



THE REALM *of* DIVINITY

CONTRADICTING
THE WORLD

FEIKOAB PARIMAH

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

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INTRODUCTION

Immediately the word divinity is mentioned, the picture that comes to mind is God. It is the desire of Christ that we pattern our lives after His. The yardstick for measuring ones level of godliness is the life of Christ. All that Christ wants to see revealed in our lives are already stipulated in scripture. The Apostle Paul advised that we keep that which has already been committed to us by the Spirit in us. The doctrine Christ gave to them is the same they lived and taught. Christ's doctrine is plain and needs no special revelations. However, most of us are not practically living His teachings which carry the potency of setting us at variance with the systems of the world. Any child of God who claims to be a partaker of the divine nature of God will operate on a higher plane of life, as Christ is revealed in his or her life. It is the will of God that we look like Him in all respects. Operating in the realm of God will cause us to contradict worldliness. This book attempts to just scratch the surface of some cardinal scriptures which will help us live in the realm that pleases God and displeases the devil. May God cause us to walk in our Spiritual inheritance. Amen

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1

CHAPTER

Keep that which is committed to you

Right from the days of the apostles, the word of God has always come under severe attack both from within and without. It appears, we are normally conscious of the attacks from without more than we do, those from within. We should however be cautioned that the attacks from within are equally deadly to weaklings within our assemblies.

We are supposed to individually as well as collectively guard what has been handed over to us by the Godly men of old. Paul gave Timothy the charge to guard what he had being entrusted with by the Holy Spirit;

“Hold the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was

*committed to you, guard through the Holy Spirit
who dwells in us.” 2 Tim 1:13-14.*

From this scripture we can infer that truth is only delivered to us by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Is being said that what takes one to the top is the same thing that will sustain him or her at the top.

Take for instance, if one becomes the world record holder in a 100 meter dash, certainly that feat was chocked through diligent and vigorous training. If this champion decides he or she will no longer train vigorously, is very likely the next time he or she goes to compete, defeat will surely embrace him or her. To maintain or even improve upon his or her record, he or she must even increase his or her training both qualitatively and quantitatively, by training more vigorously and increasing the time for training respectively. In the same way, when we are taught the truth of God's word by the Holy Spirit, it stands to reason from the above Scripture that we can only maintain and continue to walk in truth by the help of the same. Whenever one's level of fire goes low (backslides) he or she tends to compromise the truth of God's word in one way or the other.

Before one begins to teach falsehood, he or she must first of all be a breaker or transgressor of the law or word of God as implied by Jesus in the following scripture;

“Whoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and teach others to do so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever shall do and teach them shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”
Matt 5:19.

We are therefore being admonished to guard our hearts with all diligence since out of it proceeds the issues of life;

“Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it is the wellspring of life.” Prov 4:23.

This can only be possible if we do not continue to grieve the Holy Spirit or quench the spirit's fire in us by disobeying the word of God and prayerlessness.

As earlier mentioned, we can only persevere in the truth of God's word (His word is truth) and to instruct others, if we ourselves are obedient to the voice and leadings of the Holy Spirit. Paul charged Timothy to be careful of what he preached or taught, as it would first of all ensure salvation for him and afterward lead to the salvation of those who listened to him;

“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 Tim 4:16.

This charge is not different from that which was delivered to Titus (in connection with the elders) as depicted in the following scripture;

“holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict those who contradict him.” Titus 1:9.

From this scripture we learn that Titus was supposed to appoint elders who will hold firmly, the faithful word as *they had been taught*. By extension, we are supposed to stick and hold on to the teachings that have already being laid down for us in scriptures by the early disciples of Christ. That is to say, our methods for the application of God's word may change from generation to generation but the principles should never be compromised. Whatever we need to know about the Christian faith has already been spelt out;

“Beloved, while I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I was constrained to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” Jude 3.

If anyone therefore appears from amongst us or without and claims to have 'new' revelations from God's word and the so

called revelation is at variance with the understanding and practice of the apostles, we should note that fellow and withdraw from him. There have arisen in our days (just as it has always been) men with fair speeches who have compromised the word of God, and consequently bulldozed and constructed a broad way for many with itching ears.

No wonder Paul instructed the believers at Philippi to hold forth the word of life until the day of Christ;

“that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, 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.” Phil 2:15-16,

and to Timothy to hold faith and a good conscience so that he will not make ship wreck of his faith;

“holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust away made a shipwreck concerning the faith;” 1 Tim 1:19.

The writer of first John also cautioned his recipients of false teachings by false brethren who hitherto were with them but later left; “

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” 1 John 2:19.

You can observe that, some men began very well with regards to the preaching of the truth without compromising God's standards. However, in recent years they have come to tell us that, their stands were actually because of their ignorance and lack of knowledge. Such are the men the writer of Jude makes known, they have crept in unawares;

“For there are certain men who crept in secretly, even those who were long ago written about for this condemnation: ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master, God, and Lord, Jesus Christ.” Jude 4

God in His own divine wisdom have made it such that immediately a person is genuinely born again, he or she has the taste of a first love for the Lord which in later years will be used as a yardstick to measure any kind of coldness toward God. This can be deduced from Christ's testimony concerning the church at Ephesus;

"But I have this against you, that you left your first love." Rev 2:4.

Though this church could even detect false apostles and had some good works to their credit, Christ instructed them to go back to their first love or risk having their lamp put out. When we backslide, please let us always remember our first love for Jesus Christ when we first became born again. Remember how prayerful you were, how committed you were to evangelism, and how passionately you held on to God's high standards of holiness. The writer of 2John admonished the believers not to lose the things that they committed to them right from the beginning;

"This is love, that we should walk according to his commandments. This is the commandment, even as you heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it. For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who don't confess that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the Antichrist. Watch yourselves, that we don't lose the things which we have accomplished, but that we receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and doesn't remain in the teaching of Christ, doesn't have God. He who remains in the teaching, the same has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you, and doesn't bring this teaching, don't receive him

into your house, and don't welcome him,”
2 John 6-10.

The vital truths which are able to maintain us in the faith are being taught immediately when we are born again. In Christianity the foundations are laid out clearly, whiles we just build on the laid down pattern or principles. Accordingly, the writer of 2Peter makes known to believers the following truth;

“Seeing that his divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and virtue; by which he has granted to us his precious and exceedingly great promises; that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust. Yes, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence; and in moral excellence, knowledge; and in knowledge, self-control; and in self-control patience; and in patience godliness; and in godliness brotherly affection; and in brotherly affection, love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 1:3-8.

If these virtues grow in us, it will make us fruitful in the knowledge of Christ, thereby ensuring that we never depart from the faith. To buttress the importance of increasing in these virtues, Paul also admonished the believers in Thessalonica to abound more and more in love, faith etc.;

“Finally then, brothers, we beg and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, that you abound more and more. For you know what charge we gave you through the Lord Jesus. 1 Thess 4:1-2.

