

YOUNG MINISTER'S DIGEST

...A publication of Gospel Alliance



EQUIPMENT FOR MINISTRY

- Church that will would evangelise the World of the 21st Century.
- Desiring the Office of A Bishop.
- But thou O Man of God.

(Maiden Edition)

Introducing

YOUNG MINISTERS DIGEST

We are delighted to present to you the maiden edition of Young Minister's Digest. This Digest is designed to equip young ministers for service in the body of Christ, and for the work of the gospel in general. This maiden edition focuses is on the very reason for this publication: **"Equipment for ministry"**. We found the article by T. Austin-Sparks adapted to this end: "Were we asked what is the essential and indispensable equipment for the work of God we would say unhesitatingly; The anointing and filling with the Holy Spirit!... only God could do His own work, and that He never uses any man or his natural equipment except on the ground of an utter dependence upon Him: that gifts, training, ability as such do not count with God and are only of service when the man has been translated from a natural ground to a spiritual through the deep in-working of the Cross in its principles and laws. Nothing but spiritual endowments can meet spiritual forces, and this is the background of all the work of God."

This is followed up by two other articles: **"desiring the office of a bishop"** and **"Thou Oh man of God"**, both of which aims to show the correct motive for approaching the work of ministry. Instructions as to the need for sound theological studies as part of equipment for ministry and also the need for a robust prayer life has also been included in this maiden edition.

The general design/outline for this periodical include:

The Featured Article: This will usually form the Title for the edition, and serve as the theme for the edition.

Follow up Articles: Two or three articles will usually be included to further emphasize or broaden the scope of the theme.

Marriage/Family Life: We have reserve this page to

address issues regarding marriage and family life as it concerns ministers of the gospel. We consider this to be a critical aspect in training for ministry

Theological Review: As part of our aim to see ministers grounded in sound theology, topical "theological" issues are reviewed in this session.

Expository Bible Study: Specific book of the bible will be studied bit by bit in succeeding editions. It is generally agreed that this is the most enriching way for ministers to study the bible, our aim is that young ministers will imbibe the culture of expository bible study.

Biographical Review: Nothing seems to challenge the mind like to read stories of those who have succeeded in their call and ministry. This page hope to challenge every young minister.

Mission Challenge: We have dedicated this page to bring to our awareness the state of missions work amongst the unreached people group, and what we can do toward global evangelism.

Extras: this include short articles, quotes and prayers, etc.

Gospel Alliance update: We have dedicated this page to give update on our work and up coming events as a ministry. It is our hope that this publication will be given out biannually to young ministers on campuses, bible schools and churches free of charge. Our sincere prayer is that this publication will truly serve the body of Christ, equipping the saints for the work of the ministry.

Your partnership in seeing this done will be highly appreciated.

Your Brother,
Val Obioha
Editor-in-Chief

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ABOUT GOSPEL ALLIANCE

Gospel Alliance aims to raise mature and balanced ministers who will lead reformation and revival in the Church, so that the church would fulfil her vocation in this age.

To achieve this, we:

- Support young ministers through fellowship, prayers, mobilization, training, and emphasis on raising godly homes.
- Labor for the reformation and revival of the church through prayers and the word of God.
- Mobilize the church to take definite responsibility for Evangelism and Missions in its various forms.

WHAT WE DO:

MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM: The trust of our missions and evangelism are young people, with a special emphasis on those in higher institutions of learning within and outside Nigeria. We engage in the following forms of evangelism: One-on-one Evangelism, Print Media, Social Media Engagement, Discovery Bible Studies (DBS), etc.

DISCIPLESHIP AND TRAINING: Our discipleship and training is also focus on young people, with a special emphasis on those in higher institutions of learning. We run the following programs in this regard Campus Prayer Cells, Discipleship Exposure and Experience Program (DEEP), Specialized Training Courses (Short Bible Course,

Missions and Evangelism Course, Christian Leadership Course, Music Minister's Course, Courtship and Marriage Course, Children and Teens Ministry Course, etc.) are some of the courses outlined for training of ministers, Publications and Social Media Engagement: Podcast, online counseling, etc., Conferences and Retreat (Co-labourer's Retreat (CLR), Prayer and Word Conference (PWC), Young Leaders Summit (The Gates), etc.

-FAMILY MINISTRY: Family life is key if a minister must fulfil his ministry. Therefore we take special concern to see that young ministers within our reach have a balanced family life. The following programs are put in place towards this: Annual Leaders and Spouses' Retreat (LSR), Annual Family Vacation Camp (FVC) Monthly Family Time-Out, Courting and Young Couples Life Education (CYCLE) Program.

-PRAYER MINISTRY: Gospel alliance runs the Alliance Prayer Network (APN), an online prayer network with a focus to mobilize ministers towards intercessory prayers for the body of Christ, and progress of the gospel.

-PUBLICATIONS AND MEDIA MINISTERIES: Our publications includes: Specialized Devotionals; Young Ministers Digest, Welcome to Campus Series Books and Discipleship outline.

EQUIPMENT FOR THE MINISTRY



"And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent... but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Exodus 4:10).

"And the Lord... said go, and thou shalt save Israel... And he (Gideon) said, Oh, my Lord... behold... I am the least in my father's house" (Judges 6:14-15).

"Then said I, woe is me! for I am undone... And he (the Lord) said, Go..." (Isaiah 6:5,9).

"Then said I, Ah! Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak, for I am a child... The Lord said... Thou shalt go..." (Jeremiah 1:6-7).

"I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son... And the Lord took me... and said unto me, Go..." (Amos 7:14-15).

"And he appointed twelve that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth" (Mark 3:14).

"Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8).

The last words quoted above are the answer to all the others. Although Pentecost marked a new epoch and method of the Holy Spirit's activity, yet throughout all time God's Work has been done through the Spirit's agency. Were we asked what is the essential and indispensable equipment for the work of God we would say unhesitatingly; The anointing and filling with the Holy Spirit!

In the instances cited above we have men of vastly different types, but they are all brought to a common basis. Moses was a man of tremendous natural and acquired ability. There was initiative, drive, passion, devotion and courage on the emotional and volitional side, linked with "all the wisdom of the Egyptians" on the intellectual side, and evidently considerable strength on

the physical. Isaiah and Jeremiah were not without a wealthy endowment of inherited social, religious, and ecclesiastical advantages and good training. Then what need we say about Paul on this side? On the other hand, Gideon, Amos and most of the Apostles were of humble and simple birth, meagre education, and few worldly advantages. Of the latter it is recorded that "they were ignorant and unlearned men". All these, we have said, had to be brought to a common basis. Through painful and sometimes long drawn-out discipline and trial the former had to come to the place where they recognized that only God could do His own work, and that He never uses any man or his natural equipment except on the ground of an utter dependence upon Him: that gifts, training, ability as such do not count with God and are only of service when the man has been translated from a natural ground to a spiritual through the deep in working of the Cross in its principles and laws. **Nothing but spiritual endowments can meet spiritual forces, and this is the background of all the work of God.**

God may use the gifts with which He has entrusted men by nature or acquisition, but not until they have been brought through death on the natural plane to life on the spiritual. Moses went that way; Paul went that way; and so have all who have really been used of God for Spiritual and Eternal ends; that is, if the worker as well as the work was to be accepted.

No one will think that we are against all-round training and equipment. Far be it from us to suggest that this is of no vital consequence. What we are emphasizing is that though given every possible natural or acquired endowment, education, natural ability, zeal, evangelical faith and doctrine, a knowledge of Christian work, etc., there may yet remain an essential without which all this is going to fail. This superlative factor is: "filled with the Holy Spirit".

On the other hand, a Spirit-filled man is never one who holds a brief for ignorance or despises and neglects such

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acquisitions of knowledge as will be ground upon which the Lord may work. It is one of the romances of the Spirit's activity that under His stimulation and quickening many of the most illiterate have become able and eager to master things for which they had neither desire nor ability before.

Now these simple basic things lead us on further. The Lord Jesus as the model servant declared: 'I do nothing of myself; as I hear I speak.' 'The words that I speak, I speak not from myself.' 'The works that I do, I do not from

myself.' Here is even a sinless "myself" refusing to speak His own words or do His own works. He was deliberately hanging and drawing upon the Father for everything. It is clear that He realized that even in His own sinless case this was necessary, and to do otherwise was to lay His mission open to infinite peril from without. Thus it was an utterness of God. For such an utterness - which, let us urge, must characterize all who are to most closely approximate to God's ideal servant - there must somewhere at some time be a zero point on man's side. This zero point is clearly seen in the life and ministry of so many of the Lord's servants - the time when despair of everything well-nigh engulfed them, and 'God was their only asset'.

But is it necessary that this point should only be reached at a more or less late stage in Christian life and service, after perhaps, years of activity? Should there be a considerable degree of ineffectiveness, failure and abortion because such a large percentage of the effort and activity is "in the flesh", or of man? It is necessary that at last, perhaps at long last, the big framework, the loud hammering, the feverish busyness, etc., should begin to fall away and the genuine spiritual and eternal result be comparatively small. We may settle it once and for all that only what the Holy Spirit does will attain unto God's end and remain eternally.

Surely God would have zero on man's side reached at the beginning! Surely this is according to the experience of men in Scripture! At least it was a definite registering of that point to which they were continually brought back if they tended to move beyond it in self-sufficiency.

This, we believe most earnestly to be the true nature of training for the Lord's work alongside of and in company with, a growing knowledge of Himself in His word and in experience. The only knowledge of the Word of God which is of any profit in service is experimental knowledge. That knowledge is the knowledge of God Himself which makes the Word live.

Moses was trained for His life work in the hard school of

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nation. Forty years in a wilderness tending sheep for a man of a tremendously active disposition! He had set out with great visions. His motive was good and the end in view was right. His filling up of the outline, however, was mistaken. How to be patient with wrong without condoning it or losing a passion for right is one of the big lessons to be learned by those who would deliver men. Not to put a halo of romance about service for men and to think that there will be a due appreciation of one's self-sacrifice without becoming cynical by reason of disillusionment is another. Not in any way, manner, tone or conduct to suggest superiority is a third. These were some of the minor lessons which Moses had to learn, but they were themselves big ones. Dependence, faith,



obedience, humility were the primary things, and these cannot be got from books or lectures. Isaiah had to have a vision by which he was overwhelmed with his own unfitness.

Paul had to come off his intellectual, ecclesiastical, traditional, official high horse with a tremendous thud and grovel in the dust in subjection to the hated and despised "Jesus".

The disciples had to learn many lessons as to their own miserable inability to satisfy the heart of their Divine Master, and, at length, they all suffered the shame of having been proved incapable of believing through the cross.

This is all necessary training and preparation. How few there are who would voluntarily accept a course of training like this! But this surely ought to be the nature of the work done in a place for the preparation of God's servants. There should be a handing over to the Holy Spirit to take into and through all such experiences of spiritual discipline as are necessary to a deep knowledge of God. There should be the knocking of the bottom out of our ideas of work and service. There should be the making of everything inward and not outward; spiritual and not natural; from God and not from ourselves. If needs be, there should be the discipline of inaction. It is so easy to be content if only we are busy and active, but often this only gets in God's way, and He has to take our work away in order to teach us that it is Himself, and not service as such. With many the Lord has to adopt a wearing-out policy, for they will not yield otherwise.

The Ideal School of the Prophets

The ideal 'School of the Prophets' is that in which the spiritual life has first consideration; where the Holy Spirit is dealing with the individual and where the Word of God is being made necessary for light, strength, comfort and direction. If we are going to live by the Word, the Word must live for us, and experience is the meeting-place of life and knowledge.

No training centre is adequate which is only intellectual and practical in the sense of doing work. There must be primarily the attention to the spiritual life, its nurturing and directing, and especially the presence of the Holy Spirit must be sought and guarded for that work which can never be done from without.

Now, having said all this, we come back to recognize that, in principle, this was the basis of the mighty activities of God from the time of the fulfilment of Acts 1:8. The Cross, in all its fullness, was brought by the Holy Spirit into the lives of those first believers and witnesses, and the change in the character of the apostles is most

noticeable. They became selfless, humble, fearless, full of love, patience, and long-suffering. 'Position' or 'place', reputation, prestige, 'success', popularity, etc., no longer motivated their service. Note how on everything they are directed and controlled by the Spirit! The Lord is released when the bands of the self-life in all its forms in His servants are burnt up by the Fire. As through His Cross He came to His own personal liberation to the boundless so, as His Cross is planted deeply in the natural life of His servants, He is free to do His mightier works. Oh, that we could see early enough in our lives that when Christ went to the Cross He not only took our sins, but He took us! and that not just as sinners, but as men; as preachers, teachers, workers, and everything, so that "henceforth it is no longer I, but Christ". All too late some of us have had to be crucified in one or more of these capacities; and through death preaching has had to be put off the human level and born again from above. And the same with other things. Oh, for a new company of such who right at the beginning are put there! Then God will do His new thing and we shall see a fresh release of the Lord. He is not straitened in Himself, but He is straitened in the natural activities of His servants, which activities are brought over into spiritual things by the horizontal method

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instead of by the vertical - that is, along the human line, instead of by the Cross, the resurrection, ascension and descent from above.

As it was in the time of the types the strictest laws governed the anointing with the holy oil, and it was



repeatedly stressed that "upon man's flesh shall not the oil come", so the Lord, who is no less particular today, will not give His Spirit to come upon man's "flesh" - man's self-life. All that must first come under the power of the Blood and be taken to the Cross to give the Spirit a clear way. The first witnesses had nothing to gain, but everything to lose in this life by even naming the Name of Jesus. There was nothing that could be in the slightest degree a sop for the senses. Those at Jerusalem lost everything very early and were scattered abroad. From without the Lord kept everything pure and free. But He never departs from His principle, His original premise, and where He is allowed He will work this state into the very spirit and life of His servant in order that all things may be of Himself, and "whatsoever God doeth it shall be for ever". The law of the corn of wheat most surely operates: enlargement through limitation, gain out of loss, life out of death.

From "A Witness and A Testimony" July-August 1970.



DESIRING THE OFFICE OF A BISHOP

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. 1 Tim. 3:1 (KJV)

It is important we understand a few phrases in this title, 'Desire', 'Office' and 'Bishop'. **Desire** is synonymous with a *wish, want, longing, craving, yearning, aspiration, request, plea*, etc. it is to wish something strongly. The word **office** is synonymous with several things, but in the context of this article, *it is a position of responsibility; an official post or position of duty, trust or responsibility* and to define the word Bishop we will consider how different versions render it in 1 Tim. 3:1. A bishop is an *overseer* (NIV, ESV, and HCSB), *elder* (NLT, NCV), *congregation leader* (CJB), *Pastor* (TLB), *Superintendent* (AMP), *Church official* (CEV). The fundamental fact we must begin with that will give breath to a few of our discourse is, every desire God produces in a man's heart comes with the right motive, it has a direction and a purpose, centred on God and there are principles that guide its fulfilment. *This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.* KJV.

