, if we sow in truth, we reap in truth. Through the views of sowing and reaping, what did Jesus sow that He deserved to reap the penalty of crucifixion? Isn't this profound that He would sow in righteousness and reap in unrighteousness?

Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world sowed love into our lives so that He may give us life. He took the Cross for our sake. The only reason why He had come to do this for us is because He loves us. And because He loves us, He redeemed us. "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8.

It is true that the Scriptures say that Christ first loved us. This is what Napoleon had to say about Jesus: "I know men and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between Him and every other person in the world there is no possible term of comparison. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creation of our genius? Upon force! Jesus Christ founded His Empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men would die for Him."

True love to Christ!

by Spurgeon-

The Lord Jesus possesses all kinds of lovelinesses
compacted into one perfect loveliness! all perfections
blended to make one perfection! every sweet concocted
and distilled to make one perfect sweetness!

Oh, how one longs for but a moment's sight of Christ in glory!

One might be content to have only a dry crust, and to lie in
an underground dungeon for the rest of one's life, if one might
but gaze on his blessed face for once, and hear him say,
"I have loved you with an everlasting love."

Those who truly love the Saviour wish to
know all that can be known about him.

True love likes to become familiar with the object of its
affection; its heart is set upon that object, it studies it,
and can never know it too well or too closely.

True love to Christ thinks of him from morning till night;
it is glad to be released from other thoughts that it may
follow only its one darling pursuit.

True love to Christ seeks to get to him, to live with him,
to live upon him, and thus to know him so intimately
that things which were unobserved and passed over at
the first, stand out in clear light to the increased
joy and delight of the contemplative mind.

If you have but a 'spark' of love for Jesus in your heart,
Jesus has a 'furnace' of love for you in his heart!

As Jonathan Edwards said: "The happiness of the creature consists
in rejoicing in God, by which also God is magnified and exalted"
He went on to say

**"Resolution One: I will live for God. Resolution Two: If no
one else does, I still will."**

HONOURING THE AUDIENCE OF ONE

“As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the Churches and an honour to Christ.” 2 Cor. 8:23

The Greek word used here for the word ‘honour’ is ‘*doxa*’, which means ‘glory’. Isn’t it amazing that Titus was called the ‘glory’ of Christ? Every Christian should be called the glory of Christ. When Christ touches our lives, we share the joy that He gives us.

Honouring God requires a Christian to be wise and not foolish. How can a foolish servant bring delight to his master? Or, how can a foolish son bring delight to his parents? In the same way, how can a foolish Christian bring delight to his God and be a witness to the unbeliever?

As we all know that there are non Christians who walk in the character and fruit of Christianity and living righteous lives.

John Cotton said: What a shame were it, that pagan Magistrates should be more careful and zealous of the honour of their idols, than Christians of the honour of the known true God, the Lord Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier?

If we say we are Christians but lack wisdom in our dealings, we act in contempt to the word of God. We cause shame to Christianity. Proverbs 14:35 says, “A king delights in a wise servant, but a shameful servant incurs his wrath.” Every servant or employee of an organisation is penalised for the repeated mistakes. In order for us to honour God, we must first seek to do the things that will please God so that He would delight in us.

Proverbs 11:20 says, “The Lord detests men of perverse heart but He delights in those whose ways are blameless.” Many, who claim to be Christians, have a notion that if they commit small instances of unrighteousness, it is alright and that God will forgive them. They persist in those acts of unrighteousness and make it a habit. A habitual sin turns into a deadly element that stains the soul and

throws the person outside the gates of sanctification. “If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left” Hebrews 10:26.

What is the message that Christ has given us? As J. Sidlow Baxter said: Fundamentally, our Lord’s message was Himself. He did not come merely to preach a Gospel; He himself is that Gospel. He did not come merely to give bread; He said, “I am the bread.” He did not come merely to shed light; He said, “I am the light.” He did not come merely to show the door; He said, “I am the door.” He did not come merely to name a shepherd; He said, “I am the shepherd.” He did not come merely to point the way; He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” – John 14:6.

The problem with us is that we don’t know Him well enough to honour Him. We have lost the reverent fear of the Lord.

As the Bible says, that the ‘fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom’, the beginning of wisdom is the end of fear. When a Christian lives in the wisdom of the Lord, he or she will by default live a life that pleases the Lord with great honour and love. When we love the Lord and grow in His loving kindness and tender mercies, we no longer need to fear Him with the fear of retribution, but with the fear of reverence while putting our hope in His unfailing love for us. As the word of God says, “The Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.” Proverbs 147:11.

Sometimes we bend down to pick up something and we forget what we bent down for. In the same way, when we bow down in adoration, we sometimes forget the Glory and Majesty of our Creator.

When we please the Lord in our daily walk, no evil shall we fear, there would be no mountain in life that is too tall to climb or no storm too hostile that God cannot calm. In the midst of every situation, God is able to make our feet strong and to keep our steps firm. The word of God stands true to that. Proverbs 37:23 says, “If the Lord delights in a man’s way, He makes his steps firm”

When a master is pleased with his servant, he honours the servant and delights in him. He offers the servant a bonus; he treats his servant with respect and dignity. A father treats his children with the reverence as they are the heirs of his mansion. Inasmuch the same way or more, God our Father calls us to His inheritance in the abundance of His great glory. “They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights.” Psalms 36:8.

Are we honouring Christ through our brethren? Are we honouring Him through our service to others? As someone expressed:

Do you want to honour the Body of Christ? Then do not despise His nakedness. Do not honour Him here [in Church] clothed in silk vestments and then ignore Him, naked and frozen in the street. Always remember that He who said, “This is my body”, and gave effect to His word, also said, “I was hungry and you gave me not food”, and inasmuch as you did not do it to one of these, you did not do it to me”.

WORSHIPPING THE AUDIENCE OF ONE

Wise men still worship Jesus!

- **William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury,
Church of England. Said this:**

“Worship is the submission of all of our nature to God.

It is the quickening of conscience by His holiness, nourishment of mind by His truth, purifying of imagination by His beauty, opening of the heart to His love, and submission of will to His purpose.

And all this gathered up in adoration is the greatest of human expressions of which we are capable.”

“On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.” Matthew 2:11

Even today, we can see prominent leaders who stand up for Christ. They are wise in the eyes of God even if their counterparts feel otherwise. I know business leaders who never compromise on their integrity even if it means missing out on an award. These people honour God in their daily walk with God thereby living the heart of worship. When we worship God and we lack integrity, then our worship is just lip service.

Judson Cornwall remarked: Whenever the method of worship becomes more important than the person of worship, we have already prostituted our worship. There are entire congregations who worship praise and praise worship but who have not yet learned to praise and worship God in Jesus Christ.

‘You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: “These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain...” Mathew 15:8-9

Are we still a generation that worships God with our lips while our hearts are far from Him? We seem to worship God with our

songs and ministry activities but our lifestyle contradicts what we say and how we live. Are we truly living for Christ or are we living to please the anti-Christ, ignoring Jesus Christ?

John Wesley said: I have so much to do that I spend several hours in prayer before I am able to do it.

We very conveniently put people, things and activities before Christ. We treat Him as a spouse who's rejected and abandoned. Why do we do such things when we say that our hearts are sold out for Christ? True relationship with Christ comes from true worship where it's not just lip service, but that longing for the entry into His presence. The more we dwell in worship, the more we would encounter the presence of God around us. When we spend time with Christ, we partake in the aroma of His holiness. As the Scripture says "For we are to God the aroma of Christ..." 2 Cor.2:15.

John Bunyan says, Pray often, for prayer is a shield to the soul, a sacrifice to God, and a scourge for Satan.

For when we share in the aroma of Christ, we would be fruitful witnesses for Christ. When we enter into buildings or offices or just about any place, people should be able to perceive that we are of Christ even in the midst of adverse situations that may grip us. We do so, knowing that God is in perfect control and that He will give us triumph. As the Scripture says, "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him." 2 Cor.2:14.

Teresa of Avila commented: There are more tears shed over answered prayers than over unanswered prayers.

I cannot live in mediocrity, content with merely knowing that there is more of God to experience and explore — and then do nothing about it. Truths that are not experienced are, in effect, more like theories than truths. Whenever God reveals truth to us

He is inviting us into a divine encounter. - Bill Johnson, Face to Face with God.

Remember the Small Things – this is an amazing story of Mother Theresa

Some of my sisters work in Australia. On a reservation, among the Aborigines, there was an elderly man. I can assure you that you have never seen a situation as difficult as that poor old man's. He was completely ignored by everyone. His home was disordered and dirty.

I told him, "Please, let me clean your house, wash your clothes, and make your bed." He answered, "I'm okay like this. Let it be." I said again, "You will be still better if you allow me to do it." He finally agreed. So I was able to clean his house and wash his clothes. I discovered a beautiful lamp, covered with dust. Only God knows how many years had passed since he last lit it.

I said to him, "Don't you light your lamp? Don't you ever use it?" He answered, "No. No one comes to see me. I have no need to light it. Who would I light it for?" I asked, "Would you light it every night if the sisters came?" He replied, "Of course."

From that day on the sisters committed themselves to visiting him every evening. We cleaned the lamp, and the sisters would light it every evening.

Two years passed. I had completely forgotten that man. He sent this message: "Tell my friend that the light she lit in my life continues to shine still."

I thought it was a very small thing. We often neglect small things.

When you worship Christ, you will be filled with love and you will also love your neighbour.

Pray without ceasing. It was Sadhu Sundar Singh who said: The essence of prayer does not consist in asking God for something

but in opening our hearts to God, in speaking with Him, and living with Him in perpetual communion. Prayer is continual abandonment to God. Prayer does not mean asking God for all kinds of things we want; it is rather the desire for God Himself, the only Giver of Life, Prayer is not asking, but union with God. Prayer is not a painful effort to gain from God help in the varying needs of our lives. Prayer is the desire to possess God Himself, the Source of all life. The true spirit of prayer does not consist in asking for blessings, but in receiving Him who is the giver of all blessings, and in living a life of fellowship with Him.”

Dearly beloved, Worship Him, Love Him, Talk to Him!

FAITHFULNESS TO THE AUDIENCE OF ONE

Parable of the talents - Matt. 25:14-30

... it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.'

His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.'

His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid

and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.'

'Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

When God calls us to serve Him, we need to first be convicted of that calling. It is only when we are convicted about the notion of our calling will we be able to discern what God wants us to do, and that discernment will produce commitment. Sometimes, when we attempt to stay committed but there's no conviction, the commitment level deteriorates and eventually dies out. When this happens, the notion of our calling loses its essence.

Many of us start off very well, but somewhere during our spiritual walk, we fade away from the notion of the call. The primary reason for that fading away is that we no longer look to the Cross, but we are cross minded.

Francis Frangipane commented: How was it that, even in the common tasks of an ordinary life, Jesus drew the praise of heaven? At the core of His being, He only did those things which pleased the Father. In everything, He stayed true, heartbeat to heartbeat, with the Father's desires. Jesus lived for God alone; God was enough for Him. Thus, even in its simplicity and moment-to-moment faithfulness, Christ's life was an unending fragrance, a perfect offering of incomparable love to God.

Let's test the parable.

In verse 25, it says that the master gives his servants the talents according to their own ability. The Greek word of '*ability*' also meaning '*power*'. Very strangely, we fail to perceive that God has given us tasks only according to our own ability. The classic example of God not giving us anything beyond what we could handle comes from 1 Cor.10:13 'No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted *beyond what you can bear*. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.'

Therefore, the master had given them talents, knowing their power and ability. In order for him to know their ability, he would need to have a history and a pattern of the way the servants had performed in the past. In effect, to the servant that the master had given more talents, he must have had a high regard for him, knowing his pattern of sowing and reaping.

When the first servant and second servant had come forth with the produce of the investment, the master replied by saying '*Well done, good and faithful servant!* You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

The four fold worthiness:

- Well done
- Good
- Faithful
- Servant

There is a worthiness to be called a 'Servant'. In India, it's a pride to be called a 'Government Servant' in being a government servant; one enjoys a spectrum of privileges, including job security. How much more of power and security would a servant of an influential master carry?

Acknowledgement:

- You have been faithful in a few things

The Reward:

- Put in charge of many things
- An invitation to share in the master's happiness.

To the servant who did not reap what he had sown had justified that with accusations against his master. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.' (vs24, 25)

Accusations from the servant

- Hard man
- Harvesting where he did not sow
- Accused the master of causing fear

Accusations from the master

- Wicked
- Lazy

Master's justification

- So, you knew...
- That I *harvest where* I have *not sown* and *gather where* I have *not scattered* seed
- Well then, you *should have* put my money on deposit with the bankers
- So that when I returned I would have *received it back with interest*.

The Reward

- took the talent from him
- Metaphorically, threw him outside as opposed to the other two who were invited
- metaphorically, put in the place of darkness where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth as opposed to the other two who were invited to share in the master's happiness.

‘Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ (vs.28-30)

What does this mean you may ask ‘Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.’ The meaning of this is that once the talents were taken away, the servant will not have any to invest. And if he does not have any, he cannot invest any.

As we see in the parable of the talents, the three servants demonstrated characteristics of varied dimension and attitudes. If the master knew their abilities including the laziness of one of the servants, in giving him one talent, the master must have given the servant an opportunity to perform and perhaps have another chance to be called faithful. But the servant failed the master.

Due to inflation, the money put in the ground would have been of the same amount today as it was on the day of burying, but the value would be far less.

Have you felt that you have neglected God? Well, it’s a terrible feeling when you see others fulfil what God had initially called you to do. If you have neglected God and what He has called you to do, it’s because you lack stewardship.

Stewardship is the responsibility that has been given to us which we in turn have agreed to diligently undertake. The term stewardship started of in the context of hospitality where one would serve an individual at home, restaurant, etc. The term continues to be used in these specific ways, but it is also used in a more general way to refer to a responsibility to take care of something one does not own.

While serving the Lord or by just being a Christian, it calls for due diligence. It is a mandate for us to portray the characteristic of diligence. In being diligent, we become aware of what God has called us to do. Most of us don’t have a problem in knowing what we’re ought to do, but instead, we have a problem in doing what

we ought to do. When God had called our ministry to start India's first Christian Internet Radio Broadcasting Network, we knew that we were not the first to be called to this task. Personally, I knew others who were called to do it, but they were only boastful in starting it but lacked diligence and perseverance. When God had called us to call the nation of India, to purity, we were not the first to be called. During one of our major events on the call to purity, there was a Catholic nun present. She cried as she said "I was to do this five years ago, but did not do it. Now God has called you to do it"

When our ministry had called the nation of Indian to purity, the entire world media had reports of us. All the leaders of the ministry were youth and that surprised the world.

As Fr. Thomas Keating states: "The Gospel invites us to holiness and higher states of consciousness. This invitation involves risk; it means growing beyond where we are. It asks us to invest our talents even when we feel they are inadequate to a particular situation, job or ministry. It means that God, when He calls us to ministry, does not promise success, especially immediate success.

The parable of the talents shows what happens to two people who accepted God's invitation. They worked hard and with God's help, doubled their investment. The man who hid his talent in the ground is like those who opt for the status quo because they know what it is; they are unwilling to open themselves to the risks of the spiritual journey. They refuse to work at the potential that God has given them and thus obstruct the upward evolution of the human family. Even if they do not regress to lower levels of consciousness, they fail to support the development of human consciousness into Christ-consciousness.

The man in the parable chose security as his happiness project and in so doing, closed himself off from the opportunity of further growth. Hence, the judgment: "Take away his talent and give it to those who are already advancing."

Notice that the parable of the talents is taken from the business world. All the parables are based upon ordinary events: some from

business, for the sake of the urban population; some from farming or fishing, for the sake of the rural population. Cooking, sweeping, lighting lamps, sewing, harvesting, investing, going to the bank—these daily occurrences form the basis of the parables. This suggests that everyday life is the place where the reign of God takes place. We don't have to go to a monastery, convent, or hermitage. We do not have to go anywhere because the reign of God is right in front of our eyes. It is "close at hand." Divine union is available to everyone on the face of the earth. Our potential for divine union is the talent, above every other, that must not be hidden in the ground.

The experience of trying and failing is the way to learn to discard self centred programs for happiness and to surrender to the movement of transformation. Sin is the refusal to continue to evolve. By clinging to mere survival and security, we withdraw ourselves and others from the opportunity and adventure of continuing to grow into the body of Christ.

The main area of our unfaithfulness lies in genuine prayer. What do I mean by genuine prayer? Genuine prayer calls for the examination of our conscience.