We can keep what has already being delivered to us if we grow in them. Just as a baby has all that he or she needs in the genes given by the parents, proper feeding helps the already inbuilt qualities to receive expression through growth. In the same way, when we are born again, God lays the foundation and values of the kingdom in our hearts during our first love and we just need to continue to feed on sound doctrine and we will consequently grow into the fullness of Christ (as that is His will for every one of His children).

Paul informed Timothy that some men will in the end-time depart from the faith. Though they may be learning, they will still not come to the knowledge of the truth simply because they do not possess the Holy Spirit in their lives (not to even talk of sticking to

sound doctrine). To the contrary, Timothy was to take note of Paul's teachings, way of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering... and to continue in them;

“But know this, that in the last days, grievous times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof. Turn away from these, also. For of these are those who creep into houses, and take captive gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Even as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so do these also oppose the truth; men corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith. But they will proceed no further. For their folly will be evident to all men, as theirs also came to be. But you did follow my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, steadfastness, persecutions, and sufferings: those things that happened to me

at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. I endured those persecutions. Out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 2 Tim 3:1-12.

This is the only way by which Timothy could operate without falling from the faith. No matter what any man preaches and lives in our days, let us always match their teachings and lifestyle with that of Paul and the other apostles. If their teachings and lifestyle are not fundamentally different from that of the apostles, then we can follow them. However, if their teachings and manner of life contradicts that of the early believers and even those God have used in major revivals, then we need to reject them. The word of God should be our canon and not the subjective understanding of men who are reprobate concerning the faith. Christ commanded us to go and bear fruit and ensure our fruit remains;

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the farmer. Every branch in me that doesn't bear fruit, he takes away. Every branch that bears fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already pruned clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I in you. As the branch can't bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you, unless you remain in me... 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 15:1-16.*

Whether is souls being worn or the fruit of the spirit, we are to help those new converts to maintain sound doctrine in order for them to continue in the faith. We are also expected to continue to manifest the fruit of the spirit in our lives. In the end it's those who press on in the faith who will be saved;

*"You will be hated by all men for my name's sake,
but he who endures to the end, the same will be
saved." Mark 13:13.*

A crown awaits us, when the souls worn remain in the faith.

2

CHAPTER

The doctrine of Christ

In this chapter I would like us to look at the teachings of Christ with regard to those who are blessed in His sight and vice versa. In doing so, we will look at the beatitudes as presented by Matthew and Luke. Afterwards, we will compare and contrast both accounts. Let's first and foremost start with the account of Matthew;

*“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, **Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. Blessed are the gentle, For they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst***

after righteousness, For they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called children of God. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when people reproach you, persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Matt 5:1-11.

From this account, Christ upon seeing the crowd withdrew unto a mountain with His disciples. Let's take note, His teachings in this context was directed to the disciples alone in private. According to the analysis of His teachings here, He sounded figurative as the original text depicts.

Going further to look at the account in the book of Luke, we will realize that, after He had prayed all night and chosen His twelve disciples, He came down with them into a plain (not on a mountain as presented by Matthew) and in the presence of the multitude He turned to His disciples and began to teach them to the hearing of the multitude around;

“ He came down with them, and stood on a level place, with a crowd of his disciples, and a great number of the people from all Judea and

Jerusalem, and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; as well as those who were troubled by unclean spirits, and they were being healed. All the multitude sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all. He lifted up his eyes to his disciples, and said, Blessed are you who are poor, For yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, For you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, For you will laugh. Blessed are you when men shall hate you, and when they shall exclude and mock you, and throw out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven, for their fathers did the same thing to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich! For you have received your consolation. Woe to you, you who are full now! For you will be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now! For you will mourn and weep. Woe, when men speak well of you! For their fathers did the same thing to the false prophets.” Luke 6:17-26.

From His teachings in this scripture, one will realize, He sounded plain as revealed in the original text. When we now compare

these two accounts, we can say, the account in Matthew is completely different from the one in Luke. This is simply because the setting and circumstances of the accounts do differ. I am throwing light on these accounts simply because most at times we are being tempted to view these accounts only in the figurative sense. Though it is true that, the account in Matthew is largely figurative, it can also be said that, that of Luke is considerably plain. This is to assure all believers who are suffering in one way or the other that, Christ has not forgotten them and will surely reward their labor in due season.

There are times one will be passing through tough situations and be tempted to lose faith. Contrary to a popular theology in our day and age (that godliness is a means to gain), I will like to humbly submit to all believers who are passing through one difficulty or the other that, God has not forgotten them. The fact that you are living in obedience to God does not necessarily mean, you will have everything rosy on the earth. Hence, if you find yourself in one situation or the other which seems to contradict your previously held belief that a child of God can not suffer, let it be known, it is not strange when a child of God suffers for His or her believe in Christ. Please remember there were also believers of old, both in the Bible and historically who though were righteous in the sight of God did not get things on a silver platter down here on earth.

It will be appropriate at this point for us to move on further to look at Christ's teachings on giving and how we should relate with our neighbors and perceived enemies alike. This is just to remind us of the basics of our Christian faith and responsibility as believers. From my personal observations, it appears most of us who call upon the name of the Lord do not take the plain teachings or doctrine of Christ seriously. The teachings and commands of Christ are plain and need no subjective interpretation. It's however important for us to understand, it's when we abide in these doctrines that we can be called and known as children of God;

"Watch yourselves, that we don't lose the things which we have accomplished, but that we receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and doesn't remain in the teaching of Christ, doesn't have God. He who remains in the teaching, the same has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you, and doesn't bring this teaching, don't receive him into your house, and don't welcome him," 2 John 8-10.

Let us ponder over some of Christ's basic teachings to us His disciples as it relates to our relationship with our friends, strangers and even foes;

"But I tell you who hear: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer also the other; and from him who takes away your cloak, don't withhold your coat also. Give to everyone who asks you, and don't ask him who takes away your goods to give them back again. As you would like people to do to you, do exactly so to them. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive back as much. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing back; and your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, Even as your Father is also merciful. Don't judge, And you won't be judged. Don't condemn, And you won't be condemned. Set free, And you will be set free. Luke 6:27-37.

These teachings of Christ in this text are being clearly violated by most preachers and believers these days. According to the verse 27, we are supposed to love our enemies and to do good to them. Paul even amplifies these teaching in;

"Repay no one evil for evil. Respect what is honorable in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as it is up to you, be at peace with all men. Don't seek revenge yourselves, beloved, but give place to God's wrath. For it is written, "Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay, says the Lord. Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink. For in doing so, you will heap coals of fire on his head." Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Rom 12:17-21.

Instead of obeying these verses of scripture, what do we see? You will notice, most children of God are being encouraged to pray against their enemies (those we perceive could be devising harm against us), forgetting that the real enemy is the devil.

