

A close-up photograph of two hands clasped together in a supportive grip. The hands are positioned with fingers interlaced, suggesting strength and encouragement. The skin tones are warm, and the background is a soft, out-of-focus light beige.

Zacharias Tanee Fomum

The Way of Spiritual Encouragement

A close-up photograph of two hands clasped together in a supportive grip. The hands are positioned with fingers interlaced, suggesting strength and encouragement. The skin tones are warm, and the background is a soft, out-of-focus light beige.

Zacharias Tanee Fomum

The Way of Spiritual Encouragement

THE WAY OF SPIRITUAL ENCOURAGEMENT

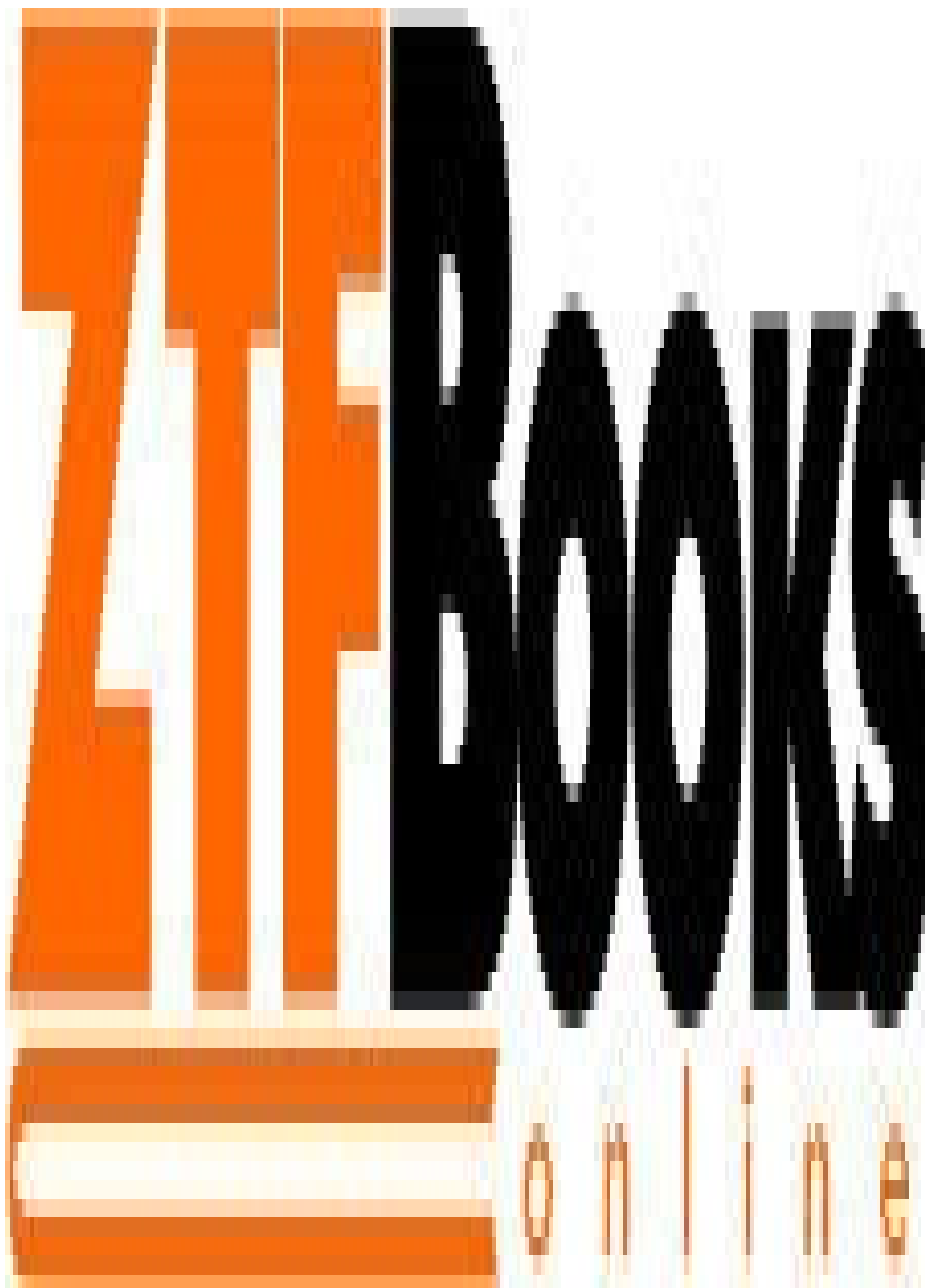
By

Zacharias Tanee Fomum

© 1987 Z.T. Fomum

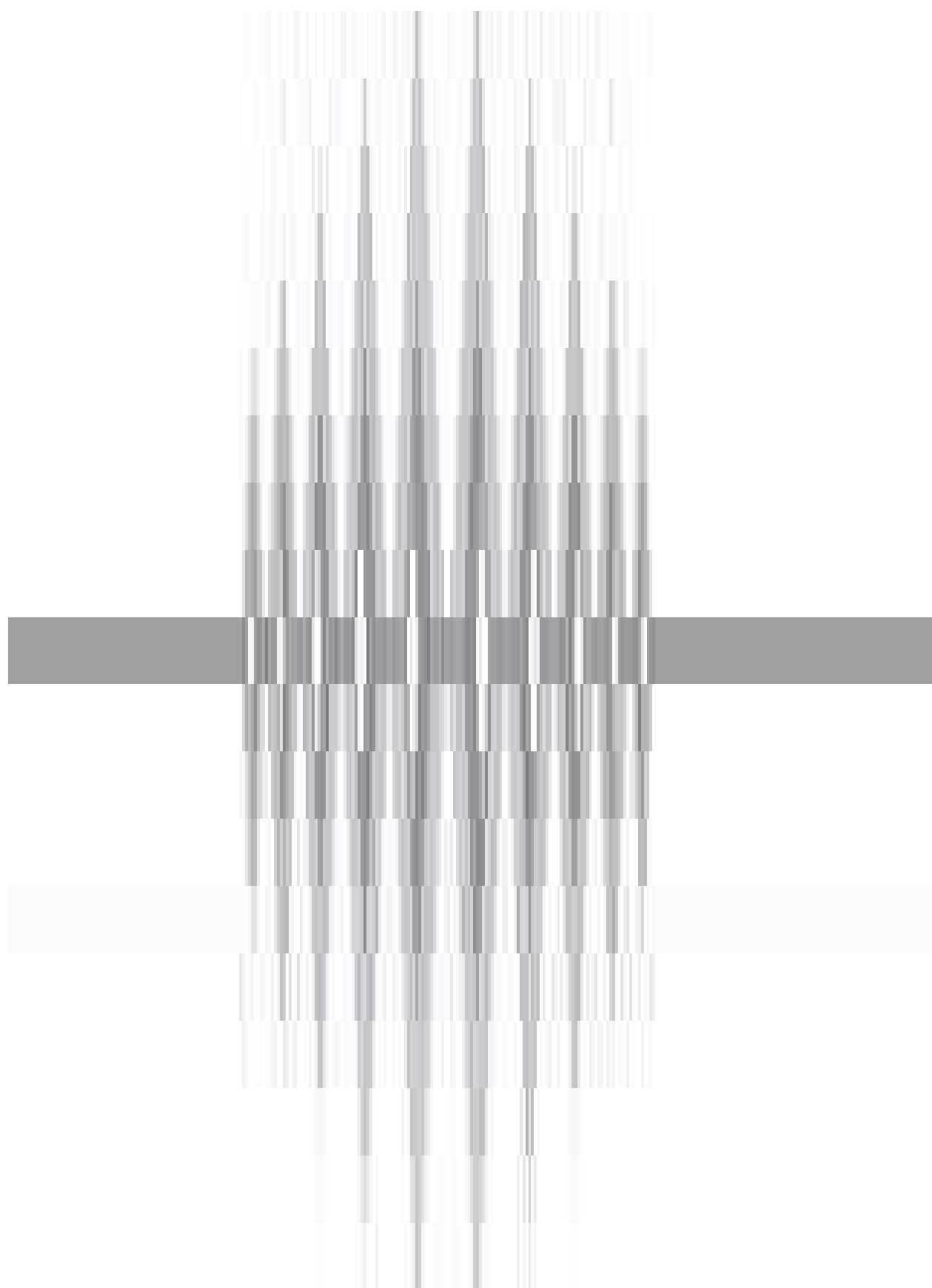


Published by



the ePublishing unit of the Book Ministry of CMFI

<http://www.cmfionline.org> | ztfbooks@cmfionline.org



I dedicate this book with profound gratitude to

THE BODY OF CHRIST JESUS IN UGANDA,

in recognition of her invaluable contribution to my spiritual growth and ministry.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Preface](#)

[God Is Able](#)

[The Greatness Of God's Grace](#)

[God's Wonderful Plan For You](#)

[To The Backslider, a Message Of Love And Restoration](#)

[God's Gracious Provision Of The Spirit-filled Life](#)

[About The Author](#)

[Other Books](#)



PREFACE

These messages that constitute the book, “ The Way of Spiritual Encouragement, ” were written while I was away from Cameroon to seek God’s face and sort out many things with Him. They have been a great blessing to me. I was shocked by what the Lord was saying to me and, by His grace, will say to those He will allow to read these messages. My own faith in Him grew as I wrote them. I have been deeply comforted to know that God is so good, so loving and so gracious. My desire is to love Him more and more.

I have received answers to many of my questions, and my problems have found solutions in Him. Somehow, in a way I cannot explain, love has welled up in my heart for all His children - my beloved brothers and sisters in Him - irrespective of whatever differences we have had. He has been good to me.

Because these messages were written over a period of ten days, I have not done very much thinking about them. I have just allowed what God has put on my heart to flow out, and sometimes He has been gracious to allow things to flow out which I had never seen.

If you approach them as the sharing of something from my heart to yours, you will, by God’s grace, be blessed. If you approach them as talks on doctrine, you may have problems. I suggest that you just open your heart to God and receive what He has for you.

I pray that you should read all the messages, for it may be that what God has for your need may not be in the first message nor in the second, but somewhere else.

If you receive a little encouragement and assurance in the Lord as you read this book, I will consider that as a bonus. The blessing to my own spiritual life, received as I wrote, more than compensates me.

May the Lord God, the Author and Finisher of our faith, be magnified for all the grace that He has shown to me, who am but one of His most undeserving servants.

This book The Way of Spiritual Encouragement is the twelfth in The CHRISTIAN WAY series. The books in the series are:

[The Way Of Life](#)

[The Way Of Obedience](#)

[The Way Of Discipleship](#)

[The Way Of Sanctification](#)

[The Way Of Christian Character](#)

[The Way Of Spiritual Power](#)

The Way Of Christian Service

The Way Of Spiritual Warfare

The Way Of Suffering For Christ

The Way Of Victorious Praying

The Way Of Overcomers

The Way Of Spiritual Encouragement

The Way Of Loving The Lord

Port Harcourt,

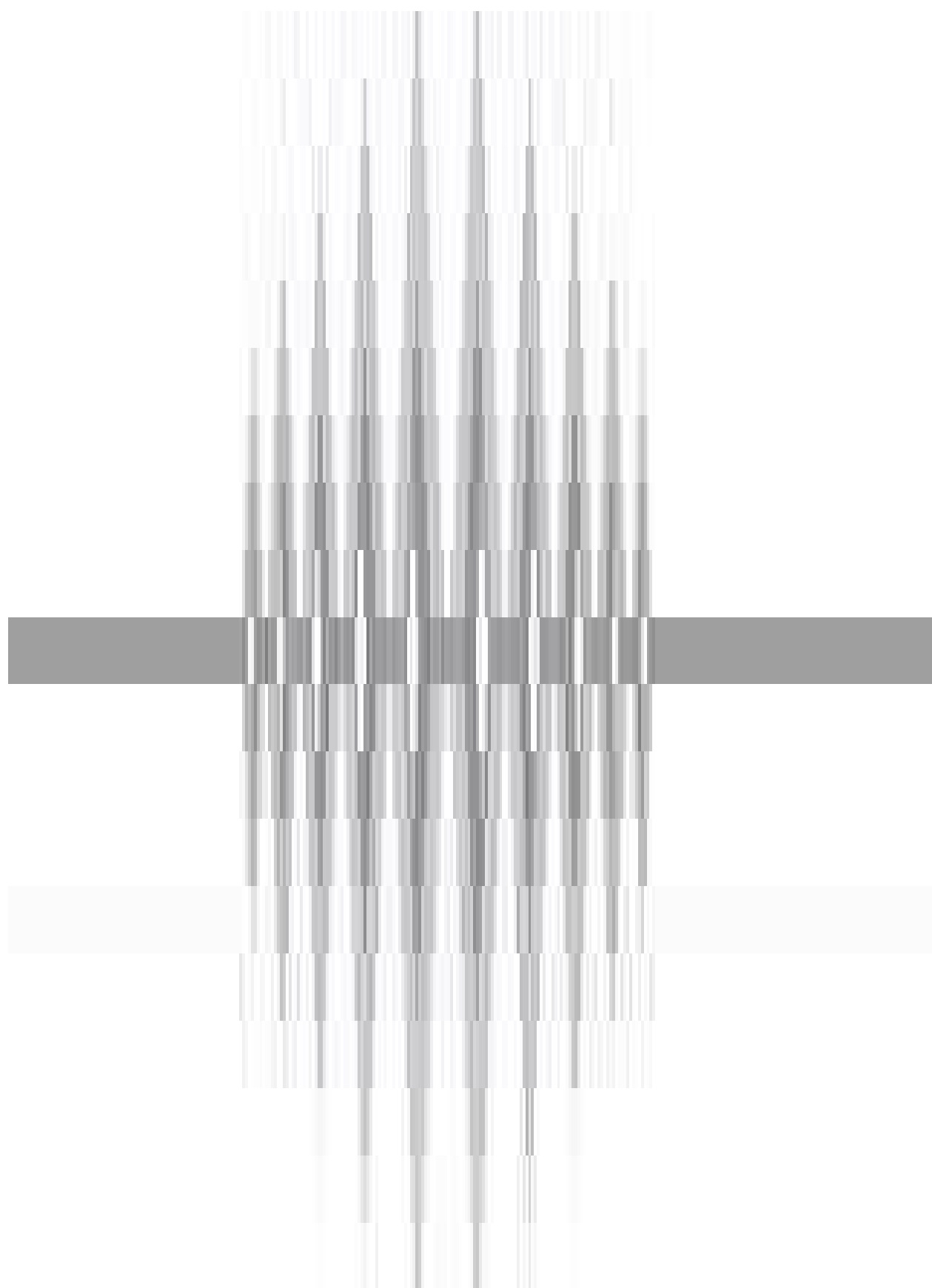
Zacharias Tanee Fomum,

18th August 1982.

P.O. Box 6090, Yaounde,

Cameroon.

Chapter 1



GOD IS ABLE

THE GREAT CALL OF GOD

These messages are addressed to those who have turned from their sin and turned to the Lord Jesus. Such love Him and are walking with Him in increasing vital fellowship. Unbelievers and those who deceive themselves that they are believers, have no part in these messages. If any such reads these messages and derives some hope, comfort and assurance from them while not being vitally linked to the Lord Jesus, the messages will only have served to undo them. So before you go on; may I ask you, “Are you truly a child God? Have you received the Lord Jesus as your Lord and Saviour? Does His Holy Spirit witness with your own spirit that you are a child of God?” If your answer to these questions is: “Yes,” then go on with the messages. They are for you. If the answer is: “No,” or “I AM NOT SURE,” I recommend that you carry out that which the following passages suggest in order to qualify to go on to read the messages.

“He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:11-13).

“Because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved” (Romans 10:9-10).

“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the

rest of the apostles, ‘Brethren, what shall we do? and Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’ ” (Acts 2:37-38).

“And he said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned’ ” (mark 16:15-16).

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

MAN-CENTRED THEOLOGY

Many believers today are distressed and broken. They do not manifest the joy that is theirs in the Lord Jesus. They go about with long faces, just like the unbeliever around, and are full of divers types of complaints. I have often asked myself the question: “What is at the root of this?” I think that part of the root cause is a man-centred theology. This man-centred theology has stressed what man must do out of proportion, and done nothing to put forward what God has done. So the emphasis is, “You must do this and that and this and that.” This is often reflected in the testimonies of many believers. They say, “I repented; I sought God, I found God; I believed; I was baptized, I,I,I.” At the end of it the phrase may be attached to these many “I’s, but it is obvious that God is not at the centre. He is not the Hero. Man is, and after many testimonies, if you analyze what has been said and how it has been said, you ought to shake the hand of the person testifying and say, ”You are wonderful. You did it well. Praise be unto you.”

With such an attitude, when such a person has the honesty to face himself and

still sees his conflicts and failures even after he has believed, he is bound to doubt whether or not he was ever saved and whether he will keep himself in Christ until that day. Such doubt results in restlessness, hopelessness and spiritual despair. A sister told me after 25 years of walking with the Lord, “I often wonder if I will make it to the end and be found in Christ.” She fasted and fasted and finally went off the rails into erroneous doctrine in an attempt to do more in order to be truly saved.

The Bible says, “In the beginning God...” but now we say either consciously or unconsciously, “In the beginning man,” or we say, “In the beginning God, now man and in the future man.” One man told me, “I do not dispute the fact that God created the world. He truly created it, but He has abandoned it to man. Man is on his own. In the beginning it was God but now and in all of the future it must be man.”