Bear in mind too that this portion of the letter was written to a believer with regards to his task in the body of Christ, so the word 'man' in this context of this scripture does not signify man generally irrespective of his condition but one who has been r

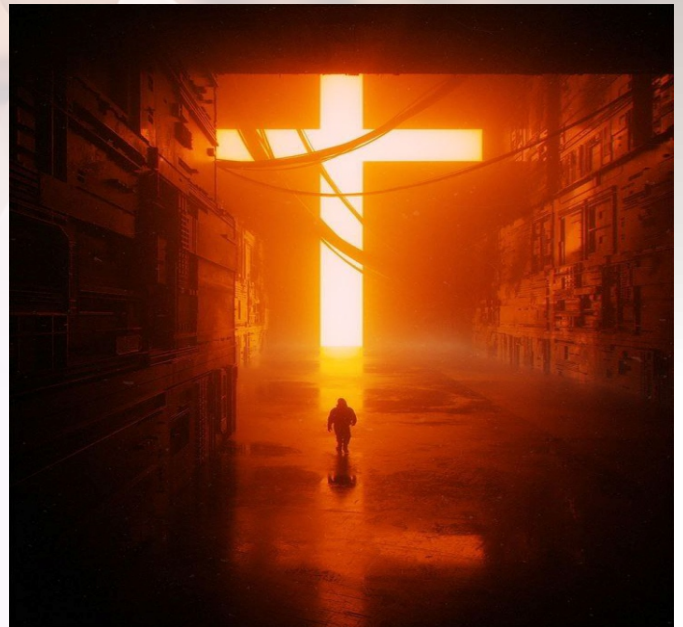
It saddens the heart of God today that many believers actually are desiring the wrong things, driven by their lust they clamor passionately for titles, it may be the title of a deacon, pastor, apostle, bishop, etc".

egenerated. It is perfectly okay if such a man desires the office of a bishop, this fundamental truth needs to settle in our hearts. Secondly, it is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit to produce this desire in our hearts *Phil 2:13*.

For it is God Himself whose power creates within you the desire to do His gracious will and also brings about the accomplishment of the desire. Weymouth (emphasis mine). It is not a carnally birthed desire nor a selfish ambition or the will to do something. It is a desire whose source can be traced ONLY to the Holy Spirit's workings in a man.

Thirdly, it is also expedient to watch our hearts to know when God is stirring certain desires in us so

that we can trust Him for guidance, because a desire can fade away and lose its potency with time if it is not acted upon, if a desire does not find an expression it does not become a reality. Consider David who was having desires to build the temple for God in the old covenant, he didn't procrastinate it, he immediately discussed with Nathan (2 Samuel 7:1-17). When God begins to stir up a desire, it is imperative to recognize that work and seek His counsel. A desire is for an appointed time (that is, may be fulfilled now, or later in the future) this is very imperative and necessitates the need for us to be alert concerning God's dealings in our lives. Furthermore, concerning desire, in the context of



this study, he that desires (*wants, yearns*) for the office (*the position of responsibility; an official post or position of duty, trust or responsibility* of a bishop (*elder, office*) desireth a good work. It is important that we quickly note that God's Spirit did not say, "He that desires the title of a bishop", but "desires the office". The office in this context is not a title **but a position of responsibility concerning a bishop**. It saddens the heart of God today that many believers actually are desiring the wrong things, driven by their lust they clamor passionately for titles, it may be the title of a deacon, pastor, apostle, bishop, etc. but not a sincere desire for the office. They are bruised when they are not recognized by their 'hard-earned' title by other brethren. Brothers and sisters are not just content to be addressed as brothers or sisters, they want recognition among

God's people, in fact, it is an aberration in today's churches not to add that title and give 'honour' as some may supposed to these persons. But whichever way we may want to justify this crave this is simply not how God designed the new covenant church to be and not the cravings that heaven produces in a man's heart, the desire is a longing for a responsibility, God's initial work in a man's heart that births him into the fulfilment of purpose.

Another foundational truth we must consider also is the *motive* for such desire. Every desire God wrought in a man's heart is first centred on God, not on man. Consider,

Phil 2:13

*For it is God Himself whose power **creates within you the desire** to do His gracious will and also brings about the accomplishment of the desire. Weymouth (emphasis mine)*

Rev 4:11

*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: **for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.** KJV (emphasis mine)*

All things, is all things, including the desire, and it is for His ultimate pleasure, to bring Him praise and glory. So, if God is stirring a desire in your heart for the office of a bishop, the first motive that the creator had is to bring pleasure to himself FIRST. It

So, if God is stirring a desire in your heart for the office of a bishop, the first motive that the creator had is to bring pleasure to himself FIRST"

is not for you to be seating in the front pew in the assembly of God's people as a "man of God", dressing as a man of God or commanding people around... Please understand it is first for God's pleasure.

*For it is God Himself whose power creates within you the desire **to do His gracious will** and also brings about the accomplishment of the desire. Weymouth (emphasis mine)*

'...to do **His** gracious will...' those 'will' may be centered around God's specific or/and general will of God for that man. Not centred around what the man wants. This desire has a purpose attached to it, it has direction and it is necessary for a child of God to understand for what purpose? Because a man can interpret the purpose wrongly and channel that desire to pursue his own selfish aim and objectives. That is how men have messed up a genuine work God started in them, they did not settle first to understand what God was saying,



they quickly jumped out and they were swallowed, probably as they were having desires for an office in the body of Christ they misinterpreted it to mean they need to start a fresh ministry or they began to lord over persons. The purpose must be understood.

Lastly, with regard to this matter of desire, there are principles that guide the fulfillment of that desire. Sincerely, as I grow in my walk with God, I am becoming passionate about understanding the principles that guides the fulfillment of the promise God has given me. I have experienced certain struggles in my walk or work with God, those times while I prayed, my heart was opened to accessing those principles I would follow to overcome; thus, I was learning God's ways. For life is governed by principles. Consider this scripture below. *Ps 103:7 He revealed his plans to Moses and let the people of Israel see his mighty deeds. GNT .He showed Moses how he went about his work, opened up his plans to all Israel. MSG.*

He showed Moses how he went about His work then, it was easy for Moses to apply the principles again and again and obtained the same result. Same with every desire. Consider David when he was desiring to build a temple for God, it was a desire God stirred up in Him, but there were principles to guide that fulfilment, you see if he did not access that (2 Sam. 7:5-17) he may as well proceed with that plan. But the principle that was to guide the fulfilment was one tied exclusively to him receiving the plans from God's Spirit (1 Chron. 28:11-12, 19(NIV)), plans for official duties in the temple (1 Chron. 28:13) and making available some provisions for the building (1 Chron. 28:14-18, 29:1-9)

So, when a child of God desires the office of a bishop, there are principles, modes of operation that guide the fulfilment of that desire, which has been spelled out in 1 Tim. 3. The major problem we have today is that many have relegated the standards to the background. A person who is to be ordained today is asked to fulfil certain requirements that may cut across whether the individual pays his or her tithe, belongs to a house fellowship, gets signature of his head of



BUT THOU O MAN OF GOD

“But thou, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness, fight the good fight of faith...”

1 Tim. 6:11-12

Read 1TIMOTHY 6:1-END

The context in which this phrase under consideration occurred is quite a strange one. Our culture of “freedom fighting and human right activism” makes it all the more difficult to grasp this background. Read through the entire sixth chapter of Paul’s first letter to Timothy, it starts with an instruction to slaves (v.1 – 2). The word refers to slaves who were bought probably in a slave market or captured in war, and are under a despot. Strangely the Apostle instructed these slaves to count their master “worthy of all honour” under such blatant social injustice? History had it that as at the time he wrote this, there were more slaves than free men in the Roman Empire. A preaching of “freedom and human

A preaching of “freedom and human right” would be sure to gain popularity.

right” would be sure to gain popularity. But for the apostle, he preached the unpopular gospel of submission to authority, even when that authority is unjust, so long as God has allowed it. Good as it is to be free, and have the dignity of human rights, the thought in the heart of the apostle is: which will bring God more glory and promote the gospel scheme – to fight and rebel in the name of human right and justice; causing social disorder, or to be obedient and seek through Christian character to win the heart of men and achieve ultimate freedom and social justice? The later way, though unpopular, is the way of the gospel.

It is against this background that Paul pointed out that some preachers, in order to be popular “does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our lord Jesus Christ” (v.3). Their aim is not to promote the spiritual health of the believer, but to wipe up the sentiment of men as they concentrate on addressing the material, temporal and mundane needs of men. The corollary in our time is the “gospel” that emphasize human needs and wants; material possession and affluent living. In a population where the majority are just struggling to get the basic means of livelihood, this looks justifiable, and will be sure to gain the crowds. But for such preachers the bible calls them “men of corrupt minds and destitute (robbed off) of the truth, who supposed that religion is a means of making money” (v.5). Their interest is not really the emancipation of the

people, but to fill their own pocket and be popular. Sure the gospel does bring spiritual, social and economic emancipation, but that is when it is presented in its wholesomeness; when the emphasis is placed on change in life and attitude as to glorify God. Such change will affect our outlook to life such that whether the person is a slave or not, whether he is materially rich or not, it would not matter, so long as God is honoured in his situation; “the inner satisfaction a Christian have makes him satisfied with whatever allotment or possession he may have, no matter how little or unpleasant it may be, the Christian lives in every situation with gratitude to God; not in grumbling, agitation of mind and covetousness” (See 1Cor.7:2-22, Heb.13:5). The emphasis should be on godliness, for indeed “godliness with contentment is great gain” v.6.

THE PLIGHT OF THE MAN OF GOD

With many in this endless chase of materialism the apostle gave the warning: ***“But thou, O man of God, flee these things...”*** Each of these phrases is worth paying attention to:

But thou, O man of God: In v.3 we read “If any man...” in contrast to this, we read in v.11, “but thou...”; any man may decide to teach whatever he likes, they may make wealth and the world their pursuit, but not so for you. You are a man of God! This must remain in your consciousness, you are different, you are accountable to God almighty, you are sent here to represent Jehovah, to speak for Him, and to seek His honour only, and above all else. When the temptation comes to pursue after the world, to court its fancy, remind yourself: “I am a man of God!”

Flee these things: What things constitute a peril for the man of God from which he must flee? Though in the immediate context where this statement is found, it refers directly to the pursuit of wealth, but in the earlier verses of the chapter, we note that there are other things which trigger this pursuit of wealth. It is necessary we look at each of these as constituting the things which the man of God must flee:

1. **Pride** (v.4): Man of God, make up your mind to run





away from pride as far as you can, it was pride that made a devil out of an archangel! Pride blinds the mind to the truth, and leads to damnable errors. It only reveals your ignorance, and any attempt to teach or correct you will be met by argument and self-defence. Many a preacher there are today who cannot be corrected, the smoke of their pride have beclouded them, thus they blindly pursue popularity and wealth in the name of ministry. Pride was the very first thing the apostle pointed out as the cause for which some teach false doctrines, of course you have to keep scratching itching ears to get the crowds to stay, and the money flowing.

2. Envy, Strife, Reviling, Evil Suspicions and Wrangling (v.4&5): Next to pride is envy and all its likes. We see such power tussle and unhealthy competition in the ministry today that one wonders if we have been called to compete with one another. There are strives over positions and titles, it seems the richer you are the more authentic your call. Younger minister are even more susceptible to this; when they seemed to be pushed out of the lime light, they grumble, revile, and rebel against their leaders, and the next thing is to go and “open their own ministry”. The apostle gave the reason for all these as having a “corrupt mind, and destitute of the truth”. In other words these things are a pointer that such men came into ministry not for the glory of God, but for some ulterior motives. If truly you are a man of God, flee these things.

3. The Desire to be Rich: In regards to this, a very strong warning is given in v.9 &10: *“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and has pierced themselves through with many sorrows”* The word translated “desire” is not just a passing emotional thing, but the result of a process of reasoning. Mature consideration has been given to the matter of the acquisition of riches, with the result that desire has become a settled, planned procedure. This desire seem all too natural and innocent, but it must be watched against, always ask yourself: “what is the underlying thought, the driving force behind all I do?”

“The desire to be rich” is the temptation itself, and once you give into this temptation of making the pursuit of wealth your aim in life, you have fallen into a snare; like a bird suddenly caught in a net, or a rabbit trapped by a noose: you enter into the endless chase of materialism, your mind is crowded with the thoughts of profiteering to the point where you forget about the fear of God and moral integrity – money becomes your driving force. You will not know when you begin to do things you

never thought you will do in your wildest imagination; your spiritual judgment would be impaired, your values would change, you will begin to fight for the things of this world. And with the increase of wealth will come pride and arrogance, and your heart will become harden. Your lust and greed will continue to increase, and will be uncontrollable and engulfing; all such money you accumulate will be spent very foolishly to purchase vanities and the idols of this world, before you realize yourself, you are completely out of the faith; as far as spiritual things are concerned your life is like a ship that hits a rock and is suddenly at the bottom of the sea. Indeed fondness for money is a root of all kinds of evil; this desire is base and depraved and will lead to all unimaginable evil. It can drive a man to stretch himself beyond the proper limit, for the sake of making more

Money is a god that demands absolute worship and total attention.

money. Men fond of money bend their every effort to it, and thus stray from the faith before they realise themselves. Truly as Jesus said, “you cannot serve God and money”. Money is a god that demands absolute worship and total attention; it will lure and seduce, deceiving the soul to think it is still in the path of faith, only to find out when it is too late that you have veered off the way, hit by the spikes of the world. The man of God is to develop a spiritual instinct that will automatically flee these things whenever it is suggested to the mind.

THE PURSUIT OF THE MAN OF GOD

The instruction continued thus: ***“and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness...”*** Here we are presented with what should constitute the pursuit of a man of God. The best way to flee those perils mentioned above is to turn our hearts to something more positive. Let us briefly consider it one after another:

1. **Righteousness (Moral Integrity):** Ensure all your actions are in conformity to the revealed will of God. That you are just and upright in your dealings with men, showing integrity and moral rectitude according to God’s law.
2. **Piety:** Nothing else will keep you like that deep fear of God, a sense of His awe, and unwavering devotion to God; doing everything as worship to God.

Truly as Jesus said, “you cannot serve God and money”. Money is a god that demands absolute worship and total attention;

3. **Love:** Love for God and for men must be the governing motive for all you do.
4. **Faith (Or Faithfulness):** Most pursuit after the world is simply out of a lack of faith in God. The man of God must trust his God to meet his every need; being convinced of His character and relating with Him thus. It also implies confidence in the gospel scheme and hence your commitment to it; if a man truly believe that Jesus died



and rose for the salvation of mankind, and there is a God who will one day judge the world by this man Jesus, he will be so committed and faithful to his duty of preaching the gospel that nothing else will be able to distract him.

5. Patience (Steadfastness): Here again, many are not just patient, they run ahead of God. The word used here implies cheerful continuance in what you believe, and consistent in what you are doing even though you are suffering for it, or under pressure. It means not giving up hope, nor being despondent and desperate.