One of the youth that I was counselling, was from a very vibrant and well known Church. This girl was a convert. She portrayed herself as a very spiritual and well behaved person. As I had prayed and sought the Lord about this girl, I soon identified that she was a chronic liar with many ghosts in her closet. She would lie outrightly, without a second thought. While counselling her, she lied to me several times varying from silly issues to mega issues. She would pray everyday and motivate herself with Scripture verses, but would never do an examination of her conscience. She would go around speaking to people ill about her mentor. Whenever she would talk to me negatively about her mentor, I would cut her off. I recommended that when she went in prayer before the Lord, to first ask forgiveness for her sins and ask God to deliver her from the habitual sin of lies. She did not go too far as she was not able to surrender herself to the Lord. She caused problems with her ministry and fled the province.

It is imperative for us to do an introspection of our lives and our standing with God.

“It is important for every person to be sufficiently present to himself in order to hear and follow the voice of his conscience. This requirement of *interiority* is all the more necessary as life often distracts us from any reflection, self-examination or introspection:

Return to your conscience, question it. . . . Turn inward, brethren, and in everything you do, see God as your witness.” CCC#1779

God seeks faithfulness in every aspect of our lives, be it in prayer, fasting or our relationships with people. We may pray and fast diligently, but if we are not faithful with what God has called us to do, then our prayer and fasting has gone in vain. What good is it to have all the money in the world and not being able to use it?

Find out what God has called you to do and be faithful in it.

Ephesians 4: 11-12 (KJV)

Vs.11 “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

Vs.12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...”

Corinthians 12:28 (KJV) “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.”

Buddha never claimed to be God. Moses never claimed to be Jehovah. Mohammed never claimed to be Allah. Yet Jesus Christ claimed to be the true and living God. Buddha simply said, “I am a teacher in search of the truth.” Jesus said, “I am the Truth.” Confucius said, “I never claimed to be holy.” Jesus said, “Who convicts me of sin?” Mohammed said, “Unless God throws his cloak of mercy over me, I have no hope.” Jesus said, “Unless you believe in me, you will die in your sins.”

DYING TO ANGER AND LIVING FOR THE AUDIENCE OF ONE

“God has been very good to me, for I never dwell upon anything wrong which a person has done, so as to remember it afterwards. If I do remember it, I always see some other virtue in that person.”
Saint Teresa of Avila

Mark 11:25 and whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against any one; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”

ANGER - The enemy within. Anger that leads to Un-forgiveness.

Most secular psychologists do not consider the notion of sin, instead they eliminate the concept of sin. In doing so, they do proclaim that they do not have a need to repent. Therefore, let's deal with this issue from a psychological and spiritual manner.

Anger is a term for the emotional aspect of aggression, as a basic aspect of the stress response. Any of the following if ruptured can cause anger to set in. Acceptance, Anticipation, Boredom, Disgust, Envy, Fear, Guilt, Hate, Joy, Jealousy, Love, Remorse, Sorrow and Surprise. Anger may be 'provoked' or 'triggered' by perceived threats, like conflict, or by abstract concepts such as injustice. There are many physical conditions that increase the potential for one to become angry. Common contributors to irritability include fatigue, hunger, being in pain, sexual frustration, or recovery from an illness. Other causes are hormonal changes, such as those associated with PMS (Pre menstrual syndrome), giving birth, and menopause, physical withdrawal, and bipolar disorder. Research also shows that some individuals can be genetically predisposed to higher levels of anger.

Suppressed anger and un-forgiveness are killers of love, joy, health, happiness, loving relationships, family harmony, success and prosperity; a killer of everything that we inherently desire, everything that is good, lovely and fair. Control of our anger is not

enough. As long as we control our anger, we still have it. What we really need is freedom from our anger. We develop many characteristic traits while we grow up. Adam and Eve were the only two humans that were adults at creation, and they did not have to go through birth, adolescence and everything in between those cycles.

While growing up we inherit many feelings, emotions and behaviours that are happy and sad and those developments make us into what we are. There are two characteristic traits, one is inherited at birth and is what we receive from our parents, the other is what we develop as we grow up at home, surroundings, school, etc., which is acquired.

Marah – Bitterness

Exodus 15:22-26 Then Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur; they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was *bitter*; therefore it was named Marah. And the people *murmured* against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” And he *cried to the LORD*; and the LORD showed him a tree, and he threw it into the water, and the *water became sweet*. There the LORD made for them a statute and an ordinance and there he proved them, saying, “If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon you which I put upon the Egyptians; for I am the LORD, your healer.”

Many Christians, become bitter and murmur at the Church and at the Lord when situations or circumstances don't go the way they would like it to. Grumbling is the opposite of thanksgiving. “Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Philippians 4:6. This bitterness leads to pride and envy – a feeling devoid of God and His mercies. Sometimes the *marah*

experience is good, it makes us realize that God is who He says He is and we are who He says we are. These experiences should draw us close to the Saviour and seek His face.

Forgiveness

But the Word of God says: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Romans 8:1. “Since, therefore, we are now justified by His Blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God.” Romans 5:9

“And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him.” Colossians 1:21-22

Forgiveness has been described as an attribute by which one ceases to feel resentment or to carry a grudge against an individual or a group for a wrong he or she has committed against oneself. Forgiveness can be granted with or without the other asking for forgiveness. Christians believe that persons can forgive themselves for any guilt that they might have against themselves such as an act of abortion. That it is possible to forgive groups of people, for it is possible to be forgiven by God, the very reason Christ had come into this world. Forgiveness is recognised in Christianity as a spiritual blessing and mercy of God. Spiritual forgiveness does not necessarily have any connection with material or financial forgiveness. One may spiritually forgive another, yet expect that the other should still make material or financial amends. Christ Jesus is the source of all forgiveness, which is made possible through the suffering and sacrifice on the Cross.

Forgiveness can be seen as a religious value. However, secularists say that belief in a deity is not necessary for forgiveness. It can be motivated by love, philosophy, appreciation for the forgiveness of others, empathy, or personal temperament. Even pure pragmatism can lead to forgiveness, as it is well documented that people who forgive are happier than those who hold grudges. However this is humanistic, if the source of love is not from God, it can have ulterior motives and can be conditional and counterfeit.

Psychology of Forgiveness

In the last decades, forgiveness has also received attention from social and secular psychologists. Although there is no consensual psychological definition of this concept in the research literature, many researchers assume that forgiveness is related to a pro-social change of attitude and health linking with interpersonal motivations towards another person who has committed an offence. Specifically, three secular and three spiritual changes in motivations are thought to occur when someone forgives an offender:

- 1) An increase in motivation to act in ways that benefit the offender or the relationship with the offender.
- 2) A decrease in motivation to take revenge on the offender.
- 3) A decrease in motivation to avoid the offender
- 4) An increase in motivation to seek God
- 5) An increase in motivation to attending Church and prayer groups
- 6) Reconciliation between man and God.

Forgiveness is necessary for civilization, since without it, all wrongs would demand revenge, which may themselves be taken as wrongs requiring revenge, resulting in a spiralling escalation of retaliation, leading ultimately to utter destruction.

Forgetting – a journey that ends

One of the most blessed things in being a Christian is the grace of forgetting past hurts and wounds. Paul says in Philippians 3:13. Beloved, I do not consider to have made it on my own, but this one thing I do, *forgetting* what lies *behind* and *straining forward* to what lies *ahead*.

The Greek word for *forgetting* is *epilanthonamai* (ep-ee-lan-than'-om-ahee) meaning, 'to lose out of mind'. Paul was saying that he loses the past as he removes it out of his mind and this is done only with divine intervention; this is why he says that he does not consider to have made it on his own.

The Greek word for *behind* is *opiso* (op-is'-o) meaning back in time or place. Paul did not worry about the *past*, he broke away from the past and all that it carried. He did not bother about the place where he was hurt or the people that hurt him. He just left

it behind. In Philippians 3:8 ...For His (Jesus) sake I have suffered the loss of *all things*, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ. In our lives many times we get hurt by several people. For example a girl who was hurt or treated badly by her father or may be was sexually abused. If she has not dealt with that hurt and set herself and her father free from the bondage of unforgiveness, she tends to carry that pain on to her husband when she gets married and that will have an effect on the marriage. If perhaps the father had called the daughter an idiot at all times with those words causing pain and grief to this child. If she is not being able to react to that hurt, the hurt will sit in her mind all through her growing up. When her husband casually calls her an idiot, her mind reaches to the unconscious repository and pulls out the hurt caused by her father which will cause her to react to her husband in an absurd or hurtful and even vengeful manner.

That is why it is important to leave all behind and surrender it to the Lord and ask for healing and deliverance. People say that time is a healer; time is never the healer. God is the healer and He gives us time to deal with our feelings.

The Greek word for *straining forward* is *epekteinomai* (ep-ek-ti-nom-ah-ee) meaning to stretch forward or reach forth. Philippians 3:16 only let us hold fast to what we have attained. We have attained salvation through repentance and the forgiveness of sins. In the same way, we need to forget the past and keep looking forward.

Forget what others have done to you. We cannot say the wound is healed but the scar remains. Forget what others have done to you, when we forgive, we don't forget the person, we only forget the hurt. We need to make conscious efforts.

Forget what you have done to others. We so often live in guilt and unforgiveness. We need to repent. The meaning of repentance is brought out in the story of the Prodigal son in Luke 15. While sitting in the midst of pigs, he remembered his father and said I will go back to my father's house and ask forgiveness. He decided. He got up and went to his father's house. He realized that he had sinned against God and his father. He got up, and he did not sit

in the same pit that was destroying him. The pit that we sit in is a reservoir that's filled with hurt, anger, envy, pride and all the rotten fruits of the evil one that cause a stench in our lives.

We need to recognize and act upon it. We need to confess our sins. 1 John 1:9 says if we confess our sins, He who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The Greek word for *confess* is *homologeō* (hom-ol-og-eh'ō) meaning to speak out or acknowledge.

Confession however is not repentance. We need to repent and forsake our wrong doings. Proverbs 28:13 says, No one who conceals transgressions will prosper, but one who *confesses* and *forsakes* them will obtain mercy. The Greek word for *forsake* is *azab* (aw-zab') meaning to commit not to do it again or refuse to do it again.

The main source of our conviction and mercy is only from God. The Greek word *mercy* is *racham* (raw-kham') meaning to obtain love, pity and compassion.

We then need to be washed from our sins and iniquities. I John 1:7 says that the Blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sins. The Greek word for *cleansing* is *katharizo* (kath-ar-id'-zo) meaning to purge, blot out and eliminate. The Greek word for *all* is *pas* meaning whole, completely and thoroughly. The Greek word for *sin* is *hamartia* (ham-ar-tee'-ah) meaning faults or offence and *hamartano* (ham-ar-tan'-o) meaning offence, trespass or *not to share the prize*. This is what Paul means when he said in Philippians 3:14 I press on towards the goal *for the prize* of the heavenly call. Therefore sin disqualifies us from receiving the prize, but repentance takes us forward to the goal set for us towards receiving the prize. In summary, we need to understand that the Blood of Jesus cleanses us from ALL SIN, not just some of it, and we need to get out of the guilt mode.

If the Son of Man sets you free, you are *free* indeed. AMEN.
John 8:36

The Greek word for *free* is *eleutheros* meaning unrestrained, not a slave (to sin)

DYING TO SELF AND LIVING FOR THE AUDIENCE OF ONE

“As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the Churches and an honour to Christ.” 2 Cor. 8:23

The Greek word used here for the word ‘honour’ is ‘*doxa*’, which means ‘glory’. Isn’t it amazing that Titus was called the ‘glory’ of Christ? Every Christian should be called the glory of Christ. When Christ touches our lives, we share the joy that He gives us.

Honouring God requires a Christian to be wise and not foolish. How can a foolish servant bring delight to his master? Or, how can a foolish son bring delight to his parents? In the same way, how can a foolish Christian bring delight to his God and be a witness to the unbeliever?

As we all know that there are non Christians who walk in the character and fruit of Christianity and living righteous lives

If we say we are Christians but lack wisdom in our dealings, we act in contempt to the word of God. We cause shame to Christianity. Proverbs 14:35 says, “A king delights in a wise servant, but a shameful servant incurs his wrath.” Every servant or employee of an organisation is penalised for the repeated mistakes. In order for us to honour God, we must first seek to do the things that will please God so that He would delight in us.

Proverbs 11:20 says, “The LORD detests men of perverse heart but he delights in those whose ways are blameless.” Many, who claim to be Christians, have a notion that if they commit small instances of unrighteousness, it is alright and that God will forgive them. They persist in those acts of unrighteousness and make it a habit. A habitual sin turns into a deadly element that stains the soul and throws the person outside the gates of sanctification. “If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left” Hebrews 10:26.

What is the message that Christ has give us? As J. Sidlow Baxter said:

Fundamentally, our Lord's message was Himself. He did not come merely to preach a Gospel; He himself is that Gospel. He did not come merely to give bread; He said, "I am the bread." He did not come merely to shed light; He said, "I am the light." He did not come merely to show the door; He said, "I am the door." He did not come merely to name a shepherd; He said, "I am the shepherd." He did not come merely to point the way; He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Chapter -3-

ENDURANCE THROUGH THE AUDIENCE OF ONE

ἡ δὲ ὑπομονὴ δοκιμὴν, ἡ δὲ δοκιμὴ
ἐλπίδα

*Perseverance Produces
Character.
Romans 5:4*

THE MIND TO SUFFER

“God had one Son on earth without sin, but never one without suffering.” — St. Augustine

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our *sufferings*, because we know that suffering produces *perseverance*; perseverance, *character*; and character, *hope*. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. Romans 5:3-5 (NIV)

What advice would you give Christians undergoing sufferings? The Apostle Peter (1 Peter) took up that challenge just as ominous rumblings from Rome were striking fear in every Christian community. Half-crazed Nero had seized on believers as scapegoats for the ills of his empire. Should the persecuted Christians flee or resist? Should they tone down their outward signs of faith? Give up?

Peter was able to counsel after persevering under great tribulations and being flogged for living for the Audience of One. He had a mind to suffer and prepared the minds of his people to also suffer and live for the Audience of One.

Most Christians don't know what it is to suffer, meaning that they don't know how to endure it. When trials and tribulations come along, they succumb to the pressures. They don't endure it in the manner in which God would say, there, that's my disciple. In moments of persecution, we tend to blame others or cry out to God to take away those moments of suffering. I'm not endorsing the view of constant disease and suffering. I'm talking about the

breaking process, the process of making us strong Christians with the character of Christ.

Watchman Nee, one of the great servants of Christ who was a prisoner until death in communist China for preaching the Gospel, in his book ‘Character of the Lord’s worker’ said this: “There are some brothers and sisters who endure suffering but they have no conception of the preciousness of the suffering. They go through it without any sense of gratitude to the Lord. They may even murmur and complain continually, hoping for the day when they will be delivered from their suffering. They pray, but they never praise. They do not heartily accept the discipline of the Spirit which comes upon them. Instead they pray that these days will go away quickly. Their attitude betrays the lack of a mind to suffer.”

Christians are supposed to be immune to sufferings and disasters. Christians, even the godly Christians sometimes go bankrupt and even get cancer and other diseases or may be they lose their jobs. Trials and adversity are real, even for believers—perhaps especially for believers. They touch every one of us and they hurt (and they usually have nothing to do with our faith level).

Athletes know that in order to grow stronger their muscles must be stressed and stretched in exercise so even stronger tissue will generate. This principle of “no pain, no gain” even applies to the Christian life. We cannot grow without pain and resistance.

A butterfly has about seven stages of transformation. If it skips one stage, it is not whole. It is the same with a Christian, unless we allow God to fully work in us, we would not be whole. There is no ready made character – it is developed.

When I had come back to India after a mission’s trip to Kuwait and Dubai, I realised that God was doing something that He had tried to do earlier, but I was resisting and just wouldn’t learn. God was trying to teach me to have the mind to suffer because, in the past, I would succumb to pressures and persecution and react. Many times when certain areas of our lives are touched, we react with a fluctuation of our temperaments and attitudes.

During the time that the Lord was teaching me lessons that would mould my Christian character; a series of events had taken place. One evening after Church service, I had taken a cab back to my apartment. On the way, the cab guy had demanded extra. As I refused to give him extra money, he had become agitated, which resulted in an argument and he ended up hitting me leaving severe bruises on my face. The public had come and everyone wanted to beat up the cab driver and take him to the police. A man even drove me to the police station to lodge a complaint. But, I told that man, that I choose to forgive the cab guy and bless him instead.

A few days later, three members of our Ministry had gone for printing of some banners and stopped by a restaurant for dinner. It was quite late when we had gone out. On the way to our vehicles, there were mobs of police officers. They suddenly came up to us and scolded us for being in that area at such a time. The police inspector then hit me and another ministry member. At this point, I was shocked and shaken and still in pain from the previous incident. This was about two in the morning. I had all the connections to have this police inspector suspended, transferred or even dismissed. After about an hour after sourcing the Inspector's mobile number, I called the inspector and told him who I was. He was very apologetic for what he had done and explained that he was under pressure because in the last week there were a few murders in his jurisdiction. In any event, I told that I had called to forgive him. At this, he was in tears when I told him that I had forgiven him. I won a brother because I did not react to him in anger, or revenge, but instead, I reacted in love and understanding.