This man-centred theology is basically the sad influence of the world on Christian thought, belief and action. In the world, man is the hero. He has done everything and he must continue to do everything. Christians have slowly accepted this way of thinking - this is the day to reject it.

We want to emphasize the Bible position. It is that, “In the beginning God, in the present God, and in all of the future God.” God is the Author of eternal salvation. He is also the Sustainer of the same salvation and He will consummate it. God is the Hero. Believers can rest in him about their salvation.

He saved them !

He is saving them !!

He will save them !!!

All of it from start to finish is His work. There is a sense in which the only thing we contribute to our salvation is our sin. The apostle Paul said,

“And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion.” You did not begin it. You cannot complete it. You must allow Him to complete that which He began. Do not fight with Him to complete it. The apostle Paul further said, “But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that He is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me” (11 Timothy 1:12b).

The Hymn writer could confidently write:

*How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,
In a believer's ears;
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.
It makes the wounded spirit whole,
And calms the troubled breast;
'Tis manna to the hungry soul,
And to the weary rest.
Dear Name, the Rock on which I build,
My shield and Hiding-place,*

*My never-failing Treasury, filled
With boundless stores of grace.
Jesus, my Shepherd, Saviour, Friend,
MY Prophet, Priest, and King,
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
Accept the praise I bring.
I would Thy boundless love proclaim,
With every fleeting breath;
So shall the music of Thy Name,
Refresh my soul in life.*

S.S. & S. N° 112

So we conclude that God is the Hero. He is able. He began. He will accomplish that which He set out to do. Glory be to His name!

The believer must be comforted, assured and full of hope because of :-

THE BELIEVER'S PAST HISTORY

The apostle Paul wrote, "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born

among many brethren. And those whom he predestined, he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Romans 8:29-30). So our past history consists of five great things, each one of them done by God and by God alone for us:-

He foreknew us.

He predestined us to be conformed to Christ.

He called us.

He justified us.

He glorified us.

A) GOD FOREKNEW EACH BELIEVER

Some think that God knows believers only from the moment that they believe in the Lord Jesus. This is not so. God foreknew the believer, that is, He knew that believer before the believer came into physical existence.

Every believer thus already existed in the thoughts, heart and mind of God before he was born into the world. The Lord God, in talking of Jeremiah, said,

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5).

When did God know Jeremiah? He knew him some time before He formed him in the womb. When did God consecrate him? Again the answer is that this was done before he was formed in the mother’s womb. When was Jeremiah appointed a prophet to the nations? Again, God says that He did this before Jeremiah was formed in the womb. So, before Jeremiah was born, the following things had already been carried out by God on his behalf, and as such they were settled:

He had been foreknown by God.

He had been consecrated by God.

He had been appointed a prophet by God.

All had been done for him.

Isaiah emphasized the fact that God knew him before he was born. He said,

“Listen to me, O coastlands, and hearken, you peoples from afar. The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name. He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away. And he said to me, ‘You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified’” (Isaiah 49:1-3).

And not only Isaiah. Paul too testified to the same thing. He said,

“I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace,....” (Galatians 1:14-15).

This foreknowledge was not only for prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah and Paul. The foreknowledge of God was for all believers. All His children were foreknown. There is no believer who came into the plans of God afterwards as some kind of after thought. So, let me assure you that God foreknew you. Every believer was not only foreknown from his mother’s womb. He was foreknown even before then. The Bible says,

“All who dwell on earth will worship it, every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain” (Revelation 13: 8).

B) GOD PREDESTINED EACH BELIEVER UNTO SALVATION

God did not only foreknow each believer. He also predestined each believer individually unto salvation. In His predestination, He said to Himself from the foundations of the world,

“This will be mine. I love this one.” the Bible says, “He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will” (Ephesians 1:4-5).

God predestined you unto salvation. He predestined you to conform to the image of His Son. His will was and is that Jesus may be the first of many brethren. He willed that the begotten Son would have God's adopted sons as His brethren. The Bible says,

“For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, ‘I will proclaim thy name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will praise thee’” (Hebrews 2:11-12).

My beloved brothers and sisters, you were predestined by God unto eternal life. You were ordained unto eternal life. God did it. He did it without consulting you. He is committed to working it out. He is working it out. That is why you believe in the Lord Jesus. Only those in whom He has worked out repentance can believe. The Bible says,

“And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48c).

The Lord Jesus said,

“But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out” (John 6:36-37).

“Do not murmur among yourselves. No one comes to me unless the Father who has sent me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”

“At that time Jesus declared, ‘I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes; yea, Father; for such was thy gracious will. All things have been delivered to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matthew 11:25-27).

God’s gracious will is that Jesus should reveal the Father to any He chooses. Jesus chose you as someone to whom He would reveal the Father. He has revealed the Father to you. You know Him. You are blessed. You are saved!

C) GOD’S CALL UNTO LIFE

The Bible says that those whom God predestined, He also called. We can say that the foreknowledge and the predestining were carried out in the mind of God. In the call, God works out in practice that which was already accomplished in His mind.

The call of God is not based upon any human merit whatsoever. In fact, the Lord calls those who are absolutely without merit to come to Him. Let us look at a few examples from the Word.

ABRAM : “Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves’” (Genesis 12:1-3).

Abram was possibly an idolater as were the rest of the people around him. He did not know God. He did not seek God. However, God knew him and sought him. God spoke to Abram first. The first move was God's. It was not Abram's. God did not respond to Abram. God took the initiative. Even before Abram responded, God commanded him to move out and promised him His presence. He further promised to bless him:-

I will make of you a great nation.

I will bless you.

I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you.

I will curse him who curses you.

Do you notice the many, "I's? God undertook to do everything. God started off as the one who called and continued as the one who blessed. The call of Abram was not a general call to all who were around and to which Abram responded. His father Terah was not called. God called Abram. God did everything for him. He was chosen by God. He had done nothing for God before that great day, but God had singled him out for everything. Praise be unto His holy name! He also singled you out and called you. He called you when you were nothing and had nothing; so that He might make you into His son and give you everything.

SAUL : He also called Saul of Tarsus. If there was anyone who, by human standards, deserved the wrath of God, Saul did. He was hostile to the Lord Jesus and to the Church. He himself confessed, “I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so in Jerusalem; I not only shut up many of the saints in prison, by authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme; and in raging fury against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities” (Acts 26:9-11).

But God called Him. He was not called when he had repented. He was not called when he had come to himself. He was on his horse running right fast to go and destroy the followers of Jesus, when God suddenly broke into his life, and things were never the same again. They could never be the same again!

THE FIRST APOSTLES: He called them too. There was the initial call to them to become His disciples. This was totally dependent on Him, and not on them. The Bible says, “As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them” (Matthew 4:18-21).

This was a mighty call. They were fishermen. They were content. They were ordinary people doing ordinary business and then He came along and called them to Himself. What had they done to be singled out that way? They were not the only fishermen that were at sea. He did not say to a whole lot, “Who wants to come with me?” and then these ones responded. He said to them “You, come...”

Later on, when He wanted the twelve apostles, the Bible says, “And he went up

on the mountain, and called to him those whom he desired; and they came to him. And he appointed twelve ..." (Mark 3:13-14). The apostles were not those who willingly responded to a general invitation. The Lord went to the mountain. He called to Him those whom he desired. It was not those who desired Him but those whom He desired, and out of this lot He made His appointment. The apostles had no grounds on which to ever boast. He was later to tell them, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you..." (John 15:16). His call is a mighty call. It depends on Himself, on His mercy. The Bible says, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion" (Romans 9:15-16). So it depends not upon man's will or exertion but on God's mercy. Did you get that clearly? God's call does not depend on man's will or on man's exertion. It does not depend on anything that is good in man. It depends solely on His mercy.

If you are a child of God today, then the most wonderful thing that can ever happen to anyone has happened to you. However, know this: God called you, not because He saw your goodness or your potential. He called you out of mercy - His mercy. May His name be praised for this!

Another wonderful thing about His call is that it is without repentance. It is irrevocable. The Bible says, "For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29). He is so wonderful that He keeps calling and calling and does not revoke His call.

He called, not only Jews, but also Gentiles. The Bible says, "In order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? As indeed he says in Hosea, 'Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'my beloved.' 'And in the very place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," they will be called 'sons of the living God'" (Romans 9:23-26).

THE OVERRULING HAND OF GOD

God's call to you was not because of anything good that He found in you. In fact, He says, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me" (Romans 10:20).

I do not know if you sought Him. I know many who honestly confess that they did not. One brother, an Englishman, told me: "My business was to run away from Him and His business was to run after me. One day, He stretched out His hand, held me by the neck and I could run no more."

Because His call is powerful and must yield fruit, He overrules all that concerns those who are called. I can say for each believer that:-

He decided the epoch in which you were born. What if you had been born before the Good News was brought to your country? You would never have heard it. You would have continued in your sin and perished in it.

He decided the nation in which you were born. What if you had been born in modern Turkey where there are only about fifty believers in forty million people? Things could have been different for you.

He decided the tribe into which you were born. He also decided who your parents were to be.

He has overruled in all your movements. He took you to that spot where you first heard the gospel. He ensured that the one who first met you was not someone who was in a Christless system who could have deceived you. He arranged

everything to the minutest detail. He was working out His mighty plans even in what you thought were the accidents in your life, to bring you to the point of blessing.

Let me say it humbly and reverently, but let me also say it boldly. If you are a child of God, redeemed by the blood of Jesus, then there is nothing accidental in your life. Your pathway was planned and supervised by God in all detail, even before you came to know Him. He is continuing to do the same today.

THE EFFECTUAL CALL OF GOD

God is not a mad Being to go calling people who will not respond to Him. When He calls, He also works out to ensure that the person responds. He works in those He calls, removing all barriers, prejudices, etc. and labours until the person responds to the call in the way that He wants.

Abraham responded to the call.

Moses responded.

Saul of Tarsus responded.

James and John responded.

The twelve apostles responded.

You responded.

D) GOD JUSTIFIED THE CALLED ONES

God put all the elect into Christ Jesus and sentenced them once and for all to death in Him on His cross. He died in their place. They died in Him. Because of His death, God now looks at all who are in Christ as if they never sinned. He did that long ago. He looks at you now as one who has never sinned, not because you have never sinned, but because the penalty for your sin had been taken away. You are justified. (For a fuller treatment of this topic, read our book entitled, “The Way of life.”)

E) GOD GLORIFIED THE JUSTIFIED

Those who were put into union with the Lord Jesus in His death on the cross were also made one with Him in His glorious resurrection and enthronement. The Bible says, “But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (By grace you have been saved), and raised US UP WITH HIM, AND MADE US SIT WITH HIM IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST JESUS” (Ephesians 2:4-6).

You were glorified in Christ even before you came to know Him.

When Christ died you died.

When Christ was buried you were buried.

When Christ rose from the dead, you too were raised with Him.

When Christ was enthroned, you too were

enthroned with Him.

IS GOD ABLE?

We have seen what God did for the believer from before the foundations of the world. We have seen the exalted position in which He has placed the believers. But all these were done in the thoughts, in the mind of God. There is a sense in which they are real. There is another sense in which they would mean nothing unless He can bring His designs to visible reality. Is He able to bring to pass in human experience that which He carried out in divine experience (since He does not live in time but always in eternity)? If He is able, then the believer's position is guaranteed. If He is not able, then it could all be wishes and no one dares to count on them.

The great thing is that God is able to bring to pass all that He has purposed. In fact, He must accomplish all that He has set out in His purposes. If not, He would not be God. Take, for example, if God set out to glorify a man, put all the power and riches of heaven out to accomplish this goal and there was a man who could say, "God, you want to do it. You have set out to do it. You have put into action all that you have to do it. However, I will frustrate your purpose. I will cause you to fail. You will not accomplish your objective," that person would become the ultimate decider. He would become God.

No such person exists. God must have His way. God always has His way. He is God. He cannot be defeated. He cannot be frustrated. Job confessed, "I know

that thou canst do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted” (Job 42:2). Do you hear it? No purpose of His can be thwarted. You cannot thwart that purpose, no matter how hard you try. The devil cannot thwart that purpose, although all the host of hell is fighting with that in view. God is God. He says,

*“My counsel shall stand,
and I will accomplish all my purpose” (Isaiah 46:10).*

*“I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass
I have purposed, and I will do it” (Isaiah 46:11).*

*“As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand”
(Isaiah 14:24).*

So, you can rest assured that all that God planned to carry out on your behalf will be accomplished. He will surely accomplish it.

True enough, there are obstacles in His way.

The devil is in the way

The world is in the way

The flesh is in the way.

But God will overcome all these obstacles and accomplish His purpose. He set out to save you, as a member of His Body, that He “might present the Church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27).

He will do it. He must do it. He has done it.

Are you laden with problems? Cast them on Him and relax.

Are you afraid that He will reject you? Run to Him and fall into His arms. That is the place of your refuge.

Are you tempted beyond measure? The Lord is near and you will overcome all the temptations.

Have you fallen into the mud of sin? Do not sit there in mud crying hopelessly. Arise. Go to Him. Wash yourself in the fountain that flows from Him and become as white as snow. Then live in His presence always.

Do you feel that you have failed so much that He will never use you again? Do not depend on your feelings. Run to Him. All now involved in His service have failed Him at one time or the other.

Elijah was discouraged and wanted to die, but God continued to use him.

Peter denied Him, but the Lord continued to use him.

Paul despaired of life, but the Lord continued to use him.

John Mark went back on the first journey, but the Lord still used him.

Moses failed, but he appeared in glory on the mount of transfiguration.

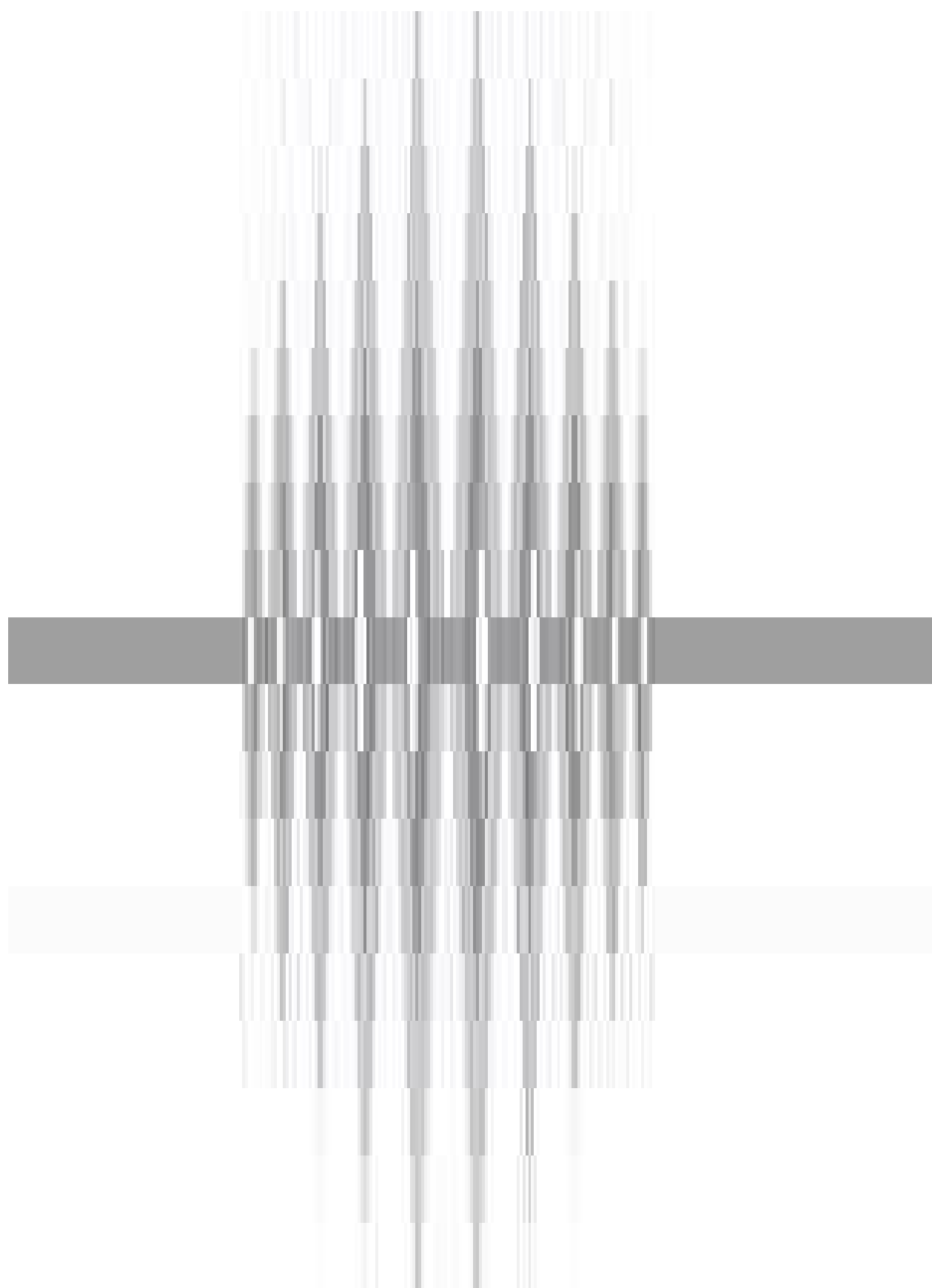
Jonah escaped, but he was taken to Nineveh and used. The writer has failed many times but has not been abandoned by Him.