It's not uncommon to hear men who believe they are so anointed and as such are 'untouchable' to begin to swear, curse and even threaten men who seem to be challenging their spiritual prowess and ego. The verse 28 of the scripture we quoted clearly contradicts the pride of these 'anointed ones'. What I find mind

bugling is, these ones don't really want to copy the examples of the Apostles and early believers. Upon all that Paul suffered, He never cursed anyone to prove he was so anointed. Exceptions are Bar Jesus and Alexander the coppersmith who Paul commanded to go blind for a season as a punishment for trying to subvert the hearers of the gospel and who he says God should reward him according to his works respectively. Not forgetting Hymenaeus and Alexander whom he also delivered to Satan so that they will learn not to blaspheme. Now looking at these exceptions, you will realize Paul (in connection with Bar Jesus, Hymenaeus and Alexander), gave them a chance to change.

With Alexander the copper Smith, you and I should recognize, he was simply stating a fact, as God will surely reward us according to our works whether good or bad. So, Paul in all these accounts did not wish the death of these people, but operated based on the love and justice of God. Remember how he and other apostles were being persecuted for their faith in Christ. Instead of swearing and cursing or even wishing the death of their persecutors, they rather rejoiced they were suffering for the sake of Christ. Even Stephen when he was being stoned, rather than curse the mob, interceded for them as they lynched him. It is important we embrace this way of life. Most often, those who pray that their perceived enemies die, cite the following scripture to vindicate themselves; *"You shall not allow a sorceress to live."* Ex 22:18. Shouldn't we appreciate, we are in a more glorious era

and thus, the clear teachings of Jesus is that we love our enemies? If for example, we are tempted to pray and kill all witches and wizards fighting against us, I believe we can learn from Christ who even did not come to kill Satan but to destroy his works;

“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. To this end the Son of God was revealed, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” 1 John 3:8.

There is however coming a time when He will throw him (the devil and his cohorts) into the lake of fire. Likewise, when we are praying, I believe we should rather channel our energy and prayers in the direction of destroying their works and also pray to construct barriers against them. Most importantly, we should pray for their salvation. Christ came to redeem men from hell. Why should we then speed up their journey into hell? If we are not sensitive to these issues, it's possible we could be doing the work of the devil for him unawares.

I will like to also touch on the verse 32 where Christ makes the point that we believers ought not to only love those who love us. There is the tendency (because of our fallen nature) that we will love those who love us and do good to those who do us good. According to Christ, when we operate at this level, then we equate ourselves to sinners. He therefore expects that we who are born of the spirit operate on a higher plane of morality far above

the people of the world. We are to create this distinction by loving those who even hate us, doing good to those who are disposed to doing us good and lending to even those who probably wouldn't be able to pay us back. This is normally difficult for many men and women to do, but is only possible by the enabling grace of God. When we are able to love those who do not love us, do good to those who cannot love us, do good to those who can't do us any good and lend to those who cannot pay back, we in effect, in one way or the other make God indebted to us;

*"He who has pity on the poor lends to Yahweh;
He will reward him." Prov 19:17.*

If we only love those who love us, and do good to those who do us good as well as lend to those who we believe are in the position of paying us back, the equation is actually balanced and as such there is no reward left for us. When we obey these aspects of Christ's teachings, you will realize there is an element of sacrifice in our obedience and this is what God rewards. Let us therefore be compassionate and merciful since it's the nature of our father in Heaven.

3

CHAPTER

Prosperity and Giving

When it comes to prosperity and the teaching on giving, it will be very beneficial if we start with the patriarchs and how God blessed them. Before Abraham was blessed, he was first asked to leave his land of nativity and his kindred, not knowing where he was going except for the fact that he was acting solely by obedience to the voice of God. Isaac and Jacob were equally blessed in their generation. We can't forget that of Job either, who was blameless before God. The times in which these men lived showed how they appropriated these blessings of God. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Job did not have the gospel to preach to the ends of the world and as such their responsibility was quite different in their dispensation. It will however be unfortunate if we use them as our yardstick when it comes to the area of appropriating God's blessings. That of David

and Solomon had a political tone, as they were the kings in their time. It therefore gives us an idea as to how they lived their lives and used their wealth.

When the children of Israel were coming out of Egypt, God blessed them with a lot of substance by granting them favor in the sight of the Egyptians. The main reason God gave them such material possessions was for them to use them in serving Him. At least this point is made clear when the time came for the building of the tabernacle and to establish His covenant. In our era God still prospers some of His children abundantly for the sole purpose of advancing the kingdom of God but not for over indulgence. This is not to say, we should neglect ourselves and our families or else we will be worse than infidels (1 Timothy 5:8).

We believers are supposed to work hard in order to provide for our families and those who are not in a position to work. A diligent study of the scriptures reveals, God has promised to meet the needs of His children. He does this by blessing some, in order that they can in turn give to their brethren who are in need. Prosperity is however very broad, as it does not only refer to material endowment. It will therefore be erroneous for us to view the prosperity of God only in financial terms. There are men who are blessed with intelligence as well as spiritual gifts who may not necessarily be financially endowed in abundance. The fact that they may not be among the top rich men in the society does not mean they are not prosperous. Though God blesses in abundance,

He however expects us to live in moderation (KJV);

“Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.” Phil 4:5.

According to this scripture, our moderation is supposed to be made known to all men. Paul throughout his life came to the conclusion that contentment is very beneficial to all of us whether we are endowed financially or not;

“Not that I speak in respect to lack, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content in it.” Phil 4:11.

By this scripture, he had learned to be content in life. He got this understanding by experience and advices us to follow his example. To Timothy, He made known, godliness accompanied with contentment is great gain;

“But godliness with contentment is great gain.” 1 Tim 6:6.



CHAPTER

Before we can give

One nature of fallen man is, he tends to be self-centered. So when God made salvation available, He required that man forsake self in order to be able to enjoy the salvation package. We rob ourselves of so much spiritual benefits when we continue to live self-centered lives (which is according to our fallen nature). Before you and I can make progress in the area of giving, we have to first and foremost give ourselves to the Lord and to humanity. We learn this truth from the example displayed by the believers at Macedonia;

“This was not as we had hoped, but first they gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us through the will of God.” Cor 8:5.

When we are able to give ourselves to God, then whatever we own will also be automatically yielded to Him. In the appropriation of the blessings of God, we need to seek first the good of the kingdom of God. During the days of Haggai the prophet, the people of God were self-centered and consequently neglected the house of God. Though they sought their own satisfaction, satisfaction was not forthcoming as God had cursed their very blessings;

"You looked for much, and, behold, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says Yahweh of Armies, "Because of my house that lies waste, while each of you is busy with his own house." Hag 1:9.

When we seek to satisfy ourselves at the expense of the kingdom of God, we will never come to a point of satisfaction. Material things never satisfy a man. It is God who can fill the void in our lives. It is therefore incumbent, we place Him and the kingdom at the zenith of our priorities.

The role of the Holy Spirit in touching men to give is worth taking note of. Scripture informs us, in the days of God's power, His people shall be willing;

"Your people offer themselves willingly in the day of your power, in holy array. Out of the

womb of the morning, you have the dew of your youth.” Ps 110:3.

