



MAKING YOUR
CALLING AND ELECTION
SURE

FEIKOAB PARIMAH

Unless otherwise stated, all scripture quotations are from the World English Bible (WEB). All emphasis are mine

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INTRODUCTION

This book is purposely written for personal as well as group Bible studies. Those engaged in evangelism and church planting could also use it as a guide in building new converts. However, I must caution that it is not to replace your Bible, as God can deal with you through His word independent of it. The topics covered are not exhaustive, but serves to create a platform that would help answer some often asked questions both from converts and those who have a desire to mature in Christ. May the Good Lord guide your way as you read this book, and also use it in group discussions.

CHAPTER 1

THE GREAT COMMISSION

The prophets of old prophesied concerning Jesus Christ's death, burial and resurrection. True to God's word, all the prophecies relating to His first coming were fulfilled;

"He said to them, "This is what I told you, while I was still with you, that all things which are written in the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds, that they might understand the Scriptures. He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day..." Luke 24:44-48

He, after His resurrection from the dead, gave you and I the charge to go and preach the gospel to all men. We are to also teach them to observe all that He had taught the disciples (who we are too);

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"Therefore go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen." Matthew 28:19-20 (emphasis is mine)

It is worth pondering over the underlined portions of the scripture. The command is to go, make disciples of all nations, and to teach them to obey all that He had commanded the disciples. This can only be done by knowing the teachings of Christ (the red letters in your Bible if any). Before we can carry out this great commission, we need to pay heed to the voice of Jesus Christ;

*"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth."
Acts 1:8*

One can only be an effective tool in the hands of God in winning and discipling souls if he obeys the above scripture. Therefore, if you are using this material, bear the following scripture in mind always;

"You didn't choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; ..." John 15:16

The definition of a disciple

Discipleship is a matter so dear to the heart of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. Therefore it is very important to take His definition as the final authority;

"If anyone comes to me, and doesn't hate his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he can't be my disciple. Whoever doesn't bear his own cross, and come after me, can't be my disciple."
Luke 14:26-27

The genesis of a disciple

There is a cost involved in becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. Therefore it is very important for one to assess the cost before giving his life to Christ. Evangelists and Christians in general who will preach the gospel to the lost should not rush them into repeating certain prayers after them, but to make them carefully consider the decision they are going to make;

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"For which of you, desiring to build a tower, doesn't first sit down and count the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? Or perhaps, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, everyone who sees begins to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build, and wasn't able to finish.'"
Luke 14:28-30

So before you receive the grace of God, you have to consider the cost of becoming a disciple. You cannot have both the world and Jesus Christ. A clear choice has to be made between forsaking the pleasures of the world in order to follow Jesus Christ and the rejection of Jesus to gain the world. They are two opposite ways. How can you walk on two opposite paths at the same time, or look up and down at the same time?;

"No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You aren't able to serve God and mammon"
Luke 16:13

DISCUSSION

- ✓ How do people view discipleship these days?
- ✓ What do you have to say in connection with that?
- ✓ What other scriptures comes into mind when we talk about discipleship?

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How can one become a disciple?

We have already learned about the fact that, before someone can become a disciple of Jesus Christ, he or she needs to count the cost of becoming one. After one counts the cost, he must bear in mind that he must obey the gospel of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. However, in this end-time it is important to know from the onset that you have started aright (Whether you have obeyed the true Jesus, true gospel or received the right spirit);

"... But I am afraid that somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve in his craftiness, so your minds might be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or if you receive a different spirit, which you did not receive, or a different "good news", which you did not accept, you put up with that well enough." 2Cor. 11:1-4

The True Jesus

Be careful in this end-time, as false prophets and teachers are preaching another Jesus who we cannot find in the scriptures. The true Jesus in the Bible during His first coming to this earth was not beautiful to behold;

"... there is no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised, and rejected by men; a man of suffering, and acquainted with disease; and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we didn't respect him. Surely he has borne our sickness, and carried our suffering; yet we considered him plagued, struck by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought our peace was on him; and by his wounds we are healed..." Isaiah 53:1-12

But false prophets and teachers these days have to polish the word of God in order to make it attractive to the world. The word the early disciples preached was not pleasant to their hearers;

"But I, brothers, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been removed." Galatians 5:11

"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, since I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his lord.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If

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they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do to you for my name's sake, because they don't know him who sent me." John 15:18-21

Scripture makes us to understand that Jesus was meek and lowly in heart;

*"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart; and you will find rest for your souls.
Matthew 11:29*

The false teachers and prophets these days rather mind high things and teach their congregants to live luxurious or opulent life style, which was contrary to the practice of the apostles;

*"For our exhortation is not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in deception... For neither were we at any time found using words of flattery, as you know, nor a cloak of covetousness (God is witness) nor seeking glory from men..."
1 Thessalonians 2:3-10 also check Jude 16-18*

If you want to know the true Jesus, then go back to the scriptures and study what Jesus taught and match it with the teachings of false prophets and teachers these days.

By so doing you will be sure you would not believe in a false Christ, since the spirit of the anti-Christ is already in operation;

"Beloved, don't believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit who doesn't confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God, and this is the spirit of the antichrist. . . " 1 John 4:1-5 also check 2 John 7-10

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Will people identify Jesus if He comes to them today?
- ✓ Will you identify Him if He should resurface?
- ✓ How sure are you, considering the fact that most men rejected Him at His first coming?
- ✓ What other scriptures come into mind when talking about the true Jesus of the Bible?

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The True gospel

For us not to believe in another gospel, it is very important for us to know the true gospel that the apostles preached. Paul defined the gospel that he preached to be;

"Now I declare to you, brothers, the Good News which I preached to you, which also you received, in which you also stand. . . For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures," 1Corinthians 15:1, 3-4

Paul's definition gives us a guideline as to what the ingredients necessary for our salvation is, and what our focus should be when we are watching out for the true gospel of Jesus Christ. According to his definition, Christ was crucified and died for our sins and for that matter our old man also needs to be crucified;

"who his own self bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live to righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed." 1Peter 2:24

The baptism of water is also very much needed for the

salvation of a person as it makes him to identify with the death of Christ;

"Or don't you know that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism to death, that just like Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. . . ."Romans 6:3-4, 4-5, " also check 1 Peter 3:21; Colossians 2:12

The resurrection of Christ also depicts our baptism in the Holy Spirit and our future resurrection. For it is only those who are sealed by the Holy Spirit who will resurrect from the dead or be caught up at the glorious appearing of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ;

"in whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the Good News of your salvation,--in whom, having also believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise," Ephesians 1:13

"...to the end he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints" 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 also check 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17

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So when you are armed with these cardinal points of the gospel then you will be sure to test whether you are obeying the true gospel or not.

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What is the gospel that men preach these days?
- ✓ Do they contain the essentials of the true gospel?
- ✓ What was your understanding of a true gospel?
- ✓ What is your understanding now?
- ✓ What other scriptures talk about the true gospel?
- ✓ Can you research more on the essentials of the true gospel of Christ?

The True Spirit

In order not to embrace the spirit of the world which false prophets and teachers preach these days, we must know the true spirit of God;

"But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that were freely given to us by God." 1 Corinthians 2:12 also check 1 John 4:5-6

It is important for us to know the Holy Spirit (the spirit of God). The spirit of the world is that spirit which makes one to love the world. Those who are controlled by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are controlled by the spirit of the world. We are commanded not to love the world, for if we do, then the love of the father is not in us;

"Don't love the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the Father's love isn't in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, isn't the Father's, but is the world's ..."
1 John 2:15-17

We will only know that we have the Holy Spirit if we

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love God and our fellow brethren;

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God. He who doesn't love doesn't know God, for God is love... Beloved, if God loved us in this way, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God remains in us, and his love has been perfected in us."
1 John 4:7-12

As the name even connotes, you cannot possess the Holy Spirit and not desire to live a Holy life. If one feels comfortable to sin, then it is clear the Holy Spirit (who is the seed and seal of God in the life of a believer) is completely missing in action;

"... Everyone who has this hope set on him purifies himself, even as he is pure. Everyone who sins also commits lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness. You know that he was revealed to take away our sins, and in him is no sin. Whoever remains in him doesn't sin. Whoever sins hasn't seen him, neither knows him. Little children, let no one lead you astray. He who does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning..."
1 John 3:2-11

Do not believe every spirit but rather put them to the test so that you can ascertain whether it is really from God or not;

"Beloved, don't believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world By this you know the Spirit of God..."
1John 4:1-3

"Test all things, and hold firmly that which is good."
1Thessalonians 5:21

DISCUSSION

- ✓ When you look around you and see the way men feel comfortable to sin, do you think they have the true spirit?
- ✓ Do you test the spirits? How?
- ✓ Mark yourself to know if you indeed possess the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ What scriptures come into mind concerning the true nature of the Holy Spirit?