Etc.

“Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees” (Hebrews 12:12). The Lord is near to help you to lift them up and strengthen them. You are not alone. He is with you.

Rejoice. Move ahead in victory. Glory be to His Name! Amen.

Chapter 2



THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S GRACE

“And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God - not because of works lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:1-10).

“Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace which was given me by the working of His power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him. So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory” (Ephesians 3:7-13).

“I thank him who has given me strength for this, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful by appointing me to this service, though I formerly

blasphemed and persecuted and insulted him; but I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. And I am the foremost of sinners; but I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever. AMEN” (1 Timothy 1:12-17).

“For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus” (Galatians 1:13-17).

“And to keep me from being too elated by the abundance of revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I besought the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses; that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (11 Corinthians 12:7-10).

“Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am and his grace towards me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me” (1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

“But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it is said, ‘When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men’ (Ephesians 4:7-8).

We want now to consider a theme that runs through all of revealed Scripture. It is the theme of grace. I must, first of all, confess that I feel totally unworthy to be writing about so deep and far-reaching a theme; yet because of its richness I feel compelled to share the little that I am beginning to learn on it.

There is a sense in which all of God’s relationship with man is based on grace. God gives everything and man receives everything. Someone has aptly said that Grace is God’s riches (made available to man) at Christ’s expense.

God’s

Riches

At

Christ’s

Expense

God's riches are all made available to man because Christ paid for all of them on the Cross. Therefore God's riches are made available to man totally free of charge. He merits nothing and he contributes nothing. He just receives and receives and receives. There is a sense in which man contributes nothing. We will even go further to say that God does not expect him to contribute anything. If he is anxious to contribute, he will stand in God's way. So we will look at five aspects of the grace of God.

GREAT GRACE IN THE BEGINNING

All begin with salvation. But let us look at what we were before God stepped in to save us:

We were dead through trespasses and sins.

We walked in trespasses and sins.

We followed the course of this world.

We followed the prince of the power of the air - the devil.

We were the sons of disobedience.

We lived in the passions of our flesh.

We followed the desires of body and mind.

We were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

While we were all these and more, and while we had done nothing and could do nothing to improve our situation before God, God loved us even while we were still dead in our trespasses. He did not love us while we had seen the gravity of our situation and wanted Him to do something about it. In fact, He loved us when we were most anxious that nothing should be done for us. He loved us while we actively hated Him. He loved us while everything in us recommended us for utter condemnation. This love is based on His grace.

Loving us in this way, He made us alive with Christ, and raised us up with Him and made us sit with Him in the heavenly places. Everything was done for us, not because of what we were, but in spite of what we were. The Bible says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God - not because of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:9).

God's mighty salvation is by grace. If any of us had to be someone very special, then our salvation was not by grace but by works; and if it was by works, then it is not God's great salvation. It is our personal salvation that begins in us, and ends in us, and has no value whatsoever before God.

We were saved by grace. We contributed nothing. God put in everything. How great must be His love for us! How great is His grace! Let us look a bit at Saul of Tarsus who later became the apostle Paul. We shall try to categorize sinners. Although we know this can easily be misunderstood, we will nevertheless do it

to illustrate our point.

We will put sinners into seven classes:-

A sinner who sins in small ways.

A moderate sinner who commits sin but opposes God only passively.

A moderate sinner who commits sin and moderately opposes God.

A great sinner who is lost in the practice of sin but opposes God passively.

A great sinner who is lost in sin and opposes God actively.

A foremost sinner who is lost in sin, but opposes God passively.

A foremost sinner who is lost in sin, but also foremost in actively opposing God.

Saul of Tarsus was in this last class, which we will call that of the greatest bondage to sin and the greatest opposition to God. He himself calls himself:-

A blasphemer of Christ.

A persecutor of Christ.

One who insulted Christ.

One who persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.

He did everything against Christ with extreme zeal.

But what happened to this Saul? He says, “I received mercy...and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me.” He again says that Jesus called him through grace.

Was there anything good in Paul to recommend him for mercy? There was nothing. If one who sins in a small way already deserves death, then we can rightly say that Paul was not fit for any grace at all . He deserved the worst from God, as it were. It is as if he deserved God’s wrath seven-fold. What did he receive?

Grace overflowed to him. He received grace in total fulness. He continues to testify that God had used him as an example for others. What an example! How great our God is!

God showed His grace to someone who deserved His wrath seven times over as an encouragement to you. You too were received on that basis.

Do you look to the past and say, “Maybe God made a mistake. I ought not to have been chosen. Does He not know how bad I was? Why me to receive such grace? There are many unbelievers who have not done some of the terrible things that I did; yet I was chosen and made alive with Christ.”

Thank God that you do not understand it. You do not need to understand it. Grace was shown to you. God’s mercy reached out to you. You were enabled by grace to respond to that wonderful grace.

It was started by Him on the basis of grace, and not merit.

The choice was His on the basis of grace, and not merit.

The outworking of His purpose was His on the basis of grace, and not merit.

He brought everything.

You brought nothing.

You gave Him nothing.

He gave you everything.

You do not understand it.

He understands all and yet you receive grace and are in grace.

Glory be to His Name!

GREAT GRACE IN APPOINTMENT TO SERVICE

If you ask many believers on what basis God appoints people to serve Him, you will receive answers that include the following:-

On the basis of their understanding of His Word.

On the basis of their obedience to His commandments.

On the basis of their zeal.

On the basis of their desire for Him.

On the basis of their holiness.

Etc.

These answers are not bad. Unfortunately, they present only a part of the answer, and the part which, for our present purpose, can be ignored. The thing that makes the answers above unsatisfactory is that they glorify man. They lay emphasis on what man must do. However, there is a more solid side to it - the side that talks of what God has done, what He is doing and what He will do. That is the side of God's grace, and grace overshadows human action.

We say that God appoints people to serve Him, not on the basis of what they are or who they are, but on the basis of His grace. Let us remind ourselves that grace says, "All depends on God and God does it according to His mercy and according to the good pleasure of His will." Grace begins with God acting and ends in God receiving all the praise.

Let us again come to the apostle Paul. We have already seen how he deserved a seven-fold condemnation as an aggressive enemy of the Lord, but he received grace to become a saint. Did he then qualify to serve the Lord by some activity of the flesh? The answer is, 'No'! He said, "Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me by the working of his power. To me though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given."

Let us illustrate it as before:

The greatest saints

The great saints

Saints

The least saints

The very least saint

Paul (less than the very least saint).

Paul said that he was less than the very least saint. So he was right at the bottom of the bottom. He had nothing whatsoever to count on. Unless God did something for him, he could do nothing for himself. And God did something for him, not because of his goodness and suitability, but in spite of him.

This man who was less than the least received grace, not to fold his hands and watch, not to be nothing because of no ability, but to do the following:-

To preach Christ's unsearchable riches to the Gentiles.

To make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God.

This is wonderful. God's grace made it possible for the less than the least saint to

become a preacher, a teacher and an apostle!

All who serve the Lord serve on the basis of grace. If anyone thinks that he has personal merit outside of the Lord Jesus and His grace to serve God, he of all people deserves to be pitied.

Anyone who does not serve on the basis of grace is completely disqualified; for no service can ever be rendered to Him outside of His grace. No one can ever come to Him and say to Him, “Lord, I want to serve You. I am qualified to serve You. I will show You my credentials and You will see that I truly qualify: they are:-

First diploma: I understand Your Word.

Second diploma: I obey Your commandments.

Third diploma: I am full of zeal.

Advanced diploma: I desire You completely.

Higher diploma: I am all holiness.

Etc.

Such a person would be sent away; for who can truly say that he understands God's Word? Who can say to the Lord that he has obeyed all His commandments? Who can truly say to Him that he is truly filled with zeal for Him and only for Him? Who can say that he desires Him as He ought to be desired, and who can say to Him that he is perfectly holy? No sane person can say any of these things. Yet God has gone ahead and allowed people to serve Him. It must mean that He allowed them to serve Him on an entirely different basis than anything that they could put up. That other basis, and indeed it is the only basis, is the basis of grace.

I am amazed that God can allow me to have even a small part in His service. I am entirely unworthy. I will always be unworthy. If He did not use me on the basis of His grace, I would have no part whatsoever in His service.

Have you been trying to amass some personal credentials to present to God as a basis on which He must use you? Forget it. Come on the basis of His grace and you will be accepted.

Grace means that God gives me something to do for Him for which I have absolutely no merit of my own. This means that anything that He gives me to do for Him is to be received as a great privilege. I cannot say to Him, "This job is not very important. I would like to be given another one instead." I cannot say that, first of all, because if He had wanted, He could have left me with nothing to do for Him and be quite free of blame for that action. Whatever is important for Him ought to give me great satisfaction in doing it for Him.

Grace also means that I have no reason to be jealous of the work that He has given the others to do. He did not give them because of something special in them. It pleased Him to give it to them and what is my portion in it? They are not more important. He is important. Only He is important. Glory be to His holy Name!

Let me ask you a personal question. What has the Lord given you to do for Him? Is it to be a helper in His Body? Is it to be a faithful witness reaching out to the people one after another? Is it to show kindness to those in need? Is it to encourage the faint-hearted? Are you satisfied with what He has given you to do and are you doing it with all your heart, thereby satisfying His heart, or are you dissatisfied, saying, “Why did He not make me into a great teacher, evangelist to the whole world, great miracle-worker, mighty prophet, most outstanding apostle?” If you think this way, then, you have no understanding whatsoever of grace. You are serving Him for your own interests and not for His.

Remember again whom you were. You were without any worth, but His grace reached out to you. You were still without merit when He gave you something to do for Him. Did He do wrong by showing you His grace? Won't you repent of your ingratitude?

Finally, maybe you look at yourself and say, “I am so unworthy. Although God gave me the privilege to serve Him by grace, I have not gathered enough personal merit to deserve the position that He has given me in His service. He will soon take away that which He gave me to do.” Do not think that way and worry because of that way of thinking. Did He call you to serve Him because of your merit? If that was the basis in the beginning, then it will continue to be the basis. However, if He called you to serve Him on the basis of His grace, then relax in Him. He will not change from grace to works. Just continue to faithfully serve Him. He will keep you doing what He has given you to do.

Another aspect of the whole matter is this, “If you were serving Him only for His glory and had no personal interest in the matter, why should it bother you that He has given your job to someone else by His grace? Should you not rather rejoice with Him in His new appointment since He has decided that that is the way to carry out His purpose?

To be dissatisfied even in a small way with the place God has given us in His service or to be jealous of the position God has given to others is a manifestation of the fact that you are serving Him, not for His interest and glory, but for your own interest and glory.

Have you found out why you are serving Him? Is it solely and absolutely for His interest? Could your restlessness and dissatisfaction stem from your self-seeking heart? Have you ever thought about the great sin that is committed in serving God for your own interest and not absolutely for His? All these questions make me cry out, “Lord, reveal to me the greatness of Your grace; for when my eyes are truly opened to grace, all self-seeking will come to an end.” Do you too feel like praying that same prayer?

Finally, the most wonderful thing about grace is that even though our motives are impure, He allows us to continue to serve Him and to satisfy Him. This is wonderful! This is great grace!

THE LIMITLESS MEASURE OF GRACE

I am writing this message in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. This great country has known financial prosperity because of her oil resources. However, at the moment production and sales are down and there are problems here and there because of the limited resources from oil. As I have been thinking about God’s grace, I asked myself, “Is the store of grace exhaustible? Is there a possibility that one day I will need God’s grace and He will say to me ‘Child, I would like to manifest my grace towards you but unfortunately the supply is exhausted and there is nothing I can do about it’?” Thanks be to God that there is no such possibility. Grace is without measure. It is inexhaustible.

His store of grace is exceedingly rich. The Bible talks of the exceeding riches of

His grace in kindness towards us (Ephesians 2:7). God's store of grace is always full. However, someone may say, "God's store is always full, but what of that portion of it which He has given me? Will it not some day get exhausted and leave me stranded?"

To such a one the Bible says that grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. What is the measure of Christ's gift? The measure of Christ's gift is all that God has. Christ "emptied" the ocean of God's grace and poured it on us. He gave all. He left nothing back. The grace given will never, never be all used up.

All the oceans in the world may have all their water used up, but not the grace of God that has been given to us. All the air may be used up, but there will always be grace for us. Have you ever thought of the day when God's power will be totally used up so that He becomes powerless? Such a day will never come, but even if it were possible for such a day to come, His grace given to us would continue endlessly beyond that day.

You may then say, "Oh, now I see, God has given grace to the church according to the measure of Christ's gift which is limitless. But that is for those who love Him in a way that I am not able to love Him. It is for the special class of:apostles

prophets

evangelists

pastors

teachers,

all the very special believers with great gifts, great zeal, great victory, etc. Can it be for a simple believer like me?”

To that question the Bible says, “But grace was given to EACH OF US according to the measure of Christ’s gift” (Ephesians 4:7).

“Each of us” means that all who are believers are included without any discrimination whatsoever. To qualify for the totality of the grace of God and to have the full measure of grace given to someone, the person must belong to Jesus Christ. In addition, he must possess the following qualifications to supplement his basic qualification of belonging to the Lord:

0% good works

0% personal righteousness

0% zeal

0% prayer life

0% Bible study life

0% evangelistic life

0% in every other unmentioned good activity.

Do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that the things listed above are not good. They have their proper place in the Christian life. I am however insisting that the person who does them does not by doing them have more grace than the one who foolishly does not do them.

God has not given us something like a basin of grace that is not filled to the brim and then asked us to fill it with these things. If that were done, it would not increase our quantity of grace; for these things can never be converted to grace. In fact, sometimes they stand in the way of grace; for they prevent us from seeing what has been given to us, and lead us into some striving in the energy of the flesh.

You, the simplest believer in the Lord Jesus, have been given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. You have the grace of God in the totality of its

width,

length,

height and

depth.

You have the full measure of all the grace that is available. You are rich in grace. You are abundantly rich in grace. You are exceedingly abundantly rich in grace. It flowed to you. It is like an inexhaustible fountain. How wonderful! It is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in His eyes and in our eyes too. Glory be to His Name!

THE EXCEEDING GREATNESS OF GRACE (GRACE IN SPITE OF LIMITATION)

Many good and even great things cannot stand limitation. Many great men have collapsed under limitations. Many great men have kept going and going but in the face of some limitation, they have become totally broken and their vision destroyed. The apostle Paul had a great call. He was committed to the vision. However, at some point he was imprisoned. It seemed as if the vision was imprisoned. Was he discouraged? No. He was imprisoned but the gospel was not imprisoned. The gospel cannot be imprisoned. God's grace has made great possibilities for the glorious gospel, so much so that it cannot be imprisoned.

One man said, "We must ban the Holy Spirit. He is causing too much confusion." So he arranged and had his government ban some work in which this "man" the Holy Spirit was truly present, and hoped that that was the end of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit has kept moving, changing lives and doing His normal work. This is God's grace at work. His grace ensures that the work of His Holy Spirit, whether it be behind the iron-curtains or bamboo-curtains, keeps going.

The church in China had great limitations when the communists arrested the faithful leaders and “banned” meetings of the lovers of the Lord, yet by the grace of God, the church that has gone through persecution and continued in spite of the communists{MISSING SYMBOL} limitations, is a stronger and larger church than the one that was “banned.”

The work that is truly God’s work cannot be limited by circumstances, men, governments, the wickedness of the enemies of God, religious denominations or by the Pharisees and Sadducees of the twentieth century. These will try very hard. They will separately and unitedly wage war against the Lord’s work, but because God cannot be limited, they can ultimately not limit His work. His grace ensures that His work keeps going. Sometimes we may feel that the Holy Spirit has been so limited that He has been put out of job by the wickedness of the world and the failure of the church. This can never be. He is Lord. He keeps going. He cannot be limited. There may appear to be many limitations, but He always has His way.

You may say, “Well, that is good for the overall purposes of God, but what of me as an individual? What of the work that God has given me to do for Him? Can it not be limited by men, the devil, etc., so that it is entirely frustrated?” We answer with an emphatic ‘No’!

The apostle Paul knew so many such limitations and obstacles. He said, “For a wide door for effective work has opened to me and there are many adversaries” (1 Corinthians 16:9). What happened with this situation? Were the adversaries removed or did he fail to do the effective work that was before him? The adversaries remained but he received grace to accomplish the work in the face of many adversaries. Grace triumphed.

In another situation, a thorn was given Paul in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass him and to keep him from being too elated. This thorn in the flesh was not from the Lord. It was from the Enemy. It was a messenger of the wicked one. Its

purpose was to harass Paul. The wicked one meant that this thorn in the flesh should harass him and limit his ministry. That was the goal in view.

One would have thought that because this was a messenger of Satan, and the Son of God had appeared to undo all the works of Satan, that God would immediately take this thorn in the flesh of a beloved servant as a personal insult and deal with it immediately, taking it away and saving His servant from its harassment. God did not act that way. The apostle prayed three times that the Lord should take away that thorn. Although he was an apostle and although he prayed three times, God did not act in the way that he had thought and asked. He refused to remove the thorn, but He did something that was far greater than removing the thorn. He spoke to him and said, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” So the thorn remained, but the apostle was not limited. The apostle was weak, weakened by the thorn, but he was not limited. God’s grace became his sufficiency.