A few days after this, while I was on my way to the mountains for a silent retreat, the bus I was travelling in stopped over for dinner, so I took the opportunity to use the pay phone. When I had gone to the pay phone, the phone meter was malicious. So I had a conversation with the owner of the phone booth. Suddenly he and his friends in the shop hit me and cut my lip and ripped my chest. I just surrendered that to Christ.

All these three incidents happened for a purpose. I had every opportunity to cry out to the Lord. In the first incident, when the cab driver hit me, I cried to the Lord and asked Him if He had abandoned me because no one has ever been able to hit me on my face. To add to the frustration, I had been under severe persecution and pressure in the previous two months. I was shattered and broken. It was during this time that I realised that God can work best in my sufferings so that I may see His glory.

When I had gone up to the mountains, three thousand feet above sea level, just to be in isolation with the Lord, there, I met a Christian monk and confided in him. He counselled me and prophetically, told me this, ‘You are scared to suffer.’ That prophetic statement changed me forever. Since then, I asked God for the mind to suffer. The mind that does not mind suffering, but enduring it all for the Cross.

I endure each moment of my suffering with great joy, simply because I’m aware that God is in perfect control and that He’s making me out to be what I’m supposed to be.

God had to break me in order to make me.

In the end, all I could hear was this “*See, I have refined you, though not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.*” Isaiah 48:10.

It’s seems to be of such irony, that anyone would rejoice in their suffering, does this philosophy seem absurd to you? In moments of grief or suffering, how many times have you been able to rejoice?

Let’s do a study on what the above Scripture means.

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. Romans 8:16-17

Suffering

The Greek word for suffering is, thlipsis, (thlip'-sis), meaning pressure (literal or figurative) afflicted, anguish, burdened, persecution, tribulation, trouble.

“Don’t call me Naomi, [Naomi means pleasant] “ she told them. “Call me Mara, [Mara means bitter] because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. Ruth 1:20

Like Naomi, we many times confess negatively in our distress and sufferings. But if we put our trust in the Almighty, He will redeem us. “The women said to Naomi: “Praise be to the LORD, who this day has not left you without a kinsman-redeemer. May he become famous throughout Israel!” Ruth 4:14

As we go through trials, we learn to endure them and persevere through them. Jesus accepted the agony for His bride, the Church.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. James 1:2-3

Perseverance

The Greek word for Perseverance is, hupomone, (hoop-om-on-ay’); cheerful (or hopeful) endurance, constancy, enduring, patience, patient continuance (waiting).

The real tragedy is that we do not wait for the Power of God to work in us, and therefore we do not persevere. Peter could not wait for three days for the Lord to resurrect; instead he got agitated and rejected the Lord. Waiting before nothing is desperation; it is alright to be desperate before God.

In a boxing match when one man is knocked down, the referee counts from one to ten and at the count of ten, the man who is down has lost the fight. In our lives when we are knocked down, the Lord counts from ten to one. He goes, ten, nine, and eight and

at the count of one, He resurrects us. During the counting period, God expects us to persevere. Moses persevered when He had to wait; he had waited for God's promise to be fruitful.

Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1:4

Character

The Greek word for Character is, dokime, (dok-ee-may') character that comes through experience.

Every time, we are tried and tested, and when we stand the testing, we're approved.

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. James 1:12

When the Police Inspector had wrongfully hit me, within that hour I heard a voice deep down soul screaming words of convictions. I immediately shared it with my friends; this is what the screaming was: "the police inspector was supposed to uphold the law, but he has abused it. When people have expected me to be Christ-like, how many times have I compromised on my behaviour?" This brought repentance to my heart with the thought of how many times I have betrayed my Lord in the way I lived. Billy Graham once said, "I wake up every morning scared that I may let down my Lord". Success doesn't necessarily mean character, but character determines success. The anointing will take you to heights and character will sustain you at those great heights.

Hope

The Greek word for Hope is, (elpis, el-pece'); from a primary elpo (to anticipate, usually with pleasure); expectation (abstract or concrete) or confidence, absolutely certain.

There was a man who was caught in a storm and his boat had drifted away. He was abandoned on an island and no way of being rescued as he was there for weeks. He pitched a hut and stayed in it. One day he had gone out to look for food and upon his return, he saw the hut in flames. He just sat there looking at the hut being burnt down and asked God how much long he had to suffer. As he was talking with God, he saw a coast guard come to his rescue. He asked the coast guard as to how they knew that he was abandoned on the island. The coast guard told him that they had seen the smoke from the fire he had lit!

You see, we only need to hope in the Lord and persevere under circumstances.

Because we have seen the Lord work through our previous trials, because we have seen Him fulfil His promises and provide our needs, because we have received His perfect peace and all the grace that we needed in the past (if we stayed focussed on Jesus), we can endure through the current trials, and confidently expect that He is providently working all things out in our lives, for our good and for His glory!

Rejoice

The Greek for Rejoice is, Glory. *kauchaomai*, (kow-khah'-om-ah-ee) (to boast) (make) boast, glory, joy, rejoice.

Acts 16:25-34, where Paul and Silas, beaten and locked up in the Philippian jail, offer prayer and praise to God. He delivers them with an earthquake, and the jailer and his household become believers.

Paul and Silas were thrown into the Philippian prison, with their feet in stocks and their backs bruised and bleeding from wrongful beatings. They could have moaned and groaned, but at that midnight hour they were too busy "praying and singing hymns to God"! They transformed their pain into praise and their stripes into songs of joy. The jubilant worship birthed in the midst of fierce tribulation

became a sweet fragrance in the nostrils of God. The presence of the Father arrived with such force that it shook the earth and brought deliverance to His worshipers. The sweet fragrance of their worship even affected the lives of the jailer and his family and changed their lives forever.

It is our hope that suffering will one day cease. It is not a mirage, but a living hope in the One who has conquered death.

PRAYER

Father, sometimes life hurts. My first impulse is to turn my back or run away, but I know You love me. The bad times and the sad times in my life should draw me closer to Your side and make me more like You. Teach me to worship You at all times—even in the hard times. Let my worship be a sweet fragrance rising to Your throne.

THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS

“Lord, I’m not crying because they did this to me, I’m crying, because they do not know you” – Xavier Fernandes.

“To be right with God has often meant to be in trouble with men.”
A W Tozer

“As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” He said to another man, “Follow me.” But the man replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family.” Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” Luke 9:57-62

The founders of our Ministry, are at this point, still young; the three of us are not yet married. God had called us and we had answered that Call. Today, we’re an International Ministry, having India’s first and only Christian Internet Radio Broadcasting Network. We have India’s leading Christian Youth Portal and department of Social Justice along with other missions within the Ministry.

Here are our stories.

“... No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.” Luke 9:62

One of our Ministry leaders, Sunil, had gone for a marriage proposal that was arranged by his family. During the visit, he and the prospective bride had a conversation and during the conversation he expressed to the girl that he had met the Lord and would serve Him with great passion as he loved the Lord. After the meeting was over, the next day, Sunil’s family got the girl’s opinion. This is what the girl had to say about Sunil, “he’s a fanatic” This girl,

thought this decent Christian to be a fanatic, simply because he said that he loves Jesus. We counted it as a privilege to be called a ‘fanatic’ for the sake of the Gospel.

Sunil’s family was devastated at this and rebuked him for mentioning that he was also an Evangelist besides owning a successful construction business. However, Sunil did not give up on witnessing for the Lord.

At the right time, God in His faithfulness brought the right girl through family elders. On the second meeting of this girl, Sunil told her that he would be blessed to have her as his wife. Her response was this “I’ve had certain expectations from the man I want to marry, but God has exceeded that expectation”. They are now happily married!

... Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family.” Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God. Luke 9:61

[No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God] This answer to the request of the man in Luke 9:61 seems harsh, but it was not, for Jesus knew that if he returned home he would likely submit to the unbelieving relatives who would weep, reproach, ridicule, and force him to give up such an idea.

Another leader of our Ministry was persecuted by his family. When he met the Lord, he had given up alcohol and other habits and strived to live a holy life for Jesus. Since this leader was dedicated, nothing else mattered to him more than serving the Lord. He also held a lucrative secular job as a software engineer. His family grew very angry with him because he would spend a lot of time in prayer and in Ministry and they assumed that was the reason he is not married as yet. He is thirty three years old. One day, his mother, brother and sister in law barged into the home of Sunil and poured out their anger with accusations on the Ministry. This caused tremendous pain to the leader in context. When Sunil and this leader had prayed soon after the episode, the leader wept quite bitterly and prayed this, “*Lord, I’m not crying because they did*

this to me, I'm crying, because they do not know you" What an amazing prayer! I'm sure; this prayer reached the heart of God.

Thereafter, his family barred him from meeting the other members of the Ministry and banned him from doing Ministry. This leader suffered terribly with emotional rupture and abuse from his family. He was depressed but endured it with the grace of the Lord.

Two months later, we needed his presence at the Ministry office because he was in charge of the technology and we needed some immediate software development. He told his family that he needed to go to the Ministry office. At this, they threw him in a room and locked him up. His mother then called me and blasted me with words of hatred and called me a fool. She then called Sunil and abused him the same way.

At this point, he is still experiencing frustration at home, but is at peace with God as always!

Blessed endurance

In writing about my experiences, I could go on to say that I was publicly humiliated, publicly beaten, rejected by friends, rejected by family, deprived of love and the list goes on. This book contains only a fraction of the persecution that I had been through. In writing this book, I had to deal with so many situations and ask God for healing, so that I don't write about my experiences in hurt or in anger. This very same space that I'm using to write these lines was actually used to write of an episode of a fickle minded friend who betrayed me. But the evidence of God's healing grace is that I have refrained from doing so. Instead, I'm confident that there is absolutely nothing that can happen to me that is outside the will of God.

The three of us chose not to turn back... how about you? What is the objection that you are facing? What is the challenge that you're facing while serving Christ or just being a Christian? Christ is always the answer. Trust in Him and He will see you through. Your crown awaits you!

BUILDING IMMUNITY against persecution

The rejection of men, leads to the acceptance from God!

Have you been hurt and wounded by people or communities? When hurt, have you reacted to those hurts and ended up being the victim, though you are the one who was wronged? Have people disingenuously held your mistakes against you and flung the first stone at you? Sounds familiar?

Well, having been through that, I've learned to build immunity from persecution in such a way that it doesn't matter to me what people say or do to me. Jesus cautioned us about persecution when He said "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also." John 15:20.

Most of the time when standing for truth and righteousness, we are often times not treated with favour; this is the irony of this fallen world. As A.W. Tozer said, "To be right with God has often meant to be in trouble with men." You are a saint to people when you tell them lovely things about themselves from the Bible. The moment you tell them that their illicit, unrepentant lifestyle is contrary to the Word of God, you are treated as a scoundrel!

Persecution is not a contemporary tool of the enemy that comes through the *sans conscience* person, but instead it is the most conventional tool. Though not justifiable, many people react in PROVOCATION and in reacting, they are held convicted to the crime. Instilling of provocation is like sprinkling salt on an open wound and expecting the victim not to react. When the victim reacts, he or she is victimised instead of the perpetrator of the crime.

Fascism has even crept into all religious circles. One look at some groups and you can see their insecurity leading to authoritarianism or a delinquent ideology.

Are you being provoked by a person, group or even your own family, or even worst, your own prayer group? As God has vindicated in the past, He will do the same even now. I'm not exempted from persecution; I've had my share and more. The

times when God has given your persecutors into your hands and you have all you need to ‘strike back and ‘strike down’ and expose them – but, you refrain from doing that, then you know that you’re walking with God. You pardon and make peace. ‘Blessed are the peacemakers’ As St. Francis of Assisi said: “It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.”

It is not up to us to judge or condemn, but it is up to us to grant mercy as God grants us mercy when we fail. Never vindicate yourself, but allow God to do it. Always remember that reconciliation is immunity against the devil and his schemes. In times of persecution, know that God is ever so mindful of your situation and He’s ready to help you. As William Barclay said “The hand of Christ is strong enough to uphold the heavens, and gentle enough to wipe away our tears”

If you’re a vessel that is broken, go to Christ, the well spring of life. Always be filled with the Holy Spirit and be under the outpouring of His tap of mercy. “The only way to keep a broken vessel full is to keep it always under the tap.” D L Moody.

God Himself is your immunity. “And I myself will be a wall of fire around it,’ declares the LORD” Zachariah 2:5. Be surrounded by God’s protection.

Don’t let persecution or criticism push you into a corner. Begin to build immunity to the things that affect you negatively. As you use the Word of God as your immunity, soon the persecution will not affect you anymore. You will stand victorious when the next persecution comes along because you will then have your immunity. Never search the Scripture to find vengeance against your accusers because in doing so, you would only build animosity. At times it is tempting, but leave it to God’s wisdom and care. He vindicates your cause.

There was man who was admiring a majestic eagle as it was soaring high in the air. Suddenly, the majestic eagle began to radically decline until it forcefully hit the ground and stayed motionless. The man went to the eagle, opened its wings which

spread nine feet across and realised the jaws of a weasel clinging on to the throat of the eagle, leaving it dead. When the eagle had pounced on the weasel and the weasel swivelled and bit as instinct taught it to, it clung on, tooth to neck. The little weasel had killed the majestic eagle.

Metaphorically, as a Christian, you are called to be majestic, knowing when to let go of the weasels in your life. The eagle would have been victorious if only it had let go of the little weasel, but instead, it had become a victim instead of a victor. Whatever be the weasel in your life, it may be a devious man calling you his brother or a deceitful woman calling you her companion, let go of all that hinders YOUR call to be majestic. Too many Servants of God have fallen after soaring high because they allowed the weasels to cling on to their throats, thus suffocating them. They did not build immunity, and they lived negligent life styles. BUILD IMMUNITY. Some learn from the mistakes of others, some learn from their own mistakes and some are yet to learn, while some, like this eagle, never learn!

Don't stand alone; be united with trusted people who will uphold you, guide you and sustain you in your walk. Don't take counsel from people who are reckless and foolish, but befriend the wise. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" Proverbs 13:20 (KJV)

Persecution is synonym with being a disciple of Christ. "God had one Son on earth without sin, but never one without suffering." St. Augustine.

Ignore the enemy. My Mentor told me this: "When I'm persecuted, I laugh at the enemy and ignore his tricks and he flees" he said "if you pay attention and give importance to your persecution, he will harass you." This is true, just ignore the enemy and set your eyes upon Jesus.

Do not be counted among those who carry unforgiveness, hatred or malice. Instead, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the

wellspring of life.” Proverbs 4:23. In doing so, “...the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7

‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ Matt 22:37

That if you love the Lord with all of your HEART, He will never permit the HEART BREAKER into your life. That if you love the Lord with all of your MIND, He will never permit the FICKLE MINDED into your life. That if you love the Lord with all of your SOUL, He will never allow the SOUL SNATCHER...

My dear friend in Christ Jesus, know this:

What people don’t understand, they persecute! People persecute you because they don’t understand you. They don’t understand you because they don’t know who called you! Your CALL is from God and not from man!

Chapter -4-

HOLINESS AND SANCTITY

Τοῦτο γάρ ἐστι θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ
ἀγιασμός ὑμῶν, ἀπέχεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ
τῆς πορνείας

*"It is God's will that you
should be sanctified..."*

1 Thessalonians 4:3

THE TEMPLE OF GOD

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 1 Cor. 3:16.

We are God's temple where the Holy Spirit dwells in. We can contaminate our temples just as a physical temple can be contaminated with the unrighteous acts of Christians. That is why Jesus drove people out of the temple. Matthew 21:13 *"It is written," He said to them, " 'My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers."*

What Jesus did was the 16th Old Testament prophecy being fulfilled in the Gospel of Matthew. This is how the temple was contaminated in the Old Testament: Jeremiah 7:9-11. *"Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, "We are safe"-safe to do all these detestable things? Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD."*

The Old Testament is a shadow of the New Testament. Every shadow has a substance. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit and we are the shadow of God for we are made in His image and likeness. In as much as the temple was polluted, even our bodies and minds and hearts can be polluted with detestable vices.

The physical Temple consisted of three parts, Holy Place, Inner Court and Outer court. The human temple also consists of three parts, Body, Mind and Soul. We can pollute ourselves with wrong deeds, wrong thoughts and wrong desires.

Sin is so corruptible, that we put our finger in milk or edible food, it turns bad. The body is sinful and thus corruptible!

Romans 12:1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship” This clearly tells us to offer our temples in a way that will please God. How can we carry the anointing of God or how can we be representatives of God’s if we are unholy?

May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:23

We need to be purified from the old habits and emptied of the residue of the old ways. Aneel Aranha says this about purification “The human soul cannot contain empty space. It has to be full at all times and it is entirely up to us as to what we fill it with: good or evil. There are those among us who are full of holiness, leading lives that are a delight to God. Unfortunately, these are few and far between.