Note: Someone with the Holy Spirit may sin against God as an exception but not as a rule. For he or she does not continue to sin deliberately.

CHAPTER 2

OBEYING THE GOSPEL

You will remember we looked at the fact that we should be careful with the kind of Jesus we preach or hear about (whether He is the true one or the anti-Christ). We also looked at the probability that one can believe a false gospel and even receive another spirit different from the one the Apostles received. Let us go on to look at how we can obey the true gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The salvation of man begins with repentance. In simple terms, repentance is the radical turn from all manner of sin to God, in order to embrace His free gift of grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The first man (Adam) disobeyed God and sin entered the human race;

"Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it; for in the day that you eat of it you will surely die." Gen2:16-17 also check Genesis 3:6-10; Rom 5:12-13; 18; Romans 3:10; Romans 3:23

The last Adam (Jesus Christ) obeyed God in order to take away sin from the human race;

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:16

"saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done" Luke 22:42 also check Rom 5:18-21, 6:10, 5:8, 6:23

Man's task therefore is to receive the gift of God's salvation by faith.

"For this cause it is of faith, that it may be according to grace, to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. . . " Rom 4:16-17, 22 also check Gal 2:16, 3:9-14

OBEDYING THE GOSPEL

One cannot claim to have faith when he does not back it up by action. God therefore expects man to obey Him with his free will by taking a step of faith in receiving His free grace;

*"... Jesus answered him, "Most certainly, I tell you, unless one is born anew, he can't see the Kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? ... Jesus answered, "Most certainly I tell you, unless one is born of water and spirit, he can't enter into the Kingdom of God! ... 'You must be born anew.'..."
John 3:1-8*

From the above scripture we can deduce that being born again entails the identification of the sinner with Christ's death and burial as well as His resurrection from the dead as earlier on revealed in our study. It is this identification with Christ's crucifixion (death) that we term as repentance. The prophets of old always called Israel to repentance. John the Baptist who was the forerunner of Jesus Christ preached repentance;

"In those days, John the Baptizer came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying" Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" Matthew 3:1-2

Our Lord Jesus Christ also started His ministry by preaching the message of repentance;

*"From that time, Jesus began to preach, and to say,
"Repent! For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"
Matthew 4:17*

It is therefore important for us to note the role of repentance when it comes to salvation. I believe we know what repentance simply is, and that one cannot embrace the free gift of the grace of God without it. Jesus made it a point to instruct his disciples to preach it in His name;

*"and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached
in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem."
Luke 24:47*

This charge was obeyed and practiced by the apostles and early believers;

*"Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of
you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and
you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38*

OBEYING THE GOSPEL

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What is repentance?
- ✓ What are some of the sins that men need to repent of?
- ✓ What are some of the sins you need to repent of?
- ✓ What scriptures come into your mind when it comes to repentance?
- ✓ What is restitution?
- ✓ What is the significance of restitution?
- ✓ Are we to retribute in our day?
- ✓ Research on the meaning of some sins written in the Bible.

Baptism

After repentance, one needs to proceed to be baptized. There are types of Baptism, but the one relevant to us now is the Baptism of water and that of the spirit. First of all let us look at the Baptism of water.

Water Baptism

Baptism by immersion (total immersion) is that which is consistent with scripture. God started teaching us way back, when the Israelites crossed the red sea. This was a form of Baptism for them. When John the Baptist came into the scene, he baptized men by immersion;

*"John also was baptizing in Enon near Salim, because there was much water there. They came, and were baptized."
John 3:23*

Even our Lord and Savior Jesus was Baptized by immersion and so we are also not exempted;

"It happened in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan." Mark 1:9

He himself also practiced water Baptism;

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"They came to John, and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified, behold, the same baptizes, and everyone is coming to him.""
John 3:26

In teaching us the essentials or necessity for water Baptism, Christ answered Nicodemus as follows;

"Jesus answered, "Most certainly I tell you, unless one is born of water and spirit, he can't enter into the Kingdom of God!"
John 3:5

And from Christ's example, the apostles after the day of Pentecost (when the Holy Spirit came upon them), had this revelation;

"... "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38

The Significance of Baptism

✓ It signifies an inward and outward sign of the remission of sins;

"Now why do you wait? Arise, be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" Acts 22:16 also check 1 Peter 3:21

- ✓ We identify ourselves with the burial of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ;

"having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead." Colossians 2:12 also check Romans 6:3-11

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What are the various types of Baptism people practice these days?
- ✓ What is their Biblical base? Are they rightly dividing the word of truth?
- ✓ What is their understanding of Baptism?
- ✓ What was your understanding of Baptism?
- ✓ What is your understanding now?
- ✓ What scriptures do you know can be used to defend your stand now?

OBEDYING THE GOSPEL

Holy Spirit Baptism

It is Christ Jesus who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. This was a testimony given by both John the Baptist and Jesus himself. John the Baptist could only Baptize with water unto repentance;

"... 'On whomever you will see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he who baptizes in the Holy Spirit. 'I have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.'" John 1:32-34

Jesus Himself had this to say;

"Behold, I send forth the promise of my Father on you. But wait in the city of Jerusalem until you are clothed with power from on high." Luke 24:49

This promise was more elaborate in Acts 1:8

This was fulfilled after the disciples heeded the advice of Jesus to tarry in Jerusalem;

"Now when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all with one accord in one place... They were all filled with the Holy Spirit..." Acts 2:1-4

After the disciples received the Holy Spirit, Peter also emphasized the importance of the Holy Spirit when he answered the sincere question of the people who were at Jerusalem at that time;

*"... and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
Acts 2:37-38*

Owing to the value of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer, the Apostles used to lay hands on new converts so they could receive the Holy Spirit. It is only by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit that the believer could live a life pleasing to God;

"When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke with other languages and prophesied." Acts 19:6 also check Acts 8:14-17

Evidence of the Holy Spirit

The speaking with other tongues is not by one's own volition, but is engineered by the spirit and spoken out by the one being inspired as he consents with his will (yielding his vocal senses);

OBEYING THE GOSPEL

"They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak." Acts 2:4 also check Acts 10:46-47

We can see from this that, Peter concluded, the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit when he heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. When Paul went to Ephesus he asked them whether or not they had received the Holy Spirit, to which they answered in the negative. They were not even aware of the Holy Spirit. They were therefore baptized in the name of Jesus after which Paul laid hands on them to receive the Holy Spirit. His action brought about the following results;

"When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke with other languages and prophesied." Acts 19:6

Also it can be said that no one with the genuine spirit of God (Holy Spirit) can curse or speak blasphemously against Jesus Christ. Anyone with the Holy Spirit will certainly affirm the Lordship of Christ in his life and declare that He is Lord of all;

"Therefore I make known to you that no man speaking by God's Spirit says, 'Jesus is accursed.' No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' but by the Holy Spirit." 1Corinthians 12:3

Furthermore, it can be noted from scripture that if one receives the gift of the Holy Spirit, he has the potential to be used by the Holy Spirit to minister in at least one of the spiritual gifts;

"There are various kinds of workings, but the same God, who works all things in all. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the profit of all." 1Corinthians 12:6-7

And everyone that the Holy Spirit dwells in manifests the fruit of the spirit;

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control... If we live by the Spirit, let's also walk by the Spirit." Galatians 5:22-25

Those who are born of the spirit of God walk righteously and also love their brothers;

OBEYING THE GOSPEL

"But concerning brotherly love, you have no need that one write to you. For you yourselves are taught by God to love one another" 1Thessalonians 4:9 also check 1John 3:10 Romans 8:9

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What is the perception of people about the Holy Spirit?
- ✓ What is their Biblical prove?
- ✓ What are some of the other evidence of the Holy Spirit in a person's life you know?
- ✓ What other scriptures do you know that talks about the Holy Spirit and the important role He plays in one's salvation?