If he had been strong, he might have been tempted to depend, even if only to a small extent, on his strength. Now God allowed the messenger of Satan to take that away. The result is that he now depended absolutely on God’s grace. He came to the end of himself and then the grace of God overabounded.

God said to him, “My power is made perfect in weakness.” So, when a person is strong, there is little room for the power of God; but when a person is really weak, then God’s power is manifested in its perfection. This is not because God withholds power from anyone, but because those who think that they are strong do not rely wholly on the Lord, and therefore they do not see His power manifested in its totality.

Paul was led to see that God works in the following ways:-

He gives a great work to be done for Him.

He allows limitations to come the way of His servant.

The servant cries out that the Lord should take away the limitations.

The Lord refuses to take away the limitations but makes His grace sufficient for the servant.

As the servant, faced with limitations, depends on God's grace, he finds to his delight that God's power has been made perfect for him in his weakness.

He rejoices in his weakness. In fact, Paul said, "I am content with:

Weaknesses

Insults

Hardships

Persecutions

Calamities.”

Why was he content with these limitations which were messengers of Satan? Why was he content with what could limit and destroy his ministry? This was because when he was weak then he became strong with the power of the Lord.

Strengthened therefore by the power of the Lord, he went ahead and accomplished the work that God had given him. So, his limitations did not destroy his ministry. They enhanced it by making him more humble and more dependent on the Lord. So he accomplished his ministry, and the limitations had brought him two bonuses:-

Extra dependence on the Lord

Humility.

How is it with you? Let me confess that I have had limitations. I have had many messengers of Satan sent my way. I have had a great call from the Lord but I have also had great handicaps. Sometimes those from whom I expected encouragement purposefully stood against me and did everything to destroy what the Lord had given me to do. At one point I was near despair. Everything in me seemed broken. I could not find comfort anywhere. The work of many years seemed at the brink of ruin through the cunning of men who laid one barrier after another in my way. It seemed as if there was nothing I could do to continue the work which God had given me and for which I had fasted and prayed for about fifteen years. I left the country and went to another place so that I could more clearly hear what God was saying to me. There, away from the work God had given me, the Lord said to me, “I have given you a work to do for Me. It is My work. I am in it. You have limitations, great limitations sent your way by the Enemy. It does not matter whom he has used, but nevertheless the limitations are

there. You have fought against the limitations violently in your heart. I allowed the limitations. Accept them. They will not hinder the work I have given you to do for Me. I want you to be more dependent on Me; to lean more on Me. I will make you more able. I will strengthen you. I will enable you to accomplish all that I purposed for you, but it will be victory through limitations. It will be my victory and there will be no limits to it.”

Those words from the Lord met my need. His hand reached out to me. My fighting stopped. My bitterness melted and in a new way, love flowed from my heart to all those whom the wicked one had used to put limitations in my way.

My prayer to the Lord is that He should enable me never to forget this basic lesson: that God uses all the limitations placed my way for blessing. I know there will be more limitations in future: more handicaps, more apposition, more difficulties, more curtailment, but by His grace I will look up to Him, and in my weakness I will trust Him for power to still do all that He has called me to do for Him. His grace will be made perfect in my own weakness too.

So my greatest need is not more doors without opposition. I ask Him for doors for ministry and should all of hell rage, should all my weaknesses fight against the desires of my inner man, etc., I will yet go on with the Lord and count on His grace and on His grace alone.

So grace could not be weakened by limitations. Grace could not be limited by weakness. Rather, grace was given room for maximum usefulness in such circumstances.

How is it with you, my brother and sister?

Have you come to the end of yourself?

- Are you surrounded with difficulties on your right hand and on the left?

Are you overwhelmed with a sense of failure and defeat?

- Do you find obstacles coming up everyday from unexpected sources?

- Are you facing an obstacle that threatens to bring your entire work for the Lord to bits?

- Do you think that you must give up everything now because all of it has failed?

- Do you feel betrayed by the one you thought would be most faithful and understanding?

Do you see nothing else but failure, criticism and blackmail?

Listen, you are not alone. The apostle Paul had such experiences. He said, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way; but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down; but not destroyed” (11 Corinthians 4:7-9).

Your body is an earthen vessel. Many things around are earthen vessels. But the power at work is God's power. That power is made more available by grace to those who with Paul accept their weaknesses and limitations so that the power of God may be made perfect for them in their weakness. The exceeding greatness of God's grace makes it possible for you to enter into new areas of service and victory at points where, because of limitations, all ought to have come to an end. But transcendent power belongs to God, and this power is, by grace, made available without limit to all who will accept weakness, that they may be strong.

So, it was grace in the beginning.

Then grace appointed us for service.

Grace ensured that all that we needed for ministry was available in full measure; and when we faced limitations, grace gave us the victory by making the power of God available to us in our weakness.

Yes, our God is the God of grace and our Saviour is the Lord of Grace and, the Holy Spirit is made available to carry out all their desires in us by grace.

What a privilege we have! What certainty ours is! I feel like shouting with Paul and saying to the Lord of Grace, "To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

I also feel like singing with the Hymn writer:

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound!

That saved a wretch like me;

I once was lost, but now am found;

Was blind, but now I see.

‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,

And grace my fears relieved;

How precious did that grace appear

The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares,

I have already come;

‘Tis grace that brought me safe thus far,

And grace will lead me home.

Yes, when this heart and flesh shall fail,

And mortal life shall cease.

I shall possess within the veil,

A life of joy and peace.

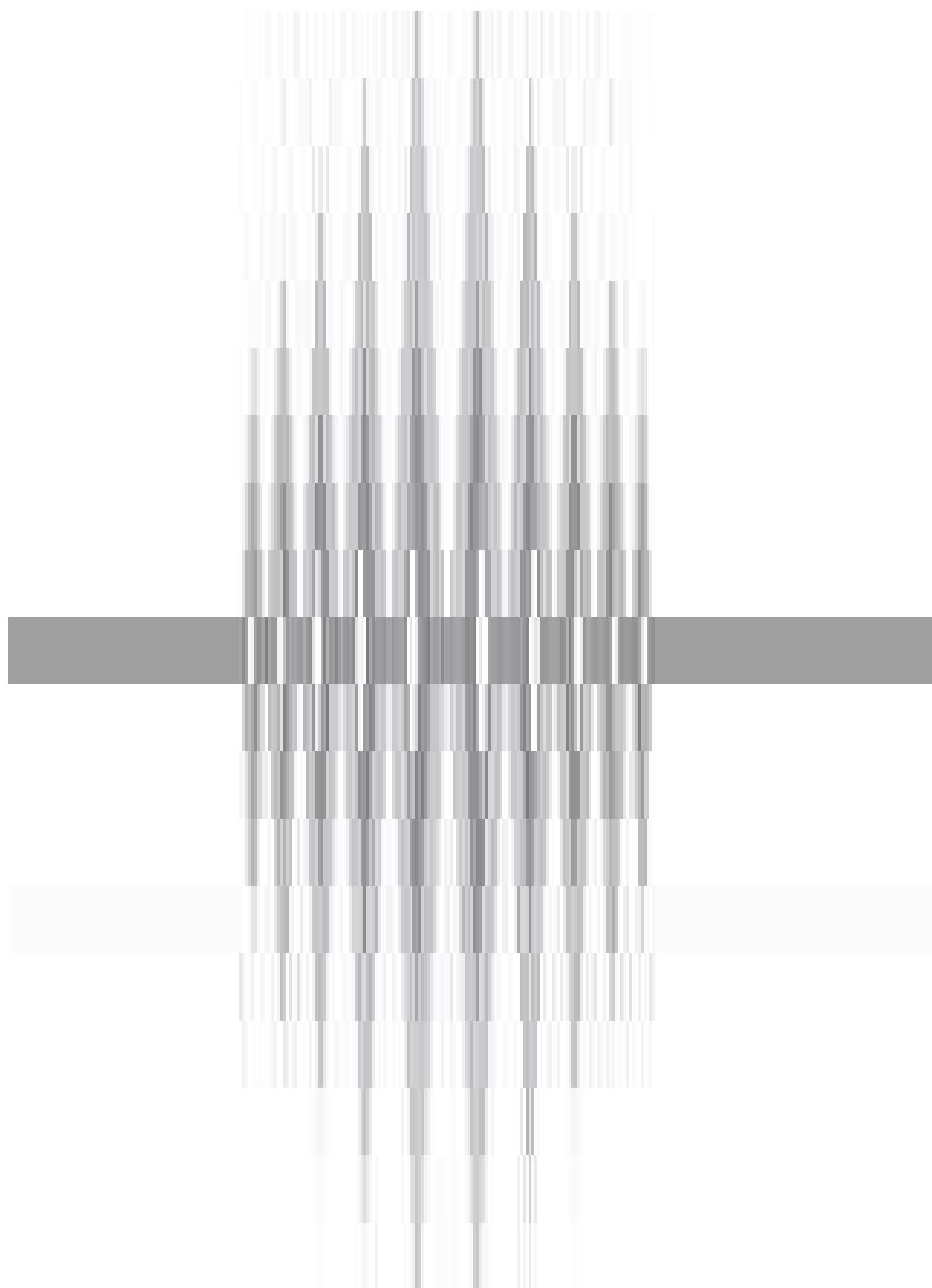
When we’ve been there ten thousand years,

*Bright, shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's grace
Than when we first began.*

(S. S & S N° 894)

Praise the Lord!

Chapter 3



GOD'S WONDERFUL PLAN FOR YOU

There are some of God's children who have been tricked into thinking that God has the worst in store for them. They expect the worst to happen to them in this life, and they are without confidence as they face the future. They think about God's will for their lives and they are thoroughly frightened. They cannot enjoy the present with God because they expect the worst to come in the future. They cannot really believe that God loves them. They love Him in an active sense, but they think of Him as an old wicked Being who is looking around to see where they have fallen so that He may punish them.

Let me assure you most certainly that God is not like that. He is the God of love. He is all-loving. The Bible says that He is love. A loving Father can only have a wonderful plan for the life of the child He loves. You are that child. God loves you. He loves you in an unchanging way. His love does not alter when your own love for Him falters!

One hymn writer put His love this way:-

*“Mine is an unchanging love,
Higher than the heights above;
Deeper than the depths beneath,
Free and faithful, strong as death.”*

About His plans for your life, His eternal Word says:

“For I know the plans have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me; when you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

“I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go, I will counsel you with my eye upon you” (Psalm 32:8).

“The Lord will fulfil his purpose for me; thy steadfast love, O Lord, endures for ever. Do not forsake the work of thy hands” (Psalm 138:8).

“We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren... What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, ‘For thy sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered’” (Romans 8:28-36).

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:37-39).

THE BASIS ON WHICH GOD WORKS

God does not work on the basis of His feelings although His feelings are perfect. Even if He were to work on the basis of His feelings, all that He did would be consistent, because His feelings are consistent with His being. He works on the basis of His knowledge. Thus, He says, “I know the plans I have for you....” So God works on facts.

THE BASIS ON WHICH WE ENJOY GOD’S PROMISES

Many believers are governed by their feelings. This ought not to be so. We are to be governed by God’s facts, irrespective of our feelings. The apostle says, ‘We know....’ He did not say, “We feel.” As we go on, we must move, not by our feelings, but by our knowledge of God’s facts. This means that we shall uphold what God says, irrespective of what we experience or feel. Our experience could go wrong as well as our feelings, but His Word is infallible.

GOD’S GREAT WORK ON YOUR BEHALF

The Bible says, “In everything God works for good with those who love him; who are called according to his purpose.”

Look, it says that God works in everything for good. When the Word of God says, “everything” it means it. What is included in the everything? It includes:-

What you think is good,

What you think will lead to good,

What you think is a mistake,

What you think is bad,

What you think is very bad,

Etc.

Yes, in everything God works for good. It may be the plan of wicked men. It may be something done by our enemy to frustrate us. It may be meant to do us great harm. The purpose on man's part may be deeply wicked, but God says that in all these things He will work for good. This gives a beautiful colour, shape, content to even the greatest tragedies in life. The worst disappointment becomes His appointment. Do you then see that there is no reason to quarrel with people and be bitter with them for what they have done or are planning to do? Do you see the hand of God in everything? Do you see why you should be calm and restful in the midst of all the evil and tragedies of life?

God will work for good in every one of the situations that come your way. Relax. Smile in the face of your present difficulties. God has already taken them into His hands and He is already working out for your good.

The Bible does not say that in everything man works for good. No! If it were left for man to work things out, there would certainly be problems. Things would fail for the following reasons:-

He may have good intentions, but lack power and ability to carry out his intentions. God has no such problems.

He may have good intentions which are later on distorted by his sin-nature. Again, God has no such problem.

He may be mistaken in his judgment. Again, God has no such problem.

Etc.

God has the good will. He has made good plans for you. In all that comes your way He will work for good. In the darkest night, you must not doubt this truth.

The question immediately arises, “Does God work this out for all human beings, or does He work it out for only a select few?” The Bible says that all who love Him and are called according to His purpose are those for whom He works in this way. Does that include you? If you are truly His son, then you are included. The Bible says that His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He has given us. All who are His love Him, if you are His, you love Him. I am not saying that you love perfectly, but I am sure that that day when He first made you His, He put into you the power to love Him.

You may be saying, “O, my love for Him is so weak and faint, can I be included?” I assure you that even those who love him in a weak and faint way are included. One of the lovers of the Lord expressed it this way:

“Lord, it is my chief complaint

That my love is weak and faint;

Yet, I love Thee and adore;

Oh, for grace to love Thee more!”

Yes, your love is weak and faint. He will give you grace to love Him more. He will not disqualify you. He has not disqualified you.

Those who love Him are those who are called according to His purpose. As we already saw, all that pertains to your election, call, justification, etc., is His work.

He foreknew you.

He predestined you.

He called you.

He justified you.

He glorified you.

You did not call yourself. If you had called yourself, then you might have called yourself according to your own purpose or some other purpose that is not His. However, it was He who called you. He called you according to His purpose. So you are one of those who are called according to His purpose, for whom in everything He will work for your good. You are in very safe hands. There is no reason for the slightest worry.

GOD'S WILL AFTER WHICH HE WORKS

God has a will for you and He will work out that will. He will also work out in everything to ensure that that will is accomplished. That will is that good for which He works in everything.

You will immediately ask, "What is that master will?" Let me, first of all, tell you what it is not.

It is not that you should be comfortable, good as this may be.

It is not that you should be happy, although happiness is a

blessing from Him.

It is not that you should have a lot of money, although He

sometimes gives much money to some who love Him to keep

for Him.

It is not that you should be important, although He has raised

some to positions of importance before men.

It is not that you should not be humiliated, for He often

humbles.

It is not that you should not be persecuted, for He allows that.

It is not that you should not fail your examinations, for if you did

not work hard, He would allow you to fail.

It is not that your ministry should be approved of men, for He

will allow it to be disapproved often in order to keep you

humble

before Him.

It is not the one thousand and one petty things that we cling to

or hold very dear, and therefore expect Him to side with us.

His master will is that you should be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He (Jesus) may be the first of many brethren.

So, God will work out in everything for good, so that you conform to the image of His Son. This is God's highest purpose for you. I dare to say that that is God's one purpose for you - that you may conform to the image of His Son.

You may suffer the loss of all things, but provided that in this loss God works out to make you more like Christ, then He has worked out for good. The same applies to when you are

persecuted,

despised,

insulted,

maltreated and

contradicted.

It will apply when your loved one is taken away; for you will learn to love the Beloved, Jesus Christ, who cannot be taken away from you. It will also apply when your property is stolen, seized, destroyed; for in it all you will learn to be like the Lord who had no place to lay His head and who laid no treasures on earth.

If you make mistakes and even fail, He will still work through this to make you meek; for He Himself is meek and lowly of heart, and the proud of heart cannot fellowship with Him.

So, given every situation, He is able to work out in it so that Christlikeness be produced in you.

This means that every situation becomes an occasion for thanksgiving, and His Word commands, "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (I Thessalonians 5:18). You may ask, "How can I give thanks in the midst of a horrible accident?" Give thanks even in that situation, first of all, as an act of obedience. God commands thanksgiving in all circumstances. To fail to do so would be to disobey Him. Secondly, give thanks because the accident is not in control. The devil is not in control. The parties involved in the accident are not in control. God is in control. He will work out everything for good; so that for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose, they will become Christ-like through that situation.

You may ask another question, "How can I thank God for a situation which has been initiated by the devil and God's name has been dragged down? How can I give thanks when the devil has triumphed?" I want to say that God must love His name and His glory more than you do. Forget about His glory. Obey Him. He will work out for good for you, and for the glory of His name.

GOD'S VIEW - LONG RANGE AND COMPLETE

When things are viewed from a short range; from the immediate consequences, it may often be difficult to see what good will come out of them. However, God does not view things that way. He looks at the total picture all at once, and ensures that in everything, He works for good with those who love Him.

When Joseph was sold into Egypt, it must have been difficult to see that this was for his good. When he was further thrown into prison for refusing to commit adultery with Potiphar's wife, it seemed as if the worst was truly working out for him; but when God took him from prison and made him the Prime Minister of Egypt, God's purpose in all the thirteen years of suffering and trial was revealed to man. But, He had that purpose in mind and in view long before Joseph was born. He had set out to carry out that purpose. Although Joseph's brothers allowed the devil to use them and although Potiphar's Wife was also

used by the wicked one, God's purpose for Joseph was not destroyed. He could later on tell his brothers,

“And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God; and he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt” (Genesis 45:7-8). He further added,

“Fear not, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me; BUT GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today” (Genesis 50:19-20).