During the days of Moses, when he did the collection for the construction of the tabernacle, the people gave to the point whereby he had to even instruct them to stop. I believe this phenomenon was largely attributable to the move of the spirit of God in the heart of His people. The believers in the book of acts immediately after the day of Pentecost were able to give out and to share their possessions among themselves in order to meet every ones needs. This was an evidence of the workings of the Holy Spirit.

We cannot talk about prosperity and giving without mentioning Gaius. He was one single individual whose account has been used by many to decree material prosperity over all the children of God. Before we take the position of Gaius and claim the prayers the apostle prayed over his life, let's first of all examine the context in which the prayer of prosperity was made on his behalf;

“The elder to Gaius the beloved, whom I love in truth. Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be healthy, even as your soul prospers. For I rejoiced greatly, when brothers came and testified about your truth, even as you walk in truth. I have no greater joy than this, to hear about my children walking in truth.

Beloved, you do a faithful work in whatever you accomplish for those who are brothers and strangers. They have testified about your love before the assembly. You will do well to send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, because for the sake of the Name they went out, taking nothing from the Gentiles.”
3 John 1-7.

From this scripture, we gather that Gaius was a devote believer who gave himself to the service of the saints and the apostles. Whenever the apostles visited the region in which he was, most often they lodged at his house and had their needs taken care of by this dear man. When the Apostle learnt that Gaius was ill, he offered such a heartfelt prayer for a man they dearly loved. Now, who wouldn't pray such a prayer for a man like Gaius? We shouldn't just go round and proclaim these scriptures over everyone we meet. Gaius used his material endowments to help other believers. The apostle knew that, when Gaius is increased in goods, he will continue to be of help to the Christians who came into contact with him. If our vision and drive is aligned with that of Gaius, then we can comfortably appropriate the prayer of the apostle in our lives so that we can also be of help to other people.

Giving is really a proof of true Christianity. When God himself loved the world, He gave His only begotten son as a ransom for the world. Likewise, we are supposed to imitate Him;

“Be therefore imitators of God, as beloved children.” Eph 5:1.

When Paul was writing to the church at Corinth, he demanded they prove the sincerity of their love for the brethren through giving;

“I speak not by way of commandment, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity also of your love.” 2 Cor 8:8.

For God to help us prove the love He has shared abroad in our hearts, He through His own wisdom makes the provision for us to be able to give;

“Now may he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;” 2 Cor 9:10.

This scripture makes us realize, is God who gives us the seed to sow (not to be eaten). When we sow this seed in the life of men, He then goes on to multiply the seed He gave us initially so we can go on to do more good works or increase the seed that will be sown in the life of others. Consequently, when we are able to increase our scope of coming to the aid of others, those who get

their needs met also increase their praises to God. In effect our acts of mercy is able to make man give thanks to God always;

“For this service of giving that you perform not only makes up for lack among the saints, but abounds also through many givings of thanks to God; seeing that through the proof given by this service, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the Good News of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all; 2 Cor 9:12-13.

Not only do they give thanks to God, but they also offer prayers to God on our behalf;

“while they themselves also, with supplication on your behalf, yearn for you by reason of the exceeding grace of God in you.” 2 Cor 9:14.

It will be very vital for me at this point to even throw light on how Job in the Old Testament used his wealth. In his days he delivered the poor who cried, the fatherless and those who had no helper;

“Because I delivered the poor who cried, And the fatherless also, who had none to help him.” Job 29:12.

He was able to come to the aid of the needy simply because he grieved for the poor and wept for those in trouble;

*“Didn't I weep for him who was in trouble?
Wasn't my soul grieved for the needy?”
Job 30:25.*

This man was wise in his days as he did not make gold (money) his hope neither did he put his confidence in it;

*“If I have made gold my hope, And have said to
the fine gold, 'You are my confidence; If I have
rejoiced because my wealth was great, And
because my hand had gotten much;”
Job 31:24-25.*

He was not serving money but rather money served him. Though he did not have the gospel to preach to the ends of the world, he knew how to use his wealth to benefit the poor and needy. Most of us these days tend to cite him as a worshiper of God who was greatly blessed by Him. We normally do so to infer, we have to also gain financial wealth by all means as children of God. The question is, after we get all the riches or wealth we have craved for, what next? Can any of us who cite the example of Job's wealth also prepare to use our wealth the same way Job did? For Job, he made it a point that whatever the poor desired he made available to them;

*"If I have withheld the poor from their desire, Or
have caused the eyes of the widow to fail,"
Job 31:16,*

and made sure no poor person died because of nakedness. Thus, he provided clothing for the poor in his generation. He has really set an example for us (and we will do well if we are not self-centered) since he never enjoyed his wealth alone even in his days;

*"Or have eaten my morsel alone, And the
fatherless has not eaten of it" Job 31:17.*

Job even obeyed the teaching of Christ in his days. Christ taught that we should love our enemies and do good unto them and not to curse them;

*"If I have rejoiced at the destruction of him who
hated me, Or lifted up myself when evil found
him; (Yes, I have not allowed my mouth to sin By
asking his life with a curse);" Job 31:29-30,*

and his house was opened to strangers;

*"(The foreigner has not lodged in the street; But I
have opened my doors to the traveler);" Job 31:32.*

These qualities should indeed be possessed by all rich men in our days. We ought to really show the distinction between us and the people of the world. In our days what most of us glory in is not anywhere near that which the early believers gloried in. For the apostles, you will grasp that what they saw to be the distinctive marks between them and others is not what Apostles or preachers in our days actually uphold and are proud of;

“Working together, we entreat also that you not receive the grace of God in vain, for he says, "At an acceptable time I listened to you, In a day of salvation I helped you." Behold, now is the acceptable time. Behold, now is the day of salvation. We give no occasion of stumbling in anything, that our service may not be blamed, but in everything commending ourselves, as servants of God, in great endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in riots, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; in pureness, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in sincere love, in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well

known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians. Our heart is enlarged. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections. Now in return, I speak as to my children, you also be open wide. 2 Cor 6:1-13.

The following were (are) the distinctive marks of a true apostle of Christ;

- They possessed much patience
- They were afflicted
- They suffered need
- They were in distress
- They received stripes
- They were imprisoned for their faith.
- They labored much
- They often stayed awake to seek the face of God.
- They gave themselves to fasting (different types of fasts)
- They were pure
- They possessed the knowledge of God
- They were long suffering

- They were kind
- They were men of the spirit. For those who are after the spirit mind the things of the spirit. Thus, they did not mind earthly things.
- They showed the love of Christ without partiality.
- They were faithful in the delivery of the word of truth.
- They manifested the power of God to a degree that we always covert in our days.
- They upheld righteousness in their life and message.
- They were sometimes honored and at other times dishonored.
- They were at times misunderstood and labeled as deceivers.
- They were not projecting themselves
- They lived their lives in jeopardy for the sake of the truth
- They also received severe beatings
- They always rejoiced, though prevailing circumstance sought to contradict their joy in the Lord.
- They were disposed to living a poor life though they made others rich.
- They lived as if they possessed nothing in this world, but had treasures laid up in heaven.