6. Meekness: If pride and the desire to show you are powerful is one of the driving forces for the pursuit of wealth, you can be sure meekness will help you flee from it. It implies having a mild disposition as a result of an inward calmness, being unperturbed and having an even mind under all adversities and contradictions. It also means having power under control.

THE FIGHT OF THE MAN OF GOD

The apostle did not leave off his instructions without showing that this would involve a fight: ***“fight the good fight of faith...”*** Indeed it is a great fight to try to flee the allurements of the world and pursue the fulfilment of your call. One way one may overcome these things is to fight! The word used here describes a mortal contest, in which all your energies are required to agonize so as to ultimately win the prize contested for. The apostle tells us that this fight is a “good” fight, that is, it is honourable, it is worthwhile; in contrast to the effort people make at getting the riches of this world, we should put our energies in something nobler; which is ***“to ensure that the faith is kept, promoted and defended”***. This is the ultimate call of the man of God, and hence his fight. The

Faith must be kept from being corrupted by errors caused by ignorance, pride and covetousness; even though this may mean all form of moral and mental struggle to us, as a result of opposition from evil men, the world, the flesh and the devil. Note what is at stake for the man of God in this fight:

1. **Your Eternity:** You are to lay hold on eternal life! This is similar to Peter’s instruction when he said: “make your calling and election sure” (2Pet.1:10). Eternal life has been offered you; for this the devil and all its forces will fight. But your resolve must be to appropriate this life fully; to “apprehend that for which you have been apprehended of God,... to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil.3:13-14)
2. **Your Confession before many Witnesses:** You have confessed your faith before many, not being true to that in life will be a disgrace to your call as a minister and a great disappointment to the body of Christ whom you are called to serve. Consider the many witnesses; the sceptics, ready to ridicule the gospel, or the younger believer who might be shaken in their faith for your lack of consistency.
3. **The Witness of God Himself:** Much more than every other, the consideration that we are standing, and

Most pursuit after the world is simply out of a lack of faith in God. The man of God must trust his God to meet his every need.

fighting in the very view of God; before His penetrating eyes Who sees into the recesses of our heart. If the thought for your life and personal security tend to pull you from the fight and make you compromise His command, remember it is God “who give life to all things” you need not fear, keep this charge, even though it means martyrdom

By Val Obioha



IF YOU MUST MARRY A MAN OF GOD

Luke 14:28-33 *“For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was unable to finish.’ Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?”*

In the two illustrations above, Jesus teaches that discipleship must include planning and sacrifice. In the first, He instructs that, before a person begins to build, he should be sure he is willing and able to pay the full cost of the project. In the second, He explains that we must be willing to sacrifice pleasure, distractions, material possessions, even our family. This principle ensures one must be ready to give up everything for Jesus. Dearly beloved sister, marrying a man of a God goes with great responsibilities! Do you know and have what it takes to be one? Are you willing and ready to let go and let God? Do you have the grace and capacity to fulfil this task? Are you willing and ready to pay that price? This is a food for thought.

We live in a time when many sisters desire to marry a man of God. They are motivated by different factors. While some are motivated by the need for spiritual protection so that they will be shielded from satanic attacks. Others are motivated by the quest for popularity and attention since they believe that more people will come to know them as pastor’s wife. Some others are

We live in a time when many sisters desire to marry a man of God. They are motivated by different factors.

motivated by the fact that they will be receiving gifts from the church and individual members of their congregation. Some of them just want to answer “Mummy G.O” or “Mummy pastor”. Some others because they will be offered special sits for VIP each time

they go out with their husband for special functions and occasions. If any of these reasons apply to you, then my advice is don’t marry ‘A man of God’.

WHO IS A MAN OF GOD?

A “Man of God” is a servant of the most high God who has been called, chosen, accepted, set apart and consecrated to fulfill a specific/definite assignment. He is a man who has received Jesus genuinely into his life as Lord and personal savior. He is a man that follows God in every way, who obeys His commands with joy, does not live for the things of this life but for the things of eternity, he keeps his mind and heart pure by guarding his eyes and ears from the filth of the world. He is a spiritual leader and does everything opposite to what the world does or approves of. Therefore, the sister that must marry this man must not fall below the grace and calling of God upon his life. Such a sister must in her own right be a true woman of God, she too must have a sense of divine call to support her husband in ministry.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO MARRY?

It is important at this point that we look briefly at the concept of marriage before we continue on this subject. And the Lord said, “It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make him an help meet for him” (Genesis 2:18). Marriage is an institution ordained by God as a lifelong relationship between a man and a woman. Marriage should not be entered hurriedly, unadvisable or unpreparedly. So many marriages collapse today because of lack of understanding of what marriage is or lack of preparation. From the foregoing, the reasons for marriage is clear; that is man should marry because he needs someone who will help him actualize God’s purpose for his life; that is a ‘HELPER’.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO MARRY A MAN OF GOD?

“Marriage is an institution ordained by God as a lifelong relationship between a man and a woman.”

In 1Tim. 3:11 the scripture is very specific on the attribute of a minister’s wife (**Note:** the word translated Deacon can also be rendered as Minister).

“Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things” 1Tim. 3:11

Before we consider these qualities, we won’t want to take for granted the general condition for Christian marriage:

1) **YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN.** (John 3:3; 1:12; 1Cor. 5:17; 2 Cor. 6:14-16). Your salvation experience is very important here because the bible strongly forbids being unequally yoked with unbelievers. Light and darkness cannot walk together.

2) **PERSUASION:** You must be persuaded that God is the one leading you to marry him. He must be the man you are ready to spend the rest of your life with. He must be the will of God for your life. If not when the wind and

storms of life rages, the marriage will crash. Having settled this, we now look at the four basic condition given to us in 1 Tim.3:11.

...Must be Grave:

The word "grave" is rendered dignified, respectable, honorable etc. in some versions. It means to "have a weight of character". Her character must be such that will compile people to submit to her, not because of her position, but because of her life. She must be a woman of worth and virtue. The bible said this of Ruth "..... for all the people of my town know that you are a virtuous woman." Ruth 3:11. Now that you are single, what are people saying about you? The way you work and treat people that comes your way, is it pleasant and glorious? Do people see grace and virtue in the way you do things and attend to people? It was the gracious ways that Ruth was handling things that linked her up to a godly man like Boaz. Character indeed counts. (2Pet 1:5-6)

You must be persuaded that God is the one leading you to marry him. He must be the man you are ready to spend the rest of your life with.

...Not Slanderer

This means she must not be a gossip, and must not talk about other people in such a way as to cast aspersion on them. Many women have weakness in the use of their tongue, a minister's wife must be different. You must not be a busy body in other people's matter. You will not nose around, but mind your own business. An idle man is the devil's workshop. (1Timothy 5:13). You must carefully choose your words to be sure that those who hear you are blessed and edified, and only speaks when necessary.

...Sober

The word means to be serious minded, not being careless and frivolous. This means she must be serious with:

1) **Her Spiritual Life:** You must be a woman of the Spirit. If you are constantly in tune with God, He will reveal spiritual matters to you that have to do with your family, and the ministry. You must be prayerful and God-fearing ".... And her lamp does not go out by night". (Proverb 31:18). The fire of your altar must be kept burning day and night. You must be a praying woman over the affairs of your home, husband, children and the ministry. You must be spiritually sensitive and alert always. She must pay constant attention to the inner man. You must be a woman of inner strength and beauty. Not just in your physical appearance, but beautiful inside. This will be seen in your comportment, the way you carry yourself, and your relationship with people (1 Pet 3:4).

2. **Domestic and Marital responsibility:** That is to say you must be hard working. There must be domestic order in your home. A minister's wife must not be lazy.



The work of the ministry is very demanding in all aspect, it may be that God will have you support the work financially by taking up some job or business (Prov 31:13-18), you must be diligent at that, and at the same time not neglect your marital responsibility.

3. **The work of the ministry:** You must always be available/ready to stand in for him in preaching programs/engagements when he is unable to meet up with. You must realize it is both of you God has called into the ministry. Therefore you must develop yourself ministerially. More so, note that like Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, people will come to you for counseling/advise. Like her, you must be a mother in Israel. (Judges 5:4-5)

...Faithful in all Things

This means you must be trustworthy. Proverb 31:11 says "The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain". If you are trustworthy, you will be transparent; you will have no skeleton in your cupboard. Whether at home or at work you will hide nothing from your husband. You must be faithful:

1) **To Your Marriage Vows:** Remember you vowed to be submissive, 1Pet 3:6 says "For in this manner, in formal times, holy women who believed in God also adorned themselves, been submissive to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good..." (see also Ephesians 5:22-24).

2. **In using your Resources:** You must be faithful with money, be accountable, even when it comes to your personal earnings. Don't waste resources, don't be careless with ministry fund. Be faithful in giving and sharing; you must be willing to share your house, food, time, clothing, etc. with whosoever is in need of them. You need to have a large heart to be ready to accommodate others

CONCLUSION: "Do not be deceived; God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." Gal. 6: 7. Therefore, you cannot be living a sinful life and expect to marry a holy person. In other words if you must marry a man of God you must also desire to become a woman of God.

THEOLOGICAL REVIEW: SALVATION



THEOLOGICAL REVIEW: SALVATION

For us Christians, we believe that salvation is to be found in no other way except through Jesus Christ. The person of "Jesus Christ" is very critical if you must understand the salvation He brought. Our concern is that even though majority of Christians believe in the deity of Jesus, and of the trinity, yet the concept of salvation in the Christian circle differs considerably. Some of these concepts are downright heresy from men who still parades as Christians but have departed from the faith, others are syncretism from other religions concept of salvation. And the third set, who though may be sincere, but yet are in error arising from wrong teachings and misconstrue text in the bible. The effect is that such notions often lead to legality on the one extreme, or antinomianism on the other extreme. It is this last set of persons we are particularly concerned with in this write up.

A Brief Word study on "Salvation"

1. **soteria** (NT:4991) denotes "deliverance, preservation, salvation." "Salvation" is used in the NT (a) of material and temporal deliverance from danger and apprehension, (1) national, Luke 1:69,71; Acts 7:25, RV marg., "salvation" (text, "deliverance"); (2) personal, as from the sea, Acts 27:34; RV, "safety" (KJV, "health"); prison, Phil 1:19; the flood, Heb 11:7; (b) **of the spiritual and eternal deliverance granted immediately by God to those who accept His conditions of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus**, in whom alone it is to be obtained, Acts 4:12, and upon confession of Him as Lord, Rom 10:10; for this purpose the gospel is the saving instrument, Rom 1:16; Eph 1:13 (see further under SAVE); (c) **of the present experience of God's power to deliver from the bondage of sin**, e. g., Phil 2:12, where the special, though not the entire, reference is to the maintenance of peace and harmony; 1 Peter 1:9; this present experience on the part of believers is virtually equivalent to sanctification; for this purpose, God is able to make them wise, 2 Tim 3:15; they are not to

neglect it, Heb 2:3; (d) **of the future deliverance of believers at the Parousia of Christ for His saints, a salvation which is the object of their confident hope**, e. g., Rom 13:11; 1 Thess 5:8, and v. 9, where "salvation" is assured to them, as being deliverance from the wrath of God destined to be executed upon the ungodly at the end of this age (see 1 Thess 1:10); 2 Thess 2:13; Heb 1:14; 9:28; 1 Peter 1:5; 2 Peter 3:15; (e) of the

deliverance of the nation of Israel at the second advent of Christ at the time of "the epiphany (or shining forth) of His Parousia" 2 Thess 2:8; Luke 1:71; Rev 12:10; (f) inclusively, to sum up all the blessings bestowed by God on men in Christ through the Holy Spirit, e. g., 2 Cor. 6:2; Heb 5:9; 1 Peter 1:9,10; Jude 3; (g) occasionally, as standing virtually for the Savior, e. g., Luke 19:9; cf. John 4:22 (see SAVIOR); (h) in ascriptions of praise to God, Rev 7:10, and as that which it is His prerogative to bestow, 19:1 (RV).

The person of "Jesus Christ" is very critical if you must understand the salvation He brought. The person of "Jesus Christ" is very critical if you must understand the salvation He brought.

2. Verb: **soterion** (NT:4992), the neuter of the adjective (see B), is used as a noun in Luke 2:30; 3:6, in each of which it virtually stands for the Savior, as in No. 1 (g); in Acts 28:28, as in No. 1 (b); in Eph 6:17, where the hope of "salvation" [see No. 1 (d)] is metaphorically described as "a helmet."

B. Adjective: **soterios** (NT:4992), "saving, bringing salvation," describes the grace of God, in Titus 2:11.

(From Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

Please note the three-point highlighted above; points b, c, and d, these forms our particular concern in this study. From these points we see that the word salvation is used to refer to:

1. The present and immediate Experience (we have been saved)
2. The Continuous Experience (we are being saved)
3. The future Experience (We shall be saved)

GENERIC USE OF SALVATION WHICH INCLUDE THE THREE ASPECTS

Luke 1:77: "To give knowledge of **salvation** to His people by the remission of their sins"

Acts 4:12 "Nor is there **salvation** in any other, for there

is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Acts 28:28 "Let it be known to you then that this **salvation** of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen"

Rom 1:16 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek"

Eph 1:13 "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise"

Salvation as used in the above verses refers to the entire gospel scheme, this is reinforced in the verse quoted below

"But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle." 2 Thess 2:13-



15

This verse shows very clearly the three aspects of salvation. We are chosen for (future) salvation i.e., same as the glory in v.14; it is the purpose to which we are called (See also Rom.8:28-30), but this will come through (a present process of salvation) sanctification because we have in the immediate exercised our free will to believe the truth.

Another verse that also brought this clearly is 1 Cor1:30 "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption —"

Here, "wisdom" refers to wisdom for salvation as can be seen from the context (also as 2Tim3:15), and the three aspects of that salvation are brought out: Justification (or righteousness) which is imputed in the immediate, Sanctification (which is a vital process), and

"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise"

redemption (which is futuristic in its usage here).

SALVATION AS A PRESENT REALITY

Luke 19:9 "And Jesus said to him, "Today **salvation** has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham"

Rom 10:9 "because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved".

Refers to immediate salvation on exercising immediate faith in Christ

2 Cor 6:2 For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation. NIV

This means that salvation is presently available owing to the present opportunity of hearing the gospel

SALVATION AS A CONTINUOUS EXPERIENCE

2 Cor 7:10 "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death." This verse may also refer to progressive salvation, as repentance is not necessarily limited to those who are just coming to faith, in fact the people being addressed were already believers. The AMP renders it as referring to progressive salvation. "For godly grief and the pain God is permitted to direct, produce a repentance that leads and contributes to salvation and deliverance from evil..." AMP

Rom 10:9-10 places immediate salvation, and the continuous experience side by side. Note the rendering in CJB: "That if you acknowledge publicly with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord and trust in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be delivered. For with the heart, one goes on trusting and thus continues toward righteousness, while with the mouth one keeps on making public acknowledgement and thus continues toward deliverance."