The Holy Spirit cannot work in a soul that is full of sin; there is simply no space for Him to do anything. The only way that we can give Him a chance to begin working in our lives is by making some room for Him. Like everything else in the Christian life, this is easier said than done, not least because sins have a habit of blending in the background, much like the dirt on the walls of an unpainted room, the familiarity rendering them invisible. It is only the Holy Spirit who can make them visible to you.

There are, however, certain sins that are clearly obvious, like huge blotches on the wall, and you don’t need the Holy Spirit to point these out to you. Getting rid of these sins is a way of freeing up some space for the Holy Spirit to begin doing His work. It is also a signal of good intent; a way of telling God that you mean business. So, pick all the obvious sins in your life and toss them right out of the door. You will have to be ruthless in execution and utterly

determined, because the enemy will throw everything he can at you. And he can throw a lot!”

When we offer our lives unto to God as a living sacrifice, we may be accepted into the house of God. “ Isaiah 56:7 “These I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess His name. Hebrews 13:15.

The Altar

Altar, from a derivative of Greek (*thusia*); a *place of sacrifice*, i.e. an *altar* (special or genitive, literal or figurative)

““Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, [Traditionally peace offerings] your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause my name to be honoured, I will come to you and bless you.” Exodus 20:24

[Wherever I cause my name to be honoured, I will come to you and bless you] Any place of worship was to have an altar to sacrifice the burnt and peace offerings on (Leviticus 17:1-11). God was to choose the place (Deut. 12:5, 11, 15, 18, 26). There were three places of sacrifice God chose in Israel’s history: Shiloh (Jeremiah 7:12); Bethel (1 Samuel 10:3); and Zion (Psalm 78:68).

It is clear that God institutes an altar where He desires to be remembered. Every person who had encountered the Lord God, had built an altar. Some of the altars still exist. We are not talking of the idolatry altar which Aaron had built, we’re talking about the altar of our hearts. The Bible tells us to love the Lord our God with all of our hearts. The heart is the central unit of our desires and emotions. God wants to be in that centre. After all, He created it for that purpose.

Five Commands concerning Worship

“If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it.” Exodus 20:25

1. Make an altar of earth to God (Exodus 20:24)
2. Offer burnt offerings and peace offerings upon it
3. Sacrifice sheep and oxen upon it
4. Only in the place chosen by God must an altar be made (Exodus 20:24; Deut. 12:5-26)
5. Do not make altar of hewn stone, but of stone untouched by tools (Exodus 20:25; Joshua 8:31)

“And do not go up to my altar on steps.” Exodus 20:26-a
Make no steps to God’s altar (Exodus 20:26).

[Steps] Heathen worshippers who imitated the rites of the true God made their altars very high, partly through pride and partly in the belief that their gods might hear them better. Such high places are mentioned 77 times in Scripture as sinful (Leviticus 26:30, note). Many heathen altars had gods engraved on them as objects of worship which was in direct contradiction to the second commandment (Exodus 20:4-6).

Inasmuch the same way, even we make those same mistakes. We build altars of false gods in our lives. The god of money, the god of lust, the god of debauchery. Many preachers today do not want to preach on the sanctification of the altar of our hearts, but instead we have become a place of motivation without the conviction of sin. Many Christians, who accepted Christ have lost the sense of the conviction of sin and have turned away from the truth of God in exchange for a lie.

“...lest your nakedness be exposed on it.” Exodus 20.26-b
[that thy nakedness be not discovered] God demands modesty of all His people (Phil. 4:5; 1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Peter 3:3).
(cf. WordSearch).

Since I had grown up in a Catholic home, we had a wooden altar where we had the picture of Christ along with other images on the altar. Occasionally, we had varnished the altar to preserve it. But in the midst of varnishing the physical altar, the spiritual altars of our hearts were tarnished. Many of us today are the same. We take care of physical things that represent God, but we neglect the spiritual act of worship.

Many of us Christians today wear a Cross around our necks, but are still in the bondages of vices. The reason is because we are not totally convicted of sin and righteousness. We have ultimately taken the Cross for granted.

Every person in the Bible, who had an encounter with God, built an altar.

Genesis 8:20

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD

Genesis 12:7

The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring [Or seed] I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

Genesis 26:25

Isaac built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD

Genesis 35:7

There he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel, [El Bethel means God of Bethel].

Exodus 17:15

Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner.

Exodus 21:14

But if a man schemes and kills another man deliberately, take him away from my altar and put him to death

When we have encountered the Lord, we need to stand firm with the Truth in the altars of our hearts. The Psalmist said: "I wash my hands in innocence, and go about your altar, O LORD," Psalm 26:6

When we walk right with God, it would be a delight and we will be filled with joy. Our altars need to be varnished with holiness that would be a pleasing fragrance in the nostrils of God. When Noah had built the ark and offered a burnt sacrifice to God, it pleased God.

“Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: “Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.” Genesis 8:20-21.

Psalm 43:4 “Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight.” I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God.

The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it *re-presents* (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is its *memorial* and because it *applies* its fruit: (Paragraph #1366, CCC)

[Christ], our Lord and God, has once and for all offered Himself to God the Father by his death on the altar of the cross, to accomplish there an everlasting redemption. But because his priesthood was not to end with his death, at the Last Supper “on the night when he was betrayed,” [he wanted] to leave to his beloved spouse the Church a visible sacrifice (as the nature of man demands) by which the bloody sacrifice which he was to accomplish once for all on the cross would be re-presented, its memory perpetuated until the end of the world, and its salutary power be applied to the forgiveness of the sins we daily commit.

In the sacramental liturgy of the Church, the mission of Christ and of the Holy Spirit proclaims, makes present, and communicates the mystery of salvation, which is continued in the heart that prays. The spiritual writers sometimes compare the heart to an altar. Prayer internalizes and assimilates the liturgy during and after its celebration. Even when it is lived out “in secret,” prayer is always the prayer *of the Church*; it is a communion with the Holy Trinity. (Paragraph #2655, CCC)

ICHABOD: No Glory

Ichabod in Hebrew means “no glory,” from the negatively modified Hebrew: kabowd, glory.

“She named the boy Ichabod, saying, “The glory has departed from Israel”-because of the capture of the ark of God and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband. She said, “The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured.”
1 Samuel 4:20-21

The glory of Israel had departed because the Ark of God had been taken away, inasmuch the same way, we let go of the glory of God when we live our lives scandalously or loosely. How can the God glorify Himself in an unrighteous person’s life?

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are. Matthew 23:15

I have seen this happen all over the Church. In citing the following, I’m not criticising or accusing, but instead, drawing your attention to the things that displease God. Let me start with youth groups. Young boys and girls come into the youth group seeking love and direction. They do get love, but they are soon enticed with the wrong love of Eros instead of Agape. Boys in the youth group befriend the girl with the mask of being a brother and soon they are into a relationship. More ironically, some boys go on the streets and educational campuses to bring youth to the meetings and after some time, they prey on these girls instead of praying on them. In doing so, they draw these girls in deception and ultimately sin. They make these girls twice as much a daughter of hell as they are. There are also girls who do the same thing. When girls do the same, the disaster is more and it becomes a chain from one boy to another.

Let’s deal with the sin of Evangelists and Pastors and Church authority.

“They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires,” 2 Timothy 3:6

I have seen women who have come into the Church with remorse and guilt due to their sins. They have come in through evangelism. They then go to the Pastor or Church counsellor or elder to unload their guilt. Sooner or later these so called Church people use it against them. These leaders have even gone to the extent of harming and abusing the victims. They worm their way into the lives of these weak-willed women who are loaded down with their sins. These Evangelicals sway away these precious souls due to the evangelical deception and pride entwined with lusts of all kinds. This is called Oppression from Spiritual Leaders.

“... The prophets follow an evil course and use their power unjustly.” Jeremiah 23:10. The Church has too many self ordained prophets, some for profits, some for power. There are many self made prophets who prophesy lies and deception for their own gain and misuse of power. There are some who genuinely have the prophetic gifting, but use it to scare and drive away people. They are acknowledged for carrying the anointing, but use it for extortion and for suppressing people. “Both prophet and priest are godless; even in my temple I find their wickedness,” declares the LORD. “Therefore their path will become slippery; they will be banished to darkness and there they will fall. I will bring disaster on them in the year they are punished,” declares the LORD. Jeremiah 23:11-12

Those who misuse the anointing from God are like those lighting a candle in a room filled with gun powder. They will soon be consumed with the wrath of God.

Matthew 23:5-7 “Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honour at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’”

[Everything they do is done for men to see] The works of the hypocrites were done to be seen by others. Like many today, outward style in dress and beautiful forms of religion made the sum of their godliness.

In the modern Church, we have Pastors who are lavish in self indulgence while members of the congregation are starving. These Pastors demonstrate a prosperity gospel that is not endorsed by Christ. In doing so, they give the flock an impression that they are doing something wrong and are therefore not prosperous. Did God call all to be materially prosperous?

[Phylacteries] A small square box containing a parchment or skin (about 1 1/2 x 18 inches) on which were written Exodus 13:1-10; Deut. 6:4-9; Deut. 11:13-21. Worn on the arm and forehead by men only. Common people wore them only during prayers, but they were worn continually by the Pharisees who sought to enlarge the boxes so as to attract attention. Jesus did not condemn the wearing of them but the show made of them in public. They became badges of vanity and hypocrisy and amulets to drive away evil spirits.

One of the biggest problems the Church has suffered is to have teachers of the Gospel living double standards. They are religious but not righteous. They are legalistic but not godly. The element of godliness is missing. Just because we demonstrate the gifts of the Holy Spirit, it doesn't mean that we are walking in righteousness. The gifts manifest in and through us because the work of God has to continue.

Awake, kneel before the Lord and repent if you have sinned against the Holy Spirit and have misused the anointing. For if you don't, in a little while you will be no more, though people will look for you, you will not be found – for the wicked will be cut off. The wicked will perish.

Whatever has been done in the dark will be brought to light. God will not spare us if we indulge in wrath. He is a God of Justice

and He will expose us if we do not repent. “But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone” 2 Timothy 3:9.

If you, my beloved Christian or leader have been involved in the above mentioned, I urge you to ask God forgiveness and repent before Him lest His wrath may fall upon you for the wrath that you have done. Then, confide in an elder whom you can trust and then beseech forgiveness from the person whom you have sinned against. In doing so, you will receive the mercies of God rather than His wrath.

Twenty-one Characteristics of Hypocrites

1. They demand respect as teachers (Matthew 23:2).
2. They teach, but do not practice (Matthew 23:3).
3. They demand service; not give it (Matthew 23:4).
4. They seek praise of men (Matthew 23:5).
5. They parade their religion (Matthew 23:5).
6. They seek chief banquet places (Matthew 23:6).
7. They seek chief places in church (Matthew 23:6).
8. They glory in personal attention (Matthew 23:7).
9. They glory in titles (Matthew 23:7).
10. They rob men of truth and life (Matthew 23:13).
11. They reject truth and life (Matthew 23:13).
12. They take advantage of widows (Matthew 23:14).
13. They exhibit long prayers (Matthew 23:14).
14. They are zealous to win men to their sect, but not to God (Matthew 23:15).
15. They root and ground converts in hypocrisy, but not to God (Matthew 23:15).
16. They profess to be the only guide in religion, but are blind to truth and practical Christianity (Matthew 23:16-22).

17. They propagate those parts of religion from which they receive most personal gain and honour (Matthew 23:16-22).
18. They strain at gnats and swallow camels; stress minor details and omit the fundamentals of religion (Matthew 23:23-24).
19. They glory in physical cleanliness, but live in moral filth (Mt. v23:25-26).
20. They exhibit outward religion and self-righteousness and ignore inward holiness in life and conduct (Matthew 23:2, 7-28).
21. They pretend to be more righteous than their forefathers (Matthew 23:29-33).

“The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach.”
Matthew 23:2-3.

[do not do what they do...] Why did Jesus say this? Doesn’t it contradict the teachings of obedience? Jesus had told them not to obey some teachers of the law, because “they do not practice what they preach”.

Many of us Christians, both evangelical and lay have presented to the world that Christianity is all about prosperity, power, entertainment, etc. We behave like a person of the world, enticing the lusts of this world.

Surrounded by a cloud of witnesses

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Hebrews 12:1-3 KJV.

[Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight ...]

Five things to do:

1. Lay aside every weight (Hebrews 12:1). Greek: onkos meaning bulk; mass; heap; weight.) In a bad sense it means arrogance, conceit. Paul's purpose here is to get the believer to lay aside whatever weight is hindering Christian progress.
2. Lay aside the sin which doth so easily beset us (Hebrews 12:1). Greek: hamartia, meaning missing the mark in a moral sense (note, John 1:29). The sin that easily besets is the one each person has been addicted to, whatever is his weakness.
3. Run with patience the race set before us (Hebrews 12:1). Greek: agon, meaning fight, conflict (note, Phil. 1:30). Translated "race" (Hebrews 12:1); "fight" (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7); "contention" (1 Thes. 2:2); and "conflict" (Phil. 1:30; Col. 2:1).
4. Look unto Jesus (Hebrews 12:2). He is the head of all the long train of faith heroes. He is the Author and Perfecter of our faith.
5. Consider Him (Hebrews 12:3). Observe and analyze every part of His life and conduct, His courage in sufferings. (Dakes Study Bible).

The unholy acts of the people of God

Christians have become too familiar with holy things. We take the ultimate sovereignty of God too lightly. We think that because we worship God at our prayer meetings and get excited at Church services, God wouldn't care about His law. The flock in the Church may not know the laws of God, but the Shepherds do. The question in question is, are the shepherds convicting and proclaiming true worship and true repentance to its flock?

Recently, a man was released from prison after spending several years there because he had killed about twenty people. When a television news channel had interviewed him, the journalist asked him if he had any remorse and what he did about it. This man replied by saying, 'yes, I do feel bad about what I have done, but I went to a Priest for confession, he told me to go and say ten 'Our Fathers', and ten 'Hail Mary's' and do not do it again'

Is that what we are teaching our people today? The Priest should have told him to repent of his sins. When John the Baptist had come, he said repent. When Christ had come, He said repent. Shouldn't we also call people to repent? The problem is that we have lost the sense of sin. We don't sense sin anymore; it has become a part of global culture and is forced into acceptance. The media glamorises sins and Christians fall prey to that sin.

Let's examine two incidents of great importance.

(a) Communion in 2 Corinthians 11:27-32

The very expression of God's great mercy is, Holy Communion when we receive the Body and Blood of Christ. He sacrificed His life so that we may have life and commune with Him. For when we eat of His Body and drink of His blood, we become one with Him. However, when we dishonour His Body and Blood, there are dire consequences.

"Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body

and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.” 2 Corinthians 11:27-32.

(b) Eight Ways of unworthily partaking

1. By taking the Lord’s Supper in envy and strife (1 Cor. 11:18).
2. By taking it to commemorate a mere historical fact, as the Jews celebrated the Passover (1 Cor. 11:19).
3. By taking it in gluttony and drunkenness (1 Cor. 11:21-22).
4. By taking it in irreverence to God and His church (1 Cor. 11:22).
5. By taking it in disrespect to the poor and needy (1 Cor. 11:22).
6. By taking it in unbelief, not realizing its true significance, and not discerning the Lord’s body and blood to receive the benefits by faith (1 Cor. 11:27-30).
7. By taking it as an unsaved man with sin in the life and without making proper confession and acknowledgement of personal needs (1 Cor. 11:27-30).
8. By taking it without judging oneself so as to escape chastening from God (1 Cor. 11:31-32).

1 Cor. 11:30 [For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep] It is the Lord’s body one must discern (1 Cor. 11:29). It is by His stripes we were and are healed (Isaiah 53:4-5; Matthew 8:17; 1 Peter 2:24). If one does not want to be sickly and die prematurely, then let him have faith in the healing which was provided by Christ as well as forgiveness and other blessings. Nothing will be impossible with such faith (Matthew 17:20;

Matthew 21:22; Mark 9:23; Mark 11:22-24; John 14:12-15; John 15:7,16; John 16:23-26).

Many Biblical experts refer to the acts of Ananias and Sapphira as an abomination to the Lord. They were about to partake in communion while lying to the Holy Spirit thereby consuming the Body and Blood of Christ in an unworthy manner.

Acts 5: 1-11 “Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife’s full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles’ feet. Then Peter said, “Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God.” When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8Peter asked her, “Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?” “Yes,” she said, “that is the price.” Peter said to her, “How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.”