When we narrow down to an individual like Paul, he in the following scripture had this to say concerning himself;

“Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as one beside himself) I am more so; in labors more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths often. Five times from the Jews I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I suffered shipwreck. I have been a night and a day in the deep. I have been in travels often, perils of rivers, perils of robbers, perils from my countrymen, perils from the Gentiles, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness, perils in the sea, perils among false brothers; in labor and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, and in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are outside, there is that which presses on me daily, anxiety for all the assemblies. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is caused to stumble, and I don't burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that concern my weakness.” 2 Cor 11:23-30.

Thus, he gives the follow credentials as been a servant of Christ;

- He labored abundantly
- He received unimaginable stripes
- He was often imprisoned.
- He always stood in danger of death for preaching the gospel of grace
- He suffered shipwreck on the high sea.
- He traveled a lot to preach the gospel
- He suffered perils in different water bodies
- He suffered in the hands of robbers.
- He suffered attacks from his fellow Jews, unbelievers and even false brethren within the church.
- He often observed sleepless nights in praying and waiting upon the Lord.
- He often suffered hunger and thirst
- He fasted often. By this he did or observed different kinds of fast.
- He was often poorly clothed and suffered from cold weather.

These are the things Paul suffered for the sake of the gospel. To our amazement, he sees these things that he suffered for Christ as a mark of being a man of God. He declared that he glories in infirmities since the power of God is made manifest in

his life. Most people these days rather glory in the things they seem to be enjoying as Christians. It will be beneficial if we mature and rather glory in things we deem not to be pleasurable. Paul gives us an insight into why he suffered for the cause of the gospel. He makes us understand, he suffered because of the power of God resident in his life;

“For this, I was appointed as a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this cause I suffer also these things. Yet I am not ashamed, for I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed to him against that day.” 2 Tim 1:11-12.

This means, when the power of God is in full operation in our lives, it also attracts persecutions and afflictions. Do not see it to be strange when you are faced with oppositions and persecutions (no matter the form it takes) when you live in total obedience to the word of God. It's for the manifestation of the power and glory of God as well as our own good. The writer of 1 Peter had the following to say;

“who by the power of God are guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been put to grief in various trials, 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—I Peter 1:5-7.

We should also count it a joy (all joy) when we fall into diverse temptations;

“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you fall into various temptations,” James 1:2.

It is however clear from the teachings of Christ and the life of the early believers that our lives are supposed to contradict that of the people of the world as He Himself (Christ) endured contradiction from the world;

*“For consider him who has endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, that you don't grow weary, fainting in your souls.”
Heb 12:3.*

In terms of finances, we need to show a distinction in the way we use our wealth. Also, we must make it clear to the people of the world by way of our priorities and what we glory in, that we are citizens of a country which is heavenly. The testimony of scripture concerning the faith of our fathers and how they contradicted the world was that the world was not worthy of them; “

(of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts, mountains, caves, and the holes of the earth.” Heb 11:38.

May the Lord help us by His grace to embrace and live the values and principles of our Lord and savior Jesus.

5

CHAPTER

To judge or not to judge

Most often when believers are challenged to live for Christ in a manner that is acceptable in His sight, they often reply by saying, “who are you to judge me”. It is however important, the subject of whether we are to judge or not, be trashed out.

Before we continue, let us first and foremost lay the foundation that, it is God who judges. The basis of God's Judgment is His word. In essence, at the end of the age we are going to be judged based on whether we lived in obedience to His revealed will as enshrined in the scriptures or we lived otherwise. Judgment does not necessary mean condemnation. Condemnation, vindication etc. are enshrined in judgment. Judgment in effect is the line we draw in order to create a distinction with regard to matters bordering on discerning between good and evil.

Scripture is clear when it comes to objective judgment and subjective judgment. God's judgment falls within objectivity and subjectivity, whereas we are to judge objectively by the authority of the word of God. Paul made it clear that, our primary domain of judgment is in the church. It is God who judges His people but has decided to work through men in the church;

"Don't you know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Don't you know that we will judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? If then, you have to judge things pertaining to this life, do you set them to judge who are of no account in the assembly?" 1 Cor 6:2-4.

Christ Himself makes us to understand this when He said, the father judges no man, but has committed judgment into the hands of the son; *"For the Father judges no one, but he has given all judgment to the Son," John 5:22.* The son judges no man, but the words which He speaks is that which judges them;

"If anyone listens to my sayings, and doesn't believe, I don't judge him. For I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects me, and doesn't receive my sayings, has one who judges him. The word that I spoke, the

same will judge him in the last day.”
John 12:47-48.

Christ goes on to say, even if He judges any man, His judgment is true since He judges what the father has judged;

*“You judge according to the flesh. I judge no one.
Even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for I am
not alone, but I am with the Father who sent
me.” John 8:15-16.*

In a nut shell what He wants us to understand is, the word of God is the final authority by which every man is supposed to be judged. We can therefore pass judgment on issues that the Bible is clear on and has given examples which we can use as our basis of judgment.

With matters bordering on subjectivity (the motives of men) judgment resides only in the bosom of God;

*“in the day when God will judge the secrets of
men, according to my Good News, by Jesus
Christ.” Rom 2:16.*

Many often misconstrue reprove, rebuke and correction in the church to mean condemnation. It is the responsibility of our leaders to rebuke, reprove and correct us by the word of God when necessary. May we not be cowed in rising up to the

responsibility of maintaining discipline in the house of God. When Paul was writing to the Corinthian church in relation to the immorality which was going on, he isolated one of the cases involving a young man who was having an affair with the step mum and said He was passing a Judgment;

"You are puffed up, and didn't rather mourn, that he who had done this deed might be removed from among you. For I most assuredly, as being absent in body but present in spirit, have already, as though I were present, judged him who has done this thing." 1 Cor 5:2-3.

In the following scripture, Jesus never suggested that we cannot point out people's wrongs to them. To the contrary, He taught that we should first of all check our lives and deal with our sins so that we can have the moral right to instruct others;

"Why do you see the speck of chaff that is in your brother's eye, but don't consider the beam that is in your own eye? Or how can you tell your brother, 'Brother, let me remove the speck of chaff that is in your eye,' when you yourself don't see the beam that is in your own eye? You hypocrite! First remove the beam from your own eye, and then you can see clearly to remove the speck of chaff that is in your brother's eye." Luke 6:41-42.

This reveals to us, the need to be slow to judge others, as it is likely, our short comings could be worse than those we are judging. In some of the previous verses of this chapter, the following is however given to the intent that we will grasp the subject matter in focus;

"Don't judge, And you won't be judged. Don't condemn, And you won't be condemned. Set free, And you will be set free. "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be given to you. For with the same measure you measure it will be measured back to you." Luke 6:37-38.