(See also AMP and RSV; note the present continuous tenses "confesses", and "confirms" used

2 Cor 1:6 "Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and **salvation**, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." NKJV

Note Clarke and Barne's comment on these verses: "This transposition of the middle and last clauses is authorized by the best MSS. and versions. The meaning seems to be this: While ye abide faithful to God, no suffering can be prejudicial to you; on the contrary, it will be advantageous; God having your

comfort and salvation continually in view, by all the dispensations of his providence: and while you patiently endure, your salvation is advanced; sufferings and consolations all becoming energetic means of accomplishing the great design, for all things work together for good to them that love God.” (Adam Clarke's Commentary)

“It will be useful for your consolation; or it is endured in order to secure your comfort, and promote your salvation”. (Barnes' Notes.)

Phil 2:12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

"Salvation" is 'worked in' (Phil 2:13; Eph 1:20) believers by the Spirit, who enables them through faith to be justified once for all; but it needs, as a progressive work, to be 'worked out' by obedience, through the help of the same Spirit, unto perfection (2 Peter 1:5,3). The Christian neither, like the formalist, rests in means, without looking to the end, and to the Holy Spirit, who alone can make the means effectual; nor, like the fanatic, hopes to attain the end without the means. (From Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary) *See also Clark Commentary*

SALVATION AS A FUTURE HOPE

Acts 4:12 “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must **be saved**.”

“*Must be saved.*” reflects the necessity set up by God's directive plan. (See The NET Bible®.)

Rom.13:11 “*And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now, our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.*”

God's plan for salvation as we know it today shall be concluded after Christ second coming

Eph 6:17 “*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*”. NKJV (See 1Thess 5:8) This refers to our future hope of salvation, which in the present keeps us fighting towards it. Much like the effect of our hope as stated in 1Jn.3:3. (See also Clarke Commentary on Eph.6:17)

God's plan for salvation as we know it today shall be concluded after Christ second coming.

Phil 1:28 “*and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God*”.

the trials are a prove that you are on your way to salvation. This is the same sense as 1Pet 1:9-10, it is better rendered in NIV, NLT, AMP, CJB

1 Thess 5:9 “*For God did not appoint us to wrath, but*

to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ”

HOW TO RECEIVE SALVATION

Nicodemus a Pharisee (a very strict Jewish sect), and a teacher (equivalent to a Ph.D. Holder) came to Jesus at night to inquire how He may be sure of securing the kingdom. The answer Jesus gave him startled him. Jesus said to him “You must be born-again”. For a Jew, it is simply taken for granted that the kingdom of God was theirs simply because they are born of Abraham (See Matt.3:9). Jesus now tells him, you must be “born in another way”. Nicodemus asked him to explain, and He made the statement in v.6 and 7.

The figure, “being born of water” was not a strange one to the Jew. It is reminiscent of their crossing the Jordan. The stones were buried in the Jordan signifying death, and new stones were taken up signifying the birth of a new nation that was to inherit the land. It is also reminiscent of their crossing the red sea. They knew that when the Prophet that was like unto Moses comes, He would demonstrate that event of crossing the red sea. Therefore, when they saw John baptizing (which is a demonstration of that event), a question was raised in their heart whether he was the Christ, the Prophet that was to come (See John 1:19-25, c/f. Deut.18:18-19). But



Jesus was actually that Prophet (See, Acts 3:20-26 Comp.Matt.17:5). Jesus' pointing to this event of crossing the red sea (being born of water) was simply to tell him that you must pass through death; that is what the event meant; they were rescued from death as it were. He was telling Nicodemus, you must pass through death; come to the end of yourself, and receive the new life which only the spirit can give. Just like the Children of Israel before the red sea, came to the end of themselves, they had to rely only on God or they would perish.

Nicodemus, not yet clear, asked “How can these things be” (v.9). Jesus explained further using the event of the serpent in the desert (See Num.21:4-9). If the serpent (which represents sin) bites a person, rather than run around trying to cure yourself, you are to simply look at the bronze serpent on the pole. Jesus said He is this bronze serpent (v.14), so rather than go about trying to find salvation to your soul, you are to simply reply, trust, and look at Jesus. He was telling Nicodemus in essence,

that all your knowledge and strict observation of the law cannot save you. In this matter of salvation, you are like one in the water who cannot help himself, but must rely on someone else. Jesus summarized the discussion by saying: *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes (trust in, relies on) in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* v.16 Then he went further to tell the implication of not believing.

This fact of believing in Jesus as the way to salvation is re-affirm all through scripture (See Mark 16:16, 16:28-33, Rom.10:8-10).

SALVATION IS BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH (ROM.3:19-31, Eph.2:1-10)

We saw earlier that man cannot save himself, he has to be helped (this was reaffirmed by Jesus as we saw in John 3). This help is called grace because man does not deserve it at all. This grace is based on the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection provided the help we need for salvation. But this help or grace can only be received by faith (i.e., believing in the Lord Jesus Christ)

WHAT DOES IT MEANS TO BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST?

From Rom.10:9 we are told: "... if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart... you will be saved"

Two things stand out:

1. Believing and Confessing Him as saviour (the name Jesus means "Jehovah Saves"). This means that you:

- i. Have recognized that you are a sinner in need of a saviour; that God will be just to condemn you except your sins are atoned for. (Rom.3:23, 1Jn.1:8-10)
- ii. Repent from your sin (have a change of mind concerning sin, and concerning Jesus) you truly feel sorry that you are a rebel to such a good God. (Acts.2:38, 3:19, Jam.4:8-10)
- iii. Believe that Jesus' death on the cross is because of you, and it is the only sacrifice good enough to pay for your sins and reconcile you to God. You believe that He indeed is the Messiah sent to reconcile you to God. (Rom.3:23-26, 5:6-9,

2Cor.5:18-21)

2. Believing and Confessing Him as Lord. This means that you

- I. You believe that not only does He forgive you of sin, but He can also keep you from sin and give you

so rather than go about trying to find salvation to your soul, you are to simply reply, trust, and look at Jesus.

the grace (help) to live a righteous life. (See Rom. 5:10, Eph.1:19-2:5, Tit.2:11-12)

- ii. That you have accepted that He has total control of your life, you are now His slave, always willing to follow and obey Him whatever it cost (2Cor.5:14-15)

Romans 10:9-10 The word "confess" is homologeō, made up of homos, "same," and legō, "to speak," thus, "to speak the same thing," thus, "to agree with some person with reference to something." To confess the Lord Jesus means therefore to be in agreement with all that Scripture says about Him, which includes all that these two names imply. Robertson translates, "Confess Jesus as Lord." The name "Jesus" means, "Jehovah saves." The name "Lord" is kurios which in the Greek version of the Old Testament is used for the august name "Jehovah," and by its use, implies deity. Thus, to confess Jesus as Lord includes a heart belief in His deity, incarnation, vicarious atonement and bodily resurrection. Robertson says, "No Jew would do this who had not really trusted Christ, for Kurios in the LXX is used of God. No Gentile would do it who had not ceased worshipping the emperor as Kurios. The word Kurios was and is the touchstone of faith." (*From Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament, Copyright 1940-55 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Copyrights © renewed 1968-73 by Jeannette I. Wuest. All rights reserved.*)

Please Note: This believing must be with your HEART; it does not mean mere mental conviction. It means the conviction and assurance which the Holy Spirit works in you, such that your whole life and living is tied to what you believe. Heart actually represents the center of life. Then also you must confess with your mouth; that means to proclaim Christ as your saviour and Lord anytime and anywhere without being ashamed or afraid of the consequences.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU PUT YOUR FAITH IN JESUS?

When you put your faith in Christ Jesus, certain things happen. These things are real, even when you may not feel it:

1. Your sins are forgiven, and you are no longer under the wrath of God. (1Jn.2:12)



2. You have died to your old self through the death of Christ, and you rose with him a new person (Rom.6:1-14, Col.2:11-15; 3:3)
3. You become a brand-new person (2cor.5:17). You have been born again (anew) by God's spirit (See Jn.3:3-6).
4. You are not only a new person, but you are also a member of a new race (1Pet.2:9-10, Eph.2:11-20) Jesus Christ is the head of this new race. Just like we were all made sinners by being born under the race of Adam, you are now made righteous by being born again by the Spirit of Christ (See Rom.5:12-21)
5. You now have eternal life; the God kind of life (John 3:16, 1John 5:10-12)
6. You are now a child of God, and His Holy Spirit lives in you (John 1:11-12, Rom.8:9,14-16, Gal.4:4-7, Eph.1:13)
7. You now have an eternal inheritance and hope in Christ (1Pet.1:3-5)

THE QUESTION OF ASSURANCE AND PRESERVATION:

When one become saved (born again), It's important for him to be assured of salvation, so that doubt will not cripple his young faith in Christ, it is also important to be assured that God is able to keep you from falling. Here is the ground of our assurance as children of God;

The Holy Spirit: He bears witness to our spirit that we are saved—Rom. 8:16; 1John 3:21

The word of God (Bible): You need to believe what the word of God says as the final authority and confirmation of your salvation experience—John 1:12; 1John 3:7–10
The evidence of a changed life. (2Cor.5:17, Eph.2:10, Jam.2:17, 1John 3:9-10): There must be a change in the way you live. We must see the evidence through the transformation of live taking place in you. There will be positive change in your behavior and conduct, you will develop deep hatred for sin and genuine love for godliness, righteousness and holiness.

SOME SCRUPLE ON ASSURANCE AND PRESERVATION:

At this point we feel it is necessary to clear some scruple that arise as to the question of assurance. Some have gone beyond the scripture in teaching a kind of "selective salvation", and that those thus selected will definitely be saved whether they exercise their moral agency or not, and such also have no possibility of falling away from salvation. We will address that by just taking two commentaries from Adam Clarke, and also look at the legal and vital aspect of salvation. Anyone with further questions is invited to write the editor.

ADAM CLARKE COMMENTARIES:

John 6:37: *"All that the father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"*

All that are drawn by the Father, John 6:44, i. e. all those who are influenced by his Spirit, and yield to those

influences: for as many as are LED (not driven or dragged) by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God, Rom 8:14. God sent his prophets to proclaim his salvation to this people; and he accompanied their preaching with the influence of his Spirit. Those who yielded were saved: those who did not yield to these drawings were lost. This Spirit still continued to work and to allure... Those who come at the call of God he is represented here as giving to Christ, because it is through his blood alone that they can be saved. God, by his Spirit, convinces of sin, righteousness, and judgment; those who acknowledge their iniquity, and their need of salvation, he gives to Christ, i.e., points out unto them the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world... Never did he reject the suit of a penitent, however grievous his crimes might have been. He is come to the house of mercy; he is lying at the threshold: the servants bid him come in—he obeys, and stands trembling, waiting for the appearing of the Master, doubtful whether he is to be received or rejected: the Master appears, and not only grants his suit, but receives him into the number of his family: he alleges his unfitness, his unworthiness, his guilt, his crimes, his ingratitude: no matter, all shall be blotted out through the blood of the Lamb, and he be put among the children; and on none of these accounts shall he be put out of the house. The Gentiles shall be as welcome as the Jews; and the invitation to them be as free, as full, and as hearty: they shall become his adopted children, and never be cast out, as the Jews have been. O thou God of love! how able and WILLING art thou to save the vilest of the vile, who come unto thee! Thou art not the God of the Jews only; thou art also the God of the Gentiles. Rejoice, therefore, ye Gentiles, with his people.

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2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth"

In your calling God has shown the purpose that he had formed from the beginning, to call the Gentiles to the same privileges with the Jews, not through circumcision, and the observance of the Mosaic law, but by faith in Christ Jesus; but this simple way of salvation referred to the same end-holiness, without which no many whether Jew or Gentile, can see the Lord. Let us observe the order of Divine grace in this business:

1. They were to hear the truth—the doctrines of the Gospel.
2. They were to believe this truth when they heard it preached.

3. They were to receive the Spirit of God in believing the truth.

4. That Spirit was to sanctify their souls-produce an inward holiness, which was to lead to all outward conformity to God.

5. All this constituted their salvation-their being fitted for the inheritance among the saints in light.

6. They were to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ-that state of felicity for which they were fitted, by being saved here from their sins, and by being sanctified by the Spirit of God.

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LEGAL AND VITAL ASPECT OF SALVATION

All aspect of Salvation is judicially complete: Christ have already been made our righteousness (Justification). He has already sanctified us (separated us and made us holy). He has secured redemption for us, having obtained the glory as the first fruit of our resurrection. All these only become vital reality on fulfilment of certain condition: for Justification, it is by an immediate act of faith in believing in the heart and confession of the mouth of the saviourhood and Lordship of Jesus. For Sanctification it is by a continuous work and walk of faith: if we fail here, it is a prove that either we do not thoroughly believe in the first instant for justification, or we threw away our faith by becoming reprobate to the truth. In which case, the next phase- redemption or final salvation, cannot be obtained. For redemption, by a steadfast hope in faith, such hope in turn promotes our sanctification (See 1Jn. 3:3).

Faith makes what has been legally achieved a vital

experience. Without faith and at whatever point we lose faith we lose entirely the value of all that has been done by grace. Therefore, the work of grace is both to sustain faith, and through faith experience the work of grace. God's provision in grace makes it impossible for one to lose his ultimate salvation, except one by refuting the ground of faith do despite to the Spirit of grace; that is continually grieve the Holy Spirit by refusing to walk continually in faith. The Holy Spirit is the surety for our redemption. The entire book of Hebrews was written to warn the Jewish believers not to grieve (tempt) the Holy spirit like their fathers did through unbelief, this indeed is the sin which easily beset, it is the great fight of the

"The Holy Spirit is the surety for our redemption"

believer; the fight of faith: the temptation to place our faith on something else other than the person of Jesus (its author and perfecter)! Indeed, the ground of faith is removed when we place confidence on any other work (even in spiritual duties; when they are no longer held as a means of grace, but as an end to gratify self) other than the work Christ has done. The grace of God is despised when a person does not reckon upon and live in the reality of its (grace) finished work (viz: the saviourhood and Lordship of Christ which we professed). We neglect grace if we continue in disobedience to the revealed will of God (Which shows an active disbelieve in the Lordship of Christ); presumptuously turning the grace of God as licence for sin; nothing more shows a man's heart is reprobate than this.



A STUDY OF THE FIRST LETTER TO TIMOTHY BY PAUL

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Paul met Timothy in course of his ministry. Because of the good testimony he heard of him (Acts 16:1-3), Paul took him as part of his ministerial team. Timothy followed Paul, and was groomed by him in ministry to a level that Paul could trust some of his ministerial assignment to him.