At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events. “

Ananias and Sapphira mean grace and beauty, but their names do not fit their conduct. They were Disciples of Christ and members of the Apostolic Church of which no man would belong unless he had a real experience of salvation. This we have to conclude

because the Church was hated and persecuted (Acts 4:1-4, 17; Acts 5:13, 17-18, 27-42; Acts 8:1; etc.). It was also repeatedly stated that all were of “one accord” and one mind who did belong to the Church (Acts 1:14; Acts 2:1, 46; Acts 24:32-37).

Acts Chapter four closes by making the statement that the Christian believers in the early Church considered their possessions to be their own, “but they had all things in common,” and that a Church member, Barnabas, sold a plot of land and donated the profit to the Apostles. It was in this context that Ananias and Sapphira decided that they, too, would like to make such a donation. After the sale they agreed only to give a certain proportion of the money to the apostles, but said that it was the whole amount.

In Acts 5:2, Ananias presents his donation to Peter, who replies, “Why hath satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?” Peter points out that Ananias had every right not to sell the land at all or to do what he wanted to with the profits, but by telling a lie—by saying that he was donating the entire amount—he had lied to God.

Ananias then fell to the ground dead and was carried out. Three hours later, his wife entered and told the same lie, suffering the same fate.

Verse 7, “Three hours later” this implies that the entire congregation had come together for worship service and every time they did so, they partook in the communion of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus. It was because they knew the truth and were not ignorant and still persisted in unworthy partaking of the communion that the Apostle called upon God’s wrath.

The significance of the cup, is that there is the cup of suffering, blessing and wrath. Jesus Christ endured the cup of suffering and God’s wrath for our sake so that we may

not drink from the cup of God's wrath. But when Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit, they called upon the cup of God's wrath, shunning away grace.

The death of Uzzah for touching the Ark

When God institutes His statutes for us to follow, we better follow it in totality. We get so accustomed to the decrees and commandments of God that we become too complacent and no longer have reverence. The Lord God repeatedly told His people to write His words upon their hearts. "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts." Deuteronomy 6:6, "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads." Deuteronomy 11:18.

2 Samuel 6:1-7 speaks about God's wrath when we violate and contradict His holiness.

"David again brought together out of Israel chosen men, thirty thousand in all. He and all his men set out from Baalah of Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim that are on the ark. They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals.

When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God."

[struck him there for his error] In Numbers 4:15-20 Levites were forbidden to touch the ark on threat of death. This was the first time that the law was enforced, and probably the first time it was broken. In the case of the Philistines handling the ark they were not killed because of their ignorance of the law (1 Samuel 6-7).

Many people are confused as to why was God so harsh with Uzzah. After all, he just tried to prevent the Ark from falling! What we don't understand, is the two dimensional perspective of God's command. One, He said not to touch anything holy, two, He expected obedience to His words of not touching the Holy thing.

Then David was angry because the LORD's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah. 2 Samuel 6:8

David's first reaction was anger with God. But he had also forgotten God's law. He thought his public worship and praise was enough for God. He thought that his excitement and zeal would satisfy God. But God is holy. God does not change. The law does not change.

God is slow to anger. He is also a God of Holiness and will not let our uncleanness to persist.

Character

“Character is what you are in the dark” D. L. Moody

In the context of character, the life of Joseph portrays the character of God. He demonstrated, love, justice, forgiveness and holiness. After Joseph was abandoned by his family, God had raised him up.

The two areas where most Christians, especially Evangelists fail in, is faithfulness in finance and chastity besides being puffed up when God lifts us up. Joseph demonstrated the cutting edge of faithfulness that when God blessed him in finance and in power, he stood faithful before God. The greatest test was when he was tempted with his master’s wife.

“Joseph was a strikingly handsome man. As time went on, his master’s wife became infatuated with Joseph and one day said, “Sleep with me.”

He wouldn’t do it. He said to his master’s wife, “Look, with me here, my master doesn’t give a second thought to anything that goes on here—he’s put me in charge of everything he owns. He treats me as an equal. The only thing he hasn’t turned over to me is you. You’re his wife, after all! How could I violate his trust and sin against God?”

She pestered him day after day after day, but he stood his ground. He refused to go to bed with her.” Genesis 39:6-10 (The Message)

Joseph was handsome and had a good physique. The same Hebrew expressions used of him are also used of Rachel (Genesis 29:17). Persian poets and the twelfth chapter of the Koran speak of his beauty as perfect. Tradition says that Zuleekha, Potiphar’s wife, was at first a virtuous woman, but when she saw Joseph she became a slave to her passion. On one occasion she supposedly invited forty of the most beautiful women of Egypt to a dinner. When they saw Joseph, they were so moved with admiration that they exclaimed with one accord that he must be an angel.

Potiphar's wife was a virtuous woman, but when she was tempted by her own evil desire, she incubated lust all the way. James 1:14-15 says: "but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

We sometimes say that "everyone's doing it". That's a wrong notion because not everyone are doing it. There are some very God fearing men and women of integrity out there. We live in a day and age where the concept of sin has been abolished. When it comes to sin, wrong is wrong, even if everybody does it - and right is right if nobody does it. When we understand sin, we would no longer indulge in things that are an abomination.

The reason why we don't live a Christian character is because our conscience does not bear witness to our actions. We are no longer sensitive to the Holy Spirit. The Bible says this of the tax collector "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'" Sinners need to recognize sin.

James M Gray narrates:

Once I was foolish, and sin ruled my heart,
Causing my footsteps from God to depart;
Jesus hath found me, happy my case;
I now am a sinner, saved by grace!

Joseph was always mindful of God and that's why he told Potiphar's wife that he could not do such a wicked thing and sin against God. Every Christian needs to have a mindset of being virtuous. If we are only aware of the statutes of God, we would dread to sin against God and against man. There are many Christians in the workforce who steal from the boss and don't think anything of it. There are Christian leaders who help

themselves from the Ministry kitty and don't think anything of it. Have our consciences become numb?

Joseph's character stands out as one of the purest in history. He allowed no temptation to affect his high morality, no calamity to shake his implicit faith in God, no adversity to depress him, and no power or position to make him proud and haughty. In his father's house he had likely been pampered; in slavery he was falsely accused. In the palace as the ruler of what was then the greatest kingdom on earth he was always the same truthful, pure, just, merciful, kind and God-fearing man.

Character attributes:

1. Had an unimpeachable character (Genesis 37:2,14; Genesis 39:7-20; 50:15-21)
2. Had a flawless record of faithfulness and trust in God and man (Genesis 37:2,13; Genesis 39:1-23; Genesis 40:1-23; Genesis 41:14-50:21)
3. Adjusted his life perfectly in favour or disfavour, slavery or freedom, as a servant or master (Genesis 37:2-41:57)
4. Was content and happy in adversity or success (Genesis 39:3-23; 40:1-23)
5. Was an outstanding witness for God (Genesis 39:3-6; Genesis 40:8; 41:8-36)
6. Served with distinction in every place of responsibility (Genesis 37:2; 39:3-41:57)
7. Maintained moral purity in the face of severe and daily temptation (Genesis 39:7-13)
8. Suffered for righteousness (Genesis 39:14-23)
9. Suffered the depths of humiliation and rose to the highest exaltation (Genesis 39:14-41:57)
10. Showed forgiveness to his enemies (Genesis 42:1-45:20; 50:15-21)

Giftng:

Had the divine gift of interpreting dreams (Genesis 37:5-10; 40:7-23; 41:1-44)

Result of Character

1. Found grace in the eyes of all except his brethren (Genesis 39:3-13,21-23; 41:14-44)
2. Prospered by God in all places of trust (Genesis 39:2-3,23; 40:1-23; 41:14-57)
3. Was put in the highest places of trust in private and governmental affairs (Genesis 39:3-41:57)
4. God blessed private industry and the whole nation of Egypt because of him (Genesis 39:4-41:57)
5. Was father of two of the greatest tribes of Israel (Genesis 41:50-52; 48:15-22)
6. Saved Israel from death, thus preserving the nation. (cf WORDSearch)

Several years ago, a new preacher moved to Houston, Texas. Some weeks after he arrived, he had an occasion to ride the bus from his home to the downtown area. When he sat down, he discovered that the driver had accidentally given him a quarter too much change.

As he considered what to do, he thought to himself, "You'd better give the quarter back. It would be wrong to keep it." Then he thought, "Oh, forget it, it's only a quarter. Who would worry about this little amount? Anyway, the bus company gets too much fare; they will never miss it. Accept it as a 'gift from God' and keep quiet."

When his stop came, he paused momentarily at the door, then he handed the quarter to the driver and said, "Here, you gave me too much change."

The driver with a smile replied, “Aren’t you the new preacher in town? I have been thinking a lot lately about going somewhere to worship. I just wanted to see what you would do if I gave you too much change. I’ll see you at Church on Sunday”

When the preacher stepped off of the bus, he literally grabbed the nearest light pole, held on, and said, “Oh God, I almost sold your Son for a quarter.”

As Wanda Paul commented “Our lives are the only Bible some people will ever read” This is a really scary example of how much people watch us as Christians and will put us to the test!

Always be on guard and remember (as I try to remember) that you carry the name of Christ on your shoulders when you call yourself “Christian.”

“Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did.”

1 John 2:6

Watch your thoughts; they become words.

Watch your words; they become actions.

Watch your actions; they become habits.

Watch your habits; they become character.

Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.

Chapter -5-

IN THE HANDS OF GOD

φοβερόν τὸ ἐμπεσεῖν εἰς
χεῖρας Θεοῦ ζῶντος.

*It is a dreadful thing
to fall into the hands of
the living God.
Heb. 10:31*

SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF A LOVING GOD!

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Mark 12:30

To love Him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, ... is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. Mark 12:33

As mentioned, earlier, I wish to reiterate that when we are in love with someone, it's all about that person and we're crazy about that person. We sacrifice more than we have to. We go out of the way to love that person. We would even die for that person. Living for Jesus, is the same. Jesus loves you so much, that He would have come to redeem you even if you were the only person He had to redeem. So much was His love for you that He chose to live for you even through all the pain. His love for you and His obedience to the Father is what kept Him on the Cross during crucifixion.

Living for the Audience of One, calls for intimacy, having those moments in isolation with the Lord dedicating that time isolated with the Lord. It is so tempting to spend the entire day in serving the Lord but we are less motivated to spend time in prayer. The Lord himself has given us model in prayer when He often spent isolated times with the Father.

What more could God have done?

The "Song of the Vineyard" beautifully summarises God's message to Judah. Although He had done everything possible to care for the Nation, His "vineyard" – the house of Israel – had produced only wild grape. What else could He do but allow it to grow wild

and uncultivated. Jesus used a related analogy in some of His parables (Matthew 20:1-16; 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 13:6-9; 20:9-19).

I will sing for the one I love
a song about his vineyard:
My loved one had a vineyard
on a fertile hillside.

He dug it up and cleared it of stones
and planted it with the choicest vines.

He built a watchtower in it
and cut out a winepress as well.

Then he looked for a crop of good grapes,
but it yielded only bad fruit.

“Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah,
judge between me and my vineyard.

What more could have been done for my vineyard
than I have done for it?

When I looked for good grapes,
why did it yield only bad?

Isaiah Chapter 5

What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? That is truly the cries of the heart of a wounded spouse.

Eight fold description of God’s Vineyard:

- Jehovah has a vineyard in a very fruitful hill
- He fenced it
- Gathered out the stones from it
- Planted the choicest vine
- Built a tower in the midst of it
- Made a winepress in it
- Expected it to bring forth good grapes
- It brought forth wild grapes.

God pursues us, He cares for us more than our parents could ever love and care for us. In the above verse, we see how God cried out for His people Israel. Like a spouse who had been beaten and rejected, He cries after us. It's as if a faithful husband who is so much in love with his wife, suddenly comes to learn that she's having an illicit affair and breaching the vows of marriage. What happens when the mind is ruptured? Because God loves, it is evident that He has emotions and the Scripture testifies to His feelings, '*The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.*' Gen. 6:6. Therefore, He is grieved when we behave in adulterous ways. In using the word adulterous, it is figurative, we may not commit sexual adultery, but we may commit the adultery of dishonouring God with our lifestyle and vices.

Ever wondered how a victim of infidelity feels? Have you been a victim of infidelity? If so, how did it feel? Having counselled so many people who were victims of adultery, my heart cries out to those victims.

Just like a marital adulterous, Christians who get involved in affairs of the heart and mind are deceived by their sinful, foolish hearts and minds and refuse to remember God. It is impossible for us to enjoy an affair or a vice and also remain in close relationship with God. In essence, we must say, "Get out of my life, God. I cannot enjoy this new adulterous relationship of illicit pleasure in the presence of Your holiness and righteousness."

Every illicit habit, be it a thought or action, is a running away from God. But there's a bizarre twist. By the very act of running away from God and exchanging His truth for a lie, unfaithful and backslidden Christians are tormented by the lingering consequences of their sin (Isaiah 50:10-11). They also forget that God is a jealous lover, who will use even their foolishness to arouse their hunger for Him.

In effect, because of our infidelity, we out rightly reject God. How, you may ask. The Scripture bears witness to that, “You have rejected me declares the Lord, you keep on backsliding.” Jeremiah 15:6

What more could have been done. The Hebrew translation for the word ‘done’ (pa’al pronounced paw-al’) is ‘ordain’.

In effect, God had ordained that we bear fruit just as He has ordained the days of our lives. “Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.” Psalms 139:16.

Bring forth. The Hebrew translation for the word ‘bring forth’ (‘asah pronounced aw-saw’) meaning ‘to bear’ or ‘to accomplish’.

God expects us to bring forth good fruit when He chose us. “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.” John 15:16

The Hebrew translation for the words ‘wild grapes’ (beushiyum pronounced be-oo-sheem’) is ‘poisonous-berries’.

Poisonous berries: just like fire is used to bring forth warmth in times of biting cold, it can also consume the person if not used with caution. It is the same with Christians, we either bear good fruit or we either bear bad fruit. There is no type of in-between fruit. For the Word of God does not expect us to be lukewarm Christians.

Just as Yahweh had spoken about the parable of a vineyard, Jesus did the same. This is what Jesus said: A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of his vineyard, “For three years now, I’ve been coming to look for fruit in this fig tree and haven’t found any. Luke 13:6-7.

The Scripture says in (Luke 13:7) that God came *looking* (seeking) for good fruit. The Greek word for *seeking* is (zeteo, pronounced dzay-the'o) meaning *desiring*. In essence, when God comes to see the fruit we are bearing, He comes with a desire, because the word of God says "... the LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love. Psalm 114:11.

I've known a few missionaries, who had great zeal for the Lord but after sometime, they backslid and they fell away. When I look into my life, there have been seasons of backsliding and shying away from the love of God, giving a deaf ear to His words of correction, giving a blind eye to His ways and totally ignoring Him. There was not much of a difference in my mine or their backslidings. When I reflect further, I can see the same grace that God has given us. I chose to return to the Father and say 'Daddy, I messed up, yet again' and Daddy, welcomed me back. The Scripture stands true to that "...there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Luke 15:7

Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil? Luke 13:7.

When God comes to see if we're bearing fruit and He sees that we are unrighteous and evil in His sight, He will cut us off. It is easy for us to quote Romans 11:29 which says "for God's gifts and His call are irrevocable." While it is true that God does not change His mind as if He made a mistake, it is man who fails God so that He cannot fulfil such callings with them. But when, if ever, they come back to repentance, God holds them to the original obligation to obey Him.

Eight fold judgement on Jehovah's house (Isaiah 5:5-7)

- I will take away the hedge from it
- The vineyard shall be eaten up
- I will break down the wall from round about it
- The vineyard shall be trodden down
- I will lay it waste

- I will not prune it nor cultivate it
- They shall come up with briars and thorns
- I will command the clouds that they do not rain upon it.

In our human limitations, we who sleep and slumber, tirelessly pursue a lover, can you imagine God who without limitations, neither sleeps nor slumbers, pursuing us in His infinite love!

When we do something that contradicts our covenant with God, something from within ought to cry out and say ‘no, don’t’ do that.’ That something is the Holy Spirit that convicts us.

We look at the macroscopic level of injustice towards people, especially perversion and terrorism. But on the microscopic level, we employ these attributes in our adulterous hearts and war raging minds and sometimes in the guise of false humility. We use a microscope to see the evil of the world, but we use a telescope to see the evil in our hearts and minds.

That being the case, why should so many who say they fear and love God risk losing so much for so little? Why should they ignore the ancient wisdom of Proverbs? “Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burnt?... a man or woman who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself” (Prov. 6:27,32).

Sir, the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears no fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down. Luke 13:8-9

The wine dresser requested the owner of the vineyard to let it be for one more year. Metaphorically, the wine dresser is the Church, pleading before God in intercession for those who are perishing. As God pleaded for Israel to repent and come back, Jesus did the same and Paul did the same when he said “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.” Romans 10:1.