CHAPTER 3

WHAT YOU MUST KNOW AS A DISCIPLE

A disciple of Christ must always bear in mind that there is a place he is coming from and there is coming a day he will surely return to his father. True disciples of Christ are therefore supposed to be focused as they live as pilgrims on the face of this earth. Christ made us aware that we are to always make the kingdom of God our priority;

"But seek first God's Kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things will be given to you as well." Matthew 6:33

This point was made clearer in the skeletal prayer that He gave His disciples when they asked Him to teach them to pray. The disciples wanted to pray and not just know about prayer;

WHAT YOU MUST KNOW AS A DISCIPLE

"It happened, that when he finished praying in a certain place, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples." " Luke 11:1

This model prayer teaches us to be selfless and to live on the provisions of God. Disciples are not to miss the focus of their mission on earth. Paul therefore prayed for the church at Thessalonica that the Lord directs their heart into the love of God;

"May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ." 2Thessalonians 3:5

And that the kingdom of God is not material, when he was writing to the church in Rome;

"for the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." Romans 14:17

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What is people's understanding of the kingdom of God?
- ✓ What should be a disciple's focus in this end-time?
- ✓ What is your focus now?
- ✓ What other scriptures teach us to focus on things above? Hint the book of Colossians and Philippians.

WHAT YOU MUST KNOW AS A DISCIPLE

You have to die to self

Selfishness is not consistent with the life of a true disciple of Christ as enshrined in the scriptures. Christ gave the command to His disciples to love one another as He had loved them;

"This is my commandment, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." John 15:12-13

You and I know that loving the way of Christ entails laying down our lives for the brethren (which is a must);

"Beloved, if God loved us in this way, we also ought to love one another." 1 John 4:11

If we do not obey this scripture then we are not qualified to be called true disciples of Christ. Why? Because scripture has made us to understand that if anyone does not have the spirit of Christ (manner of life) then he is none of His;

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if it is so that the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if any man doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his." Romans 8:9

There is no way a disciple can manifest the glory of God if he does not die to self. Christ revealed this truth to us when some Greeks wanted to see Him;

"Jesus answered them, "The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Most certainly I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life will lose it. He who hates his life in this world will keep it to eternal life. If anyone serves me, let him follow me. . . ." John 12:23-30

Paul understood this scripture and for this reason lived a selfless life by seeking the profit of others and not for himself;

"Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. . . even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved." 1Corinthians 10:31-33

In order for him to carry out his assignment on earth, he acknowledged that he needed to die daily. If you call yourself a believer or a disciple of Jesus and you do not put the desires of the flesh to death, you will find it very difficult to manifest the glory of God;

WHAT YOU MUST KNOW AS A DISCIPLE

"Why do we also stand in jeopardy every hour? I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." 1Corinthians 15:30-31

In the pursuit of self-denial so that others may gain salvation, Paul was always under persecution and trials, but in all the glory of God was rather being revealed in his life;

"Therefore we don't faint, but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, works for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory;" 2Corinthians 4:16-17

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Do most people love to live selfless lives?
- ✓ Do you yourself live a selfless life?
- ✓ What other scriptures teach us self-denial for the good of others?

You do not have to run in vain

So many professing disciples of Christ will be disappointed in the end when Christ declares he never knew them;

"Many will tell me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, in your name cast out demons, and in your name do many mighty works?' Then I will tell them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you who work iniquity.'"
Matthew 7:22-23

Why do you think Christ said He did not know them? The answer is found right at the latter end of that scripture in that, they were workers of iniquity. So, never be deceived by the miracles you perform, the tongues you speak, and even the number of demons you have been able to cast out of people. Those who qualify for the kingdom are those who do the will of God;

"... among whom you are seen as lights in the world, holding up the word of life; that I may have something to boast in the day of Christ, that I didn't run in vain nor labor in vain."
Philippians 2:13-16 also check 1Thessalonians 5:23;
1Thessalonians 4:3-4

WHAT YOU MUST KNOW AS A DISCIPLE

It is not how one starts a race that matters, but how he finishes. In as much as a good start is very important, one must however endeavor to persevere to the end;

"... You therefore must endure hardship, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on duty entangles himself in the affairs of life, that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier. Also, if anyone competes in athletics, he isn't crowned unless he has competed by the rules." 2Timothy 2:2-5 also check 2Tim 1:13-14

Owing to the nature of the end-time battle, Christ had to make us (His disciples) understand that it is only those who endure to the end who shall be saved;

"Because iniquity will be multiplied, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end, the same will be saved. Matthew 24:12-13

DISCUSSION

- ✓ How are so many running the Christian race these days?
- ✓ How are you running yours?
- ✓ What are some of the scriptures which throw more light on the subject matter under discussion?

CHAPTER 4

THE GRACE OF GOD

In this end-time, a lot of people have their own view as to what the grace of God is and its implications on the life of a believer. It is therefore important for us to use the scriptures as our reference point and not our mind (which may be full of good intentions but not truth);

"... and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand."

1 Peter 5:12

From the scripture above, we get the hint that there is the true grace of God. If there is the true grace of God, then by extension there is a false grace preached by many. It is therefore important for us to know what the true grace of God is, so we can reject the counterfeit;

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"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we would live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; . . . "Titus 2:11-14

Most people hide under the cover of false grace to sin, citing Romans 3:23 as their basis since it is not by works that a man is saved. However, when we check the definition of the grace of God according to Titus 2:11 you will realize that the grace rather delivers us from evil and not a warrant to sin. In fact grace according to its definition came to empower us to live a righteous life;

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? May it never be! We who died to sin, how could we live in it any longer?" Romans 6:1-2

In effect, the person who is truly justified by grace is the one who is free from sin and as such sin does not have dominion over him;

"Thus consider yourselves also to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore don't let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. Neither present your members to sin as instruments of

unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin will not have dominion over you. For you are not under law, but under grace. . . " Romans 6:11-19 also check Ephesians 1:2-7

So you appreciate the fact that the true grace of God helps us live in consonance with the word of God through obedience.

NOTE: There are different types of grace within the general grace of God; check **2 Corinthians 9:8; 1 Peter 5:10**

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What is the understanding of many as touching the grace of God?
- ✓ What was your understanding of the grace of God?
- ✓ What other scriptures teach the true grace of God?

CHAPTER 5

BEWARE OF LEAVEN

Leaven in our modern language is yeast. Yeast is used for many purposes but we will narrow ourselves to just two of them. Yeast is used to cause bread to bloat beyond proportion and to give it a certain kind of taste. God warned the Israelites during their Passover feast not to eat bread with leaven;

"Seven days shall you eat unleavened bread; even the first day you shall put away yeast out of your houses, for whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel." Exodus 12:15

In the New Testament, Christ warned His disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees. The leaven under this context referred to hypocrisy;

"Meanwhile, when a multitude of many thousands had gathered together, so much so that they trampled on each other, he began to tell his disciples first of all, "Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Luke 12:1

This was to warn the disciples about the danger of hypocrisy that, it is capable of causing one to be blind. The message to the Pharisees was for them to repent of their hypocrisy. A lot of believers or disciples these days do not speak truth from their heart at all;

"He who walks blamelessly does what is right, and speaks truth in his heart;" Psalm 15:2

The reason why many are not able to know Christ as they ought to is because of impurity (which starts from the heart). They are not truthful to own up to their sins and for that reason they fall into the same category as the Pharisees because they are hypocrites. The Pharisees were blind because of their hypocrisy;

"Leave them alone. They are blind guides of the blind. If the blind guide the blind, both will fall into a pit." Matthew 15:14

BEWARE OF LEAVEN

Hypocrisy is a sin and whosoever lives in sin is blind;

*"For he who lacks these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins."
2Peter 1:9*

Christ also talked about the leaven of Herod. The leaven of Herod means going to bed with politicians. The disciples thought that Jesus Christ was going to bring about political emancipation not knowing that was not His agenda in His first coming. He therefore warned the disciples so that they will be careful mingling with politics with the hope that, that was going to solve their problems;

"They forgot to take bread; and they didn't have more than one loaf in the boat with them. He charged them, saying, "Take heed: beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod." Mark 8:14-15

I am not in any way suggesting that you should not vote in an election or hold a political position. Rather, I am to warn you not to put your hopes and aspirations in political positions or political systems, for it is just sinking sand. We are to look up to Jesus, the Rock of ages.

*"looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."
Hebrews 12:2*

Paul used leaven to mean sin in the life of a believer. Never condone sin no matter how small you see it, for it carries the potential of leading your whole members into hell fire;

"Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole lump? Purge out the old yeast, that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed in our place. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old yeast, neither with the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." 1Corinthians 5:6-8

"A little yeast grows through the whole lump." Galatians 5:9

It takes just a small leaven in order to cause a loaf of bread to bloat beyond proportion. In these days a lot of people are not comfortable with the raw word of God, but prefer to listen to false prophets who will garnish their messages (in this case leaven) such that it only flatters to

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deceive many. Do not be fooled by such smooth talks and the condoning of sin no matter its magnitude. Remember, in the kingdom of God there is a zero tolerance for corruption (sin);

"Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man will see the Lord," Hebrews 12:14 also check Ephesians 5:27

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What are the other uses of yeast in modern day life?
- ✓ How do you relate it to sin?