From these, He makes the assertion that we should not judge in order not to be judged. Neither should we condemn so that we will not be condemned. He said this because there were people who judged and condemned others with regards to matters which they themselves were found culpable. This is why He explained Himself in the verses 41 and 42 of the same chapter. We, according to Christ's teachings are supposed to judge righteously but not according to sight; *"Don't judge according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment."* John 7:24. This is only possible if we are in tune with the Holy Spirit and are well vexed with the word of God. Thus, we need to possess the mind of Christ;

"But he who is spiritual discerns all things, and he himself is judged by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct him?" But we have Christ's mind." 1 Cor 2:15-16

When we possess the mind of Christ, then we can judge righteously. There is really an urgent need for spiritual men and women in our days who can discern and draw the line of distinction between what is true and false. In our days it appears every one claims to be either a true Prophet, an Apostle, evangelist or teacher. We really need spiritual detectives to fish out and expose the fake ones in the system by the Spirit and word of God.

In concluding this chapter, I believe Paul's teachings on this issue of Judgment will be very beneficial. To the believers in Rome, he instructs that they should not judge in connection with matters which border on subjective experiences and motives (a domain which only God is privy to). Rather, we are to judge issues which put stumbling blocks before others regarding the Christian faith;

"For none of us lives to himself, and none dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord. Or if we die, we die to the Lord. If therefore we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died, rose, and lived again, that he might be Lord

of both the dead and the living. But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, "'As I live,' says the Lord, 'to me every knee will bow. Every tongue will confess to God.'" So then each one of us will give account of himself to God. Therefore let's not judge one another anymore, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block in his brother's way, or an occasion for falling. I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that nothing is unclean of itself; except that to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Yet if because of food your brother is grieved, you walk no longer in love. Don't destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. Then don't let your good be slandered, for the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then, let us follow after things which make for peace, and things by which we may build one another up. Don't overthrow God's work for food's sake. All things indeed are clean, however

it is evil for that man who creates a stumbling block by eating. It is good to not eat meat, drink wine, nor do anything by which your brother stumbles, is offended, or is made weak.”
Rom 14:7-21.

That is, we are not to please ourselves.

6

CHAPTER

The Wisdom of God

It was and still is the will of God to reveal His wisdom to principalities and powers through the church of Christ. Thus, God wills that we show forth His wisdom. The wisdom of God is to manifest Himself in frail flesh. This agenda of God started right from the foundations of the world when the Lamb of God was slain to take away the sins of the world. This agenda was brought into fruition when Christ was born and eventually died for you and I. It has never been grasped by the powers of darkness as well as man as to how possible it is for God to manifest in the form of man;

“Without controversy, the mystery of godliness is great: God was revealed in the flesh, Justified in the spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the nations, Believed on in the world, And received

up in glory.” 1 Tim 3:16.

No wonder Paul sees it as a mystery in this scripture. In the same way He purposed that He will dwell in our hearts through faith by His spirit who is resident in us;

“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that you, being rooted and grounded in love,” Eph 3:17.

God wants to have many sons like Jesus Christ and that is why He sent His spirit. Up till date all other religions in this world never want to accept the truth that Christ was God manifest in human form. Not only that, they also don't want to entertain the idea that He arose from the dead and by this very act, He is now seated at the right hand of the father and is living in believers by faith. How is it possible, God will decide to live in us who are weak and frail. This certainly contradicts logic but possesses in it the wisdom of God. This is why Paul makes it known, we as clay vessels, possess the power of God so that the Excellency of the power shall be of God;

“But we have this treasure in clay vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves.” 2 Cor 4:7.

Not only has He given us the privilege of dwelling in us, but Has also made us partakers of His divine nature, making us sit with

Him in the heavenly places far above principalities and powers;

*“and raised us up with him, and made us to sit
with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,”
Eph 2:6.*

This is great riches that mortal man cannot comprehend. In the next chapters I endeavor to expatiate on this truth.

7

CHAPTER

Partakers of His Divine Nature

One thing which should make us eternally grateful to God is the truth that He has made us partakers of His divine nature;

“by which he has granted to us his precious and exceedingly great promises; that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust.” 2 Peter 1:4,

and has also made us sit with Him in the heavenly places far above principalities and powers;

“and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” Eph 2:6.

Dear child of God, whenever you are tempted to cast away your confidence which has a great recompense of reward;

*“Therefore don't throw away your boldness,
which has a great reward.” Heb 10:35,*

always remember, God has given you a privilege and a position in Him which money can never buy. The world may reject, sideline and even hate you because of your faith in the Lord, but never loose heart as you have riches in Christ untold, which mortal man cannot figure out. It pleased God that from the foundations of the world we were positioned in Christ that we will be co-heirs with His son by being partakers of His divine nature as we conform to His very image.

What a blessing it is for us to share fellowship with the father and the son by the agency of the Holy spirit.;

*“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,*

and received a like precious faith;

*“Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus
Christ, to those who have obtained a like
precious faith with us in the righteousness of our
God and Savior, Jesus Christ:” 2 Peter 1:1*

As we progress in this chapter, I will bring to our knowledge the importance of being partakers of His divine nature and how it is connected to our relationship with other believers. Before that, I will strive to lay some very important foundations as it relates to the subject matter in question. Scripture makes us know, we should let this mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus;

“Have this in your mind, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, existing in the form of God, didn't consider it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. Phil 2:5-7.

From the scripture quoted, it is clear Christ was not exalted to that position without first of all humbling Himself by becoming a man and subsequently dying a shameful death. In apparent terms, we are expected to learn from His example. There is no way we can claim to be seated with Him if we do not follow Him (His example). Scripture declares, when we identify with the suffering of Christ, then we can be glorified together with Him;

“and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if indeed we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him.” Rom 8:17.

When we identify with His suffering and consequently get to be seated with Him in the heavenly places, we should bear in mind we are not seated with Him alone, but with other believers everywhere regardless of gender, age or race.

Being partakers of His divine nature implies that though Christ is in heaven, He is here with us on earth. Conversely, as we are on this earth, so are we also present with Him in the heavenlies. This is why Paul makes us to recognize, though we are on earth, our conversation is in heaven (KJV);

*“For our citizenship is in heaven, from where we also wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;”
Phil 3:20.*

If we therefore believe we are risen with the Lord and for that matter are seated with Him in the heavenly places, then let us seek those things which are above, where Christ is seated;

“If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God.” Col 3:1.

We are, according to Paul present with the Lord in heaven whiles on earth if we do not feel comfortable on this earth with its systems;

"Therefore, we are always confident and know that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord." 2 Cor 5:6-8.

From this scripture we can infer that whenever we feel at home in this world, then we have inadvertently relinquished our position in the heavens. Also, it is important I add that because we are partakers of His divine nature (Being in Him), whenever we are being persecuted or afflicted, He suffers it with us. We get to know this truth when Christ intercepted Saul (now Paul) on his way to Damascus to persecute the believers there;

"He fell on the earth, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He said, "Who are you, Lord?" The Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Acts 9:4-5.