Three things God asked Judah to do. Isaiah 5:3-4

- Judge between Him and His vineyard and decide certain matters
- Tell Jehovah what he should have done that He had not done to make His vineyard produce good grapes
- Tell Him why it brought forth wild grapes when He had planted the choicest vine,

Hypocrisy will always cause eventual shame, as will sin (Ezra 9:6), backsliding (Jer.17:13), fear of man (Mtatt.8:38), selfishness (Lk.14:9), and all wrongdoing (Rom. 6:21), but innocence (Gen. 2:25), trust in God (Ps.25:2), hope (Rom. 5:5) the Gospel (Rom 1:16), faith (Rom. 9:33; 10:11), self-improvement (2 Tim. 2:15), and all righteousness (Ps. 119:6) will never make one ashamed. The Gospel teaches that whosoever believes the Truth with the whole heart will not be ashamed (Rom 9:33). The secret of deliverance from hypocrisy and shame is to know the truth which sets free (Jn. 8:32-36; Rom. 1:16) (cf. Dakes Study Bible)

SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF A GRIEVING GOD!

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.” Hebrews 10:26-30.

In our vain glory and self seeking, we Christians sometimes become too complacent and deviated from the confession of our faith and deteriorate in our reliance of God. We indulge into adverse territories of deception, bringing judgement upon ourselves. The Greek word used in this context for ‘judgement’ is ‘krisis’ pronounced ‘kree’-sis’ meaning ‘justice’ – by divine law, ‘accusation’, condemnation’ and ‘damnation’.

We should be consumed by the love of God when we walk in obedience. Instead, when we’re in constant sin, we are in the danger of being consumed (devoured) by the raging fire from God.

It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (vs.31)

The Greek word for dreadful (fearful) is ‘phoberos’ pronounced ‘fob-er-os’ meaning frightful and formidable. The Greek word for hand is ‘cheir’ pronounced ‘khire’ meaning ‘power’ Therefore the Scripture warns us that it’s a *frightful* thing to fall under the *power* of God when we are in constant sin.

If it bears no fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down. Luke 13:9
 God gives us several chances, for He is a God who is slow to anger. He takes us to a process of breaking and making. Depending on our obedience, we face different intervals of the refining process.

Semper Reformanda - always reforming

Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did.” 1 John 2:6

Our world today is looking for men and women with integrity, for communicators who back up their Ministry with their lives. Our preaching emerges of what we are. - Billy Graham.

Go to any evangelical Church or a renewal centre and the buzz word is revival and the call is anointing. But how can revival happen if we are unrepentant?

We need to discern on the thoughts of the invisible mind of God. In doing so, we would have a renewing of the evangelical mind.

Thank God for the various spiritual movements within the Christocentric framework that has reached the masses. However, while receiving the fire of the Holy Spirit, somewhere down the line, we have become lukewarm. We speak of global warming but are still cold hearted. Unfortunately, instead of reformation, there is sometimes turmoil within the Body of Christ. There is constant mayhem within the Body about issues from denomination to abomination. Provocation is one of the chief deadly sins in the Body today. Denominations provoking denominations, prayer groups provoking prayer groups and individuals provoking individuals. The Church has fallen divided instead of standing united.

William Wilberforce stated “though I am an Episcopalian by birth, I yet feel such a oneness and sympathy with the cause of God at large, that nothing would be more delightful than consuming once a year with every Church that holds the Head, even Christ.”

Indeed, we need to come together as one Body. We stand in need of relationship reformation and this will happen only if we are committed to doing so. Os Guinness said that commitment to our corporate calling means remembering the need for ongoing reformation and even for the reformation of reformation. ... the Carthusian monastic movement was proud of its motto, **“Never reformed because never been deformed.”** But in a fallen world the Reformation maxim *Semper Reformanda* (“always reforming”) is nearer the mark.

Throughout much of Christian history, the impulse towards reformation has been carried on by the voluntary principle and the voluntary movement – whether earlier Catholic movements such as the Benedictine and the Franciscan orders or more recent Protestant movements such as missionary societies and some parachurch organizations. These special kinds of reforming voluntary associations were the *ecclesiola in ecclesia* (“the little Church in the large Church”) this was a corporate reformation, but what about the *Christos Dokeemay*’ or the ‘Character of Christ’ that is personal?

Having been in Ministry for just a few years, I’m still an infant in the calling. My life is not necessarily impacted by eloquent preachers, but by men and women who are living holy lives, pleasing unto God. Their godly life style, challenges me.

Having seen how some senior ministers and ministries have handled issues and behaved scandalously, many new disciples followed them and ended up making mistakes. I was a victim of such a plight. The greatest catastrophe is that the novice missionaries are watching the way negligent Church leaders are handling Ministry and issues, and they follow the same method and cause greater scandals to the Body of Christ. What happened to the mentors of the Church?

Some Christians see how far to the edge of their sins they can go without getting caught. There is a story of a medieval

King who wanted to find out who was the best-qualified man to be his chariot driver. Three men were chosen as the best in the realm, so he took them up to a high cliff and asked them to drive along the rugged road with a sheer drop of more than a thousand feet. The first two drivers drove as fast as they could and as close to the edge as they could, showing how skilfully they could manoeuvre the chariots even though they were close to the edge. The third driver drove fast, but he drove many yards away from the edge of the cliff. He was the one who was chosen.

Resist sin, don't persist in it thinking that you could get away with it. The Word of God says that every dark thing will be brought to light.

A case was reported of a youth leader who was repeatedly sexually molested by his mentor who belonged to a prominent missions' organisation. This boy had done his discipleship at this missions' organization. His greatest pain was that the mentor said that he saw nothing wrong in his actions and gave the youth leader a philosophical explanation. The danger is that this mentor will be ordained as a Catholic priest in the next few months. How did this happen? This happened because of the negligent lifestyle and leadership as there is a delinquent pattern with this ministry. This ministry had started off very well and have done great things, but now, the testimony is lost.

Seven out of ten children in India are sexually abused with the clergy contributing to it with most cases gone untold.

The American Catholic Church has paid an estimated US\$2 billion in compensation since 1950 to victims of sexual abuse by the clergy. Pope Benedict admitted that he is "deeply ashamed". Religious leaders from other denominations, religions and philosophies have also caused these scandals. The Anglican Church has a foul practise of ordaining gay priests in contradiction when the word of God says that homosexuals will not enter the kingdom of God. This is a grotesque religion.

Because of these individual behaviours, we have contributed certain attributes to religion. One Christmas, when I had gone to a store, a Muslim brother asked me this “brother, why are you not drinking and having a good time?” “Why would I do that” I asked him. “you’re a Christian” he replied.” I responded to him with a question “brother, why are you not bombing and terrorizing any places” he was stunned and asked me “why do you ask me that” “you’re a muslim” I replied. Is this how we define religion?

Christianity is a relationship! Why is it that so many Catholic Priests and leaders are turning to Transcendental meditation and New Age Movements? It’s because they are unable to feel the presence of God, they search for it through adulterated means.

C S Lewis said: “The world does not consist of 100% Christians and 100% non-Christians. There are people who are slowly ceasing to be Christians but who still call themselves by that name... there are other people who are slowly becoming Christians though they do not yet call themselves so”

What is the image that we are projecting? How do people perceive Christians today? As Bishop Desmond Tutu said: *“When the missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said, ‘Let us pray.’ We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land.”* Is this the impression we give the non Christian? One of the greatest secular reformations in history was that of Satyagraha, the philosophy of non-violence, led by M K Gandhi which influenced freedom for India. Bertrand Russell, an atheist said this of Mahatma Gandhi, a pantheist. He said that Gandhi *“spoke to the conscience of the Christian people”* (colonialism) about non-violence. You see, when Gandhi spoke to the Christian conscience, he convicted them of their very purpose... *“to set the captives free”*

During a discipleship program at a youth missions program, when a student confronted a staff member, the staff member beat up the student and justified his actions. The leaders of the discipleship program and the directors have never done anything about it even after repeated attempts by the student to resolve the issue. The incident has caused severe mental and emotional damage to the student. However, the staff who beat up the student is address-less, the student is now an international evangelist running a international Ministry.

Sometimes, leaders and members are elated and puffed up because they belong to a well known denominational body or are possessed with pontifical privileges. This demigod attitude is destructive. They pontificate and demoralise other upcoming ministries and ministers. This is only insecurity leading to fascism in the Body of Christ. When we are to have security in Christ, why do so many of our young boys and girls go running behind one lover after another in search for love and sometimes yoking with unbelievers? Why do they seek false comfort and compromise on values and morality, ignoring the conscience when it convicts of purity? Why are there equal amounts of divorces in the Church as outside the Church? Why are we not watchful? It's because we have become complacent and in calling God our friend, we have lost the reverence for His Majesty.

In any situation, a Christian is guilty until proven innocent, that is, if, ever, proven innocent. How much then, should we be careful? It took me a long time to realize this until God permitted me to be whacked and knocked down, until I fell on my knees. *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes."* **Psalm 119:17.** He then restored me to much great heights and with a fresh anointing.

The word is reformation and the subject is you.

Humility in ministry and submission to leaders: If you cannot take direction from your leaders, that has been commissioned to them by the Lord and then onto you, you will never be able to be a fruitful disciple. If you are leading a mission centre or you're an Evangelist who cannot take leadership direction, then don't expect people to listen to you when you preach or counsel. The unteachable spirit is the exact opposite spirit of humility that causes disunity and malice. Remember what the Scripture says about it in Hebrews 13:17? *“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”*

We need to allow God, time to work on us if we want to have a Christ centred character or a Christ centred Ministry.

My greatest fear is that I should never be a bad example to the next generation servants of Christ. That me being a Mentor to so many, that I should never be a scandal to my protégé's. Christ, in His mercy has restored me, lifted me up and taught many things that develop the character of a Christian worker. **I am Work In Progress. Are you?**

We need to thaw our desensitized hearts and be sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

May we Christians never be counted as a group that inflicts Pathos on every Ethos that we step upon. Instead, may we influence Christ in every domain. Be Christ like and live Christ like.

Dearly beloved, if today, you have done anything against the Body of Christ, go down on bended knees, repent and reconcile with man and with God. How can we bring reformation in this evil world if we are evil? We stand in need of personal reformation. The reformation is a personal thing between you and the Lord and between you and the Lord's worker. It's merely an individual CALL, but yet, a corporate CALLING. Don't let the enemy steal your testimony!

Lord, may You dip us in the kerosene of Thy Spirit and set us on FIRE!

During the historic international conference for Itinerant Evangelists in Amsterdam led by Dr. Billy Graham, world leaders were present in the presence of God. This affirmation was made. I, challenge you this affirmation.

AFFIRMATION

We acknowledge our obligation, as servants of God, to lead lives of holiness and moral purity, knowing that we exemplify Christ to the Church and to the world.

Your Response: **I AFFIRM.**

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

CCC #1779: It is important for every person to be sufficiently present to himself in order to hear and follow the voice of his conscience. This requirement of interiority is all the more necessary as life often distracts us from any reflection, self-examination or introspection:

Return to your conscience, question it. . . . Turn inward, brethren, and in everything you do, see God as your witness.

“Conscience” is derived from the Greek word **συνειδήσει** – “Suneidesis”. Suneidesis is made up of two words: sun, meaning with, and oida, to know. Hence, a co-knowledge.

Conscience therefore is “literally, ‘a knowing with’ (sun, ‘with,’ oida, ‘to know’), i.e., ‘a co-knowledge (with oneself), the witness borne to one’s conduct by conscience, that faculty by which we apprehend the will of God, as that which is designed to govern our lives;’ hence (a) the sense of guiltiness before God; Heb. 10:2; (b) that process of thought which distinguishes what it considers morally good or bad, commending the good, condemning the bad, and so prompting to do the former, and avoid the latter; Rom. 2:15 (bearing witness with God’s law); Heb. 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:12; acting in a certain way because ‘conscience’ requires it, Rom. 13:5; so as not to cause scruples of ‘conscience’ in another, 1 Cor. 10:28,29... (Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words).

Conscience and the self

The Holy Spirit acts as our conscience. We would do well and right to set our conscience upon the conviction of the Holy Spirit for guidance. Many go by their conscience, but their acts are contradictory to the moral law of God. Hitler went by his conscience. He believed that the world would be a better place if it had a superior race. He massacred millions of innocent people. Mother Teresa went by her conscience and she loved and

rehabilitated millions of broken people. What was the difference? While Hitler's conscience did not bear witness to his actions, he centred his conscience on evil and therefore was possessed by the devil. Mother Teresa on the other hand, had her conscience centred on Christ and was possessed with the love of the Father in Heaven!

Over one of the doors at the Auschwitz museum is inscribed a quote from Hitler: "I want to raise a generation of young people devoid of a conscience, imperious, relentless and cruel."

When Hitler spoke those words, he spoke with deep conviction, he proclaimed what he believed in. He actually engraved those words on the hearts of an entire generation of young people. Hitler wanted to raise a generation of young Germans who unquestioningly obeyed leadership while ignoring their own conscience and were willing to sacrifice their lives on the battlefield in the name of Fatherland. Those young boys would think like Germans and act as Germans which was in the definition of Nazism.

Finally, Hitler made this statement and lived for his audience of one - THE DEVIL, devoid of a conscience.

"In my fortresses, we shall raise a young generation that will make the world tremble with fear..." —Adolf Hitler

Ignatius Loyola stated that "Examination of conscience is the single most important spiritual exercise" Examination of Conscience is by far the most important spiritual exercise for a Christian from the time he rises to the time he rests. Examination of conscience is in retrospect, reflecting on our words and actions in conformity to the word of God. St. Bernard taught: "As a searching investigator of the integrity of your own conduct, submit your life to a daily examination. Consider carefully what progress you have made or what ground you have lost. Strive to know yourself. Place all your faults before your eyes. Come face to face with yourself, as though you were another person, and then weep for your faults."

If you want to walk with God, you must examine your conscience daily and throughout the day. When we are complacent or lazy, our conscience also takes rest. When our conscience takes rest, our moral fire wall is turned off and the enemy enters with distorted thoughts intruding our minds.

Examination of conscience needs to have a standard by which we gauge what is right and wrong in accordance to the moral law of God, and thus we could discern on our conscience. That standard is the written Word of God and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Conscience, the way of life

“Paul often appeals to his conscientiousness as the leading habit of life. Even before his conversion he endeavoured to act according to the dictates of conscience....To do that which is right, so that my conscience shall never reproach me. ‘Void of offence.’ That which is inoffensive, or which does not cause one to stumble or fall. He means that he endeavoured to keep his conscience so enlightened and pure in regard to duty, and that he acted according to its dictates in such a way that his conduct should not be displeasing to God or injurious to man. To have such a conscience implies two things: (1) That it be enlightened or properly informed in regard to truth and duty; and (2) that that which is made known to be right should be honestly and faithfully performed...” (Barnes on the New Testament, Vol. 3, pg. 333).

Conscience and Service to the Lord

The Christian worker should always be sensitive to his conscience in fulfilling his duties assigned to him by the Master. Paul the Apostle was able to make a bold statement about the diligence of his conscience when he said “... *I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day*” *Acts 23:1*. Are you able to make that statement to the people around you? If you can't, then practice diligence.

Romans 13:5 “Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.” One of the challenges in serving God under a Ministry, is being receptive and in submission to the vision of leadership. In being obedient, you prove that you are accountable. I have never seen a successful servant of Christ who is disobedient, or unaccountable. If a person is negligent, he would go only to a certain level and will soon fall away.

2 Corinthians 4:1-2 “Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God.” A servant of God called by God and ordained by God, ought to live a spirit centred life. When a person accepts Christ, he/ she ought to renounce secret sins. There are many today who shy away from preaching on repentance, but instead preach a prosperity gospel. They even use deceptive means to extract money from the congregation. They distort the word of God and instil fear upon people by saying that the wrath of God will fall upon them if they don’t give what the preacher asks for. These preachers have a numb conscience, that’s why the word of God says “Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.” *1 Timothy 4:2*

2 Corinthians 4:2 “...On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” Every Christian, especially those who call themselves servants of Christ, has to have an open conscience in the sight of God. If you are convicted based on your conscience, you will never be condemned for unrighteousness, because there will be no room for unrighteousness because you will have a clear conscience.

Conscience and Communion

Examination of conscience was commanded by the Apostle St. Paul to be performed by the faithful each time they received Holy Communion: “Let a man prove”, that is examine himself, and so

let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice; for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment to himself . . . if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1 Corinthians 11:28-31). And, as the early Christians received Holy Communion very frequently, examination of conscience became a familiar exercise of their spiritual life. Thus we read of the great hermit St. Anthony, that he examined his conscience every night, while St. Basil of Caesarea, St. Augustine of Hippo and St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and founders of religious orders generally made the examination of conscience a regular daily exercise of their followers. What was thus enjoined on religious by rule was inculcated upon the faithful at large by the masters of the spiritual life as a most effectual means to advance in virtue.

So, to receive Holy Communion while in the state of mortal sin is itself a mortal sin - a mortal sin of sacrilege.