How to know the Truth

Everyone reads or studies the Bible for so many reasons, but you as a disciple of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ should study it for the purpose of knowing the truth;

"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me." John 14:6

"You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."
John 8:32

The attitude with which you approach the Bible is what will determine whether you will know the truth or you will be able to rightly divide the truth. In the first place God commands that;

"Jesus answered, "The greatest is, 'Hear, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one: you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment."
Mark 12:29-30

Therefore that is why God told the Israelites in the day of Jeremiah that before they find Him, they have to search for Him with all their heart;

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"You shall seek me, and find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13

So when we seek God with all our heart, we will surely find Him as He has already promised;

"Ask, and it will be given you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened for you." Matthew 7:7

A lot of people fail to know the truth and thus, do not rightly divide the truth simply because they do not love God with their all;

"... for Yahweh your God proves you, to know whether you love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul." Deuteronomy 13:1-3

Remember, the path way to knowing God the more is losing all for His sake;

"... for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and count them nothing but refuse, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;" Philippians 3:7-9

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Do people love truth these days? Why?
- ✓ Are you ready at all times to obey God's word?
- ✓ What other scriptures teach this truth in question?

CHAPTER 6

THE WORD OF GOD

One most important thing you must understand is, the Bible is a compilation of writings which were or are inspired by God. They testify of God and as such can be termed as the word of God. However, you must understand that God (the word) goes beyond all that we have in the Bible (even though all that is in the Bible is inspired by God) and as such we need to, and must embrace the whole of the word of God in order to gain an understanding of it;

"Every writing inspired by God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

It is good to know everything written therein from Genesis to Revelations, but it does not mean you have to start reading it from the book of Genesis in succession. This is because, even the books as they were arranged do not follow the order in which they were written. It is therefore important to pray to God to lead you as you read it (for the word was spirit and became flesh). Why, because it is only the Holy Spirit who knows what you will need per time therefore you must make it a point to be flexible. As a beginner I advise that the first books you start (get yourself conversant) with should be the gospels where you can take note of the life, ministry and teachings of Jesus Christ;

*"Therefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on to perfection--not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, of faith toward God,"
Hebrews 6:1*

After getting used to the teachings of Jesus, I advise you go on further to (go through) the book of 1 John very well;

"That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we

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saw, and our hands touched, concerning the Word of life"
1 John 1:1

This is because you will be able to gain an appreciation of what the foundation of Christianity is all about, Christ being the chief corner stone of the church;

"being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone;"
Ephesians 2:20

So in understanding more about Christ as the Holy Spirit leads you, try and do more study on the laws of Moses, the prophets and the Psalms looking out for scriptures which speak of Jesus; check *Luke 24:44-45*

As we have already learned (that we are being built on the foundations of the apostles and the prophets) it is very important to know the apostles' teachings;

"They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and prayer." Acts 2:42

You can know their teachings by studying the book of Acts and the epistles. After which you can add the pastoral letters. Meanwhile, you can have a personal study plan to go through the other books of the Bible like Genesis, Proverbs etc. to gain more knowledge of the Bible. You can as well use books like Ruth, 1Kings, Judges etc. for character study purposes. Therefore it is very important that you go through the whole Bible more than once. I however advise that you follow the sequence being laid down, as it can give you a quicker understanding of the Christian faith (help you rightly divide the word of truth);

"Give diligence to present yourself approved by God, a workman who doesn't need to be ashamed, properly handling the Word of Truth." 2 Timothy 2:15

However, you must prayerfully be led in your Bible Studies as the Holy Spirit knows best.

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DISCUSSION

- ✓ How was the Bible compiled?
- ✓ What is the difference between God and the Bible?
- ✓ Do people practice what they study from the Bible?
- ✓ Are you always ready to obey any instructions you come across in the Bible?
- ✓ What lessons have you learned from the Bible so far?
- ✓ What is your Bible study plan?

The kingdom of God

The simplest definition of the kingdom of God without any controversy is found in this scripture;

*"for the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit."
Romans 14:17*

Therefore when men reduce the gospel to the chasing and claiming of material things, then know that they are not talking about the kingdom of God but rather serving their belly;

"Brothers, be imitators together of me, and note those who walk this way, even as you have us for an example. For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, as the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who think about earthly things." Philippians 3:17-19

When one has the kingdom of God in him (the presence of the Holy Spirit) though he is on this earth, he will know he is not of this earth and thus, will set his affections on things above where Christ is;

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"If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Colossians 3:1-3

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What was Jesus' definition of the kingdom of God? How do you relate it to what you have learned?
- ✓ What is the kingdom of the world? How do you relate it with the temptation of Jesus by the devil?
- ✓ What scriptures do you know talk about the kingdom of God?

The Church

The church refers to a called out group of persons from darkness into light, with Christ as the main architect;

"I also tell you that you are Peter, {Peter's name, Petros in Greek, is the word for a specific rock or stone.} and on this rock {Greek, petra, a rock mass or bedrock.} I will build my assembly, and the gates of Hades {or, Hell} will not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18

It is Christ who is building his church whiles we are his building blocks or spiritual stones (however it could refer to an individual)

"You also, as living stones, are built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2:5

If the church is a body and for that matter we are part of it, we should be identified with it by fellowshipping with other believers.

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DISCUSSION

- ✓ Is the church a building or a people? Give reasons for your answer with scriptural support?
- ✓ How did God progressively reveal his church to us right from the time of Moses or Noah?
- ✓ How many churches do we have? Explain.

Fellowship with other brethren

Fellowship with other brethren is very important in our Christian life, since it teaches us about the oneness of God;

*"that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us. Yes, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:3
also check Acts 2:42*

This is why the early church did not play with fellowship at all, for it reminds us that one day we will fellowship with God and His angels in heaven. As the world is drawing to a close, we need to continue in fellowship with one another so that we can be of help to each other. Fellowship also helps us to use our gifts for the benefit of the church (body of Christ);

"not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:25

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DISCUSSION

- ✓ What is your understanding of fellowship?
- ✓ How often do you fellowship?
- ✓ Which other scriptures talk about fellowship?

Giving

Giving is the very foundation upon which the Christian faith was built; check **John 3:16**. Giving is an expression of love. Right from the day of Pentecost (when God gave His spirit to the disciples) you would realize, giving or sharing was an integral part of their daily fellowship with one another;

"They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and prayer..."

Acts 2:42-46

We as disciples of Christ are supposed to give without strings attached. That is, we are taught to give liberally;

"how that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality." 2 Corinthians 8:2

Bible teaches us to give to all men especially those of the house hold of faith. When you become a believer, you need to be closer to your spiritual family than the physical. Therefore in giving, you need to consider the disciples of Christ first; check **Galatians 6:10**

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DISCUSSION

- ✓ Why should giving be part of a believer?
- ✓ What are some of the things you can give?
- ✓ Why do some professing believers find it very difficult to give unless they are deceived by false prophets?

The Lord's supper (Communion)

The communion stands for the body and the blood of Jesus which is the seal of the New Covenant (Testament);

"As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had blessed, he broke it, and gave to them, and said, "Take, eat. This is my body. He took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave to them. They all drank of it He said to them, "This is my blood of the new covenant..." Mark 14:22-25

It establishes the fact that we ought to be part of the body of Christ and to possess the life of Christ in us. The bread stands for the former whiles the blood stands for the latter. This is why it was very important to Christ that anybody who wants to be His disciple had to partake of the elements mentioned; check **John 6:48-57**

Since the bread was not supposed to be leavened, it means His disciples are to live pure lives. As blood signifies life, we are also expected to live the life of Christ or else we cannot qualify to be His disciples. So taking the elements must first of all be backed by the practice of it as He made known to the early disciples. It also symbolizes

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the one body of Christ and as such cautions us to be one in spirit. This is why Paul had to rebuke the Corinthian church because some took the elements of the communion without first discerning it (understanding what it stood for);

"For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he doesn't discern the Lord's body." 1 Corinthians 11:29

Therefore as we take the elements of the communion, let us always endeavor to understand and live according to what it stands for.