Though there's a lot of controversy over the date this letter was written, but it is certain that Timothy was by this time a mature believer in the faith, though young in age, he could handle certain responsibility. Paul could leave him in Ephesus to put some things right, he nursed the hope of being restored (1Tim.3:14), but while he was absent, there was need for the church to be properly guided. Thus Timothy was left in Ephesus, with the purpose of ensuring that sound doctrine is promoted (1v.3, 4). It is to further strengthen this purpose that he wrote, and that "if I tarry long, you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God which is the church of the living God..." (Chapter 3:15)

To do this work effectively, there is need for Timothy to be:

- 1) Sound in faith and in good conscious (1.5)
- 2) Well equipped for the battle ahead (1.18)
- 3) Prayerful as to advance the purpose of God. (Chap.2)
- 4) Carefully select co-labourers (Chap.3)
- 5) Spiritually fit and vigilant against false teachers (Chap.5)
- 6) Maintain proper relationship (Chap.5)
- 7) Avoid distraction that comes through money and the pursuit of knowledge (Chapter 6)

Though the major concern of the book was Timothy as a minister, but it also has a lot to teach the church as its vocation (Chap.2) and government.

STUDY 1: CHAPTER 1&2

GREETINGS AND INTRODUCTION (1: 1-2)

a. How did Paul introduce himself? v.1

As usual, Paul started by introducing himself as an "apostle". Paul does not necessarily need to introduce himself to Timothy; Timothy is well acquainted with him. He did this to stress his call, function and authority. This is important because only a man with an apostolic authority can address such issues of doctrines and church governance as seen in this letter. Moreover this letter is more like his handover note of the church in Ephesus to Timothy.

b. What was the basis of his apostolic authority? v.1

Paul gave the basis of his apostleship as "*the commandment (authority, commission) of God our*

saviour and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope". A man's authority only goes as far as God's call upon his life goes. This command gave him a certain sense of responsibility; he dare not fail God's command. With this commission is the assurance of preservation from God, and hope in the Lord Jesus Christ. These are important if a man is going to fulfill his call.

c. Who was Timothy to Paul? v.2

The letter was addressed to "Timothy, a true son in the faith". Timothy was more like an adopted son of Paul, Paul took him at the recommendation of the brethren in Lystra, and circumcised him (Acts 16:3). The word used for son in this verse stresses "parentage"; Paul groomed Timothy in the faith and ministry. Timothy knew his doctrine, manner of life and purpose (2 Tim.3:10), as at the time of writing this letter, Timothy has grown so mature that he could even co-author some letters with Paul, and could stand in for Paul when called upon. Paul called him a "true son in the faith" because of his fidelity to the faith. Only those who are true sons, who have been properly disciple to the point of maturity can be called into the kind of responsibility Timothy was called.

d. The significance of the prayer Paul made for Timothy. v.2

In the pastoral epistle, Paul added "mercy" to his usual "grace and peace" greeting seen in his other epistles. The grace of God is the influence of God upon a soul, the beauties of God graciously wrought upon a soul. As a result of this grace a man becomes fruitful in life and ministry. Mercy is that disposition that causes God to pity our weaknesses and failings, and brings Him to our aid. The minister cannot do without this because his duties and temptations are exceedingly great. Finally the Apostle prayed for peace. Peace keeps the minister in harmonious fellowship with God, and diffuses into their labour like an oil lubricating the engines, so that there is no friction amongst fellow workers. This heart peace keeps the minister even in midst of tumults. This grace, mercy and peace comes from "God our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ".

THE PURPOSE OF WRITING (1:3 – 10)

a. Paul's reason for leaving Timothy in Ephesus? (v. 3&4)

Having poured out his life for the cause of the gospel, the apostle cannot afford to handover the work to someone who will destroy the work, neither will he leave without ensuring the continuity of sound doctrines in the church. Timothy was trusted to take over this work; as a son he will show the commitment one gives to his Father's business, he will have a sense of ownership, and

not work as a hireling.

Paul “besought” Timothy to remain in Ephesus.... The word implies to draw close to one's heart in order to feel the pulse. Paul wants Timothy's heart to resonate with the same passion as his. Therefore he besought him to abide still in Ephesus. There are times God keeps us in one place for a longer time, leaving earlier than required may jeopardize all that has been done. Paul saw that after his departure shall “grievous wolves enter...” Acts.20:23. In fact while he was still there some like Hymeneus, Alexander and Philetus have started teaching perverse and false doctrines. He therefore took steps to guard against that. It was for this purpose Timothy was left in Ephesus.

b. Issues Paul wants Timothy to handle in the Church (v.4 – 10)

Next to converting a soul, is to establish that soul in the doctrines of Christ. They are to be nurtured to the point that they could discern between “good and evil”, false teachings and true.

The first issue Timothy is to address is to “charge some that they teach no other doctrine contrary to what has been taught”. The word for **charge** implies he is to give very clear and unambiguous warning, it is a kind of announcing what is meant to the ears of every one. He is to issue a bold command to stop the teaching of false doctrines. This means he must be highly knowledgeable in the doctrines of the faith to discern what is false. Wherever false doctrine thrive, someone have been

Paul wants Timothy's heart to resonate with the same passion as his. Therefore he besought him to abide still in Ephesus.

negligent in his duty.

Not only is he to command certain individuals to stop false teaching, he is also to command the people not to pay attention to such fables. This means he is to teach the people to be discerning, and not to have itching ears. This is the most effective way to fight false teaching; it is only possible when the people's spiritual taste is raised high. This is a very serious work, only a sound and highly spiritual ministry can achieve this.

c. The effect of teaching fables and endless genealogy. v.4.

Such fables and endless genealogies will only “minister questions” i.e. to trouble the people's faith, to introduce doubt, by raising unnecessary debate and arguments. It is often Satan's ploy to distract the church. Such teachings does not edify its hearers whatsoever, it can at best swell their heads in pride, and such pride makes them troublesome.

d. The goal of Christian teaching (v. 4 – 6)

Two things stand out as the goal of Christian teaching:

1. To build men in the faith (v.4): that is, help them to

grow into that which the Christian faith represents, namely to become like Jesus; mature in character, strengthened in convictions and trust in God, and a deep personal knowledge of God. If you build men to argue, or to be materially wealthy, or to simply be “churchy”, you have missed the goal of teaching.

2. To produce love (v.5): Where God's word is rightly taught, it will produce love. (See Eph. 4:15, 16), Such love must be from:

- **A pure heart:** A pure heart is one free from the admixture of selfish ambition, carnality and ulterior motive.

- **Good conscience:** A good conscience is a conscience pre-modified, programmed to judge righteously, to urge the mind to act according to the principles of love. If we take a pure heart as the reservoir that holds love, then a good conscience is the channel through which love flows, it will not let the heart rest until it performs the highest possible good to the object of love

- **Sincere Faith:** When we have sincere faith in God, our love for Him will be sincere. Agape is love that springs from reason or evidence. If I don't believe the revelation God gives concerning Himself, if I doubt His person, I cannot truly love Him. Therefore to produce sincere love in men, we must see to it that they have sincere faith, that they believe rightly the word of God.

If our message is intended to stir up love, then it must create a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith. If our message is not focused on this, we have missed the whole point. Verse 6 tells us some swerved from this; they missed this mark because they were not really aiming at faith and love. We should have a set objective for every message we preach (whether by words or example), what do we want to pass across? If we are not deliberate on this, we will surely wander off. Any other thing than this is “vain janglings” or “random talks”, idle talk, a talk with no definite aim, useless and purposeless.

e. What mainly leads people into false doctrines and



legalism? (v.7)

One major reason some preachers wanders off into vain janglings and false teaching is pride. Their ambition is not to build men in faith and love, but to get applauses from the people. All they aim at is accolades and recognitions, titles and prestige. As stated in verse 7, they desire to be recognised as Doctors of the Law. It is unfortunate when men who should pursue after building the souls of men, begin to pursue after academic recognition, and applauses of men. The result is that in order to sound novel, they delve into strange teachings, emphasizing things they have no understanding of. The word “understand” as used in v.7 implies the ability to place the law, the word or concept within the entire purpose of God, to have the big picture, to gain practical insight and application. When men pick God’s word or the law, and expand it just for a show of “knowledge” with total disregard to the entire purpose of God and its practical implication, it results in false teachings and legalism.

f. The purpose of the law (v.8 – 10, See also Rom.3:21, 7:7-13, Gal.3:24)

When we compare scriptures, we see that the law is useful as:

1. A school master to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:4)

“One major reason some preachers wanders off into vain jangling and false teaching is pride”

2. It defines what sin is, and shows how exceeding sinful the human nature is, (Gal. 3:19, Rom. 5:13, 7:7-13)

3. The law also witness to the righteousness by faith in Christ (Rom.3:21)

We cannot however secure salvation by keeping the laws as the judaizers in Paul’s day try to teach. They insisted that believers in Christ must be regulated by the law and all its ceremony to be truly saved. The Apostle explained that the law is not made for the justified. One who have satisfied moral justice; in this case the new creation, who by the atonement of Christ is pardoned, and by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit has become a new person with a nature inclined to righteousness, no longer needs a law to regulate his activities. He does right not because of fear of punishment by the law, but because it is his nature to do right. The judaizers, rather than preach the gospel that transforms men, tries to regulate unregenerate men by the law, this will of course breed hypocrisy. This is true even today, when you look at ministries that tend toward legalism, they always have a lot of hypocrites.

The law is made for sinners; when they realise that all effort to please God by keeping the law is met with failures, and that they are by nature rebels against God, they will realise their need for mercy, pardon and grace.

This mercy and grace is found only in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The law points to sinners how far off they have fallen from the glory of God, but by receiving the “glorious gospel” (v.11), one is brought up to the measure of God’s glory. Any teaching that is not aimed at brining men to this glory of the gospel, so that they enjoy the full possibilities of grace, is unsound; it is not fit for the consumption of the church, it does more harm than good.

THE TRUST COMMITTED TO PAUL (1:11 -17)

a. The “glorious gospel” is committed to Paul?

v.11-14 (See also Rom.1:14-17, 1Cor.9:15-18, Gal.1:15-16, Col.1:24-29, 1Thess.2:14, Tit.1:3).

The gospel is the only hope of bringing men back to the glory of God. Paul said in verse 11 that this gospel is committed to his trust. This is a great claim indeed. His words in v.11 literally meant: “God trusts me as far as holding charge of the gospel is concerned, he gave me the responsibility of being in custody of the gospel”. What could make a man worthy of such divine trust? We see the answer in v.12. Paul has personally experience the power of the gospel. Unlike those false teachers, trying to teach what they have never experienced. The height of trust a man will hold in God’s eternal counsel is dependant on the depth of grace he has experience. Paul was so grateful for this grace that turned him from being a blasphemer to God’s own confidant. If we realise the depth of hell from whence we were drawn, we will place very high premium on the gospel of grace, we will price it, and take responsibility for it like Paul.

Paul saw it as a great and underserved privilege to be put in trust of the gospel. Those who realise it is a privilege to be called into the ministry of the gospel, will be always thankful, rather than mourn at the sufferings and pressure associated with ministry. Of course at his commission, Paul was told of the sufferings he will have to endure, but “Oh, for whatever adversity I may face, let me only have a part in Thy service”. It is unfortunate that some men abuse this height of grace by running away from the ministry, and failing in their trust. Some even

The law is made for sinners; when they realise that all effort to please God by keeping the law is met with failures, and that they are by nature rebels against God, they will realise their need for mercy, pardon and grace.

think they are doing God a favor answering the call. The mere fact that the King of kings calls me, is enough to stir me to utmost duty and faithfulness. How can I afford to betray divine trust on my life? How can I abuse such grace? For Paul, that grace was not in vain, he responded in faith as he saw the love of God shown in the gospel.

Furthermore, Paul recognized God's enabling power working in him. In v. 12 he said "Christ... hath enabled me..." the word signifies that the Lord has put supernatural strength or ability in him. It is actually based on the work that God has done in a man that He judges him trustworthy. To fail God then will mean to say that the work of grace in your life is too weak.

"Paul saw it as a great and undeserved privilege

b. The purpose of Jesus' coming (15 - 17)

In reflecting on his salvation, Paul made a statement he declares as being absolute and universal; that Christ came to save sinners. In a world where being absolute is repudiated, as though every thing is relative, it is important we take note of statement like this as being fundamental to our faith and ministry. The knowledge that only our gospel can save men will surely oblige us to proclaim that message even in the face of death. Since the malady of sin is universal, it can only be expected that its remedy be universal. To Paul, this remedy have been tested on the worst case ever; he considered himself being the chief of sinners, and it worked. Indeed the basis of all sin is ignorance and unbelieve, Paul described himself as being in this situation, and only the light of the gospel can shatter the darkness of ignorance and give us the light of the true God in the face of Christ. Only the gospel can break the stony heart of unbelieve, and make the sinner tremble before a Holy and Just God. Therefore only the gospel can save.

When one look at how great a sinner he is, he will indeed acknowledge that Christ is a great saviour. There is nothing in the sinner that could have appease the wrath of God, when God saves a soul it is simply to magnify His mercies, to use that soul as a specimen to show how merciful and patient He is (v.16). To Paul, this was simply the reason God saved him. Indeed the basic purpose for the salvation of man is that God will be glorified in him.



We see the spontaneous doxology the apostle uttered

as the thoughts of the salvation in Christ came into his mind. A true work of grace will always lead to a lofty view of God. He recognized God's sovereignty, immortality, invisibility (imperceptible and incomprehensible by the natural mind), and divine wisdom. When a man see such a glory of God, he will live for nothing else but to declare that honor and glory be given to this God for ever and ever.

PAUL'S CHARGE TO TIMOTHY (1:18–20)

The Apostle, having pointed out what the emphasis of our teaching should be, and drawing from personal testimony, the preciousness of the trust committed to him, now commissioned timothy with a charge: *"This charge I commit unto the son Timothy..."* This is the first of a statement that would be repeated again and again to Timothy (See 1Tim.6:13-14, 20, 2 Tim.2:2). What he is to realize is that the same way Christ committed the glorious gospel to Paul, it is now being committed to his trust. He must receive it with a great sense of responsibility. Note how specific the command is: *"unto you son timothy"*; when God calls a man, He is very specific. Timothy would have no doubt that this trusteeship is to him. As a true son, it is only natural to bear responsibility in the house. Even before now, there has been a prophetic intimation that pointed to him (See Amplified Bible). It was not a surprise to him. No one comes into the place of divine trust by chance, there is always some form of prophetic intimation going before. For Timothy, these may be the prophetic utterance made by the presbytery when they were commending him to service with Paul, or from a word of prophecy, i.e. the revealed will of God. The "prophetic will" upon a life may also be discerned through God's dealing on that life, and the successive spiritual experience. When we study the life of Timothy, we will not be surprise that such a commission should be given to him (See Acts 16:1-2, Phil.2:19-22). What is God's dealing on my life so far pointing to?

The trust we hold for God is always in accordance with those prophesies that have gone before on us. Those prophesies becomes a weapon by which we make strategic warfare. It is important we realise that what we are called unto is a warfare, and we are charged to fight strategically, the picture we have here is that of a military general strategizing for a war, Timothy is commission to lead the military campaign... This warfare is specific: *"... you may wage the good warfare"*. There are many warfare in life, but this one is "the good fight", it is a noble and honorable cause to undertake.