After he been a partaker of the divine nature of Christ and knowing the implications, asserted that he carried in his body the dying of Christ;

"always carrying in the body the putting to death of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body." 2 Cor 4:10.

Thus, he knew the only way to glorification was to accept suffering for the sake of Christ to be an integral part of the salvation package. In the great separation between the sheep and the goats in Matt 25:33-40;

“He will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will tell those on his right hand, 'Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry, and you gave me food to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you clothed me; I was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me. Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry, and feed you; or thirsty, and give you a drink? When did we see you as a stranger, and take you in; or naked, and clothe you? When did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to you?' The King will answer them, 'Most assuredly I tell you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers , you did it to me.'”,

Christ is identified with those who were hungry, naked, sick and strangers who needed shelter. It will be very vital for us to

recognize that, in our poverty, nakedness, sickness etc. Christ is never ashamed of us and for that matter is identified with us. Never let anyone deceive you that when you find yourself in such circumstances, then you are not a believer (supposing that a believer cannot suffer need some times in his or her life). Christ has promised that He will never leave us nor forsake us;

"Be free from the love of money, content with such things as you have, for he has said, "I will in no way leave you, neither will I in any way forsake you." Heb 13:5.

Though we may suffer need in one way or the other, He has made it clear, He will meet those needs. He will surely come to help us in our time of need. If even He chooses not to, by faith we will still follow Him and not bow to the systems of the world. Before I proceed, let me quickly touch on the love of God toward us. To begin with, He so loved us that He gave His only begotten son for our redemption. Paul makes us understand the love God has towards us in that, there is nothing that can ever separate us from His love, not even the 'bad' times we go through;

*"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
Could oppression, or anguish, or persecution,
or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"
Rom 8:35.*

The apostle was certain of the truth that God will even confirm us unto the end that we may be blameless at the appearing of Christ. In Christ's own words to His disciples, He promised to be with them even unto the end of the age;

"teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen." Matt 28:20.

Being with us always encompasses every circumstance we may find ourselves in. He assured the disciples that they will suffer persecution for His sake. True to His word, they suffered and He went through everything with them. Surely, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of Christ. The bond is so strong, nothing can ever break it. Haven laid this foundation about what being partakers of His divine nature entails, let us move on to established the connection between being partakers of His divine nature and how it should affect our relationship with other believers.

Please remember the point was made that we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places together with other believers regardless of their gender, age, race and even social status. When we have this at the back of our mind and there is the fullest understanding of it, we will seriously deal with all forms of discrimination and even racism in the house of God. If one has the understanding of what true Christianity is, and the fact that Christ

died for all regardless of their social standing or classification, we will humble ourselves to all and treat them the same way Christ would. In effect any attempt to create “class worship” is unchristian. For example, if we try to structure our way of fellowship in a way that it suggest only the rich or people in a high social class are welcome, then we are judges with evil intentions. James fought the spirit of classification and discrimination in the house of God in His letter to the Jews;

“My brothers, don't hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ of glory with partiality. For if a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, comes into your synagogue, and a poor man in filthy clothing also comes in; and you pay special attention to him who wears the fine clothing, and say, "Sit here in a good place;" and you tell the poor man, "Stand there," or "Sit by my footstool; haven't you shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?”
James 2:1-4.

The writer of 1 Peter even makes us know, God is no respecter of persons;

“If you call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judges according to each man's work, pass the time of your living as strangers here in

reverent fear:” 1 Peter 1:17.

It is false preachers, who according to the writer of 1 Peter and Jude, for the sake of their belly and lusts have people's faces in admiration (KJV);

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

Since we are partakers of the divine nature of Christ together with other believers both at home and abroad, we need to be identified with the joy and suffering of other believers starting from our local assembly. As scripture teaches us that we are part of the body of Christ, for this reason if one part suffers or is rejoicing, we are also expected to feel the pain and joy respectively. When a brother is in need one way or the other, it is the responsibility of believers to come to the aid of such a person. We are to mourn with those who mourn and rejoice with those who rejoice;

“Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep.” Rom 12:15.

Human beings always have the tendency of identifying with people's successes but not with their predicaments. This should not be the portion of us who are born of the spirit. Let us look at some of the examples in the Bible where certain individuals

shared in the predicaments of other children of God regardless of their geographical location.

Moses in his days chose to suffer affliction with his fellow Jews or Israelites. Though he was raised in the palace of Pharaoh and had the opportunity of enjoying the pleasures of sin in the palace, he however rejected the life of comfort and rather chose to suffer with the Israelites. Scripture says he esteemed the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the pleasures in Egypt. He certainly knew what being a partaker of Christ's divine nature entailed;

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.” Heb 11:24-26

In the days of Esther, when the Jews nearly suffered extinction because of the order of the king, Esther (though was living in the palace as a queen) was touched with the predicament of her fellow Jews. She chose to identify with them by proclaiming a fast for all of them and risking her life by going to the king to seek the reversal of his orders. She could have chosen to be indifferent to the plight of her people, but did not. Esther did a 3 days dry fast

and put her life on the line for her people;

“Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.” Est 4:15-16

The example of Uriah the Hittite is worth commending. When king David devised his diabolical plan against him to cause him to sleep with his wife (so that he (David) could cover up his sin of adultery), Uriah refused the request and persuasion of the king, citing the reason that it wasn't prudent for him to be enjoying with the wife while the course of the nation was at stake and his colleagues were in battle. Though he was at that moment absent from the battle field, yet in spirit he identified with his colleague soldiers on the battle front and the good of the nation as a whole;

“But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and didn't go down to his house. When they had told David, saying, Uriah didn't go down to his house, David said to Uriah, Haven't you come from a journey? why did you not go down to your house? Uriah said to David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah,

abide in booths; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open field; shall I then go into my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing.
2 Sam 11:9-11

Even Daniel in his days when repenting, identified himself with the sins of the whole Israel and even their fathers. We know from the scriptures that this Daniel was a pure man, one who was greatly beloved by God. Yet in interceding for the nation Israel, he identified with his people in their sin. I believe it is a vital example all true intercessors must emulate;

“we have sinned, and have dealt perversely, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even turning aside from your precepts and from your ordinances;” Dan 9:5

In the New Testament, after the day of Pentecost, the early believers had the understanding of what being partakers of Christ's divine nature really is. This could be observed in the way and manner of their fellowship, prayer life and how they shared their possessions among themselves. When the need arose that other believers needs be met, those who had lands and other properties sold them and laid the proceeds at the feet of the apostles so that others needs could be met. They were touched by

the suffering of others;

“All who believed were together, and had all things in common. They sold their possessions and goods, and distributed them to all, according as anyone had need.” Acts 2:44-45

One example of a church in the New Testament who identified with others was the Macedonian church. Though they were not well-to-do as compared to the church at Corinth, yet when they learnt the believers in Jerusalem were in need, they gave even beyond the imagination of Paul and the other apostles towards the collection for the saints at Jerusalem;

“Moreover, brothers, we make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the assemblies of Macedonia; how that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality. For according to their power, I testify, yes and beyond their power, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much entreaty to receive this grace and the fellowship in the service to the saints.” 2 Cor 8:1-4.