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What is people's understanding of the Lord's Supper (communion)?
- ✓ How often should it be taken and why?
- ✓ Do you partake in the Lord's supper (communion)? Why and why not?

The necessity of prayer

Do you know that the most important thing Christ's disciples asked Him to teach them to do whiles He was on earth was prayer?;

"It happened, that when he finished praying in a certain place, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples." Luke 11:1

They asked Him to teach them to do it, but not just have a head knowledge of it. You realize that Christ taught them to concentrate much on the kingdom and others rather than themselves. We are taught to ask more spiritual things and less material just for our needs. That is why Paul also taught it in 1Timothy 2:1-3;

"I exhort therefore, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and givings of thanks, be made for all men: for kings and all who are in high places; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior;"

You see that first of all we do not need to concentrate on ourselves just as Christ taught His disciples. The act of prayer is supposed to be continuous;

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"Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What is prayer?
- ✓ Do you know that prayerlessness is a sin?

Loving one another

Love is the very nature of God;

*"He who doesn't love doesn't know God, for God is love."
1 John 4:8*

*"We know and have believed the love which God has for us.
God is love, and he who remains in love remains in God, and
God remains in him." 1 John 4:16*

If we therefore call ourselves children of God, then we ought to also love as Jesus commanded His disciples;

*"This is my commandment, that you love one another, even as
I have loved you." John 15:12*

From Jesus' command we get the hint that our love should be sacrificial and as such no strings should be attached;

*"By this we know love, because he laid down his life for us.
And we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers."
1 John 3:16*

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If you do not love unconditionally then that means you are not a true disciple of Christ, since the kind of love Christ showed toward us was an unconditional one;

"But God commends his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

Though we are taught to love one another as Christians, we are also supposed to love our enemies. We are to learn this from our father who is in heaven, for He causes it to rain on both the evil and the good. It will take love for evil men to be saved. Therefore we are enjoined to love our enemies;

"But I tell you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who mistreat you and persecute you," Matthew 5:44 also check Luke 6:27

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What are the types of love you know?
- ✓ Which of them must a Christian manifest? And why?
- ✓ If a Christian does not manifest the love God wants him to, will he go to hell?
- ✓ What other scriptures teaches us about the love of God and also teaches us to love?

CHAPTER 7

EVANGELISM - OUR CALL

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, you need to make it your responsibility to preach to others for their conversion. This is so because, we have been given the commission to do so;

"He said to them, "Go into all the world, and preach the Good News to the whole creation." Mark 16:15

There is no way you can possess the fire of the Holy Spirit and not evangelize the lost. The fire of the Holy Spirit converts us into witnesses for our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. In essence, for maximum impact in evangelism we need the power of the Holy Spirit;

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, in all

Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth."
Acts 1:8

Bear in mind you became a believer simply because someone in one way or the other preached the gospel to you. For others to also hear the gospel and to heed its call, you have to make it your duty to present it to them;

"How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in him whom they have not heard? How will they hear without a preacher? And how will they preach unless they are sent? ..." *Romans 10:14-15*

Evangelism goes to a large extent to reveal our level of love for God and for our neighbor. You cannot claim to love God when you do not get involved in the main reason why God sent His only begotten son. Likewise you cannot claim to love your neighbor when you cannot warn him to come out of his sins;

"On some have compassion, making a distinction, and some save, snatching them out of the fire with fear, hating even the clothing stained by the flesh." *Jude 22-23*

EVANGELISM - OUR CALL

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Are we really serious about evangelism these days?
- ✓ Is evangelism a pre-requisite to entering heaven?
- ✓ How can you be an effective tool in the hands of God for evangelism?
- ✓ What other scriptures talk about the need for evangelism?

Heaven a place you must not miss

Heaven is the abode of our heavenly father and that is the place where all His disciples will spend eternity. Because of the importance of heaven and our Christian hope, Jesus had to talk about it to His disciples;

"From that time, Jesus began to preach, and to say, "Repent! For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Matthew 4:17 also check Matthew 5:20

There is coming a day that all our suffering on this earth will be over (for we will go and be with our Lord Jesus Christ in heaven). This is the hope of a true disciple of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ;

"for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shepherds them, and leads them to springs of waters of life. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Revelation 7:17 also check Revelation 21:4

Jesus however made it clear it is only those who are pure or live in total obedience to the word of God who will find a place there. There is no way Christ will entertain rebels in heaven;

EVANGELISM - OUR CALL

*"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Matthew 5:10
also check Matthew 5:8*

Because of this hope we have as believers, we need to constantly keep ourselves pure;

"Everyone who has this hope set on him purifies himself, even as he is pure." 1 John 3:3

Also, in order not to lose focus of the fact that we are just pilgrims on this earth, we need to make this our prayer;

"May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ" 2 Thessalonians 3:5

It is those who fear God and obey His commandments who will gain entrance into the kingdom of God. Therefore in everything we do let us remember the advice of Solomon;

"This is the end of the matter. All has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every

hidden thing, whether it is good, or whether it is evil."
Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What were some of the teachings of Christ concerning heaven?
- ✓ What were the teachings of the prophets in the Old Testament and the apostles in the New Testament concerning heaven?
- ✓ How does heaven look like according to what you know from the scriptures?
- ✓ Who are those whose names are written in the book of life?
- ✓ How does the road which leads to heaven look like?

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Hell a place you must not go

Hell was not created for you and I, but for Satan and the other fallen angels who rebelled against God. This is a place of torment for all the disobedient awaiting final judgment when they will be thrown into the lake of fire;

*"The sea gave up the dead who were in it. Death and Hades {or, Hell} gave up the dead who were in them. They were judged, each one according to his works." Revelation 20:13
also check Matthew 25:41*

Because of the horrible nature of the place, Christ always admonished His disciples to radically overthrow sin in their lives;

"If your right eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it away from you. For it is more profitable for you that one of your members should perish, than for your whole body to be cast into Gehenna." Matthew 5:29 also check Matthew 18:9

The value of your soul is more than the whole world put together. Will it therefore be wise to trade your soul for even the subsets of things on earth?;

"For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life?" Mark 8:36

Sin, no matter the degree will take any body to hell fire. That is why it should not be entertained. Some of the sins that will take many to hell fire and eventually the lake of fire are;

"Even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil habits, secret slanderers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also approve of those who practice them." Romans 1:28-32 also check Revelation 21:8; Revelation 22:15; Galatians 5:19-21

EVANGELISM - OUR CALL

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What is the description of hell?
- ✓ What is the difference between hell and the lake of fire?
- ✓ What are some of the contemporary sins that will land many in hell fire?
- ✓ Are you identified with one of those sins?
- ✓ How does the road which leads to hell look like?
- ✓ How does one walk in the spirit?

Suffering for Christ's sake

When you seek first the kingdom of God, then surely you will suffer persecution;

"... but he will receive one hundred times more now in this time, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and land, with persecutions; and in the age to come eternal life." Mark 10:28-30 also check John 7:7

Christ made us aware that so far as men hated Him, they will also hate us and persecute us simply because we are His followers;

"Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his lord.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will keep yours also." John 15:20

This prophecy of Christ was vividly manifested in the life of the early disciples;

"They therefore departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for Jesus' name." Acts 5:41

EVANGELISM - OUR CALL

Paul makes us to understand that by the reason of the power that is working within us, persecution will be the automatic consequence;

"Therefore don't be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but endure hardship for the Good News according to the power of God," 2 Timothy 1:8

Therefore he said that everyone that will like to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution;

"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12

And because he himself led a godly life, he was able to predict to the disciples at Thessalonica that they were going to be persecuted and truly that prediction came to pass;

"that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you know that we are appointed to this task. For most certainly, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we are to suffer affliction, even as it happened, and you know..." 1 Thessalonians 3:3-5

It is impossible especially in this end-time to decide to live for God holistically and not suffer persecution in one way or the other.

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Do professing disciples view suffering for Christ's sake as a blessing?
- ✓ Are you living a godly life in Christ devoid of lies and hypocrisy?
- ✓ What other scriptures show that a true disciple must suffer for his faith in Christ?