What is the fight for? It is to hold, or keep the faith and a good conscience. This implies the battle is first of all on a personal level, for faith and conscience are primarily personal. But the consequence of not holding unto this is far reaching, it goes beyond the individual. Paul used the figure of a shipwreck. When we do not hold unto our

faith and a good conscience, the damage is colossal. Conscience is like the vessel that holds faith (1Tim.3:9), it drives the faith. It urges a person to live out true to what he believes. If the vessel is punctured, water will get into the ship and it sinks. A man's conscience is punctured when he ignores its nudging. When we cannot endure adversity for conscience sake, or restrain our indulgence for conscience sake, we are violating our conscience, and at risk of making a shipwreck. Paul gave example of two men that have shipwreck their faith – Hymenaeus and Alexander; they were likely leaders in the Church. These men like Timothy had divine trust committed to them, but they wasted it. This

is to sound as a note of warning to Timothy, and indeed every minister. Oh that we may learn from the mistake of many mighty men that have fallen, and not become casualties in this warfare. The Apostle said he handed them over to Satan. This is a form of church discipline in which the person is excluded from the grace of fellowship for a while (Comp. 1 Cor.5:1-13). Are you wounded in the fight of faith already because of your carelessness? Are you almost making shipwreck? There is hope for you if only you humble yourself and accept divine discipline.

David Brainerd

Missionary To The American Indians



Arranged from the book, The Life of David Brainerd (1718-1747), chiefly extracted from his diary, edited by Jonathan Edwards.

On his 24th birthday, David Brainerd wrote: "I longed to live to God, and to be altogether devoted to Him. I wanted to wear out my life in His service, and for His glory." It was the year 1742 and he was studying with a pastor in preparation for the work of the ministry. He realized his own inadequacy to serve the Lord acceptably. Time was set aside daily for secret prayer and some whole days were given to fasting and prayer, that the Lord might bestow upon him the grace needed to serve Him. Hours, too, were given to intercession for souls and for the enlargement of Christ's kingdom in the world.

In the spring of 1743 Brainerd received his assignment from a Scottish missionary society to minister to the Indians living in the northeastern part

I was enabled to wrestle with God by prayer, in a more affectionate, fervent, humble, intense, and importunate manner than I have for many months past

of his homeland, which would later become the United States of America. Brainerd made the journey by horseback into the wilderness where the Indians lived. He sought to be fully submitted to God whatever miseries and sufferings he might meet. Living conditions were primitive. For a time he lived in the home of a settler, where his bed was a little heap of straw in a log room without any floor. Later he lived in a wigwam while his own little hut amongst the Indians was being built. Humble though the hut was, he appreciated it as a place where he could be alone to commune with the Lord.

His diary of these days is much taken up with his efforts in prayer. He yearned, he wrote, to "follow after holiness, that I may be fully conformed to God...I longed after holiness, humility and meekness." He struggled to persevere in prayer for himself and for those to whom he had come to minister. "I poured out my soul for all the world, friends and enemies," he wrote. "My soul was concerned, not so much for souls as such, but rather for Christ's kingdom, that it might appear in the world, that God might be known to be God, in the whole earth. "He was helped in prayer by the example of Elijah. "My soul was much moved, observing the faith, zeal, and power of that holy man,"

he recorded in his diary, "how he wrestled with God in prayer, etc. My soul then cried with Elisha, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah!' (2 Kgs. 2:14). Oh, I longed for more faith! My soul breathed after God, and pleaded with Him, that a double portion of that Spirit which was given to Elijah might 'rest' on me (2 Kgs. 2:15). And that which was divinely refreshing and strengthening to my soul was, I saw that God is the same that He was in the days of Elijah! "I was enabled to wrestle with God by prayer, in a more affectionate, fervent, humble, intense, and importunate manner than I have for many months past. Nothing seemed too hard for God to perform; nothing too great for me to hope for from Him. I had for many months entirely lost all hope of being made instrumental of doing any special service for God in the world; it has appeared entirely impossible, that one so vile should be thus employed for God. But at this time God was pleased to revive this hope."

At other times he recorded concerning his prayer life: "I love to live alone in my own little cottage, where I can spend much time in prayer...My soul was sundry times in prayer enlarged for God's church and people. Oh, that Zion might become the 'joy of the whole earth!' (Psa. 48:2)...My soul confided in God for myself and for His Zion; trusted in divine power and grace, that He would do glorious things in His church on earth, for His own glory...My soul was ardent in prayer, was enabled to wrestle ardently for myself, for Christian friends, and for the church of God; and felt more desire to see the power of God in the conversion of souls than I have done for a long season. Blessed be God for this season of fasting and



prayer! May His goodness always abide with me, and draw my soul to Him!"

He often felt weak in body and already had signs of tuberculosis. Sometimes he lacked nourishing food. He had to go or send someone ten or fifteen miles for bread and sometimes it became moldy or sour before he could eat it. He obtained Indian meal and made fried cakes. "Yet I felt contented with my circumstances, and sweetly resigned to God," was his reaction to this. "I blessed God as much for my present circumstances as if I had been a king."

He travelled many miles through the woods seeking out Indians to whom he could minister. He rejoiced in God's care for him during these journeys: "I have often been exposed to cold and hunger in the wilderness, where the comforts of life were not to be had, have frequently been lost in the woods, and sometimes obliged to ride much of the night, and once lay out in the woods all night; yet blessed be God, He has preserved me!"

David Brainerd experienced severe privations and hardships as he traveled by horseback through the dense woods of the American frontier, endeavoring to evangelize American Indians in the area now chiefly made up of the states of New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. He was invited, and even urged, to become pastor of churches in settlements of pioneers where living conditions would have been more pleasant and comfortable. But he chose to continue his mission to the Indian people.

"Oh, I longed to fill up the remaining moments all for God!" he wrote.

For about a year he labored and prayed at the first Indian settlement to which he was assigned. There were no apparent converts, although through his studied, careful preaching, backed by hours of prayer, several came to him with tears in their eyes, asking what they should do to be saved.

Through the Wilderness to a New Settlement

To reach his next assignment, he had to travel about 100 miles by horseback through desolate country where there were few settlements. "My heart sometimes was ready to sink with the thoughts of my work, and going alone in the wilderness, I knew not where," he confided in his diary, "but still it was comfortable to think that others of God's children had '*wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth*' (Heb. 11:38), and Abraham, when he was called to go forth, '*went out, not knowing whither he went*' (Heb. 11:8). Oh, that I might follow after God!"

The Indians at the new location were quite scattered and showed little interest in Christianity. He recorded his thoughts in his diary: "To an eye of reason every

thing that respects the conversion of the Indians is as dark as midnight; and yet I cannot but hope in God for the accomplishment of something glorious among them....

"In prayer my soul was enlarged, and my faith drawn into sensible exercise; was enabled to cry to God for my poor Indians, and though the work of their conversion appeared impossible with man, yet with God I saw all things were possible. My faith was much strengthened by observing the wonderful assistance God afforded His servants Nehemiah and Ezra, in reforming His people and re-establishing His ancient

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church. I was much assisted in prayer for my dear Christian friends, and for others whom I apprehended to be Christless, but was more especially concerned for the poor heathen around the world, and those of my own charge. I was enabled to be instant in prayer for them and hoped that God would bow the heavens and come down for their salvation.

"It seemed to me that there could be no impediment sufficient to obstruct that glorious work, seeing the living God, as I strongly hope, was engaged for it. I continued in a solemn frame, lifting up my heart to God for assistance and grace, that I might be more mortified to this present world, that my whole soul might be taken up continually in concern for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom. Earnestly desired that God would purge me more, that I might be as a chosen vessel to bear His name among those in darkness....

"My soul was very solemn in reading God's Word, especially the ninth chapter of Daniel. I saw how God had called out His servants to prayer, and made them wrestle with Him when He designed to bestow any great mercy on His church. And alas! I was ashamed of myself to think of my dullness and inactivity when there seemed to be so much to do for the upbuilding of Zion. Oh, how does Zion lie waste! I longed that the church of God might be enlarged, and was enabled to pray, I think, in faith. My soul seemed sensibly to confide in God, and was enabled to wrestle with Him...."

When Brainerd recognized that the spirit of prayer was upon him he said he "was watchful, tender, and jealous of my own heart, lest I should admit carelessness and vain thoughts, and grieve the blessed Spirit, so that He should withdraw His sweet, kind and tender influences." He was afraid of every idle thought which might grieve the Spirit.

"I cared not where or how I lived, or what hardships I went through, so that I could but gain souls to Christ," his diary records.

He prayed urgently for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Indian people. He longed to see the power of God manifested among them. Some days he retired five or six times for prayer. As he traveled on horseback he prayed. Sometimes he had wakeful nights because of pain or weariness. These times he prayed as able and meditated on Scriptures. "My soul so much delighted to continue instant in prayer at this blessed season," he wrote once in his diary, "that I had no desire for my necessary food."

After laboring for about a year at the second location among the American Indians with seemingly little results, David Brainerd moved on to a third location. He found the families here scattered, but he gathered seven or eight women and children together and preached to them. After hearing him once, these women traveled here and there to gather others to come together to hear him preach again. About thirty gathered, and they soon showed concern for their

"I cared not where or how I lived, or what hardships I went through, so that I could but gain souls to Christ,"

souls...At this time he had his first Indian converts. His interpreter and wife made a public profession of faith in Christ. The interpreting now took on new life and fervency. After Brainerd had finished preaching, the interpreter would continue on, repeating what had been preached and urging it upon the hearers.

Some of the other Indians became concerned about their souls and inquired how to be saved. A few words to them about their souls would cause the tears to flow. Even a message on the love of God pierced their hearts with conviction. Some lay prone on the ground crying for mercy. A few began to pray through to peace and joy of salvation

The congregation was growing in number as new people came. Brainerd reports concerning the meeting of one afternoon: "There was much visible concern among them while I was discoursing publicly. But afterward, when I spoke to one and another more particularly, whom I perceived under much concern, the power of God seemed to descend upon the assembly 'like a mighty rushing wind,' and with an astonishing energy bore down all before it. I stood amazed at the influence which seized the audience almost universally, and could compare it to nothing more aptly than the irresistible force of a mighty torrent, or swelling deluge, that with its insupportable weight and pressure bears down and sweeps before it

whatever is in its way.

"Almost all persons of all ages were bowed down with concern together, and scarcely one was able to withstand the shock of this surprising operation. Old men and women who had been drunken wretches for many years, and some little children not more than six or seven years of age, appeared in distress for their souls, as well as persons of middle age. It was apparent that these children, some of them at least, were not merely frightened with seeing the general concern, but were made aware of their danger, the badness of their hearts, and their misery without Christ, as some of them expressed it. The most stubborn hearts were now obliged to bow.

"A principal man among the Indians, who before was most secure and self-righteous, and thought his state good because he knew more than the generality of the Indians had formerly done, and who with a great degree of confidence the day before told me he 'had been a Christian more than ten years,' was now brought under solemn concern for his soul and wept bitterly. Another man advanced in years who had been a murderer, a powwow or conjurer, and a notorious drunkard, was likewise brought now to cry for mercy with many tears, and to complain much that he could be no more concerned when he saw his danger so very great.

"They were almost universally praying and crying for mercy in every part of the house, and many out-of-doors and numbers could neither go nor stand. Their concern was so great, each one for himself, that none seemed to take any notice of those about them, but each prayed freely for himself. I am led to think they were to their own apprehensions, as much retired as if they had been individually by themselves in the thickest desert....

"Me thought this had a near resemblance to the day of God's power, mentioned in Joshua 10:14, for I must say I never saw any day like it in all respects: it was a day wherein I am persuaded the Lord did much to destroy the kingdom of darkness among this people....

"A young Indian woman who, I believe, never knew before that she had a soul, nor ever thought of any such thing, hearing that there was something strange among the Indians, came, it seems, to see what was the matter. On her way to the Indians she called at my lodgings, and when I told her that I designed presently to preach to the Indians, laughed, and seemed to mock, but went however to them. I had not proceeded far in my public discourse before she felt effectually that she had a soul, and before I had concluded my discourse was so convinced of her sin and misery and so distressed with concern for her soul's salvation, that she seemed like one pierced through with a dart, and cried out

incessantly.

"She could neither go nor stand nor sit on her seat without being held up. After public service was over, she lay flat on the ground, praying earnestly, and would take no notice of, nor give any answer to any who spoke to her. I hearkened to what she said and perceived the burden of her prayer to be, 'Have mercy on me, and help me to give You my heart.' Thus she continued praying incessantly for many hours together. This was indeed a surprising day of God's power, and seemed enough to convince an atheist of

Some of the other Indians became concerned about their souls and inquired how to be saved.

the truth, importance, and power of God's Word...."

The day following a mighty outpouring of God's Spirit upon the group of Indians which caused them to seek God with many cryings and tears, the account in David Brainerd's diary reads: "While I was discoursing near night to two or three of the awakened persons, a Divine influence seemed to attend what was spoken to them in a powerful manner, which caused the persons to cry out in anguish of soul, although I spoke not a word of terror but on the contrary, set before them the fullness and all-sufficiency of Christ's merits and His willingness to save all that come to Him, and thereupon pressed them to come without delay.

"The cry of these was soon heard by others, who, though scattered before, immediately gathered round. I then proceeded in the same strain of Gospel invitation till they were all melted into tears and cries except two or three, and seemed in the greatest distress to find and secure an interest in the great Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

"Some who had little more than a ruffle made in their passions the day before, seemed now to be deeply affected and wounded at heart, and the concern in general appeared nearly as prevalent as the day before. There was indeed a very great mourning among them, and yet every one seemed to mourn apart. So great was their concern that almost every one was praying and crying for himself as if none had been near. 'Have mercy upon me; have mercy upon me' was the common cry. It was very affecting to see the poor Indians who the other day were hallooing and yelling in their idolatrous feasts and drunken frolics, now crying to God with such importunity for an interest in His dear Son. ..."

The diary continues with reports of the outpouring of God's Spirit at this time: "Those who had obtained relief and comfort, and had given hopeful evidences of

having passed a saving change, appeared humble and devout, and behaved in an agreeable and Christian-like manner. I was refreshed to see the tenderness of conscience manifest in some of them, one instance of which I cannot but notice.

"Perceiving one of them very sorrowful in the morning, I inquired into the cause of her sorrow, and found the difficulty was that she had been angry with her child the evening before, and was now exercised with fears lest her anger had been inordinate and sinful, which so grieved her that she awoke and began to sob before daylight, and continued weeping for several hours together. ...

"I never saw the work of God appear so independent of means as at this time," records Brainerd. "I discoursed to the people, and spoke what I suppose had a proper tendency to promote convictions, but God's manner of working upon them seemed so entirely supernatural and above means that I could scarcely believe He used me as an instrument, or what I spake as means of carrying on His work.

"It appeared, as I thought, to have no connection with or dependence on means in any respect. Though I could not but continue to use the means which I thought proper for the promotion of the work, yet God seemed, as I apprehended, to work entirely without them. I seemed to do nothing, and indeed to have nothing to do, but to '*...stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord*' (Ex. 14:13), and found myself obliged and delighted to say, 'Not unto us,' not unto instruments and means, 'but to Thy name be glory.' God appeared to work entirely alone, and I saw no room to attribute any part of this work to any created arm."