Do you see something great there? His brothers meant evil against him, but God meant it for good. That which was meant to be for evil was taken over by God and, without changing their evil intentions, He meant it for good and worked out for good, and God won. He always wins. There was conflict in purpose, but God's purpose stood.

“The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord” (Proverbs 21:31)

“No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel, can avail against the Lord” (Proverbs 21:30).

Do you now see what your attitude should be? It should be one of rest in the will and in the hands of God. Stop saying that the devil has done this and that. You are not in the hands of the devil. You are in God's hands, and He knows what He is doing. Do not by fearing begin to seek help from the wrong places, for the

Bible says:

“Woe to the rebellious children,” says the Lord, “Who carry out a plan, but not mine; and who make a league, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who set out to go down to Egypt, without asking for my counsel, to take refuge in the protection of Pharaoh, and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame, and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt to your humiliation” (Isaiah 30:1-3).

The Lord continues to speak in this direction, saying

“Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy one of Israel or consult the Lord! And yet he is wise and brings disaster, he does not call back his words, but will arise against the house of the evil-doers, and against the helpers of those who work iniquity. The Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall, and they will all perish together” (Isaiah 31:1-3).

Do you hear what the Lord is saying? He is saying that it is sin to turn to the world and turn to worldly methods to find solutions to problems that may arise as God works out His will for you. If instead of waiting on Him, you fret and turn to the world, or turn to worldly methods in order to try and help Him, He will stand fast against you. Egypt is symbolic of the world. All that the world has and all that it offers is flesh and not spirit. It may look very promising for now, but have you looked at it over the whole range, including eternity? Therefore the Lord calls you to trust in Him. He puts it in the following words:

“For thus the Lord said to me, ‘As a lion or a young lion growls over his prey,

and when a hand of shepherds is called forth against him is not terrified by their shouting or daunted at their noise, so the Lord of hosts will come down to fight upon Mount Zion and upon its hill. Like birds hovering, so the Lord of hosts will protect Jerusalem; He will protect and deliver it, He will spare and rescue it” (Isaiah 31:4-5).

Rest in the Lord. Trust Him. Do not be terrified by the noises and all that the world around you is saying. The Lord will come down. The Lord has already come down. He will protect you. He is already protecting you . He will spare you and rescue you. Even at this very moment, He has already set out to rescue you. Rejoice in Him and praise Him.

WHEN GOD TAKES SIDES

There are ultimately only two sides - God’s side and the devil’s side. God always takes sides with Himself. There is no third side. Either we are on God’s side or we are on the wicked one’s side. Jesus said, “He who is not for me is against me and he who does not gather with me scatters.” Neutrality is totally excluded.

Those who are in Christ Jesus have taken God’s side, for He Himself put them into Christ. The Bible says, “He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus.” Because we have been made a part of Him, when He takes His side, which He always does, He has also taken our side. Therefore God is for us.

The apostle asks, “If God is for us, who is against us?” Because we know for certain that God is for us we say, “God is for us, who is against us?” If one were just to ask, “Who is against us?” There would be many replies that are correct:

Demons

Principalities

Powers

This person

That person

This and that system

organization

tribe

denomination

etc.

However, although all these people and all these systems are against us, the

whole scene changes when it is obvious that God is for us. Consider it like things being weighed on the balance. All these things are as light as feathers. They are many and they are put on one side of the balance. As long as there is nothing weighty on the other side, the balance swings in their favour. Let God be represented by a bottle of lead. Immediately the lead is put on the balance, it weighs so heavily that it wins the day. God always wins.

Let us look at it differently. Let all that is against us be represented by one million village men who are prepared for war. They each have a sharp wooden spear, and they are very furious and are all ready to fight and win. If a simple you went up against these people, you would surely be defeated. You would surely be destroyed.

Let God be represented by a pilot flying a B-52 bomber plane. It is loaded with tons and tons of destructive bombs. You are with Him. He invites you into the plane with Him and promotes you to the rank of co-pilot. Then He says to you, "Let us go and fight your enemies together." You go off together and in one swift raid, all the one million village fighters with their wooden spears are eliminated. There was hardly a fight; the enemy was just wiped off.

We again ask, "Who is against you?" The answer is, 'Nobody.' What if you were again told that there was another village made up of five million fighters, and that they used metallic spears? Would you panic this time?

It would depend on whether or not you were going to battle alone, or with some people like yourself, or you were going to war with the B-52 bomber pilot. If you are going alone or with people like you, you are in serious trouble. If you are going with Him, you can relax and even encourage the enemy to double or triple their numbers. Victory is guaranteed for you.

God is for us. God is for you. He will fight for you. Never forget that. Let the enemy roar. Let him increase in strength. That will not change anything. Of the power of the God who is fighting with you and for you, even the pagan king Nebuchadnezzar said:

“His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing; and he does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What doest thou?’” (Daniel 4:34-35).

His power is so great that the prophet Micah allows us to have a glimpse of it in the following words:

“For behold, the Lord is coming forth out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains will melt under him and the valleys will be cleft like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place” (Micah 1:3-4).

Would you not feel at ease when a God so powerful is on your side?

GOD TAKES SIDES TO BLESS

We have briefly looked at the fact of God taking sides with the believer against his enemies. There are, however, other reasons why God takes sides with His children. He takes sides with His children to bless them. The apostle Paul asks the following questions:

If God did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, can He then, after giving His Son withhold anything from us? Can He, after He has given us the greatest treasure of heaven - the Lord Jesus - refuse to give us all the other things that are in any way inferior to Christ? The answer is NO! He will not withhold anything. He will give us all things with Christ.

I am blessed as I look at two alls in the apostle's writing. He says that God gave Christ up for us all. He also says that God will give us all things with Him. This means that no child of God need withdraw and say that all these blessings are not for him. Are you a weak disciple? Have you failed? Are you discouraged? Has the enemy told you that you no longer have any part in the Father? Forget all that he has been saying. God gave Christ up for all of us. God gave Christ up for you. You were included. You are included.

Christ is God's all-inclusive gift. God has put all that we need into Him and given Him to us. When we have Him, we have all that we need. The Hymn writer grasped the Truth of Him and wrote:-

Just as I am - poor, wretched, blind,

Sight, riches, healing of the mind,

Yea, all I need, in thee to find;

O Lamb of God, I come! I come!

But this applies, not only to spiritual needs, but to all the other needs of our lives - practical needs. God will not withhold these from us either. The Lord Jesus said, “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all, but seek first His Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well” (Matthew 6:31-33).

The apostle Paul adds, “Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6).

THE GOD WHO WILL NOT ACCUSE HIS CHILDREN

Many of God’s children live in fear. They somehow feel that God will condemn them at the last day and, as such, they will be lost. As a result of this, they try to do many things in the energy of the flesh to please the Lord. This again leads to less and less satisfaction. To all such believers, we say, “You are accepted. God will not accuse you. He will not deny you.”

So the apostle Paul asks an important question: “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect?” Of course, the devil and all his agents and, sadly enough, some believers act as his agents in accusing God’s elect. However, the accusations bear zero weight. Only two people can bring a charge against God’s elect and that charge will bear weight before God. These two are God the Father and the Lord Jesus. So the questions go:

Can God condemn? Can God bring a charge against them? The answer is, ‘No.’

God has justified you in Christ Jesus. He justified you when you were yet without hope. Now that you are His child, will He Condemn you? The answer is an emphatic 'No' If the one who justified and who justifies, were to turn and condemn the very ones whom He justified, there would be total confusion. So God will not condemn you.

Can Christ who died for the elect turn and condemn them? The answer is again a big 'NO' He died for us while we were yet without hope. He died for us while we were yet totally against Him. Can He who did that for us while we were yet His enemies point to us now that we are His friends and say to the Father, "My Father, condemn them"? No! He cannot do that. He will not do it. You are safe and saved if you are His.

Can Christ, who took us with Him in His resurrection, condemn us? Jesus did not only die for us. Even while we were yet carried away in the futility of our minds, He included us in His resurrection.

By including us in His resurrection, the Lord Jesus was saying to God, "I do not only seek their forgiveness. I do not only desire their justification. I want them to share my resurrection life with me. I want many brethren like me." Do you hear that?

Jesus said to His Father even while you were lost in sin, "I want this one to share my resurrection life with me." Having said that, how can He again turn and say, "Father separate this one from me for ever?" Christ cannot do that. He will not do it. You are safe in His hands.

Can Christ, who is on the throne and who took us with Him to the throne and made us sit with Him on the throne, turn and say, "I do not want these ones with Me on the throne. They are so bad that I must have them leave the throne and

perish eternally”? Christ cannot do that. He has made you, along with the other saints, heirs of God and co-heirs with Him. He will not reject you. He has accepted you in a final way. I repeat, “You are accepted.” Praise the Lord!

Can Christ, whose main work at God’s right hand is intercession for you, turn and condemn you? In His office as the mighty Intercessor at the throne, day and night, the Lord is pleading with the Father on your behalf. When you fall into sin, He pleads and stands in the gap before God on your behalf. When your love is weak and faint; when you fail the Father in one way or the other, for example, when your prayer life or your witnessing life is weak, or you fail in love for God, the brethren and those outside of Christ, He pleads with the Father, interceding with sighs and tears. After doing all that for you, can He turn and condemn you? The emphatic answer and the testimony of all Scripture is: ‘NO!’ He will never do that. You are safe. You are saved. Glory be to Him!

THE SECURE LOVE OF CHRIST

I CAN HEAR SOMEONE SAYING, “The Father will not condemn me. I am sure of that. The Lord Jesus will not disown me. I am sure of that too, but there are other things that may separate me from the Lord Jesus and from His love. Difficult circumstances are coming. I may not keep it right to the end. I may be overcome and be separated from the love of God in Christ Jesus.”

The apostle Paul has an answer for you: He asks, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” He makes a list of possibilities:

Tribulation (trouble)

Distress (hardship)

Persecution

Famine (no food)

Nakedness (nothing to wear)

Peril (danger)

Sword.

Then he answers “NO!” and then he adds something sweet. He acknowledges that these things will try to separate us from the love of Christ. There will be conflict. There will be a struggle, but because God is on the believer’s side, he will not be overcome by these things so as to be separated from the love of God.

In a conflict in which the believer is not overcome, the following possibilities are open:-

He barely survives.

He moderately wins.

He conquers.

The third possibility of conquering seems wonderful, but to the apostle, that is not good enough. He sees the believer in a super class:-

4. He is more than a conqueror.

Yes, you are more than a conqueror. You enter into the conflict and you come out with victories too good for the conqueror. That is God's doing and He does it in Christ.

That is why 'we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.' Do you remember our previous illustration? The one million village fighters with their wooden spears could not do any harm to the inexperienced, unarmed fighter who was sitting by the expert B-52 bomber pilot. The pilot came through with astounding victory, and so did the co-pilot, and the co-pilot is you!

The apostle Paul is not speculating in saying these things. They are God's unchanging facts; so he adds more words of certainty. He says, "I am persuaded (I am convinced) that the following additional things will not be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. That is for you my discouraged saint. The additional list includes:-

Death

Life

Angels

Principalities (Heavenly rulers on the enemy's side)

Powers

Things present

Things to come

Heights

Depth

Anything else in all creation,

will not be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. In this list, everything has been included. The devil has been included in it, and you have been included in it. So neither you nor the devil, nor any other creature, will separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

In conclusion, we say that God had a master plan for you to conform to the glorious image of the Lord Jesus. He worked out in you and enabled you to respond to Him. He is working out that plan and He will not rest until it is perfected and accomplished in you. He will surely do it. You have been put into Him and you are safe in Him. Glory be to His name!

What does this mean for you? It means, amongst many things, that you cease from your carnal struggles and rest in Him. He began the good work in you . He will bring it to perfection. He began. He is at work. He will complete it all.

Therefore there must be no room for discouragement on your part.

Be humble

There must be no room for worry. Relax.

There must be no room for misery. Rejoice.

There must be no room for frustration,

despair,

looking back,

introspection,

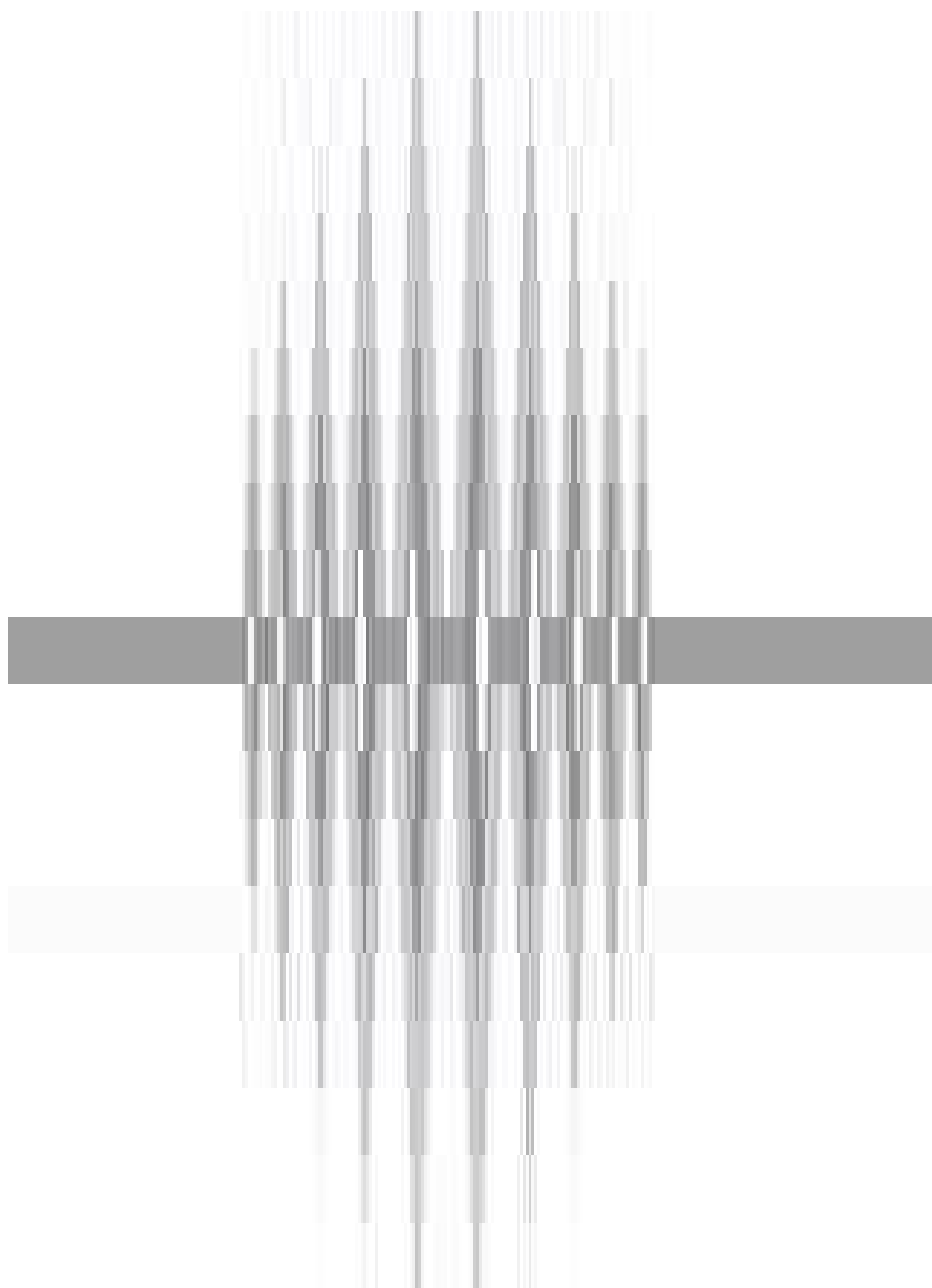
self-blaming,

etc.

There is room for looking unto Jesus - the Author and Finisher of your faith.
Follow Him. Love Him. Obey Him and you will be truly blessed.

Amen.

Chapter 4



TO THE BACKSLIDER, A MESSAGE OF LOVE AND RESTORATION

There are many believers who are backslidden. Some of those who are in this condition know that they are backslidden and they long for the days long past when they had sweet communion with the Lord. There are others who are backslidden but do not know it. They are blind to their actual condition. This message is for those who are backslidden and are miserable in that condition. They sigh and wish things could be different. I write to people who with the hymn writer cry inwardly, saying:

Oh for a closer walk with God,

A calm and heavenly frame;

A light to shine upon the road,

That leads me to the Lamb!

Where is the blessedness I knew

When first I saw the Lord?

Where is the soul-refreshing view

Of Jesus and His Word?

What peaceful hours I once enjoyed -

How sweet their memory still!

But they have left an aching void

The world can never fill.

(S.S. & S. N° 583)

Before we go ahead to look at our subject more closely, let us read from the Word.

“After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the sea of Tiberias; and he revealed himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twain, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat; but that night they caught nothing.

Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, “Children, have you any fish?” They answered him, “No.” He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, for the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his clothes, for he was stripped for work, and sprang into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish lying on it, and bread. Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish..... When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love

me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” A second time he said to him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?”... And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go.” (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God). After this he said to him, “Follow me.”

Peter turned and saw following them the disciple whom Jesus loved, who had lain close to his breast at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?” When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about this man?” Jesus said to him. “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!” (John 21:1-22).