EVANGELISM - OUR CALL

The faith on trial

If you claim to be a true disciple of Christ then surely your faith in Christ will be tested in one way or the other;

"that the proof of your faith, which is more precious than gold that perishes even though it is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" 1Peter 1:7

The writer of 1Peter in this letter is trying to make us understand the necessity of our faith being tested. Though the testing is not at all pleasant at first sight, it however brings about tremendous spiritual blessings to the individual just as Paul also makes us to know (it works patience in our lives);

"Not only this, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering works perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope: and hope doesn't disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us."
Romans 5:3-5

To the Corinthian church, Paul made them aware that

there was coming a time that their faith was going to be tried in fire to know what sought of material it was made of;

"For no one can lay any other foundation than that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or stubble; each man's work will be revealed. For the Day will declare it, because it is revealed in fire; ..."
1Corinthians 3:11-15

Paul was a man who suffered a lot of persecution, but did not allow it to stop him from running the Christian race well. He could boldly declare to the church in Rome that;

"... For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:35-39

Let us also bear in mind that we will also be tested or tried for our faith just as the Hebrew boys' own was tried. In that scenario, the glory of God was revealed in the midst of their trial;

EVANGELISM - OUR CALL

"He answered, Look, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the aspect of the fourth is like a son of the gods." Daniel 3:25

There is therefore tremendous benefit that will accrue to us when we pass through persecutions and trials for Christ's sake.

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Do men know of the benefit of suffering for Christ?
- ✓ Do they know that it is a pre-requisite to make it to heaven?
- ✓ What are the scriptures that attest to this fact?
- ✓ Do you bear the marks of Christ on you?

Disciples indeed

Jesus taught that those who keep his commandments really abide in His love. Therefore to abide in the love of Christ, you need to keep His sayings and commandments;

"If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and remain in his love." John 15:10 also check John 14:23-24

These are a gist of Christ's sayings and teachings;

"Seeing the multitudes, he went up onto the mountain. When he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He opened his mouth and taught them, saying, . . . Even so, let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Matthew 5:1-16 also check Luke 6:20-49; Luke 14:11-14, 26-33; John 9:5

"Most certainly, I tell you, if a person keeps my word, he will never see death." John 8:51

Jesus also taught that those who continue in His teachings are indeed His disciples. An important point to

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note here is that spiritual stagnation is a sin and it is not tolerated in the sight of God;

"Whoever remains in him doesn't sin. Whoever sins hasn't seen him, neither knows him." 1John 3:6 also check John 15:1-10; John 8:12, 29-36; John 11:9-10

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Which other scriptures admonishes us to keep all the sayings and commandments of Christ?
- ✓ According to the standards set by Christ, are we his disciples indeed?
- ✓ What steps are you going to take from today in the face of what you have heard?
- ✓ What is your understanding of this scripture:

CHAPTER 8

WHO IS GOD?

No man can know the totality of His being, but can only progress in the knowledge of Him as He reveals Himself to him by the agency of His spirit. The clear definitions of God are;

- ✓ *God is one; "Hear, Israel: Yahweh is our God; Yahweh is one:" Deuteronomy 6:4 "Now a mediator is not between one, but God is one." Galatians 3:20*
- ✓ *God is love; "He who doesn't love doesn't know God, for God is love." 1 John 4:8*
- ✓ *God is light; "his is the message which we have heard from him and announce to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." 1 John 1:5*
- ✓ *God is a consuming fire; "For Yahweh your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God." Deuteronomy 4:24 "for our God is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12:29*
- ✓ *God is a spirit; "God is spirit, and those who worship him must*

WHO IS GOD?

worship in spirit and truth." John 4:24

From the above definitions of God, you come to appreciate the fact that mortal man cannot and should not try to bottle God. He is the creator and sustainer of all things.

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Can any man know God by himself?
- ✓ How does God look like?
- ✓ Is it a sin to try to bottle God? Give reasons.
- ✓ Why should I know the definitions of God?
- ✓ How can I apply them to my life as am created in His image? Give scriptural backing.

The Godhead

Remember we have already established in our previous lesson that God cannot be put in a straitjacket. Whatever we know about Him now is only partial knowledge until He appears to take us home. Therefore whatever we need to know that we were not privileged to know shall be made clear;

"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, even as I was also fully known." 1 Corinthians 13:12

There is nothing impossible for God to do. He is able to do things which beat the imaginations of men, but can only be grasped by faith in His word. Even though God is one, He in His own eternal purpose and sovereignty chose to reveal Himself in three different ways as though He is separate and distinct from Himself in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and yet He is the same God (eternally existing as the Godhead) for His own redemptive purpose;

"Therefore go, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," Matthew 28:19 also check Romans 1:20; Acts 17:29

WHO IS GOD?

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What are the various views about the Godhead?
- ✓ What is your understanding of the Godhead as it relates to scripture and the role that understanding plays in your life?

The Son of God

Jesus Christ according to scripture is the son of God as well as God Himself. How this is able to happen I cannot explain by my mortal limitation, but by faith I believe this truth with all my heart;

*"Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"
John 20:28*

Scripture teaches that during His journeying on this earth for our redemption, He was the embodiment of the Godhead;

*"For in him all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily,"
Colossians 2:9 also check 2 Corinthians 5:19*

And without any controversy whatsoever (although many may argue), He is the accredited name by which anyone no matter his or her status and stature must be saved;

"There is salvation in none other, for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, by which we must be saved" Acts 4:12

WHO IS GOD?

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Do you believe Jesus Christ is the son of God and at the same time God?
- ✓ What is the testimony of men about Him?
- ✓ What makes Jesus Christ peculiar from all other men such that it is only by His name that one can be saved?

The Holy Spirit

He is the Spirit of God or Christ. In other words He is God Himself, for God is Spirit and His Spirit is holy;

"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4:24 also check 2 Corinthians 3:17

The Holy Spirit is the seal of the redemption of man;

"who also sealed us, and gave us the down payment of the Spirit in our hearts." 2 Corinthians 1:22 also check Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 4:30

Therefore if any one does not possess the Holy Spirit or the life of Christ, then he has no business proclaiming Himself to be a son of God;

"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if it is so that the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if any man doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his." Romans 8:9

WHO IS GOD?

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Why is the Holy Spirit God?
- ✓ What role does the Holy Spirit play in the redemption of man?
- ✓ What are some of the symbols used to depict the Holy Spirit in the Bible? Give scriptural backing for your answer.

CHAPTER 9

WHAT A SHERPHED MUST KNOW

Christ Jesus (who is the good shepherd), taught His disciples who a good shepherd really is;

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who doesn't own the sheep, sees the wolf coming, leaves the sheep, and flees. The wolf snatches the sheep, and scatters them. The hired hand flees because he is a hired hand, and doesn't care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and I'm known by my own;" John 10:11-14

First and foremost we know from Christ that a good shepherd is one who lays down his life for the sheep. This means that a good shepherd should love the sheep by sacrificing himself for it. In applying this to a leader in the church, he must live a sacrificial life for the sake of the

WHAT A SHEPHERD MUST KNOW

sheep just as the apostles did;

"Behold, this is the third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I seek not your possessions, but you. For the children ought not to save up for the parents, but the parents for the children. I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more abundantly, am I loved the less? But be it so, I did not myself burden you. But, being crafty, I caught you with deception. Did I take advantage of you by anyone of them whom I have sent to you? I exhorted Titus, and I sent the brother with him. Did Titus take any advantage of you? Didn't we walk in the same spirit? Didn't we walk in the same steps?" 2 Corinthians 12:14-18 also check 1 Thessalonians 2:8

The good shepherd must know that his main tools to aid him in carrying out his mandate is the rod and the staff, which is the word of God;

"Yahweh is my shepherd; I shall lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He guides me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup runs over. Surely goodness and loving kindness shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in Yahweh's house forever." Psalm 23

He is therefore charged not to hide anything that will be beneficial to the salvation of those who hear him (the flock). That is, he must make known to them the whole counsel of God;

"Every writing inspired by God {literally, God-breathed} is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction which is in righteousness," 2 Timothy 3:16 also check Acts 20:27

The shepherd must know that he is a watchman over the flock of God and as such his own salvation is also dependent on the kind of message or food he gives to the flock of God (if he gives them poison to die he will be judged, and if he nourishes them he will be rewarded);

"Pay attention to yourself, and to your teaching. Continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." 1 Timothy 4:16

WHAT A SHEPHERD MUST KNOW

Psalm 23 should be clearly understood by every true or good shepherd. From this psalm we realize that the needs of the flock come on top of the priority of the shepherd and also identifies with the problems of the flock. In simple terms love is the motivation of every good shepherd, as he is not in to profit from the sheep.