Z

The change in the lives of the converted Indians was evident. Brainerd wrote: "In the afternoon I discoursed from Revelation 1:20, at which time fifteen Indians made a public profession of their faith. After the crowd of spectators was gone I called them together, and discoursed to them in particular, at the same time inviting others to attend. I reminded them of the solemn obligations they were now under to live to God. I warned them of the evil and dreadful consequences of careless living, especially after their public profession of Christianity. I gave them directions for future conduct, and encouraged them to watchfulness and devotion by setting before them the comfort and happy conclusion of a religious life.

"This was a desirable and sweet season indeed. Their hearts were engaged and cheerful in duty, and they rejoiced that they had in a public and solemn manner dedicated themselves to God. Love seemed to reign among them. They took each other by the hand with tenderness and affection as if their hearts were knit together while I was discoursing to them. All their

deportment toward each other was such that serious spectators might justly be excited to cry out with admiration, 'Behold, how they love one another!' Numbers of the other Indians, on seeing and hearing these things, were much affected and wept bitterly, longing to be partakers of the same joy and comfort which these discovered by their very countenances as well as conduct. ...

"An old Indian who had all his days been an idolater, was brought to give up his rattles, which they use for music in their idolatrous feasts and dances, to the other Indians who quickly destroyed them. This was done without any interference of mine, I having not spoken to him about it so that it seemed to be nothing but the power of God's Word, without any particular application to the sin that produced this effect. Thus God has begun, thus He has hitherto surprisingly carried on a work of grace among these Indians. May the glory be ascribed to Him Who is the sole author of it." Writing further about the remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the group of Indians to which he was ministering, David Brainerd's diary evidences the deep, authentic work God was doing in their midst, as dozens bowed in sincere and sorrowful repentance, and then experienced dramatic change as they received assurance of sins forgiven and their acceptance with God. Brainerd tells of the eagerness of the new converts to hear the Word of God: "I discoursed from John 4:13,14. There was a great attention, a desirable affection and an unaffected melting in the assembly. It is surprising to see how eager they are to hear the Word of God. I oftentimes thought that they would cheerfully and diligently attend divine worship twenty-four hours together, if they had an opportunity to do so. ...

Another recording from the diary says, "The impressions made by the Word of God upon the audience appeared solid, rational and deep, worthy of the solemn truths by means of which they were produced, and far from being the effects of any sudden fright or groundless perturbation of mind. Oh, how did the hearts of the hearers seem to bow under the weight of divine truth, and how evident did it now appear that they received and felt them *'not as the word of men, but...the word of God.'* None can form a just idea at the appearance of our assembly at this time but those who have seen a congregation solemnly awed, and deeply impressed by the special power and influence of divine truths delivered to them in the name of God. ..."

Of the little congregation out in the wilderness, David Brainerd wrote: "I know of no assembly of Christians where there seems to be so much of the presence of God, where brotherly love so much prevails, and where I should take so much delight in the public worship of God in general as in my own congregation, although not more than nine months ago

they were worshipping devils and dumb idols under the power of pagan darkness and superstition. Amazing change this! effected by nothing less than divine power and grace. This is the doing of the Lord, and it is justly marvellous in our eyes. "The strenuous labors were telling more and more on David Brainerd. He had traveled more than 3000 miles on horseback in his labors among the Indians. He had endured many hardships – sleeping sometimes on the ground and in the open air. He was exposed to cold and heat and rain. Sometimes at night the wolves howled around him. He did not complain. "Such fatigues and hardships as these serve to wean me from the earth and I trust will make heaven the sweeter." He became able to rejoice in these hardships, like the Apostle Paul.

Of the Indians he wrote: "They are so unwearied in religious exercises and insatiable in their thirsting after Christian knowledge, that I can sometimes scarcely avoid laboring so as greatly to exhaust my strength and spirits." Not only did he preach to his Indians several times a week, but he did much visitation among them. His little house was often thronged with visitors. From time to time he ministered to gatherings of white settlers in the area also. When he became too weak to go to the church to preach, he lay on his bed and the people gathered around so he could minister to them. At last he bid farewell to his beloved Indians and traveled north, barely able to stay on his horse, to the home of Jonathan Edwards, where he was to spend his last months.

His Work Finished

"I am almost in eternity," he said as he gradually lost strength and was confined to bed. "I long to be there. My work is done.... All the world is nothing to me. I long to be in heaven, praising and glorifying God with the holy Angels. All my desire is to glorify God." He was only about 30 years of age when he was granted the desire of his heart to pass into the presence of his Lord. The work among the Indians was carried on by his brother John, which was of great comfort to David Brainerd. David Brainerd was reluctant to give consent that the diary from which the above account is taken, should be published. But at last he agreed that Jonathan Edwards might use the diary as he saw fit for the glory of God and for the interest of religion. Through the years, God has used the diary to inspire many to accept the challenge to a life of prayer and wholehearted service to the Lord, and for the advancement of revivals of religion. Let our hearts be likewise stirred to pay the price for revival in our day!



A CHURCH THAT WILL EVANGELIZED THE 21ST CENTURY.

The church has been set in all generation as God's tool in bringing men into relationship with God. The promise of Jesus to His disciples of being with them even to the end of the age clearly show how He has ordained the church's existence and its effectiveness in the work of raising disciples even to the end of age.

Matthew 28:19 *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen".*

One thing common to all generations is the church. The church has been called to stay, she will only be taken away when the plan of salvation has been completed. The day the church ceases to exist, salvation ceases to be available for men as we will see when the church will be rapture and the door of salvation will be closed to mankind.

Generations evolve with time. No two generations are the same. It is very necessary to take cognizance of these generational evolutions. If the church will be effective in reaching and evangelizing each generation, the approach must be different from the previous. While the message and mandate and commission are the same, the approach will differ due to generational evolution. To use the same method in the 10th century for the 21st century is to be ineffective and irrelevant.

Let's take a look at some of the characteristics of the 21st century generation.

1. There has been a great improvement in science and technology, hence like never before we can communicate with anyone in the world in few seconds using our cellular devices or social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, emails etc. Such has never been in previous generations.
2. There has been a great quest for education. Lots of persons have devoted themselves to developing the minds, like Daniel prophesied, "many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall increase" (Dan. 12:4)
3. The standard of living has greatly improved, travels are much faster, there are better diplomatic ties between nations, and a greater level of political and religious freedom.

One thing remains, in spite of these great improvements in the 21st century, the hearts of men remain darken and in need of a savior. No matter how improved life is, it doesn't change the heart of men or remove the need to have their hearts washed by the blood of Jesus or justified with God. We see the same moral wreck in humanity as have ever been, and even more devastating in the 21st

The day the church ceases to exist, salvation ceases to be available for men

century: high rate of crimes, wars, hatred, addictions, immorality and atheism. This is not far from the truth that though this generation has "everything" it needs, their hearts quest for true peace, love and purpose which only Jesus, the savior of the world can give.

God has given us the task of making disciples of all nations irrespective of their generation. Even in this 21st Century, God wants to see His light of salvation spread across the nations.

God has made many opportunities available to engaging the 21st century as has never been available before now. We are going to explore some of these doors of opportunities.

1. **The Internet/Social Media:** The social media is a great tool we can take advantage of. Averagely 7 in 10 people from 12 years above use the social media in various form a day. This averagely means billions of persons can have access to the gospel everyday, hear of the love of God when we make that available to them using the social media platforms.

One of the key areas we can spread the love of God, of the salvation of Jesus must be through the internet, through the social media, through telecommunication channels. Large chunk of the population use these devices daily.

2. **The Market Place:** Another opportunity available to us is going to where the unsaved and unbelievers are found and engaging them there. Some are found in our offices, the market places, the banks, even in our schools and institutions while others are found in their primitive and uncultured places of existence Good enough the 21st century market is a global market; irrespective of your nationality, you can work in any part of the world so long as they have demand of your services. There are lecturers for example that are invited to institutions in various parts of the globe to deliver lectures, some other professionals are required to undertake studies or represent their organizations in different parts of the world. In a single organization, you may have hundreds of people from various nationalities working together. It has never been like this before. What a great opportunity before us. Only one thing can bring us closer to any of these categories and that is contextualization, becoming like them in many ways. That's the only way they can accept us. In our jobs we contextualize by becoming a professional as they are, so we can have access to



working among them. In our schools we contextualize by becoming students or teachers so we can have access to them in the schools. In the unreached places of the earth, we contextualize by adopting their cultures and way of life so we can be accepted by them.

Part of the commission to go into all worlds and make disciples of men include going into all institutions, all platforms and systems set up by men, everywhere men

“Part of the commission to go into all worlds and make disciples of men include going into all institutions, all platforms and systems set up by men”

are found and raising disciples from them in such places.

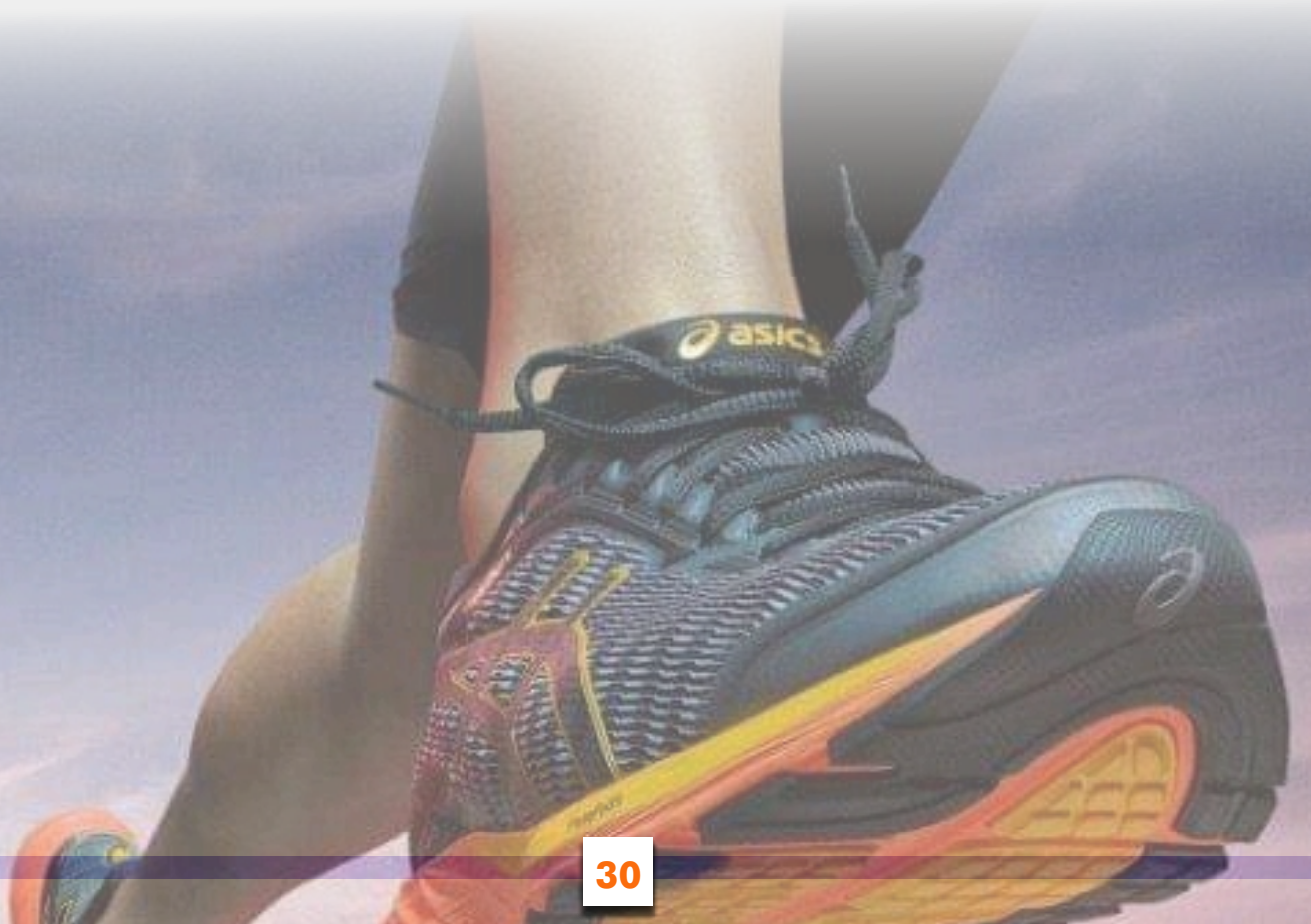
Mark 16:15 *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”*

3. Prayer: A church that will evangelize the 21st century must be a praying church. Like never before, the

strongholds on the minds of men is at its peak. Men have been given to irrational thinking and unimaginable acts all propelled and sponsored through the degenerating influence of the nature of sin at work in the hearts of men. If we must be effective in communicating the love of God, such strongholds must be removed, only through the anointing of the Holy Spirit at work in us, this can be done.

Like no generation before us, the burden of demonic oppression, slavery, sickness, diseases are in full sway. It is only as men experience the power of God, are convinced of the touch of Jesus, they can pledge undiminished allegiance to the Lordship of Jesus.

4. Sound Knowledge of Jesus Christ: One philosophy that holds bound many hearts in today’s world is “religious plurality”. Like Athens of old that has many altars to various gods (Acts 17:16), we live in a culture of relativism, where everybody is correct, depending on the way you see it, the idols and altars today are built in men’s mind, and must be confronted in that realm. A church that would evangelize today’s world must be absolutely convinced about the truth of the Scriptures, and the claims of Jesus Christ. They must have come to know Christ by revelation, like the early church, and force the world around them to see the error in their thinking because of the truth of the gospel which the church stands for, and the life she exudes. This is only possible through a diligent teaching/training ministry, and a close walk with the Holy Spirit who is the Lord of the harvest.