As discretion is to be used in remitting or retaining sins, the confession of the sinner is necessary and to confess his faults he must examine his conscience with proper diligence.

As to the daily examination of conscience, two species must be distinguished, the general and the particular. The former aims at the correction of all kinds of faults, the latter at the avoidance of some particular fault or the acquisition of some particular virtue.

Conscience and fruitfulness

As to the importance of this practice, St. Pius X taught in *Haerent Animo*: The excellence of this practice and its fruitfulness for Christian virtue are clearly established by the teaching of the great masters of the spiritual life. Experience shows that the man who frequently subjects his thoughts, words and actions to a strict examination, gains new strength of soul both to detest and fly from evil and to desire and strive for the good.

Even if you are being slandered and persecuted, surrender it to the Lord, the worst thing you could do is to react. Always be clean in your dealings with your persecutors, be careful that you should not be called a persecutor. This is how the word of God responds to those who persecute you *“keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”* 1 Peter 3:16.

Examine your conscience daily. Don't ignore your conscience, if you do so, and interact with people, you would end up breaking people rather than binding up their wounds. Treat people with love and care and be carriers of the love of the Father. You be the Father's love messenger. You be the conscience of the world and make the world aware of their conscience.

Prayer

“O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” (Lk 18:13) “Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven...” (Jn 20:23) Your word says, “Though your sins be like scarlet, they shall become white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall become white as wool.” (Is 1:18). Lord Jesus, wash me and I will be clean.

Your word also says “If we confess our sins, He who is upright can be depended upon to forgive sins, and to cleanse us from every wrong.” (1 Jn 1:9). Please forgive me O Lord for I have grieved and quenched your Holy Spirit.

“Forgive us our sins, for we too forgive all who do us wrong.” (Lk 11:4) and help me to have the grace to say “Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.” (Lk 23:24) when people hurt me.

Lord Jesus, I receive Your forgiveness and cleansing. Help me examine my conscience daily and to live in accordance to my conscience that is always convicted by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Chapter -6-

PRINCIPLES

Υμεῖς ἐστε τὸ ἅλας τῆς γῆς· ἐὰν δὲ τὸ
ἅλας μωρανθῇ, ἐν τίνι ἀλισθήσεται;
εἰς οὐδέν· ἰσχύει ἔτι εἰ μὴ βληθῆναι ἔξω
καὶ καταπατεῖσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν
ἀνθρώπων.

Υμεῖς ἐστε τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου. οὐ
δύναται πόλις κρυβῆναι ἐπάνω ὄρους
κειμένη.

"You are the salt of the earth."

"You are the light of the world."

Matthew 5:13, 14.

LEADERSHIP

Just as no organisation, no family is great without great leadership; it is the same with Ministry. If there is a slothful leader, the Ministry will produce slothfulness. But how do we develop into great leaders?

Israel was forced to ask that question during a critical, do-or-die period. Three men rose to the highest power: Samuel, Saul and David. All were attractive, powerful figures who commanded admiration and respect. Two, David and Samuel, made very successful leaders. The other, Saul, had a promising beginning but ended as a failure.

A good leader should first be a good follower. If you don't know how to receive feedback, you will never be able to give feedback. The un-teachable spirit has to be broken. If we're not in the habit of accepting advice and correction, we will never be able to designate authority in love. God had to break the un-teachable spirit within me before He gave me a Ministry.

Leadership Negligence

“When wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when health is lost, something is lost; when character is lost, all is lost.” Billy Graham

David's story – touched no woman.... But committed adultery

One of the most classical stories of Servants of God who have caused disgrace and yet reconciled with God, is the story of David, a man after God's own heart.

David's reign held ironic tragedies, too. David could lead a nation but not his own children. His ineffective parenting nearly destroyed all he had done when his heartless son Absalom led a rebellion. David was a murderer and a leader capable of cruelty.

Nevertheless, he was Israel's greatest king. Even at his lowest points, his great strength of character showed. He was never vengeful with his enemies. He took full responsibility for his mistakes. He managed to remember that he had started out as a mere shepherd. He held power only by the grace of God - and he believed that God had every right to take power away.

Through his love for God and his sense of astonished gratefulness for what God had done for him, David became a living embodiment of the Israel God wanted. Like all truly great leaders, he made his country thrive not just by what he did, but by who he was. (The Devotional Study Bible)

For all that David had done, in the light of today's context, do you think that David would be the leader, even of a small prayer group? Would he have been held as a scandal in the modern Church? Most certainly!

Leaders who rebuke others– ignoring their own flock

Some leaders are known for removing the speck in the eyes of the flock of other Ministries, while ignoring the log in the eyes of their own.

Eli's sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the LORD. (1 Sam. 2:1)

Eli rebukes his wicked sons

Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours. No, my sons; it is not a good report that I hear spreading among the LORD's people.

If a man sins against another man, God may mediate for him; but if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?" His sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the LORD's will to put them to death. 1 Samuel 22:25

Eli rebukes his sons, eventually. He was fast enough to rebuke the innocent Hannah (1 Sam. 1:13-14), but he did not rebuke his own evil sons until he was very old. Sins such as those committed by Eli's sons did not develop overnight, but instead, it grew from a very tender age. The same thing happens today in our Church. Church leaders ignore the debauchery of their children and their disciples. I have seen so many Ministry leaders strive to remove the speck in the eyes of the flock of other Ministries, while ignoring the log in the eyes of their disciples. There may be genuine cases where Preachers' kids are attacked by the enemy, I'm not dealing with that issue as I sympathise with them and share in their sufferings. I'm talking about the deliberate immorality.

What was the primary thing he rebuked them about? Was it the corrupt way they fed themselves from the sacrifices? Was it the way they threatened the people? No. It was something much less important. He rebuked them for their sexual promiscuity. As if the debauchery of sleeping with other women at the tent of the meeting was not enough, very surprising that Eli did not seem to do anything about their abhorration of the offerings to the LORD. "This sin of the young men was very great in the LORD's sight, for they were treating the LORD's offering with contempt." (1 Sam. 2:17)

The Call to serve God: shortened Prophecy against the House of Eli

Now a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "This is what the LORD says: 'Did I not clearly reveal myself to your father's house when they were in Egypt under Pharaoh? I chose your father out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to go up to my altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod in my presence. I also gave your father's house all the offerings made with fire by the Israelites.

Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honour your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?

“Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: ‘I promised that your house and your father’s house would minister before me forever.’ But now the LORD declares: ‘Far be it from me! Those who honour me I will honour, but those who despise me will be disdained. The time is coming when I will cut short your strength and the strength of your father’s house, so that there will not be an old man in your family line and you will see distress in my dwelling. Although good will be done to Israel, in your family line there will never be an old man. Every one of you that I do not cut off from my altar will be spared only to blind your eyes with tears and to grieve your heart, and all your descendants will die in the prime of life. “‘And what happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to you—they will both die on the same day. I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his house, and he will minister before my anointed one always. (1 Sam. 2:27:36)

God explained to Eli, all that He had done and had given them according to the call He had upon their lives. After all that God had done for Eli, Eli did not prove faithful enough to God in giving God the honour, instead, he put his wicked children above God. It is the same with many Ministry leaders. For various reasons, they are scared or reserved to exhort or rebuke their disciples or flock who are an abomination and a scandal to the Body of Christ.

God also warned Eli that all those who despise Him will be disdained. (vs. 29)

God shortened the life of the house of Eli and most dreadful of all, God revoked the Call. (vs. 30)

All that God spoke had happened. The sons of Eli fell on the same day and the Call was given to someone whom God found to be faithful.

PARADOX

The Paradox of our times in the Church is that:

We have bigger Churches, but fewer Christians
We have many prayer groups, but are less prayerful
We have beautiful buildings, but ugly builders
We have faithful sheep, but unfaithful shepherds.

Evangelists have more degrees, but less decrees
Missionaries have more machines, but fewer missions
There are more love offerings, but less living sacrifices
We have more information but less knowledge
We have more intelligence but less wisdom
We have more literature but are ignorant.

We eat more and pray less
We have more gods but are less godly
We have more rituals but pray less
We have light but live in darkness
We have hope but live hopelessly.

This is the irony of Christianity today.

PREDICTABILITY

Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control. Proverbs 25:28.

In being predictable with a loose character, we rob ourselves.

Arthur Berry was a very famous jewel thief who practised his trade back in the roaring 20's. He was a very unusual thief in that he would only steal from the very rich. Not only did they ever have to be rich, but they had to be of the elite rich. The story goes that Arthur would pass up many jewels and take only the finest, most precious. He was the thief that was a connoisseur of art. Since Arthur Berry stole only from the highest elite of the society it became something of a social status to have been robbed by this notorious robber. This kind of widespread popularity gave the police nightmares.

Well, one day the police caught him in the act, and he was shot. While he was suffering excruciating pain he promised himself that he would never steal again. Now, that was a good beginning; but for some strange happening, Arthur escaped his imprisonment and spent three more years on the loose. Then came his downfall, when an insanely jealous woman turned on him by telling the police where he was. He was recaptured and spent next eighteen years behind bars. While in prison, Arthur made up his mind that crime didn't pay and that he would never steal again.

When Arthur got out of prison he made his way to a little town up in New England and settled down. People did not suspect that he was a famous jewel thief, and due to his hard work and neighbourliness, he soon became one of the small town's respected citizens.

All went well with Arthur until someone came to the little town and recognized him as the famous jewel thief. As the news spread as to who he was, reporters came rushing in from the largest city newspapers to interview this reformed criminal. One of the questions that was put to Arthur by a young reporter was this one: "*Arthur, we know that you have taken from some of the wealthiest*

people in the world. Do you remember whom it was that you stole most from?" Without a moment of hesitation Arthur answered,

*"The person that I stole the most from was Arthur Berry. I could have made a contribution to society. I could have been a stockbroker. I could have been a teacher. I could have been a successful businessman. I could have done all these, but instead I spent two-thirds of my life in prison. **I have spent a lifetime robbing myself.**"*

Are you robbing yourself today?

Am I predictable that in a situation, people will know exactly how I would react? In a secret temptation, can I predict whether I would succumb to the temptation or whether I would fight against the temptation?

Do I have a predictable character, a character that can be predicted that it would glorify Christ? Do I have the credibility to predict my reaction in any situation?

In my life, there was a time where people, even my own Ministry brethren could predict my behaviour. There was a time when one of my Ministry leaders said that I was 'volatile'. People were scared of me for some time because of my attitudes. I thought of myself to be something that I was not, and that was, deception.

When certain areas of my life were touched, I would erupt like a volcano. Which areas of your life are being touched that makes you erupt like a volcano? Certain areas in our lives, when touched, cause us to react, with words, emotions and actions that contradict what we claim to be -Christians. Let not our lifestyle contradict our life statement.

The moment I knew that I was a predictable person for all the wrong reasons, I repented before God and asked forgiveness to the people whom I've hurt. Now however, my friends have a different opinion about my predictability. One of our Ministry directors have commented and said that I have grown wonderfully in that area. God will not rest or rather; He will not let us rest until He

knows that He can count on us to behave Christ like in every situation.

People around us expect us to behave like Christ at all times and all seasons. I'm not talking about the time when we need to rebuke and chastise people. I'm talking about times where we're right and the other person has wronged us. But the way we reacted to the situation, we ended up being blamed. Have you been in that situation before? Well, if you have, then you know what I'm talking about. All of this happens because of the anger that we have which is ungodly. Christ got angry, but His anger was towards sin, yet He loved people and He always acted in charity and great understanding. It's because of His great understanding, even prostitutes and thieves followed Him more faithfully than anyone else did.

Our predictability may depend on our temperaments. If you're like me, who grew up in hostile environments where hostility was nature to me, and upbringing was difficult, then your reaction to situations may also be hostile. When we are born, we inherit characteristic traits from our parents. As we grow up, we develop characteristic traits depending on our parents, friends, environments, etc. As we grow up, we encounter happy and sad events and these events have the possibility of leaving life long marks or scars. These scars can change our views of life and perception of people or even a community. For example, if a boy had a difficult time with a Church leader while he was growing up, his attitude towards the servants of Christ or the Church may be negative.

On the other hand, a girl for example, who has grown up with acceptance and love from her father, would grow up with security of life and will not easily give in to a guy who comes along and tells her she's beautiful.

When we accept Christ, the reset button is not pressed. We have a change in heart, the heart to accept what is right and to put away with the things of the past which are not pleasing to the Lord. After we accept Christ into our lives, we need to go through the breaking process. If we evade the breaking process, we will never

move ahead in character until and unless we deal with it. Ministry and gifts may grow, but you would never grow in fruit. The Word of God says that we would be recognised as His disciples by our fruit and not by our gifts. The Bible says that in time, the gifts will cease. What about the Christians who focus mainly on the gifts and ignore the fruit? When the gifts cease, the only gift that we would be able to give unto people is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is a Christian character.

Predictable attitude of dealing with Anger

He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity. Proverbs 21:23.

Perhaps you may have to deal with your anger like I had to deal with mine.

I was digging into the Bible for the word anger and did a Greek reference and study from the Wordsearch reference and here's what I found.

The word anger in Greek is, *orgizo*, (or-gid'-zo) meaning to provoke or enrage, become exasperated. The word anger is also connected with the Greek word *parorgismos* (par-org-is-mos), meaning rage.

When we react in anger, it causes a rage. Rage when acted upon, causes us to sin.

Anger is our natural reaction when someone wrongs us, or when we think someone has wronged us. It's not a sin to get angry, however; Jesus himself got angry at injustice and sin. You must understand that we can be angry without dipping into sin. Anger that has a motive to love the person who's doing wrong.

When we lash out at others, we often do enormous damage. On the other hand, when we suppress our angry feelings, we risk becoming bitter and depressed. Someone has wisely said: "Anger is the powerful acid that can do damage to the vessel in which it is stored as well as the object on which it is poured."

So how should we handle anger? What should we do with feelings of rage?

1. Face your weaknesses. Examine where your anger has been justified and where it has not. Jot down the four times you have become most angry in the last two or three months. Why did you become angry? Were your motives wrong? Did you channel your anger in a constructive direction? Don't offer excuses for your faults, such as "that's my nature" or "I can't help it; that's just the way I am."
2. Admit both to God and to others where you have been wrong. First John 1:9 states, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Agree with God that your attitudes have been wrong when you have harboured hate or have been critical. Where you have wronged another person in your anger, confess it to God, and to the other person involved. Ask for that person's forgiveness; heal the relationship.
3. Ask God for help in dealing with anger. God has promised that if we ask anything in line with His will, He will hear and answer us (1 John 5:14-15). Victory over anger is God's will. Trust God. He will do what he promises.
4. Learn to let Christ control you (Galatians 5:15, 1 John 5:1-5). Exercise your will in making Christ a conscious part of every area of your life. Let him live through you as expressed in your behaviour and attitudes.

Approach anger with a specific strategy.

- Deal with anger on a daily basis
- Deal with tensions when they're small.
- Learn to listen.
- Decide what is right, not who is right.

Determine one annoying situation you know you will face in the next 24 hours. Talk to God specifically about it in your conversational prayer time tonight. Prepare now to consciously apply what we have discussed to your situation.

MORE Ministry's Manifesto

Predictability in moments of temptation, the MORE Manifesto

... each one is tempted when, by his own desire, he is dragged away and enticed. James 1:14.

How predictable are you in times of temptations? It's a great challenge for every human being, especially the Christian that chooses to live according to their conscience where it always convicts of right and wrong.

In our Ministry, we have a manifesto that draws boundaries to keep us safe from temptations in Ministry which includes the character definition of our personal lives behind closed doors. The leaders of our Ministry thought over the manifesto, fasted and prayed and only then came together seeking God for a manifesto. The manifesto is intrinsic and cannot change based on a situation or a person. Here is the Manifesto.

1. To first love Jesus and be committed to daily prayer, devotions and regular fasting and to be faithful in tithing and love offerings.
2. To honour the Call to Evangelism.
3. To be accountable to the Ministry and leadership in the areas of Ministering & developing the Character of Christ.
4. Not to be with the opposite gender in isolated places unless it is our own spouse, parent or sibling.
5. As an individual not to solicit donations. As a Ministry to be financially accountable with funds duly audited by a certified professional.
6. Not to promote self but strive to promote Christ and not promote or exaggerate self and Ministry achievements.
7. To develop and maintain godly relationships within Ministry, with other Ministries and society and to proactively reconcile in the event of a conflict.

Definition of the Manifesto:

1. To first love Jesus and be committed to daily prayer, devotions and regular fasting and to be faithful in tithing and love offerings.