A good shepherd shares fellowship with the flock, just as Christ shared fellowship with His disciples. From our lesson in psalm 23, no good shepherd will give the flock food without water. The leader after he has fed the sheep with the word of God, he is also expected to intercede for them;

"My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ is formed in you" Galatians 4:19 also check Colossians 1:9; Romans 1:9; Ephesians 1:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:3; Philemon 4

Every good leader therefore must be a very serious intercessor. It is the intercession that will help them easily assimilate the word of God, just like water does indigestion. Without intercession or prayer in the life of the shepherd, he will only preach letters which will lead to

the death of the flock. Christ was an intercessor and still is;

"Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes rather, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." Romans 8:34

The heartbeat of the shepherd should be to guard the flock from wolves in sheep skin;

"Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the assembly of the Lord and God which he purchased with his own blood. For I know that after my departure, vicious wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Men will arise from among your own selves, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore watch, remembering that for a period of three years I didn't cease to admonish everyone night and day with tears." Acts 20:28-31

These wolves are the false teachers and prophets, whose messages have the potential of leading the flock astray. Therefore it is the duty of the good shepherd to identify these false prophets and teachers in order to

WHAT A SHEPHERD MUST KNOW

evict them from the church or guard the flock from those who are without. The wolves according to Paul are earthly minded;

"Brothers, be imitators together of me, and note those who walk this way, even as you have us for an example. For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, as the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who think about earthly things." Philippians 3:17-19

If they are earthly minded then that means they are not teaching the kingdom, and neither are they making the kingdom of God their top most priority. The kingdom of God is not materialism (meat and drink). Owing to the infiltration of false prophets these days, the true shepherd's eyes should always be filled with tears for the sheep because of love for them;

"Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches; Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord. Lift up your hands toward him for the life of your young children, that faint for hunger at the head of every street." Lamentations 2:19

"My eye runs down with streams of water, for the destruction of the daughter of my people." Lamentation 3:48

There is no way a good shepherd can lead the flock if he does not know his bearing. The reason why messages on holiness are dying out these days is simply because the leaders themselves are not living holy lives. If a blind man leads his fellow, this is what happens;

"Leave them alone. They are blind guides of the blind. If the blind guide the blind, both will fall into a pit." Matthew 15:14

We can therefore preach holiness when we are holy ourselves. If we are able to deal with our sins then we can also deal with that of others;

"... You hypocrite! First remove the beam out of your own eye, and then you can see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye." Matthew 7:3-5

However, a good shepherd must manifest the fruit of the spirit as is very vital in helping him carry out his duties;

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience,

WHAT A SHEPHERD MUST KNOW

kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control..."
Galatians 5:22-26

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Who is a shepherd?
- ✓ Who is a good shepherd?
- ✓ Who is a bad shepherd?
- ✓ What scriptures differentiate the good shepherd from a wolf in sheep clothing?

Humility and servanthood

God is very much opposed to pride. It was pride that led to the downfall of Lucifer. Scripture tells us about the way God views pride;

"Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to Yahweh; they shall certainly not be unpunished." Proverbs 16:5 also check James 4:6

From our lesson on grace, we learned that it is the empowerment to depart from iniquity so that we can fulfill our mission on earth. However, to get this grace we need to be humble. It was through humility that God gave man redemption from sin;

"And being found in human form, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, yes, the death of the cross." Philippians 2:8

We must also learn from our savior to be humble. Let us bear in mind that humility is a choice but is also a prerequisite for our healing or deliverance;

WHAT A SHERPHED MUST KNOW

"if my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14

Christ therefore taught His disciples what humility entails and the fact that, if one is not humble, he will not be able to gain eternal life;

"Most certainly I tell you, whoever will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child, he will in no way enter into it." Mark 10:15 also check Matthew 18:4

Disciples of Christ are therefore supposed to humble themselves as a matter of necessity. We are taught by the apostles to also be humble so we can serve one another;

"... but in humility, each counting others better than himself; each of you not just looking to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Have this in your mind, which was also in Christ Jesus..." Philippians 2:2-8

It is however important to note that humility is a command that all true disciples of Christ must obey, for in heaven no

proud person is found there. As the point has already been made clear, humility is the path way to making spiritual progress as taught by the Apostles Paul, James and Peter;

"Therefore God also highly exalted him, and gave to him the name which is above every name;" Philippians 2:9 also check James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6

And this is through sacrifice (selflessness), just like our savior made Himself of no reputation.

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What is the Biblical definition of pride?
- ✓ What is the Biblical definition of humility?
- ✓ What makes men proud?
- ✓ What makes us humble?
- ✓ What is the difference between being humble and being humbled by God?
- ✓ What other scriptures talk about the necessity for a believer to be humble?

WHAT A SHEPHERD MUST KNOW

The message of a good shepherd

To help us know what goes on in the church of God, we need to use the churches in Asia as a case study;

"the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands. The seven stars are the angels of the seven assemblies. The seven lampstands are seven assemblies." Revelation 1:20

The church in Ephesus

"To the angel of the assembly in Ephesus write: "He who holds the seven stars in his right hand, he who walks among the seven golden lampstands says these things: I know your works, and your toil and perseverance, and that you can't tolerate evil men, and have tested those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and found them false..." Revelation 2:1-7

In Ephesus the believers were taught to labour for the Lord, to be patient, reprove evil, evict false apostles but left their first love though they hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. From this church we can learn that a good shepherd is supposed to teach the flock to labour for God in love;

CHAPTER NINE

"For God is not unrighteous, so as to forget your work and the labor of love which you showed toward his name, in that you served the saints, and still do serve them." Hebrews 6:10

The good shepherd is also supposed to teach the flock to be obedient to God's word and be patient in all things, waiting for the promises of God;

"But you did follow my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, steadfastness," 2 Timothy 3:10

We as leaders are not supposed to be part-takers of evil but to dissociate ourselves from them and to expose them;

"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them." Ephesians 5:11

It is the duty of the good shepherd as already delved into in our previous lesson to identify wolves in sheep cloths and to guard the flock from such;

"Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the

WHAT A SHEPHERD MUST KNOW

assembly of the Lord and God which he purchased with his own blood..." Acts 20:28-31

Good shepherds teach their flock to maintain their love for God as they believed and to also abound in that same love of God;

"But whoever keeps his word, God's love has most certainly been perfected in him. This is how we know that we are in him:" 1 John 2:5 also check 2 Thessalonians 3:5

The leader is also expected to help every member of the church to identify their role in the body of Christ and to function as such;

"But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the profit of all." 1 Corinthians 12:7

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Can you see such a church in our time?
- ✓ Are you that type of church?

The church in Smyrna

"To the angel of the assembly in Smyrna write: 'The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life says these things: I know your works, oppression, and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan...'"
Revelation 2:8-11

From this church we find out that though they were a poor church (financially) they were able to endure tribulation. The good shepherd therefore is the one who arms the flock against persecutions for righteousness sake;

"I have told you these things, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have oppression; but cheer up! I have overcome the world." John 16:33

He also teaches them to endure hardship as good soldiers who are in combat and as such must suffer for their savior because of the power which works in them;

"You therefore must endure hardship, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 2:3

WHAT A SHEPHERD MUST KNOW

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Can you identify such a church in our days?
- ✓ Are you prepared to suffer for your faith in Christ?
- ✓ Have you ever suffered for righteousness sake?

The church in Pergamum

"To the angel of the assembly in Pergamum write: "He who has the sharp two-edged sword says these things: I know your works and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. You hold firmly to my name, and didn't deny my faith in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. . . ." Revelation 2:12-17

This was a church which held fast the name of Christ and did not deny him in the face of persecution. Christ however had these against them in that, they tolerated false doctrine and robbed the people of their priestly duties. From this church we are made to understand that leaders are to prepare their flock to be steadfast in their love and devotion to Christ and to witness Him before men no matter the cost;

"But whoever denies me before men, him I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven." Matthew 10:33

A good shepherd is supposed to check the teachings that go on in the church. He is also supposed to maintain sound doctrine by rightly dividing the word of truth;

WHAT A SHERPHED MUST KNOW

"... be urgent in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all patience and teaching. For the time will come when they will not listen to the sound doctrine,..."
2 Timothy 4:1-5

They are also expected to encourage their members to use their spiritual gifting and call, to the benefit of the whole church;

"But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the profit of all." 1 Corinthians 12:7

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What is the doctrine of Balaam?
- ✓ What is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans?
- ✓ How is it manifesting these days?