Based on the example of the Macedonians, Paul advised the Corinthian's to emulate their example by sharing their goods with

the believers who were in need at Jerusalem. He made them to understand, it is possible one day they will also be in need, requiring that others also do them good by sharing their goods with them;

“but for equality. Your abundance at this present time supplies their lack, that their abundance also may become a supply for your lack; that there may be equality.” 2 Cor 8:14.

It is possible in those days, due to persecutions and the like, some believers lost their jobs and even could not engage in their own trade. This led to a need, thus necessitating assistance from other believers. Whatever our brothers go through should be a matter of concern to us, as we are partakers together with them.

We can't certainly talk about the partakers of divine nature of Christ without mentioning Paul who wrote about this important truth. Though there were times when Paul was imprisoned, right over there he continue to fellowship with other believers through his unceasing prayers to God on their behave and the letters he wrote to them. He informs the believers at Philippi that his bonds had actually led to the furtherance of the gospel and for that matter the good of all believers;

“Now I desire to have you know, brothers, that the things which happened to me have turned out

rather to the progress of the Good News; so that it became evident to the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest, that my bonds are in Christ; and that most of the brothers in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear.” Phil 1:12-14.

Though he was in prison, the believers did not also neglect him, as they sent brethren to him to comfort and to meet his needs. One co-prisoner of Paul, Epaphras, though was in prison and naturally one would have taught that he would be praying for his own release from prison, rather dedicated his life to praying for the believers that they be perfect in the Lord;

“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, salutes you, always striving for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” Col 4:12.

Being partakers of the divine nature of Christ also entails that we be of one spirit with other believers as well as speaking the same thing;

“Now I beg you, brothers, through the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among

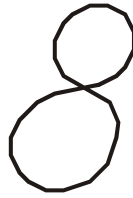
you, but that you be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”
1 Cor 1:10,

just as Paul and Titus walked in the same spirit;

“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 Cor 12:18.

God in His own infinite wisdom and love for us have given us this privilege of sharing in His divine nature with the ultimate aim of helping us mature into the fullness of the stature of Christ;

“until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a full grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;” Eph 4:13



CHAPTER

Partners with God

Closely linked with being partakers of the divine nature of Christ is the privilege we have, as God chooses to partner with us when it comes to the fate of other men. Someway, He has determined we should have a say when it comes to the destiny of other men. As a consequence, I see this as a blessing from God which needs to generate in worship, praise and thanks giving.

In the Old Testament when God intended in destroying Sodom and Gomorrah, He could have straight away gone to raise it down in flames without consulting or informing any man. In His own wisdom He wanted Abraham to have a say in the determination of the fate of the people who resided there; *"Yahweh said, "Will I hide from Abraham what I do," Gen 18:17.* From this episode you will

realize, it was the intercession of Abraham which moved God to wanting to save the whole family of Lot.

During the sojourning of the Israelites in the wilderness, God could have destroyed all of them if not for the intercession of Moses. One would ask why God had to inform Moses about His intended action. I believe God wanted Moses to act in order to avert his wrath upon them. Though God is a just God and every sin needs to be Judged, He also has the nature of compassion which makes Him have mercy on us. He knew that Moses had this kind of knowledge about Him and thus expected Him in the act of intercession to activate the mercy that was in God, so that in Judgment He will remember mercy;

“Yahweh, I have heard of your fame. I stand in awe of your deeds, Yahweh. Renew your work in the midst of the years. In the midst of the years make it known. In wrath, you remember mercy.”
Hab 3:2

It is important for us to understand, God does reveal certain things to us with the expectation that we will act with knowledge and wisdom in order to avert the judgment He intends to unleash on a people because of their wickedness. This is why scriptures points out that God does not do anything unless He reveals it to His servants the prophets; “

Surely the Lord Yahweh will do nothing, Unless he reveals his secret to his servants the prophets.” Amos 3:7.

Most at times certain things happen and we are tempted to think it happened out of the blue. It is very possible, God revealed it to someone and the fellow refused to take action. Though Christ died for all men that they all might be saved, however, we play a vital role in the proclamation of the gospel so that men will hear and have faith. We can (and are supposed to) hasten the second coming of the Lord by spreading the good news to the ends of the world.

We can either lead men to hell or to heaven. We gain this understanding via Paul's advice to Timothy to pay attention to what he teaches, as it has the propensity of leading him and the people who listen to him into destruct. What a great privilege God has given to man in permitting him this far;

“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 Tim 4:16.

No wonder Christ made known the tremendous power and authority he had vested in the apostles. He told them, as the father had sent Him, so was He sending them; *“Jesus therefore said to*

them again, "Peace be to you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." John 20:21, and that, the person whose sins they forgave would be forgiven them and whosoever's sins they retained, would be retained;

"Whoever's sins you forgive, they are forgiven them. Whoever's sins you retain, they have been retained." John 20:23

James in concluding his letter to the Jews makes us understand, at times when a member of the church is taken ill, when the elders of the church are called for and prayer is made for the fellow, God will forgive that fellow;

"and the prayer of faith will heal him who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." James 5:15.

Even in the Old Testament, if a man of God was supposed to warn the wicked and he failed to do so, the wicked would be punished because he did not get anyone to warn him or her so that he or she could get the chance of repenting. Nevertheless, the man of God who refused to warn the wicked would not also be spared. This is made known through the charge God gave Ezekiel;

"When I tell the wicked, You shall surely die; and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at your hand." Ezek 3:18

In the New Testament the Lord partnered with the apostles in the preaching of the gospel by working with them and confirming the word with signs following;

*"They went out, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed." Amen.
Mark 16:20.*

Paul later in his letter to the church at Corinth makes us know we are co-laborers with God; *"For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's farming, God's building."* 1 Cor 3:9, who in our trials and tribulations comforts us by the agency of the Holy Ghost so that we will also be able to comfort others who will later be suffering what we have suffered before;

"who comforts us in all our affliction, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, through the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." 2 Cor 1:4.

Christ in His days with the apostles told Peter that Satan sought to destroy him, but that He had prayed for Him, expecting that after he is converted he in turn should also strengthen his fellow brethren;

"The Lord said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat, but I prayed for you, that your faith wouldn't fail. You, when once you have turned again, establish your brothers" Luke 22:31-32.

In deed there are tremendous benefits to be derived in our true fellowship with the Lord and other believers which surely beats our mind. These are benefits which money cannot buy. An old preacher once said, we are so much concerned with things money can buy such that we neglect those that money cannot buy. You and I however know, most of the things money cannot buy are so vital to life, they are indispensable. Only God provides these things for us freely by His grace, love and mercies. We should therefore be eternally grateful to Him for all the unsearchable riches there are in His son Jesus Christ.