THE EVIDENCE OF BACKSLIDING

At the point at which we meet Peter and six of the other disciples in this passage, they were obviously backslidden. At the beginning of their relationship with the Lord, He had said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men,” and they had “immediately left their nets and followed him” (Matthew 4:19-20). The sons of Zebedee had received a similar call to that of the sons of John and they too had immediately left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed Him.

It was understood then that whatever were their former careers, these had been brought to an end by that call, and that this bringing to an end was once and for all and was total. They were to become fishers of men for the rest of their lives. The Lord then set out to train and prepare them for their new career.

They had spent three wonderful years with Him as He trained them. They had seen His power and authority and had even effectively used that power and authority. He had given them Himself and written their names in heaven. The whole future of His work was depended on them. He had told them about His death and resurrection and had expected them to be faithful to Him.

Now, He was no longer there and instead of continuing to watch and pray, Peter their leader had opted for fishing. He opted to go back to that from which the Lord had called him; he decided to re-open a chapter that the Lord had already closed for him. He was saying, "I am sure about fishing. I am not certain where the hazardous journey with the absent Jesus will lead to. Let me go to that about which I have certainty." And he went and off with him went the other disciples, as if to say, "We have been waiting for you to take that decision for yourself and for us all, all this time. It is good that you have now taken it."

A believer backslides when he takes a step backward from obeying the Lord, from following Him and from serving Him. He is backslidden when he decides that he will go on with Jesus but on his own conditions; that he will pay the price of discipleship only partially, whereas before he had decided to pay it fully. He backslides when he looks at other believers and says, "These ones are not doing all the things that I am doing for the Lord, yet they seem to be enjoying their lives in Him. Why must I be the only one to suffer so much? I will come down to their level and then I will free myself of the extra suffering that maintaining such a close walk with the Lord and serving Him in such a determined way has brought to me."

A believer backslides when he decides that he will go back to some old ways, old habits, old sins that he had abandoned in the past. He may decide to go back to some aspects of these ways and these sins that seem "permissible" but all the same there has been a going back. He backslides the moment when after a long struggle he says, "I have resisted this temptation long enough. God knows that I have tried my best, but from now on, I will not struggle for victory any more.

Next time the temptation comes, I will let things take the course that they want.”
Such a person has backslidden.

A person backslides when he re-adjusts his finances and decides to give less to the Lord. Before, he gave much but now he says, “I will do as others are doing. I must dress well again, I must provide for myself as I did before. I must not destroy myself by sacrificing for His work. After all, am I the only believer? I will just give my ten per cent instead of the twenty-five per cent that I gave in the past. If every believer gives ten per cent, all the needs of the assembly will be met. Why should I give for the others? Let me buy myself some really fashionable wear. I will give myself a real treat and others will see that I am a Christian and still up to date. I will refurnish my house. There should be no difference between my house and that of other people of the world who are my rank. Aren’t we earning the same sums of money? I must not give the impression that a Christian lives below the standard.”

A person backslides when he says to himself, “Actually, I was too strict as a young believer. I took a very hard line of separation from the world. That was childishness. I will act mature. I will go and look for the friends I had in the world. I will tell them that there isn’t too much difference between us. I am still the same person that I was; only that I do not go to the same extent with things as I did in those old days. Let us go together again and just live as before again. Let us recall the good old days and laugh together; you will drink your beer and I will drink my soda. We have different tastes; but why should it separate us and destroy our togetherness? We will talk about our friends, families, etc. There is so much between us. Let us not be foolish and lose it all.”

A person backslides when he says, “As a young believer, I was afraid of going to this place and that place for fear that if I went there, I could fall into sin. I am stronger in the Lord. I will go there, but I believe I will manage to come out without actually committing sin.”

A person backslides when he asks, “What is wrong with this? Can’t I do it and yet continue in the faith?” He ought to have asked, “What is right with this? Will it affect my relationship with the Father positively or negatively? Is it ultimately of God or of the devil?”

A person backslides when he says, “Before I read my Bible every day. I witnessed every day; I prayed very often and I spent nights in prayer. I am becoming a fanatic. I am becoming a prisoner to Bible study, prayer, witnessing. I will just do things as the Spirit leads. If I do not feel like praying or doing any of these things, I will take it easy. After all I have Jesus.”

A person backslides when he decides that, “Before, I went to all the prayer meetings, teaching meetings, and evangelistic meetings of the local Assembly. Now, I will have liberty to go or to stay at home. The Lord understands. If I miss one talk, I can always copy from a brother or listen to the cassette. If not, well, the Lord can still talk to me. I can read my Bible at home. I can pray at home. God hears prayers that are prayed anywhere. Look, it is raining. Should I go to a meeting and be wet? Before, I thought that if I did not go to a meeting, I would be finished spiritually. Now, I know better than that.”

A person backslides when he decides to do things that can wait instead of things that cannot wait, whereas in the past he thought differently.

A person is backslidden when sin no longer shocks and hurts him as it did before; when the fire and zeal to reach out to the lost is gone; when he can go for a day without witnessing to anyone about the Lord and still feel comfortable; when he can go for long periods without leading someone to the Lord and not bother seriously about it. A person is backslidden when he finds no joy in prayer, witnessing, Bible reading and just does them out of duty and not out of love for the Lord. He does them coldly, without zeal and does not bother about the results. He is happier if the occasion does not present itself for these things, or if there is a good substitute for them that satisfies his flesh.

A person is backslidden when he finds the company of those who are walking close to the Lord irksome and enjoys the company of backslidden or worldly christians who have never entered into vital fellowship with the Lord.

LIFE IN A BACKSLIDDEN CONDITION

Peter and Andrew, James and John were very experienced fishermen. They had made their living on fishing until the Lord Jesus called them to come and follow Him. In their backslidden condition, they went to sea and made an effort to catch some fish, but it was futile. When the Lord asked them, "Have you caught any fish?" They were compelled by the facts to reply, "No." They had gone on their own, away from the Lord, to find joy and fulfilment in the things from which the Lord had called them, yet these very things - the joy of fishing, the catch of fish , etc., had let them down.

The experience of the disciples in the backslidden condition is typical of the experience of all who backslide. The joy that anyone thought he would find in going back to the world, in following the Lord from a distance, or in compromise, is just not there when the person has actually gone back. He may acquire money, fame, and prestige, but they will not satisfy. He may have more time, more clothes, more 'friends' but they will all fail to give the backslider deep and lasting meaning. He will find that whatever he had hoped to get out of the world has eluded him. There are no happy backsliders. Some backslider may pretend that life is good and things going on well without the deep commitment which they once knew and without that intimate fellowship with the Lord that was to them the source of overflowing life. However, pretence is not reality. The reality is that in the backslidden condition the heart knows an aching void which nothing else but the Lord Jesus in all His fulness can satisfy.

Twice-born people are created, not for relaxation, but for spiritual wrestling

along the pathway of the call of God. That is why the one who keeps struggling to obey the Lord and to serve Him, even when the flesh in him rebels totally, is yet happier in the struggle than the one who, by backsliding, has given up the struggle completely.

Permit me to ask you a personal question, “Are you backslidden? Are there things that you did in the past that satisfied the heart of the Lord which you have stopped doing? Is there some battle you once engaged in against the flesh, the world or the devil which you won through constant battling, but which you have decided to surrender to and stop battling? Were you once active in evangelism, but you were insulted or you saw no abiding fruit and so gave it up? Are you happier now that you hardly talk to anyone about the One who saved you?

Have you replaced something you did for the Lord at His command by something of your own making, and content yourself by saying that although you are not doing the things you did before, you are nevertheless serving the Lord? Have you left the thing that God called you to do for Him for something that satisfies your flesh? Do you not see that that is backsliding ?

If you are backslidden and you know the tragedy of your condition, there may yet be hope for you. The Lord wants you back. He says in His Word, “Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:6-7).

THE LOVING FRIEND OF BACKSLIDERS AND HIS MECHANISM OF RESTORATION

The disciples must have felt horrible as they found themselves back to the sea to

catch fish. They might have done everything to hide from the Lord Jesus. The one person they did not want to see in that condition was the Lord. Perhaps they thought that if He came there, He would give them up formally and finally. They did not expect Him. They did not want Him. A big gap had developed between them and Him.

If the Lord had abandoned them to their backsliding, it would have been fair. He could have said, "I called you, mere fishermen, and gave you the honour and the dignity of serving the King of kings. I wasted three years training you and giving Myself to you. I made you taste of My power and My glory in a very special way; yet this is all that I have out of it. You have proved that all you deserve is to be fishermen, and fishermen you shall be for the rest of your lives. I am completely disappointed in you and with you." However, He did not say these things and He did not act that way.

He did a number of things that reveal the graciousness of His character and the greatness of His person. I write them with prayer in my heart that God should perfect that which He had begun in me and make me as gracious as my Lord; for it is in situations like this that I fail the most.

First of all, the Lord went seeking the backslidden disciples. He could have said, "They have let Me down. They have gone back. They are not dependable. What use are they to Me? I will leave them alone. If some day they decide to come and seek Me, I will decide whether or not I am going to continue with them." He did not say this. He went looking for them. He was the Lord of glory. They were run-away disciples. Yet very early in the morning, just as day was breaking, He was there by the sea, to look for them. Do you get the point I am making? I am saying that the backslider should be sought. Those who are going on with the Lord should go and look for those who are backslidden. Those who are going on with the Lord should go and look for those who have fallen away from the Lord and from His body. If you know a brother or a sister who has backslidden in one area of his life with the Lord, do not close your eyes and go on as if nothing had happened. Go out and seek him out. On the other hand, if you are backslidden

and there is no one who has come to bring you back, I want to assure you that the One who went out looking for the backslidden apostles is also out looking for you. He says to you : “Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings” (Jeremiah 3:22 - KJV)

You can reply, saying : “Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God” (Jeremiah 3:22 - KJV)

The second thing that the Lord did was that He spoke to them. He spoke to them tenderly, lovingly. He said, “Children, have you any fish?” He called them children. He was calling them, “My children.” Have you backslidden? Maybe the wicked one tells you that because you have committed some sin, you are no longer God’s child. His love for you is unchanging. You feel very unworthy. You know you have broken His law. You have betrayed His trust. Like the prodigal son, you want to say to Him, “Father, I am not worthy to be called Your son. Make me one of Your hired servants.” But the Lord does not think of you that way. He says to you, “My child, My loving child, I love you.” He could have called them by names that very accurately described the type of people that they had proved to be. He could have used phrases like:

My half-hearted disciples,

My good-for-nothing followers,

My fish-minded people,

You fishermen,

You untrustworthy band of people,

You true children of fallen Adam,

You incorrigible lot, Etc.

But the wonder of His love is that He did not use any such words or phrases. Have others used them on you? Do not be bitter with them; for are these words not a true description of what you are? However, turn from man, even from the best of men. Turn to the Lord Jesus; and He says to you, "My child, I love you just as I loved you before you turned back and went away. My love has not changed. My love for you will never change."

Thirdly, He was concerned about their need at that moment. The Lord Jesus was not "super-spiritual," that is falsely spiritual. There was and there is nothing unreal in Him. The disciples were at sea. They were looking for fish. That was their current need. They were hungry physically. He did not say, "These people forsook Me for the sake of fish. I will not as much as mention the name fish." He did not talk to them about their sin in backsliding. He did not ask them to repent immediately before He could say another word to them. He did not ask them to throw the nets away, sink the boats and promise that they would never go back to fishing again. Rather, He was concerned with their need. When they confessed that they had no fish, He did not use that as a starting point of a sermon on the futility of backsliding. He did not preach. What they needed then was not a sermon. What they needed was love and fishes and He gave them both.

Have you gotten into deep trouble in your backsliding? Is someone saying to you, "You have got it. God has proved to you that your sin in hiding will be

exposed. You've got it. We told you that you were wrong, but you were stubborn. See what a mess you are in now. God has kept His word. You are an example to other secret sinners"?

I was very touched while in Uganda. One of the leaders of the Christian Union, a girl of outstanding spirituality offered to take care of a baby, born during the examination. This Christian girl normally did not compromise with sin or sinful conduct; and although the unwed mother had mocked her for her Christianity before, now that she was reaping the firstfruits of sin, she was shown love by the Christian girl. This is victory!

Fourthly, the Lord Jesus was practical. At the seashore, the Lord of glory made a fire, baked fish on it and made things ready for a meal. Then He invited them to come and have breakfast. How gracious! How loving! How real! He is truly the Lord. He was there serving the disciples. He did not say, "Well, I am the Lord, they should serve Me." He was the Lord and He served. He served His backslidden disciples without once rebuking them for their backsliding.

The disciples were back at His feet, in His presence, and what did they find there? They found what they could not find at sea alone labouring in rebellion. All they had got from there was hunger and frustration, but now at His feet there was fire to keep them warm physically, and there was His presence to warm them spiritually. There was fish and bread to satisfy their physical hunger. There was His presence to satisfy their spiritual hunger. Everything was there in the presence of the Lord Jesus. What they could not find in the world, they found in the Lord Jesus, and they found more in the Lord Jesus than they had missed in the world.

Jesus is wonderful. He is the Lord of abundance. He has everything. He gives everything. All who come back to Him have all their needs met. Jesus wants to do the same to you today. He wants to do everything. He will hold nothing back. He will give you all of Himself. He is yours for the asking. Walk to Him. He is

by you. Tell Him, “Lord, I come back to you.”

THE IMPLICATIONS OF RESTORATION: LOVE AND MINISTRY

As we have seen, the Lord sought the disciples, met their need and bridged the gap that their sin had created. He did everything. He took the initiative and He carried out all the action. However, He did not leave the disciples that way, or else they could miss the point. The Lord is against backsliding, although He loves the backslider. So, He went further to talk with Peter as representative of the disciples.

One thing that is sweet and heart-lifting is that the Lord talked to Peter. He still considered Peter as the leader of the disciples. He did not say, “Well, I made a mistake about Peter. Now I know his true person. He is totally unreliable. He is useless. He denied Me on the day I was arrested and just soon after that, he used his natural leadership gifts to lead My faithful apostles back to the sea. He will fail the whole church in future if I allow him to continue to lead. I have restored him to Myself, but I must guard the work. Another leader must be appointed. If Peter likes, he can serve with the band, but I will not take the risk of making him the leader. Does the proverb not say, “Only a fool goes back to the fire that burnt him”? No. He did not think and act that way. He was prepared to continue to trust Peter, and He continued to trust him. That is the wonder of the Lord Jesus. He delights in restoration. Restoration to Him means that all rights that were lost because of the sin are given back to the person. Someone once said, “I will love you always, but from today, my faith in you is gone. I will never, never trust you again.” The Lord does not say that to you. Maybe that is what you deserve, but the Lord does not give you what you deserve. He just gives you love.

The Lord Jesus trusted Peter in spite of his double backsliding. He was not worried about Peter because He was sure of what the Holy Spirit would do in him. He trusted the Holy Spirit and He was sure that in a short time from then, the Holy Spirit would come on Peter, and everything would be different.

Do you believe other believers and continue to trust them even when they have failed you a number of times, confident of the Holy Spirit who dwells in them? Do you trust them, not because of what they are, but because of the One who started a good work in them and who is not only able and willing, but who will surely bring it to completion?

Sometimes when I look at believers, I am discouraged. Often when I look at myself, I am even more discouraged. But when I look at the Lord Jesus who is in them and in me and who is at work in us all both to will and to do His good pleasure, I have hope and my discouragement gives way to a song of rejoicing.

So the Lord trusted Peter. He then went on to commission him, but before commissioning him. The Lord asked Him, first of all, if he loved Him more than the fishes and if he loved Him for His own sake. This was of the utmost importance, because if fishes were to continue to mean more to Peter than Him, then there would be serious problems in the future. So Jesus wanted to know.

You see, everything depends on love. If Peter loved fishes more than the Lord, then his heart's loyalty might be divided all his life. This is at the root of all backsliding. Something is preferred to the Lord. Had Peter not preferred fishes and fishing to the Lord, he would not have gone back to the sea. So the Lord asked him, "Is it over now - this preference for fishes and for fishing?"

Peter replied, "Yes Lord, you know that I love you." He was saying, "Lord, I love You more than fishing and fishes." The Lord then commissioned him, "Feed my lambs." The Lord Jesus said to Peter, "You have confessed that you love Me more than these fishes. Manifest this love by feeding My lambs - young people, children who come to know Me. Do it for Me. Do it as a token of your love for Me."

Then the Lord went on with Peter as if to say to him, “Peter, you have said that you love Me more than these fishes. That is understandable. But do you love Me for my own sake? Peter, do you just love Me for who I am?” Peter replied, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.” Then the Lord gave him another charge, “Tend My sheep.”

The Lord was saying, Peter, “Take care of My adult followers.” But the Lord did not leave it there. He probed deeper into Peter’s heart, and so He asked again the third time, “Do you love me?” This time Peter could not rush to answer quickly. Before, he had done so; but the Lord kept asking Peter to rethink before answering. Peter was deeply touched. He might have thought about that day when he had boastfully told the Lord, “Even if everyone should be disloyal and run away, I will be faithful unto death.” Yet not long from then he had denied the Lord thrice. He was humbled. Then he replied the Lord, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” “Yes, Lord, you know everything,” said Peter. “You know that when I promised to go with You even unto death, I meant it in my heart then. That was the true response, the true desire of my heart then. I really loved You and was willing to die for You. You know that shortly after that, I failed. I did not stop loving You. I was overpowered by fear, and the desire to be safe took hold of me. I am changeable. My actions will change. My actions may betray You. Yet, Lord, in my desperate weakness You who know everything, You know that I love You. Lord, no man can understand how someone who loves You can deny You and behave so shamefully. I do not want to make my sin appear any less sinful than it is, but, Lord, I prefer to fall into Your hands than into the hands of man. No man can understand how a person who loves You can deny You and backslide repeatedly from You. My actions say that I do not love You. However, Lord, You know everything. You know my heart, my motives, my everything. I love You. I am Your failing lover. I cannot guarantee that I will never fail You. I can only say that even with all my inconsistency, I love You. I love You. It is not perfect love. It is weak and wanting, but You are the one Object of my love.”