BUILDING PRAYER CAPACITY FOR A FRUITFUL MINISTRY



Definition of key terms

CAPACITY: *The amount that can be contained*

FRUITFUL: *Productive or conducive to producing abundance*

Capacity determines how much any man or system can function. The result of functioning above capacity is breakdown. Our prayer capacity determines greatly our level of fruitfulness in ministry. This is *because prayer links up our impotence to God's omnipotence.*

GOD'S ACCENT ON A FRUITFUL MINISTRY

Throughout the scriptures, God places importance and a demand on fruitfulness. At the very beginning (Gen 1:29), God's first instruction was that man should be fruitful. God's purpose in creation will be achieved when men who are created in His image multiplies and fills the earth with the divine image. Barrenness will mean an impediment to the divine purpose. *The purposes and plans of God are incompatible with a barren state.* Hence, God's mandate is a mandate of fruitfulness. The kind of ministry that he chooses will be that marked by abundance of life and fruitfulness. (Gen. 9:1; 22:17; etc.) In Num. 17:1-10, God put to silence the rebellion by the miraculous act of making the dead staff of Aaron overflow with life and not a barren life but a life with fruit that blossomed overnight. By this, God set an eternal principle in place that *the ministry that count is the ministry that has life and is fruitful.* Any ministry that is not fruitful is not a ministry chosen by the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To etch this eternal principle deeper, God instructed that during the terrible wars that Israel will enter in as a nation where destruction of living things will follow, *they are to spare trees that are fruit bearing trees. Trees will escape being cut down if they are fruit bearing* (Deut. 20:19-20). The matter here is not how gigantic or how ornamental it is. What counts is if it bears fruit. And in the book of the prophets and in the gospel, we see God threatening to cut down Israel as a nation because she failed to bring forth the fruit expected of her. (Mark 11:43; Luke 13:6-9; Luke 3:8, 9)

The thing that honours and put God in the place He belongs is our fruit bearing (John. 15:8). What make us true Disciples of Christ is that we are bearing fruit. Christ is saying fruitlessness means that you are not part of me. Why God is not glorified among certain people is

We see that prayer builds up the inner man, strengthens it and enlarges the amount of divine things it can contain.

because the people of His mandate are not bearing fruit. God's judgement remain same for the branch that does not produce: *He takes away* (John. 15:2)

THE CONNECT BETWEEN PRAYER AND FRUITFULNESS

Having seen the emphasis God places on a fruitful life and ministry, it should be our major preoccupation to see that we put all things that are needed in place to meet God's end. One of the Scriptural means of grace in achieving this end is prayer. This is because something deep happens to our inner man in the place of prayer, thus making us fit and clearing our spiritual channels for fruitfulness. *The capacity to bear fruit is found in our inner man and this is a place where prayer has a vital role to play.* This thought was clearly stated in the epistle of Jude 1:9 *"But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,"*. Paul goes on to say that the one who prays in tongues edify (builds up) himself (1 Cor. 14:4, 14) reason being that the inner man prays at that point. We see that prayer builds up the inner man, strengthens it and enlarges the amount of divine things it can contain. Paul further invoked God's grace through prayers for the Ephesian Christians to be strengthened with might in their inner man (Eph. 3:14-16).

To know how prayer prepares and build capacity in men for fruitful ministry, we need to look through the scriptures at few men who built capacity for fruitful ministry through consistent devotion to a life of prayer.

JOSHUA: The greatest part of this man's prayer life, I believe was not captured in the scriptures when he commanded the sun to stand still or those wonderful deeds recorded in the book of Joshua. Those things are the record of a fruitful ministry. Where did he build that capacity of being a man of God? It is recorded in Exodus 34:11, *"So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle."* This is outstanding! Indeed God never commits serious things to the hands of casual people. Joshua not departing from the tabernacle means a lot. This tabernacle was outside the camp. It was a place of loneliness except for the divine presence. No socializing, no familiarity, nothing. Even when Moses departs from the place to carry out official function, Joshua was there like one detained before the presence of God. This was the fellowship of prayer that made him prepared for the pouring out of the Spirit upon him. It was here that his spiritual eye was made sharp to see what the other ten spies could not see when they spied Canaan. It was here his ear was trained to hear God. The capacity to step into Moses' shoes and produce result was built here. As Leonard Ravenhill would say, "God's men are in hiding waiting for the day of manifestation". Why will Joshua's capacity for fruitfulness not be enlarged when the most part of his forty years in the wilderness were spent in the tabernacle?

ELIJAH AND JOHN BAPTIST: These two men cannot be spoken separately in regards to the issue of preparing

for fruitful ministry. This is because the record missing in the narrative of one is found in the other, because they are of the same spirit. Elijah was an unusual man who suddenly comes out with a great manifestation and goes out of the picture to return again with a greater manifestation. He, as well as John the Baptist was fruitful in their ministry of turning hearts back to God. They had unusual fruitfulness and power because of the capacity they built in the place of prayer. Speaking of, it is recorded: *"So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts tills the day of his manifestation to Israel."* (Lk. 1:80). 'They both needed capacity to battle a nation far from God and bring them to their knees. In prayer, their inner man was given capacity to bear the burden of the Lord and the miracles that followed their ministry were miracles that were strange to other men. Elijah was not carried away by the fruitful result of locking up heaven, he built deeper capacity in that three and a half year of being away from public view until he was equipped to call down the divine fire and unlock the gates of heaven. The last days of his life was spent mostly on the mountain from where he got authority to confront anybody at all, armies and kings. Their continuous resort to prayer accounts for why men start a very fruitful work and sooner everything comes to a halt. Capacity building in the place of prayer was interrupted

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST: All the work Jesus did and victory he won was done as the Son of man. This was in order to be that true mediator between God and man. He laid the rights to His majesty aside and was found in fashion as a man (Phil. 2:5-8). Hence, his dependence on the Father for all He said and did, because in the state that He was, He could do nothing of Himself (John. 5:19). This dependence found great expression in the prayer life of Jesus where, as the Son of man, He gathered capacity for the work. The book of Luke truly captured the prayer life of Jesus in intensity. It records the prayer preparation he did for several task which other gospel recorded without giving a background. It was while He prayed at His baptism that the heavens were opened and the Spirit came upon Him (Lk. 3:21-22). It is challenging that with this experience, He didn't jump into ministry, Instead, He went into the wilderness fasting and praying for forty days. Only God knows the unusual things His soul passed through, but one thing we know was that He returned in the power of the Spirit. He didn't return to a broken world empty handed (Lk. 4:14). *Should this not be our cry: "don't allow me oh lord to go empty handed!"*. Other reference of Christ actively in prayer is found in the following passages: Lk.5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28-30; 22:39-46; Mk. 1:35.

Other examples of men whose fruitfulness came a result of praying include David in the wilderness tending sheep, Moses on the mountain, the apostles on the upper room, Paul at Arabia etc.

THE INNER MAN

For emphasis, it is the inner man that reaches out to God and through whom God works. Fruitfulness is from the inner man. It is not the strategies, buildings, human inventions, and systems we put up that gives fruitfulness in ministry. Fruitfulness is the flow of God through the

inner man and it is in prayer that issues of the inner man are dealt with.

BUILDING A PRAYER LIFE

Our quest now should be on how to build a strong prayer life that is consistent and through which God can work through us. The answer that I find in scripture is that of Daniel who had a fruitful ministry in Babylon. A verse from his book gives us a hint of how he built capacity in the place of prayer. "... And in his upper room, with his windows open to Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, *as was his custom since early days.*" (Dan 6:10). It was a discipline he cultivated. For a prayer life to be meaningful, we must be deliberate about it. Prayer should not be something we think of when we have done other things and have left over time. As we give priority to it in our daily lives, seeking God's face and deepest thoughts for us and what our place is in his eternal plan, we will surely be endued with all the grace of the Spirit that brings fruitfulness.

In this day of great barrenness in many works, let us turn to God in Prayers in the words of this hymn:

Come as the dew and sweetly bless This consecrated hour May barrenness rejoice to own Thy fertilizing power. Amen.

Away with palsied, powerless preaching which is unmoving because it was born in a tomb instead of a womb and nourished in a fireless, prayerless soul. We may preach and perish but we cannot pray and perish. If God called us to the ministry, then I contend that we should be unctionized. With all thy getting, get unction, lest barren altars be the badge of our unctionless intellectualism. Leonard Ravenhill

Though we do not hear much of it in this age of spineless religion, there is nevertheless much in the Bible about the place of moral determination in the service of the Lord. "Jacob vowed a vow," and it was the beginning of a very wonderful life with God.. Daniel "purposed in his heart," and God honored his purpose. Jesus set his face like a flint and walked straight toward the cross. Paul "determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,"... Let us, then, set our sails in the will of God. If we do this we will certainly find ourselves moving in the right direction, no matter which way the wind blows. A.W. Tozer: *The Set of the Sail*, pp. 11-13

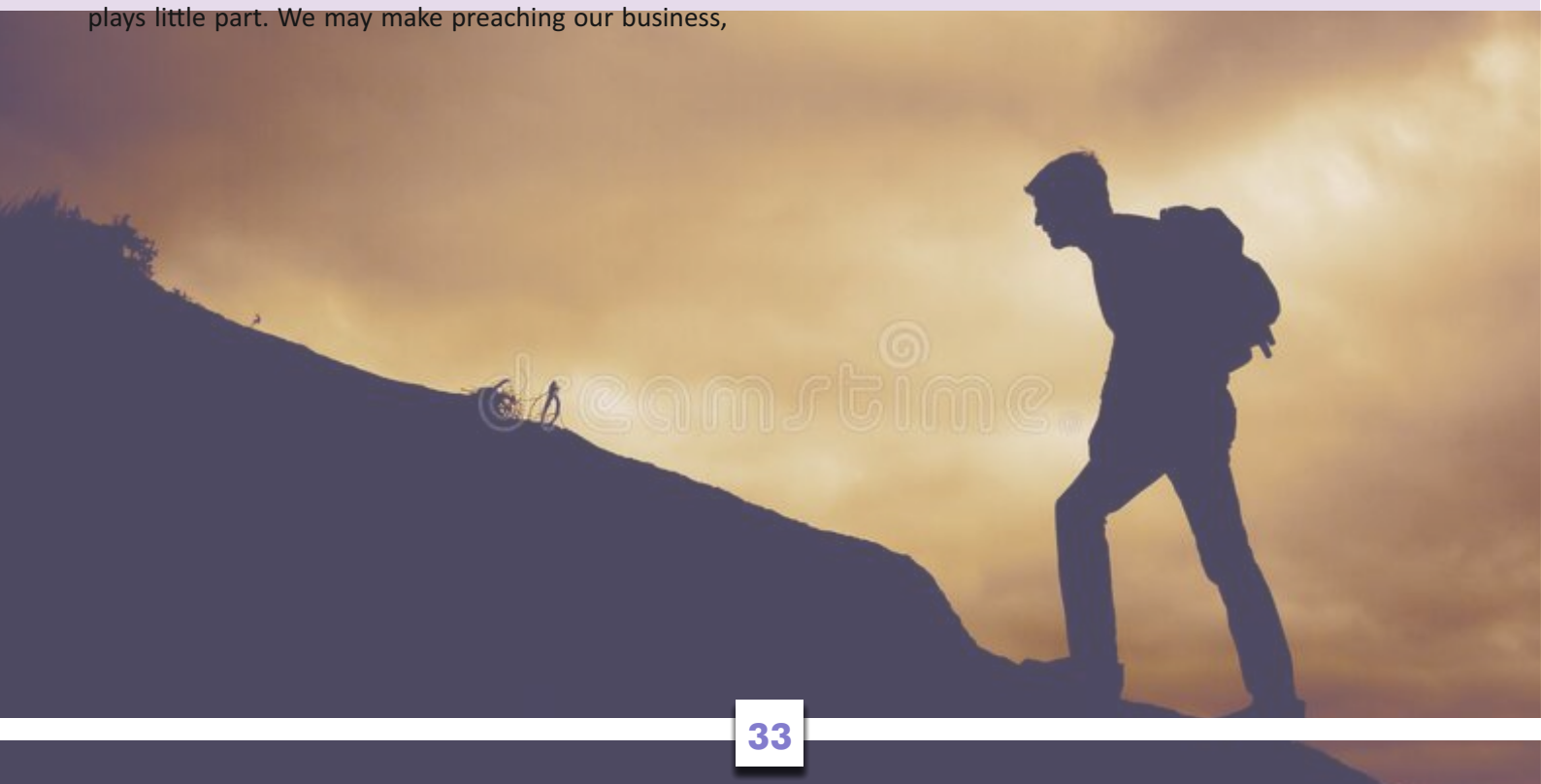
"When we have received a direct command fresh from the lips of Christ, we must act on it, and not be turned aside by a different suggestion, made to us through the lips of professing Christians. God does not vacillate or alter in the thing which proceeds from his mouth. When we know we are in the line of his purpose, we must not allow ourselves to be diverted by any appeal or threat, from whomsoever it may emanate. Deal with God at first hand. The rule for determining the true worth of the advice which our friends proffer us, is to ask, first, whether it conflicts with our own deep seated conviction of God's will; and, secondly, whether it tends to the ease and satisfaction" F.B Mayer

It is our lot to live in an important epoch of the Christian Church. Great revolutions of mind seem on the eve of breaking forth. A fearful conflict between truth and error has even already begun. The ark of God is in the storm; "the faith once delivered to the saints" is boldly and fearfully assailed; truth has fallen in the streets. Upon whom, under God — rests the hope of the Church? To whom does truth, now prostrate and bleeding, turn her eye for sympathy and support? Who but the Christian ministers and pastors of the land? They are set for the defense and confirmation of the gospel, and to their hands is committed the guiding of the tempest-tossed ark. If ever a thoroughly-trained ministry and a high order of ministerial character were needed — surely it is now. God, in His providence, is summoning His servants to a great work. Ordinary acquirements and low spirituality will not meet the exigencies of the case. Scribes well instructed, full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, banded together in love, merging their party distinctions in one common and holy confederation against the enemies of God and of truth — these are the only men who will be found prepared to meet the fearful onset when it comes Octavius Winslow

We believe that one of the serious and most popular errors of the modern pulpit is the putting of more thought than prayer, of more head than of heart in its sermons. Big hearts make big preachers; good hearts make good preachers. A theological school to enlarge and cultivate the heart is the golden desideratum of the gospel. The pastor binds his people to him and rules his people by his heart. They may admire his gifts, they may be proud of his ability, they may be affected for the time by his sermons; but the stronghold of his power is his heart. His scepter is love. The throne of his power is his heart... A professional ministry is a heartless ministry. When salary plays a great part in the ministry, the heart plays little part. We may make preaching our business,

and not put our hearts in the business. He who puts self to the front in his preaching puts heart to the rear. He who does not sow with his heart in his study will never reap a harvest for God. The closet is the heart's study. We will learn more about how to preach and what to preach there than we can learn in our libraries. "Jesus wept" is the shortest and biggest verse in the Bible. It is he who goes forth weeping (not preaching great sermons), bearing precious seed, who shall come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. E.M Bounds

There is no more merit in service than there is in salvation, no more merit in spiritual knowledge than in our justification: it is all of grace. I want to emphasise that God must have that ground before He can do things. We have such a way of returning to the Lord and after all seeking to in some way suggest a claim upon Him, a right, a merit, a worthiness, presenting Him ground upon which we feel the Lord ought to do this and ought to do that, and the Lord demands that we shall come for every phase and aspect of our spiritual life and relationship to Him to the place where: "Lord, if You do it, it will be all of grace"; "If the work is done, it will be all of grace." The Lord demands that ground. You find it through the Old and the New Testaments, the ground upon which the Lord works is, whether we wholly and fully recognise that, whatever the Lord does it will be all His grace, and while in Christ we have privileges and the Lord will sometimes call upon us to lodge a claim to the fulfilment of His promises - after all, on His side it is all of grace. So let us let go to His grace and give Him the ground that He needs for doing His continual enlarging things, and never ourselves become anything as believers or as workers, or as having any knowledge, but holding all things as of the grace of God. T. Austin-Sparks



Quotes

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