In Ministry, the greatest challenge is to be committed to Christ in loving Him. Loving Christ means to spend time in intimacy and union. This calls for faithful regular personal prayer which helps us to live for the Audience of One. We get so caught up with Ministry and administration that we forfeit in personal prayer. When I first met the Lord, I used to spend about eight hours in prayer every day. As time went by, it went down and down and finally sometimes there was almost no prayer. The moments of not being in prayer were my weakest moments of vulnerability. It was difficult to preach, teach and most of all to live a godly life. At this it was only doing and not being.

We need to fast and fasting has to be a part of our ministerial calling. Fasting helps us to humble and surrender our lives before the Lord. Fasting gives us power. The power that Christ told His disciples that comes through fasting to drive out those evil spirits.

We have to be faithful in every dimension of our lives which includes faithfulness in tithes and love offerings. My missionary friends and I, make sure with faithfulness give our tithes and love offerings which amount to more than just ten percent.

2. To honour the Call to Evangelism.

Honouring the call to evangelise can be a challenge when either laziness or complacency sets in. When the zeal and the fire have gone down, monotony turns into laziness. When the focus from Jesus has turned to self, complacency sets in to rely on self and when one relies on self, he or she is heading to the road of destruction.

When we first start the commissioning to evangelise, we want to save every soul, we never spare a single person that we come in contact with, we just tell them about Christ. But

after a while, it becomes a job that we dread to do. We never go out of our way to lead anyone to Christ. We get so busy with meeting our own needs instead of trusting God to provide our every need.

Once there was a man on the way to be executed for a crime that he had committed. When he had gone to the execution chamber, there was an Evangelist who had read a Bible passage to him. The criminal looked at the Evangelist in the eye and said this ‘if I believed even half of what you believe that the Bible says about hell, I would crawl half way around the world, just to save one soul.’ It takes a conviction in our hearts to stay committed. How convicted are you? It is only to the extent of conviction that you have within you that you will be able to convict others. Without that deep inner conviction, you will never be able to convict others of what you preach.

All of this is not only for those who evangelise, it is also for every man, woman and child who calls themselves Christians.

3. To be accountable to the Ministry and leadership in the areas of ministering & developing the Character of Christ.

Accountability is a key factor in Christian growth. For a short time, I did not have accountability and I ended up in a mess. When I actually sort after a spiritual leader to be accountable to, I couldn’t get one, perhaps because of the mistakes I had made and no one would want to be responsible for me. However, when I received honours from the media, the Bishop and other authorities, certain leaders had come forward to take credit for mentoring me. So what I had done was, be accountable and transparent to the leadership team of our Ministry. I would tell them just about anything, I was so transparent, that they would trust me even if an angel were to tell them otherwise. They knew that Dom will never utter a word of lie.

There are various areas of Christian accountability. The accountability to God, to leaders and to society.

Accountability comes with submissiveness. You cannot be accountable and not be submissive to the person or people you're accountable to. My Mentor asked me not to do any public Ministry for six months, I agreed immediately. I had to forfeit all my meetings, media presentations and other dimensions of Ministry. Let me tell you this, the sabbatical, was the most precious time in my life. I could reflect not just on what God has called me to do, but most importantly, I could reflect on what God has called me to BE. I realised that I'm a human being and a human doing.

I would recommend that you have an accountability partner. An accountability partner is someone who is your confident where you speak to that person just about anything. An accountability partner should always be of the same gender, male to male and female to female. Many people in the Church find it very comfortable to confide in the opposite gender and not before long, they are into a relationship and not very long after that, they're in a mess. Everything needs to be tried and tested with the right discernment.

While ministering, a Minister of the Gospel needs to be in constant check of his or her doctrine, the language and tone of speaking. Some preachers do not think of themselves in sober judgement and are not accountable. Romans 12: 3 says '...but rather think of yourself with sober judgment...'

These type of Evangelists end up hurting the flock rather than edifying. At no cost should we criticise any denomination. We have the Biblical mandate to rebuke and chastise, but we do not have the right to abuse. This is a very sticky subject and needs proper diligence to avoid hate statements.

Most of us Christians don't have the character of Christ. The character of Christ does not come over night. It is a breaking

process where God breaks us, reaches deep within our being and removes all those attributes that we have developed over the years. However, during the breaking process, people will be able to perceive our diligence and the fruit of the Holy Spirit that is being manifested in us. If we're not faithful in the breaking process, every hidden thing will come to light, sooner or later. If we do not allow ourselves to be broken, we will never be useful in the hands of God.

4. Not to be with the opposite gender in isolated places unless it is our own spouse.

If the Church today has taken a beating from secular or contradictory groups, it is mainly because of our Christian behaviour.

I've been to so many youth groups and most them have been a place for matching, hatching and dispatching. Sadly, innocently, they talk with each other, take each other's cell number, start off with a Biblical sms forwards, then a hello message, then a personal message and the list goes on. Before long, they are into a relationship that is an abomination to the Lord. To be more candid, as a preacher once said, 'there are so many youth in the Church today that give one another oral sex.' They think that by not having sexual intercourse, it is alright to do the rest. Having reached out to several hundred thousand youth, I have come across many girls who have joined youth groups as virgins and not too longer after, they were no longer virgins. As a counsellor, I've counselled many youth from various faiths and have realised that this epidemic is not just among Christians youth groups but also among youth groups and youth camps of other faiths.

At youth meetings, some volunteers found used condoms around the place. One youth told me that the first time he had gone for a retreat; he had sex with a girl on the campus of that retreat centre in an isolated place. No one should dare to

blame the retreat centre because they are not responsible for individual actions.

Every relationship has boundaries. I would never allow a female to enter into my apartment if I'm alone. I will never counsel a female if she's alone.

Many, many preachers have fallen prey to this deception of seeking comfort in the opposite gender. We should never be in an isolated place with the opposite gender, unless that person is our spouse, parent or sibling. This rule applies both to the married and the unmarried. It applies to the flock and the Shepherd of the Church.

As Christians, we are not exempted from sensual feelings or temptations, as a matter of fact; we are more vulnerable to it.

5. As an individual, not to solicit donations. As a Ministry, to be financially accountable and to be duly audited by a certified professional.

Greed is one of the things that displeases God. It pollutes the mind and the heart. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 6:10 'For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.' Of course to run a Ministry, we do need money. But to solicit in huge amounts, misquoting Scripture and manipulating through sermons are what people classify as cheap. In our Ministry, we have a strict policy of not soliciting for personal or Ministry funds. A person once remarked that if we are praying in faith for other things, why not pray for funds instead of soliciting? This man has a very valid point. We pray in faith for people to be healed and they are healed, so why not pray in faith for God to also provide funds for our needs? Wouldn't He provide? God can use anyone to provide for us.

Many Evangelists, insist on getting rich, they preach on prosperity and the flock follow into the prosperity gospel. For sure, God wants to bless us, but does He want all of us to be prosperous, financially? Perhaps God would like some to be financially prosperous so that they could bless the Church financially. Perhaps, God would like others to be prosperous, spiritually and not financially. Many preachers have gone after money and have forgotten their call to serve Christ in all circumstances. They mourn when they don't have enough money to spend on their luxuries. They preach a prosperity gospel leading the flock to run after prosperity even to the point of missing Church and devotions due to lack of time, to the extreme of falling away just to fulfil what their Pastor had preached.

This is what the Scripture means when it says 'People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction' 1 Timothy 6:9.

If you search on the internet for Ministry scandals, there are two predominant areas of where powerful men and women of Christ have fallen. It is in the areas of Finance and Adultery. It's either they have misused funds or they have committed adultery.

The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. Why have we fallen prey to these temptations? It's because we have forgotten to live for the Audience of One.

6. Not to promote self but strive to promote Christ and not promote or exaggerate self and Ministry achievements.

... nor is it honourable to seek one's own honour. Proverbs 25:27.

Great danger: Satan promoted himself, and he fell. There is always a temptation of promoting self. I used to get annoyed when people told me that I had pride and with promotion of self. There are

several testimonies of healings and deliverance in our Ministry. Sometimes, when testifying, there were subtle intrusions of self praise and self glorification. In trying to be humble, I was producing false humility.

Exaggeration is another major issue with Christians. In India, we have multitudes of preachers, plus we have international preachers staging crusades. The tallied amount of souls evangelicals claim to have saved, out number the population of India and yet India has only about 3% of Christians.

When we exaggerate, we're self seeking. We're seeking a name for ourselves. What happened to the denying of self and glorifying the name of Christ? This is insecurity. When we are insecure, we try to make a point while making a name for ourselves and most of the time we manipulate what we say and speak.

For me, it's a great temptation as I'm still young and in such a short time, God has done powerful things in and through me. I've been in so much of the media and met with decision makers of Nations. It's a temptation to constantly speak about it or to be more specific, to brag about it. It's a great challenge for me sometimes to be myself because of the expectations of others. I'm constantly reminded of the Scripture that says 'If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself' Galatians 6:3.

7. To develop and maintain godly relationships within Ministry, with other Ministries and society and to proactively reconcile in the event of a conflict.

If there is an area in my life that I could regrettably say I have failed, it is in the area of maintaining godly relationships. I was fast at building relationships, but sadly, even faster at breaking them. I miserably struggled with this. I was not wrong all the time, however, I reacted wrongly, with emotions and without love. To maintain godly relationships, a distance needs

to be maintained. In maintaining a distance, our response to issues will not be emotional. In dealing with other Ministries, we should always deal in love and charity, in loving kindness and tender mercies. When a Ministry has an issue with us, the easiest thing to do is to justify ourselves while the godly thing to do would be to hear what they have to say and amicably resolve the issue. There may be times when we may not be able to agree upon certain issues but we have the opportunity to love one another and put the issue to rest. Putting it to rest, never to bring up the issue again and never to be accusing.

Someone remarked that the single most reason for atheism is Christianity. It's because we have do not behave like Christ. Once, during a Christmas season, I had gone to a store and there was a muslim brother who was the owner and I knew him. He asked me this 'brother, aren't you going to get drunk and party for Christmas?' my response was 'NO?' he responded by saying 'we'll, you're a Christian?' I responded to him saying 'are you going to bomb any place?' he asked me why, I responded by saying, 'well, you're a muslim!'

Sections of Society have categorised Christians, simply because of the way we have behaved in the past. They don't look too much at the Mother Teresa's or the Saints of the Church when it comes to role models. Why? It's because the non Christians don't interact with the saints or the Mother Teresa's of the Church, instead, they interact with you and me and most of the time are turned off with our behaviour.

Our call to predictability is here and now. We have a choice of being predictable in the right sense in every situation.

**“Brothers, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation...”
Hebrews 13:22.**

Chapter -7-

CONCLUSION

Μακάριος ἀνὴρ ὃς ὑπομένει
πειρασμόν· ὅτι δόκιμος γενόμενος
λήψεται τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς, ὃν
ἐπηγγείλατο ὁ Κύριος τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν
αὐτόν.

*Blessed is the man who perseveres
under trial, because when he has
stood the test, he will receive the
crown of life that God has
promised to those who love him.*

James 1:12

EXHORTATION

“If I be worthy, I live for my God to teach the heathen, even though they may despise me.” Saint Patrick

The path is narrow. The way is straight. The Lord is Holy.

Living for the Audience of One, is the greatest challenge but it is also the chief goal for every Christian. We are to live our lives holy, pleasing and acceptable unto to God.

- Teachers of the Truth will be listened to, if we practice the Truth.
- People will listen to you because your life is a reflection to the obedience of God.
- We cannot talk about values of the Gospel unless we live those values.

People are so confused with the mixed values. We have an opportunity to promote the value system of Christ.

- Ears – in tune with the Holy Spirit
- Mouth – to proclaim the Truth
- Mind – of Christ
- Heart – of Reconciliation
- Hands and Feet - Isaiah 61
- Eyes – Compassion of the Father

God has lit a match; we need to keep the fire burning!

Call to the Prophetic

Many people think that the prophetic call is fun. The role of a Prophet was to blow the whistle against and for the Nation. The

idea about the prophetic dimension is to speak forth God's Word. The Prophets of the Bible spoke with their lives. They enacted God's heart for the Nation. They spoke of judgement but also of the love of God.

The cost of being a Prophet

If we don't say anything in critique, we are considered good. This will leave no room for Prophets. We need Prophets in our Ministry to constantly correct us. Prophets and Evangelist should get along.

- Anything important in life always comes with a cost attached
 - Jesus Christ
- The Prophet of the Bible paid a heavy price – John the Baptist
- A Prophet had to marry a Prostitute - Hosea
- One could not cry at a funeral - Jeremiah
- One had to sleep on one side for three hundred days – Ezekiel

The call to Love

God is love. Only those who learn to live in love can experience love. When we love and show compassion, it is not given up, it is received.

The Call to Heal

My brokenness and humiliation has helped me bring healing to people. Persecution brings humility and compassion. Just as Jesus was tested, He can empathise with our weaknesses. It is only when we are broken and wounded, can we understand others, with compassion.

The key in healing is, it is only when we are healed, can we give healing to others. If we carry emotional wounds and counsel others, we may be biased in our counsel.

“May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless...”

1 Thessalonians 5:23

We need a three tier healing. The Body from the lust of the flesh, the mind from the pride of life and the soul from lust of the eyes.

Like looking in the dessert for drinking, we look for the Holy Spirit in our dry, evil ways and that's why we cannot be healed and not able to heal others.

Mary, the mother of Jesus was victorious. She never failed the Lord. She was called blessed! All this, because she had trust in the infinite power of God. "For nothing is impossible with God." Luke 1:37.

Mary had learnt to live in the Spirit. She perfectly submitted to God "I am the Lord's servant. May it be done unto me as you have said" Luke 1:38

Mary, carried the word of God, from HER womb, to HIS tomb!

Where do we go from here?

For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations. Isaiah 61:11.

A prediction that righteousness and praise will spring up among all the Gentiles like plants and buds springing up and growing in gardens and other places of the earth. These passages in this one book predict a time when righteousness will be a common thing in all the earth.

The seed in deed, is greater than the forest.

- God has given us a small seed
- God is calling us to plant and take care of it
- The seed will be a small one to begin with

Treasure in earthen vessels

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. 2 Cor. 4:7, KJV.

Here it refers to the power of the Holy Spirit through the light of the gospel in our bodies. The emphasis is on the contrast between a frail vessel of the earth and the priceless treasure of power that dwells in it.

Get rid of the old yeast

1 Cor. 5:6-9 "... Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast so that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth."

We need to identify the leavens in our lives.

[Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch] As was the custom of the Jews before the passover to cleanse their homes from all leaven, so we are admonished to clean out the immoral practices from our lives.

[as you are unleavened] You are yet unleavened; the filth of moral sin has not yet become spread among you. If you will purge this immorality out then you will be a new lump, completely free from sin.

[Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us] Christ has become our Passover lamb and by His blood all sin can be purged (Ephesians. 1:7; Hebrews 9:22; Rev. 1:5).

If you cannot control yourself, you cannot be in a place of influence. Renounce all false ways of thinking. We cannot believe in something and contradict it.

Trust in the Lord: When the navigation instrument of the seamen fails, they rely on the North Star. What are you relying on when everything fails? My God did not need grapes to make wine, He did not need me to be righteous to save me, He died and cleansed me with HIS precious Blood. Rely on Him!

FINISHING THE RACE

“Be ever engaged, so that whenever the devil calls he may find you occupied.” — St. Jerome

“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.” Acts 20:24

Isn’t this dying to self and living for Christ? Paul knew his calling and he knew that such a call had come with a huge price and he was willing to pay that price. He considered his life worth nothing to himself though his life meant a father figure in the eyes of his people. Paul’s eyes were on the race - not that he had set to run, but on the race that God had set for him to run. Many Christians, especially Servants of Christ, set goals for themselves that are not of God. When they see healing Ministries, they want to be in that Ministry, when they see prophetic Ministries; they want to be in that Ministry. They don’t discern on the call that God has for them. Some Servants of Christ start off rightly discerning their call and the later drift away in another dimension.

Many of us start off well in the calling given unto us but later on we diversify and lose sight of the original call that God has on our lives.

Paul was focused on Christ and proclaiming the message as far and wide as possible. One preacher said, “I don’t want to preach healing, but I want to preach the healer. I don’t want to preach deliverance; I want to preach the deliverer.”

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” 2 Timothy 4:7

When I see men and women who stood the test of time, I marvel at how they worked towards finishing the race that God had set for

them. They endured hardships. In the midst of obstacles, they fought against loneliness, depressions, rejection, hunger and the wrath of this evil world. They fought the good fight of standing for the truth in the midst of lies from the enemy that God does not exist.

“Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” James 1:4

It is only through testing that we can identify we have stood the test of time. Unless we are tried, tested and approved can we grow in maturity. Maturity does not come over night. It is developed through the discipleship that God puts us through. It is only when we persevere can we reach maturity. We need to persevere even if the world comes against us. We need to persevere and produce good fruit even if we’re being condemned and bad mouthed.

My dearly beloved Christian, my prayer for you is that you would always seek God and live for the Audience of One.

PRAYER

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:14-21.