That was Peter’s confession. I who write this also confess that it is mine. Judged

by my actions and my many failures before the Lord, judged by the inconsistencies of my heart, I should be qualified as someone who does not love the Lord; for I am very many times worse than Peter. Yet, I too confess that the Lord Jesus is the One Love of my heart, and I believe He knows it. He is my one point of rest. He is my one source of

joy,

hope,

satisfaction.

He is my one

ambition,

encouragement,

reason for living.

He is to me and He will always be my one

Goal ,

Object of service,

Source of fulfilment.

Being all this to me, how can it be that I backslide so often, even though it is often only for seconds or for a few minutes? How can love be reconciled with such reactions? I cannot even explain it myself. All I can say is that I, who have failed Him so often, also confess with Peter, "Lord, You know everything. You know that I love You."

Are you too like that? Does the experience of Peter resemble yours? I invite you not to despair. Come to Him today and without trying to cover your sin or justify yourself, fall before Him and confess your love for Him. He will pick you up as no one else can.

Then the Lord said to Peter, "Feed my sheep." So the Lord had given Peter a three-fold charge:-

Feed my lambs.

Tend my sheep.

Feed my sheep.

I am amazed by this Jesus. A man denied Him thrice and sealed it by running away from Him completely. Instead of the man being written off completely and cast into hell for ever, He goes looking for him, meets his physical needs and gives him a three-fold commission of the highest order that God can ever give to man. What a great Saviour! What love! I am amazed by it. How can I sing His praise? Won't you join me to sing:

“Sweet Jesus, Sweet Jesus,

What a wonder You are,

You are brighter than the morning star,

You are fairer, much fairer than the lilies that grow by the way,

And Your love is more precious than gold” ?

Yes, I feel like singing and shouting His praise because, out of the ruin of sin, backsliding and inconsistency in my relationship with Him, He has, out of love that is too deep for words, given me the privilege of serving Him, by granting to me a ministry unto those who have and who have not yet responded to His love.

THE STUFF OUT OF WHICH MARTYRS ARE MADE

The Lord did not only give Peter a three-fold commission. He gave him the privilege of being one of those who would seal their testimony by their blood. The Lord said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go.” (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.)

The Lord was saying to Peter, “You love Me. I know it is true. You said before that you would die with Me. You were prepared to lay down your life for My sake. To show you that I accept your love without reservation, I will strengthen you and give you the opportunity to do that which you always wanted to do - die for My sake. I have given you a great commission. You will do it while living and your death will be no ordinary death. Your death will be a way in which you glorify God. That is the degree to which I take you to My heart. That is the extent to which I accept your love for Me.”

It would normally have been thought that only impeccable saints, who have never for one second denied the Lord or backslidden, could be made leaders in the church by the Lord; and that only perfect saints whose lives have never had a shadow and in whose walk Christ has never known even the slightest cloud from the day they first knew Him until the day of their death, would be allowed to manifest this love that has never faltered by dying for the Lord. If such saints exist, we praise the Lord for them.

Even to one who backslid however and was restored, was given the privilege of becoming a martyr, and the Lord of glory considered it a matter of such vital importance that He prophesied about it.

This makes some of us who have been loved and restored to service and commissioned to minister to Him and with Him for Him, to begin to feel and to know in a new way that, perhaps not long from now, we too may be given the opportunity to seal our love for Him by imprisonment and death. If it comes, and when it does come, it shall be the manifestation of His unchanging love for us, and how blessed we shall be!

THE WALK OF THE RESTORED: GOD’S WAY OF UNENDING SPIRITUAL SUCCESS

The path of every believer has already been marked out by the Lord. No two paths are identical. We must accept that which the Lord, in His sovereignty, marked out for us from the foundations of the world. We must take our eyes off the other brethren - off their successes and off their failures (except when out of true loving, we go out to be a blessing to them.) This is often the cause of backsliding - eyes taken off the Lord and cast upon what the Lord is doing with other believers.

After Peter was restored, he immediately began to inquire about another disciple, saying, "Lord, what about this man? Lord, I am to feed Your lambs, tend Your sheep and feed Your sheep and I am to die for You. What shall this disciple do? What work are You giving him? Will he too die like me?"

To this the Lord replied, "What is that to you?" The Lord may be saying the same thing to you today as you talk and talk about this or that person, this or that work, etc. Is the Lord saying to you, "What is that to you?"

Then the Lord said to him, "There is one way of victory in the way to which I have called you. Walk that way. The way is not complicated. I will not bury it in many words and formulae or illustrations. I give it to you in two words and I want you to put it to work, and you will have unending spiritual success. You will never backslide. You will never fail me. It is FOLLOW ME!

Follow Me, and not your feelings.

Follow Me, and not the other disciples.

Follow Me, and not the church.

Follow Me, and not the crowd.

Follow Me, and not a doctrine.

Follow Me, and not a group.

Follow Me, and not some individual.

Follow Me, and not fishes and fishing.

Follow Me, follow me; Follow me.

Follow Me, follow only Me

Follow Me, follow only Me when you are

happy

unhappy

sad

rejoicing

confused

encouraged

discouraged

praised

condemned

obeyed

disobeyed

understood

misunderstood.

Follow Me; Follow only Me all the time, in all circumstances, under all conditions. Follow Me, Follow Me, Follow Me.

Do you hear Him today? Will you obey Him now? Blessed are you if you do.

FOLLOW ME

I hear my glorious Saviour say,

“Follow Me, follow Me, follow Me.”

His voice is calling all the day,

“Follow Me, follow Me, follow Me.”

For you, I trod the bitter way,

for you, I gave My life away,

I drank the gall thy debt to pay,

“Follow Me, follow Me, follow Me.”

“Come, cast on Me your many cares,

follow Me, follow me, follow Me.

I am the answer for your needs,

follow Me, follow Me, follow Me.

*Though you have sinned I pardon you,
I am the answer to your backsliding,
I restore you to all My fulness,
follow Me, follow Me, follow Me.”*

*“Behold, the past is all forgiven,
follow Me, follow Me, follow Me.
Your past sins I remember no more,
follow Me, follow Me, follow Me.
I offer you the joy of My life,
and the pathway of suffering unto death.
And in all these I’ll be with you,
follow Me, follow Me, follow Me.”*

*“I am your never-failing Guide,
follow Me, follow Me, follow Me.
Forsake the world, what’er betide,
follow Me, follow Me, follow Me.
And walk by Faith and not by sight,
My hand shall guide you everyday,
Through day time bright or darkened night,*

follow Me, follow Me, follow Me.”

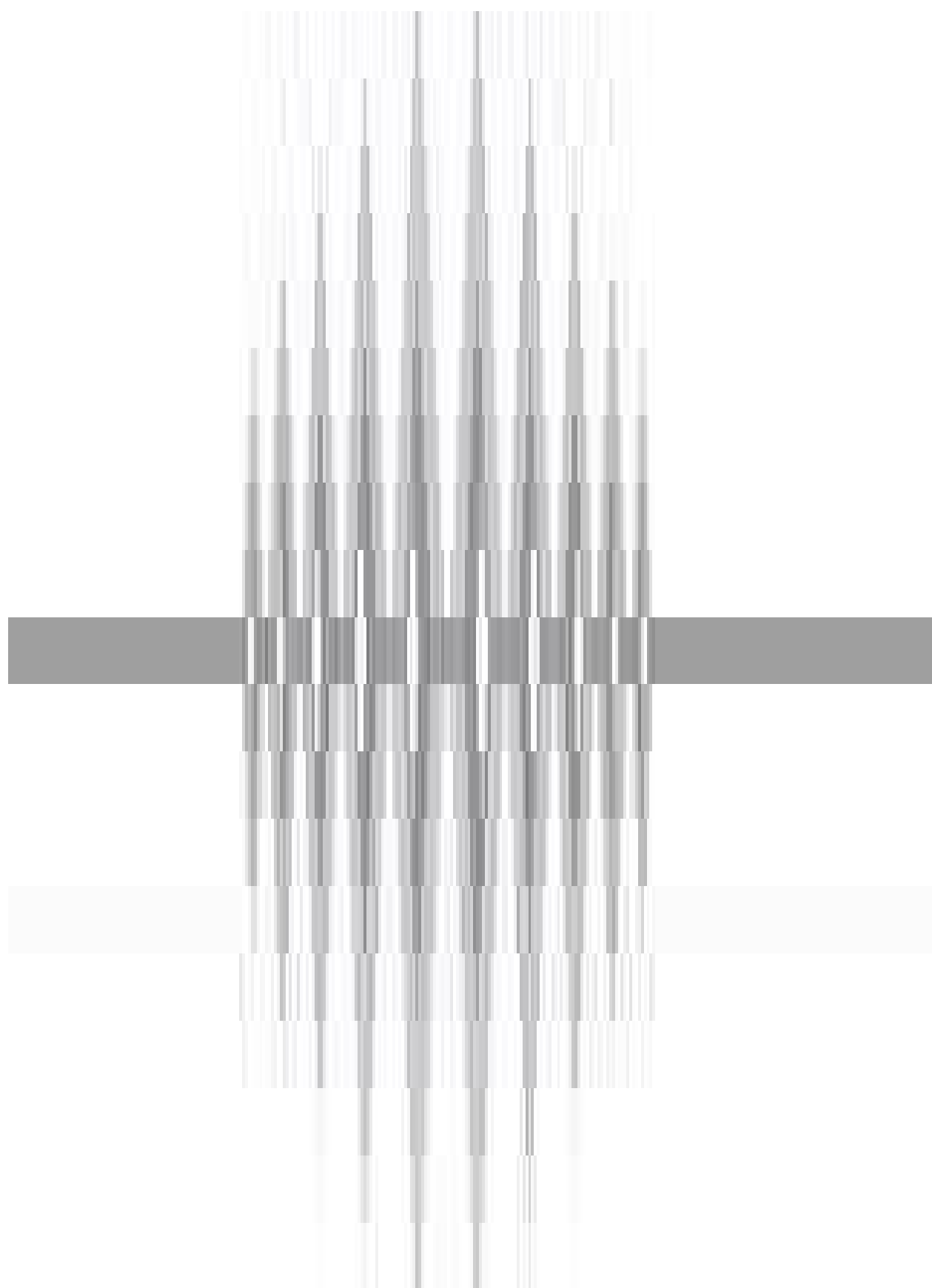
*“Suffering and shame will not be the end,
follow Me, follow Me, follow Me.*

*Behold, I have a crown in store for you,
follow me, follow Me, follow Me.*

*And My Father’s wondrous presence,
the home prepared for My very own,
Then you will sit with Me on the throne,
and rejoice for having followed Me.”*

(Port Harcourt, 15/8/82.)

Chapter 5



GOD'S GRACIOUS PROVISION OF THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple towards the east (for the temple faced east); and the water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. Then he brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me round on the outside to the outer gate, that faces towards the east, and the water was coming out on the south side.

Going on eastward with a line in his hand, the man measured a thousand cubits, and then led me through the water; and it was ankle-deep. Again he measured a thousand, and led me through the water; and it was knee-deep. Again he measured a thousand, and led me through the water; and it was up to the loins. Again he measured a thousand, and it was a river that I could not pass through, for the water had risen; it was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be passed through. And he said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?"

Then he led me back along the bank of the river. As I went back, I saw upon the bank of the river very many trees on the one side and on the other. And he said to me, 'This water flows towards the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when it enters the stagnant waters of the sea, the water will become fresh. And wherever the river goes every living creature which swarms will live and there will be very many fish; for this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes. Fishermen will stand beside the sea; from Engedi to Eneglaim it will be a place for the spreading of nets; its fish will be of very many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt. And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary.

Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing” (Ezekiel 47:1-12).

The desire of the Lord is that all His children should be filled with the Holy Spirit, that they should be sources of life and spiritual refreshment, and that they should continuously be a source of blessing to others, and to the world. However, there are many believers who are dry and barren. There are others who have sought one experience after another. Yet, each experience, irrespective of what they felt or experienced at the actual moment of the experience, has not had sustained effects. That is not God’s way of the spirit-filled life.

ONLY GOD CAN LEAD A PERSON INTO THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

In our passage, the initiative is not man’s but God’s. Man is in need, but it is God who leads to the place of blessing. The Bible says,

“He brought me back.”

“He led me through.”

“He led me back along.”

This is gracious of the Lord. He is the One who leads. Is the reason why you have not been satisfied or fulfilled all these months and years that you were trying to lead yourself to the place of blessing? You might have tried one thing or the other in that self-effort, but things did not turn out in the way for your need to be met. The Lord brought the prophet back. He wants to bring you back

from your personal efforts to Himself; so that He may lead you to the place of blessing.

I wonder if you have been trying to do something so that God may look at you and say, “This one has struggled very hard, let Me help him to enter into My fulness.” What did you do?

You fasted to make yourself more qualified; then

you looked inside yourself and saw how corrupt and impure you were, and you decided to do something about it.

You thought, “I must do this thing and that one.”

After all the efforts, you said, “God must surely now look at me, and on the basis of all that I have done, He will give me of His fulness.” Then God looked at you, and all your self-made righteousness was like dirty rags.

Stop coming on the basis of anything good in yourself. You will never be good enough to deserve being filled with the Holy Spirit. Think about it for a second. To be good enough, one has to be as good as God the Father and the Lord Jesus. To be good enough, one has to be absolutely without sin, and one’s motives have to be completely without any bit of self. When will that day come? Certainly, it cannot be now.

You are to come to the Father as you are. He will lead you into the Spirit-filled

life. He makes invitations to you. He says,

“Ho, every one who thirsts,

come to the waters;

and he who has no money,

come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without price.

Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and you labour for that which does not satisfy?

Hearken diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in fatness”

(Isaiah 55:1-2).

The Lord Jesus continues to invite. The Bible says, “On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, “If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living waters’” (John 7:37-38).

You see, it was the last day of the feast. For everyone who is to be filled with the Holy Spirit, there must come a last day. That last day is the day when he comes to the end of himself and says to the Lord, “God, I will never be good enough to come on my own merit. If I must come at all, and I really need to come, it must be on Your merit. Lord, here I am. I come, I come. I come just as I am. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and lead me into the Spirit-filled life.”

Has that last day come for you? Have you come to the end of yourself? Have you got to the point where after much effort in the flesh to try and qualify to be filled with the Spirit, you say, “Lord, do it for me or I perish”? When you get to that point, the Lord will take over and you will be blessed.

Why will God not fill a person, who is working up some qualification of his own, with the Holy Spirit? The reason is that if God did such a thing, the person would always depend on the Lord in part and on himself, because, after all, it was a joint work. He would steal God’s glory. Because God will not share His glory with man, He works where, man, having come to the end of himself and surrendered to the Lord in total abandonment and perhaps self-despair, can say, “Only God did it.”

Again I ask you, “Have you come to that point?” If you have, then read on. If you have not got there yet but are still filled with your own status and experiences, do not continue to read. It will not help you.

God’s greatest blessings are for people who have come to the end of themselves.

THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE ORIGINATES IN GOD

The river was issuing from the sanctuary; from God’s presence. The prophet said, “But they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary.”

It is possible to have many experiences that originate from man, from demons, from one sect or the other, from some human manipulation, etc. However these experiences will never give birth to the spirit-filled life. For that, everyone must

go to the Father and to the Son. He must not go to the Holy Spirit; for the Holy Spirit cannot fill you with Himself by Himself.

If you are dissatisfied with God the Father and God the Son, you will also be dissatisfied with God the Holy Spirit. So, if you want the Spirit-filled life, go to the Father and the Son. When you go to Them, They will show you the Holy Spirit, but more than that, They will take you to Him and cause you to be filled with Him.

GOD GRACIOUSLY LEADS INTO THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

A line was measured - a thousand cubits, and the Bible says, "He led me through the waters; and it was ankle deep." I believe the Lord has led you that far and He did it gently, tenderly, graciously. He did not force you into it. He brought you lovingly as He made it possible for you to say to Him, "Lord, I want to go through that water - a thousand cubits - ankle depth." At this point the Lord opened his eyes to see more, touched his heart and made him willing, and measured another thousand cubits, and then led him into it and it was up to the loins. Has the Lord led you that far? If you have gone that far with Him, you will realize that it was not because you struggled or because you broke down His reluctance by doing one thing or the other, but because He loved you and wanted to do it; and so, He took your hand into His and led you on. Let me ask you, "Were you blessed when He took you from ankle-depth to loin depth?"

Loin-depth is good, but there is more in store. The problem with many is that they have stopped at loin-depth, instead of going on with the Lord. They have continued to blow their trumpets about the measure of their spiritual progress, until people have become fed up, not with them, but unfortunately, with the things of the Spirit which these loin-deep people talk about carelessly.