The church in Thyatira

"To the angel of the assembly in Thyatira write: "The Son of God, who has his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like burnished brass, says these things: I know your works, your love, faith, service, patient, endurance, and that your last works are more than the first. . . " Revelation 2:18-23

From this church we understand they show love, they serve, they are faithful and patient. These we have already touched on in other lessons. God however was not happy with them because His institution and criteria of leadership was violated. We as leaders therefore should be careful how we appoint leadership as we will be held accountable one day. We are not supposed to allow women to exercise authority over men (but should be actively involved in ministry) though they can do so with their fellow women and children. Without any gender prejudice, I believe this is God's ordained system of leadership in the church;

"let your wives keep silent in the assemblies, for it has not been permitted for them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as the law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home, for it is shameful for a woman to chatter in the assembly. . . 1 Corinthians 14:34-38

WHAT A SHERPHED MUST KNOW

"But I don't permit a woman to teach, nor to exercise authority over a man, but to be in quietness." 1 Timothy 2:12

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What is the Biblical stand on women in leadership?
- ✓ What is the Biblical stand on women in ministry?
- ✓ What were the teachings of Jezebel?

The church in Sardis

*"And to the angel of the assembly in Sardis write: "He who has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars says these things: "I know your works, that you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and keep the things that remain, which you were about to throw away, for I have found no works of yours perfected before my God..."
Revelation 3:1-6*

The main problem God had with this church was that, their works were not perfect before Him. It is interesting to note that God even pronounces a curse on those who do His work anyhow as revealed in the Old Testament;

*"Cursed be he who does the work of Yahweh negligently; and cursed be he who keeps back his sword from blood."
Jeremiah 48:10*

Leaders are therefore expected to teach their flock to be diligent in their work for God and to live perfect lives since Christ is coming for a church without spot or wrinkle;

"that he might present the assembly to himself gloriously, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Ephesians 5:27

WHAT A SHEPHERD MUST KNOW

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What does it mean to be perfect before God?
- ✓ Is there any consideration for anyone into heaven apart from living a pure life?

The church in Philadelphia

"To the angel of the assembly in Philadelphia write: "He who is holy, he who is true, he who has the key of David, he who opens and no one can shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says these things: I know your works (behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one can shut), that you have a little power, and kept my word, and didn't deny my name..." Revelation 3:7-13

Christ had nothing against this church simply because they were faithful with the little strength He gave them. Leaders are therefore expected to encourage their flock to put to use the little gift or talent they have. God continues to grace us with more of such if only we are faithful with the little;

"He said to him, 'Well done, you good servant! Because you were found faithful with very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.'" Luke 19:17

This is one of the path ways to spiritual progress in the Lord. If a good shepherd teaches these, his flock is set to grow into maturity.

WHAT A SHEPHERD MUST KNOW

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Why was God pleased with this church?
- ✓ What are the other path ways to spiritual progress?

The church of the Laodiceans

"To the angel of the assembly in Laodicea write: "The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Head of God's creation, says these things: I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of my mouth..." Revelation 3:14-22

This church was a church for the people in that, it was the people who determined the kind of messages they wanted to hear. This is clearly known by how Christ addressed them. They could boast of so many physical things but performed poorly on the scale of God. Leaders in this age are supposed to be very careful as people have itching ears according to prophecy;

"For the time will come when they will not listen to the sound doctrine, but, having itching ears, will heap up for themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside to fables." 2 Timothy 4:3-4

The leader is therefore expected to check the motivations of his heart very well, as it could determine the message he delivers. As already learned in previous lessons, the

WHAT A SHERPHED MUST KNOW

path way to knowing the truth is to love God with all our heart (searching for him with our all). People normally get the type of leader they want. If they want to continue to drink, they will get a leader who condones drinking and if they want to continue to fornicate and commit adultery, they will follow a leader who even has concubines. However, a good leader should be a man who loves God, and is loved by God. God will always give such a man food for His people according to the need per time;

"The Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the right times?" Luke 12:42

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Can you see 'Laodicean' churches around you?
- ✓ Are you a 'Laodicean' yourself?
- ✓ Ask God to show you how much you weigh on his scale.

What a minister must flee from

A good shepherd should not be a man of greed;

"This is a faithful saying: if a man seeks the office of an overseer he desires a good work. The overseer therefore must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, modest, hospitable, good at teaching; not a drinker, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;" 1 Timothy 3:1-3

The love of money has caused so many leaders to depart from the faith. The love of it makes one economical with the truth just because of undue advantage;

"These are murmurers and complainers, walking after their lusts (and their mouth speaks proud things), showing respect of persons to gain advantage." Jude 16

Paul therefore advised Timothy to flee from the love of money for it is the genesis of all evil that happens to most men;

WHAT A SHEPHERD MUST KNOW

"...But those who are determined to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful lusts, such as drown men in ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some have been led astray from the faith in their greed, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." 1 Timothy 6:5-10

What a man of God should pursue

The man of God is rather advised to chase after these;

"But you, man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you confessed the good confession in the sight of many witnesses." 1 Timothy 6: 11-12

DISCUSSION

- ✓ Why is the love of money the root of all evil?
- ✓ What are the virtues a shepherd must chase after?
- ✓ Which other scriptures instruct the good shepherd to chase after certain virtues?
- ✓ Can you name certain individuals in the Bible who were destroyed for the love of money and greed?

The rewards of a shepherd

Jesus Christ during his stay on earth raised disciples who would later continue with His legacy. An important prayer He prayed to the father was that those He gave Him, He had been able to keep them except the son of perdition;

"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in your name. Those whom you have given me I have kept. None of them is lost, except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." John 17:12

It is therefore important to note that the work of the Christian leader is to keep the flock or help them to remain in the faith. Christ gave this command to His disciples;

"You didn't choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatever you will ask of the Father in my name, he may give it to you." John 15:16

The shepherd has no reward in heaven if those he was leading are not able to make it to heaven. No wonder Christ even prayed an advance prayer for Peter that he

WHAT A SHERPHED MUST KNOW

be saved from Satan's temptation. Paul knew this and that is why he used to weep for the churches he founded. Preach what Christ has instructed you, and you will save your own soul;

"Therefore I testify to you this day that I am clean from the blood of all men," Acts 20:26

One also gets a reward for taking people to heaven;

*"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Isn't it even you, before our Lord Jesus at his coming?"
1 Thessalonians 2:19*

Many people will therefore enter heaven without a soul winners crown simply because they were not able to secure the souls of those they preached to.

DISCUSSION

- ✓ What are the different kinds of reward in stock for the disciples of Christ?
- ✓ What are the qualifications for such rewards?

The progressive revelation of God

Let Philippians 3:7-16, 2Peter 1:1-10 and John 15:1-6 be your guiding principle in the Christian faith.

ARE YOU PREPARED FOR CHRIST'S SECOND COMING?

Please note that...

The first Adam disobeyed God and because of his disobedience sin entered the human race, resulting in the spiritual death and separation of man from God; “Therefore, as sin entered into the world through one man, and death through sin; and so death passed to all men, because all sinned...So then as through one trespass, all men were condemned; even so through one act of righteousness, all men were justified to life.” Romans 5:12-13, 18.

The last Adam (Jesus Christ) obeyed God in order to take away sin from the human race; “But God commends his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8.

Your part of the arrangement is to receive the grace or free gift of God's salvation by faith (Romans 4:16-17).

You must understand faith without works is dead, so God expects you to obey and receive this free gift (but costly) salvation with your free will; “But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become God's children, to those who believe in his name: who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John 1:12-13.

The most important decision you have to make now is to be born again (John 3:1-8). Being born again is to repent of your sins and to submit yourself to be baptized by immersion (and not by sprinkling) as well as receive the Holy Spirit; “Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Acts 2:38.

The grace of God is not a license for you to sin, but rather to receive strength to live in obedience to God's word (Titus 2:11-14).

You therefore have to (as a matter of necessity) live a holy life and walk as Christ did, and not to live in hypocrisy; “However God's firm foundation stands, having this seal, “The Lord knows those who are his, and,

"Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness." 2 Timothy 2:19.

"Everyone who has this hope set on him purifies himself, even as he is pure." 1 John 3:3.

If you walk in the light of the above scriptures and make 2 Peter 1:2-10 your guiding principle, you will never live a defeated Christian life, thereby ensuring you are found in Christ even at His glorious appearing.

I however caution that you beware of people who preach Another Gospel, Another Jesus and Another Spirit as in line with 2 Corinthians 11:1-4.

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OTHER TITLES

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WAXING STRONG IN SPIRIT

BROKEN VESSELS

BREAD BAKED IN HELL

AWAKE, AND CHRIST WILL GIVE YOU LIGHT

CHRISTIAN MODESTY

THE CRY OF APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

MAKING YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE

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