It may be that the Lord is asking you, “Will you let Me take you another step further? I want you to have more, I will give you more. Will you let Me do it?”

In the next step, he measured a thousand and it became a river! How marvellous! The river is ready. It has its beginning in God and the Believer can be led to it by the Lord.

THE GREATNESS OF GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT

God’s Holy Spirit is so mighty that you cannot put Him into a corner. He cannot be locked up in a doctrine. He cannot be locked up in a denomination. He is great. He is sovereign. He is God. True Bible teachers teach about Him, but they are often caught up with His greatness, His might, His infiniteness. I find that when I have written what I have written about Him, it begins to need modification as soon as I put down my pen.

We must worship Him as He is. We must not limit Him. We must give Him perfect freedom to do His thing,

His way,

His time,

Etc.

We must be willing for Him to contradict all our doctrines, all that we have thought about Him and all that we have taught about Him. We must be prepared to have people tell us, “He does not act the way you said He does.” When such comments come, we must not defend ourselves or our teaching. We must bow down to Him and say to Him, “Sovereign Lord, have Your way in an increasing measure.”

How often we have limited Him by saying, “When He is at work, you must see this manifestation and this one and that one, and they must come in the order, 1, 2, 3, etc.” This is most sad. Peter was wiser. May we be like him as we deal with Him! In the book of Joel, the Lord said, “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the men-servants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out my spirit” (Joel 2:28-29).

On the day of pentecost what was manifested was not dreams, visions, etc. but tongues as of fire, speaking in other tongues, etc., yet the apostle Peter said, “This is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel.” The outward manifestations were different, but the inward reality was the same. God had poured out His Holy Spirit.

Are you prepared for the surprises of the Holy Spirit? Are you prepared to let Him have His way and lead you in the direction He wants you to go, and not the one into which you want Him to lead you? Are you prepared to have Him manifest Himself to you differently today than He did in the past, or are you saying to Him, “You must do it again in the way You did it before. Then I shall be satisfied.” Are you pressing it down on someone that the Holy Spirit has not filled his life, just because that one’s manifestation was different from yours? Do you want Him to manifest Himself to you the way He did to the disciples at Pentecost, while He is perhaps wanting to manifest Himself to you as He did with the Samaritans, or with Cornelius’ household or with the Ephesians? Are you open to the fact that He may want to manifest Himself to you in a way or in

ways that are different from those in which He has done with others, both in the past and in the present? Unless you are prepared for that, you will limit Him and perhaps go away unblessed.

In the book of Ezekiel, when the water became a river, he could not pass through. It was deep enough for swimming. He would not pass through because of its greatness, vastness and depth. The Holy Spirit is like that. The river was deep enough for swimming. In swimming, there has to be more water than a person's body can be in contact with at any given time. The Holy Spirit is so mighty that we can only relate to what He is doing in our lives at a time. We cannot predetermine how He will deal with us for all time, nor can we predict how He will deal with another believer. At a swimming pool, I once observed four categories of people.

The first group were just moving around the pool, drinking, talking, laughing and criticizing those who were actually in the water.

The second group entered the water and stood on one spot and used their hands to beat the water; so that from a distance, if you looked at the water, you might think that something big was happening, but they were not swimming. They were in total control of the water.

The third group lifted up one leg and began to jump on the other as they moved from one shallow end of the pool to the other, beating the water and using their hands to cause motion that resembled that of swimmers. From a distance they too could be mistaken for great swimmers, but they were not swimming. Their one leg that was at the bottom of the pool put them in control.

The fourth class of people lifted both legs and hands and committed themselves to the waters. They trusted the buoyancy capacity of water and then they began

to swim, first slowly, then as they continued, they made more progress. They were swimming. To some extent, they had given over completely to the water.

The Lord is graciously inviting you to do what this fourth class did. Commit yourself to His Holy Spirit. Let Him have His way. He will manifest His greatness and His goodness. Will you say to Him, “Lord, have Your way. Fill me with the Holy Spirit and let Him do with me as He likes”? If you say that to Him, He will take over and do great things in your life. You will be led into the Spirit-filled life and you will be helped to walk in it, and the Struggling,

dryness,

restlessness,

barrenness,

etc,

will all give way to His

peace,

freshness,

fruitfulness,

yielding,

etc.

THE MARKS OF THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

The greatest mark of the Spirit-filled life is flow, overflow. When the Lord has His way and relates a yielded man to Himself in His own way, the rivers of living waters, the Holy Spirit, flow and overflow through him. As they flow they will cleanse any dirt in their way, so that a Spirit-filled person becomes increasingly more like the Lord in holiness. As the river flows, it will widen its channel by taking away other obstacles like self, etc., so that the person becomes a more useful vessel for all of the Lord's glory and power to pass through and reach out to others. Because of the continuous flow, the person will maintain a constant and an increasing freshness as He is daily in touch with God's life.

However, personal holiness, personal freshness, etc., are only a means to an end. The ultimate purpose of a Spirit-filled life is not the one who is filled, but the others whom the Lord wants to reach through the Spirit-filled one. The tragedy with too many believers is that their testimonies run like this:-

I was filled with the Holy Spirit then:

I spoke in tongues.

I prophesied.

I was filled with joy.

I knew God's peace.

All my problems were solved.

Etc.

This is not what God meant it to be. The Bible says, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them" (Acts 4:8). "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God with boldness" Acts 4:31).

Tongues, joy, peace, etc. are all good, but they are a means to an end. The purpose of the Spirit-filled life is life in others, freshness in others, fruit in others, etc.

LIFE, FRESHNESS, ETC. IN OTHERS

As the river flowed, it accomplished the purposes of God for the spirit-filled life.

These include:-

1. STAGNANT WATERS BECOME FRESH:

The Bible says, “This water flows towards the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when it enters the stagnant waters of the sea, the water will become fresh” (Ezekiel 47:8). The water goes down. It does not go up. True Spirit-filled believers will be led by the HOLY SPIRIT into greater humility. (The proud of heart are not filled with the Holy Spirit!). As it goes down, and only as it goes down, will it be able to serve.

It serves, not by running away from that which is not flowing, but by entering into it. Today, there are many who use every fresh touch of God to run away from other believers. Each time God opens their eyes to see some aspect of the truth which they did not see before, they say, “Oh! I have now seen this truth. These people have not seen it. I must separate myself from them.” This ought not to be so. The flowing river came to the stagnant waters, and the waters of the river that was flowing and fresh did not run away from the waters that were stagnant, but they entered the stagnant waters.

As the fresh, flowing water of the river entered into the stagnant waters of the sea, a mighty miracle took place. Normally, when fresh water enters stagnant waters, all becomes stagnant and stale. However, in the case at hand, the fresh flowing water entered the stagnant water and the stagnant water became fresh and the flowing water that came in did not lose its freshness. A mighty miracle took place -- the stagnant waters of the sea became fresh. A sea is normally not fresh, but here we have a miracle - a fresh water sea. The purpose of God is that Spirit-filled believers should go to dry believers who have lost their freshness, so that these ones too will be fresh and the fresh ones will not lose their freshness. In fact, because the Spirit-filled ones are plugged directly to God who is the Source of the Holy Spirit, and because the channels of the flow of His power have been cleansed and enlarged, there will be continuous freshness, flowing freshness, overflowing freshness, such that, in flowing into the stagnant and in giving off their freshness to the stagnant, there is no loss, for more freshness

comes through from the Lord to immediately replenish that which is being given away. The desire of God today is that, because of the stagnant and stale condition of the church in many quarters, there be many believers who will allow Him to flow through them in such a way that they will be a source of life to the dry and stagnant. God's ultimate purpose is that the whole church, the Bride-elect of His glorious Son, should be fresh. Anyone therefore who is satisfied with personal freshness or with the freshness of a small portion of the church, has missed the goal that God has at heart. Have you seen that goal?

Another thing that comes through is that although there is more water in the sea than that which flows from the river, the river nevertheless made the sea fresh and maintained its own freshness. Quantity is not what matters to God. If you are ready, He will begin with you and work through you to accomplish His great purpose. Do not say that you are alone. If you are alone and are fresh and have seen God's vision, you and Him constitute a majority that will ultimately cause His great purpose for the whole church to be realized.

Do you now see why you cannot separate yourself from those who are dry and stagnant and have backslidden? You are fresh water. They are the stagnant waters. You must flow into them and then they will become fresh and you will remain fresh.

There is, however, a big problem. Many who go to make others fresh end up being stale without making the others fresh. They become like the product of hot water mixed with cold water. I do not say that this is not possible, but I am suggesting that because the one who invites the fresh to go to the stagnant is the Lord, we should trust Him to keep His Word.

Do you believe that the Lord can make you fresh and use you to make the stagnant fresh while you remain fresh? If you believe it, which means that you believe Him, it will happen to you; for everything that God has promised is possible for him who believes.

2. EVERY CREATURE WHICH SWARMS WILL LIVE:

The Bible says, “So everything will live where the river goes.” The purpose of God is that the dead may live. So He desires that Spirit-filled believers should impart His life to His creatures (human beings who are dead in trespasses and sin.) This is what the Gospel is about. The Spirit-filled life is ultimately not to be judged by the number of spiritual gifts and the abundance of revelations and prophecies, but by the people who are brought to the Lord. Unfortunately, there are some who claim to be filled with the Holy Spirit and then they withdraw from the lost to seek spiritual experience, and the more experiences they have, the more experiences they seek. They have separated themselves from God’s purpose for the Spirit-filled life. This ought not to be so. God wants to fill you and send you to the world and He wants to see one evidence of the fact that you are filled with the Holy Spirit - people brought to life.

Unfortunately, there are some who say that they are filled with the Holy Spirit, but wherever they go, they cause death. This is not what God wants. He invites you to be filled and to go and produce life.

The Lord wants that wherever Spirit-filled people go, everything should live. That is God’s goal. What a goal! What a great goal! What a near impossible goal! Yet God does not present it to us as something impossible or difficult. He presents it to us as something “natural.” The river flows naturally without stress, without effort and wherever it goes, life is produced naturally. He does not invite us to a struggle, for the Spirit-filled life is not a carnal struggle. He does not invite us to strive; for that is not His way. He invites us to Himself. He invites us to drink, so that what He said to the Samaritan woman may become true for us. And to her, He said, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14). So the water wells up to eternal life, not only for the Spirit-filled believer, but for everyone whom the Spirit-filled believer touches.

It was so with the Lord of glory. It can be so for the disciples. All who touched Him were made whole and He remained whole. When He touched the dead, they received life, yet He Himself remained alive. When the unclean touched Him they became clean, yet He Himself remained pure.

As life flows from the Spirit-filled believer, it will create such an interest in the gospel that there will be more people to lead to the Lord than he alone can lead to the Lord. So there will be room for the ministry of others. “Fishermen will stand besides the sea.....it will be a place for the spreading of nets; its fish will be of very many kinds, like the fish of the great sea.” Do you see what the Lord has in store for others? He intends that the Spirit-filled believer should minister so much life that there will be room for the ministry of other believers. He does not go looking for other places for others to minister. The rivers just flow through him, bringing life to multitudes and ministry to many.

Glory be to the Lord!

DISTINCTIVENESS

The Holy Spirit moves as He will. He is free, but He is not disorderly. The Spirit-filled believer is free and goes about “naturally”, but he does not cause confusion; for where there is confusion, God has been left out. The Bible says, “But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt.” At the natural level, everything ought to have been made fresh because the river was making things fresh. Everything ought to have had the same type of life. However, in the spiritual realm where God operates, it is not so.

The swamps and marshes did not become fresh. They were touched but left to become salt.

How great God is! How mighty His provisions! Salt is for preservation and salt is for making food taste better. So, having provided life, He made sure that that life would be preserved and that it would taste. So, too, the Spirit-filled believer would minister life, and in addition, he would minister preservation and taste. God is not only concerned with the life that the believer produces in the world. He is also concerned about the preservation of the life so that it does not deteriorate. How He desires to move today in order to accomplish that end!

Then trees grow by the river for food! The fruit does not fail. And the leaves are not wasted; for God does not permit waste. The leaves are for healing. Praise the Lord! He wants to move so that your every word, action, thought, etc. will be fruitful and useful. Will you let Him do it?

FINALLY

How is all this possible? It is possible because the water from them flows from the sanctuary. The secret is in the source of flow. The secret is not in you. You are just a channel. You are important, but the glory is God's. He is in the sanctuary. He is at the origin. He gives it a beginning and He sustains it and guides it to ensure that it accomplishes its purpose. That is God's way. But it is all His doing.

He brought me back.

He brought me out.

He led me.

He caused the river to flow.

He caused it to transform stagnant water into fresh water.

He caused the river to give life wherever it went.

He caused it to produce abundant fish of many kinds.

He caused it to produce salt.

He caused trees to grow.

He caused the leaves to heal.

He caused the trees to produce food.

He did everything.

In your life He has done everything and He wants to do everything. He is able.

He is willing. Be only a channel and let Him work. All the glory shall be His, but you will be blessed.

God is great! God is God! God is wonderful! God is good! AMEN.

CHANNELS ONLY

*How I praise Thee, Blessed Saviour
That Thy love laid hold of me;
Thou hast saved and cleansed and filled me,
That I might Thy channel be.*

***Chorus: Channels only, blessed Master
But with all Thy wondrous power,
Flowing through us, Thou canst use us,
Every day and every hour.***

*Just a channel, full of blessing,
To the thirsty hearts around;
To tell out Thy full salvation
All Thy loving message sound.*

*Emptied that Thou shouldst fill me,
A clean vessel in Thine hand;
With no power but as Thou givest
Graciously with each command.*

*Witnessing Thy power to save me,
Setting free from self and sin;
Thou hast bought me to possess me,
In Thy fullness, Lord, come in.*

*Jesus, fill now with Thy Spirit
Hearts that full surrender know,
That the streams of living water
From our inner man may flow.*



THANK YOU FOR READING THIS BOOK

If you have any question and/or need help, do not hesitate to contact us through ztfbooks@cmfionline.org. If the book has blessed you, then we would also be grateful if you leave a positive review at your favorite retailer.

ZTF BOOKS, through Christian Publishing House (CPH) offers a wide selection of best selling Christian books (in print, eBook & audiobook formats) on a broad spectrum of topics, including marriage & family, sexuality, practical spiritual warfare, Christian service, Christian leadership, and much more. Visit us at ztfbooks.com to learn more about our latest releases and special offers. And thank you for being a ZTF BOOK reader.

We would like to recommend to you the next book in the Series - The Way Of Loving The Lord:

The “Way of Loving the Lord” is very different from many of the books in the Christian Way Series. It is not an attempt to present the Bible position on some aspects of Christian Truth. Rather, it is an expression of the yearning, longing - the spiritual emotions of my heart - after the Lord Jesus.

I believe that there are some who yearn in an increasing way for the Lord, and in whose hearts the evidence of His soon coming awakens, with each passing day, greater desires to see Him - the Hope of the Ages - face to face. It is because of the presence of such saints in the church today, though their number be few, that I dare share these feelings of my heart in this way.

I send this book out with prayer, that many hearts be touched to seek the Beloved, and that such seekers should pray for me so that the Lord may soon grant the one desire of my heart - to know Him and to see Him face to face.

Thank you and God bless you!

CONNECT WITH THE AUTHOR

Find us on: Facebook.com/cmfonline, Twitter.com/cmfonline, YouTube, Instagram

[Author website: www.ztfministry.org](http://www.ztfministry.org)

[Online Bookshop: ztfbooks.com](http://ztfbooks.com)

[Join our FREE online Bible Course at www.bcc.ztfministry.org](http://www.bcc.ztfministry.org)

[Internet Radio: www.rvc.ztfministry.org](http://www.rvc.ztfministry.org)

[Podcast](#)

We equally offer on-ground and remote training courses (all year round) from basic to university level at the University of Prayer and Fasting (WUPF) and the School of Knowing and Serving God (SKSG). You are highly welcome to enroll at your soonest convenience.



VERY IMPORTANT!!!

If you have not yet received Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, I encourage you to receive Him. Here are some steps to help you,

ADMIT that you are a sinner by nature and by practice and that on your own you are without hope. Tell God you have personally sinned against Him in your thoughts, words and deeds. Confess your sins to Him, one after another in a sincere prayer. Do not leave out any sins that you can remember. Truly turn from your sinful ways and abandon them. If you stole, steal no more. If you have been committing adultery or fornication, stop it. God will not forgive you if you have no desire to stop sinning in all areas of your life, but if you are sincere, He will give you the power to stop sinning.

BELIEVE that Jesus Christ, who is God's Son, is the only Way, the only Truth and the only Life. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). The Bible says, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:5-6). "And there is salvation in no one else (apart from Jesus), for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God..." (John 1:12). BUT,

CONSIDER the cost of following Him. Jesus said that all who follow Him must deny themselves, and this includes selfish financial, social and other interests. He also wants His followers to take up their crosses and follow Him. Are you prepared to abandon your own interests daily for those of

Christ? Are you prepared to be led in a new direction by Him? Are you prepared to suffer for Him and die for Him if need be? Jesus will have nothing to do with half-hearted people. His demands are total. He will only receive and forgive those who are prepared to follow Him AT ANY COST. Think about it and count the cost. If you are prepared to follow Him, come what may, then there is something to do.

INVITE Jesus to come into your heart and life. He says, “Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door (to his heart and life), I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me ” (Revelation 3:20). Why don’t you pray a prayer like the following one or one of your own construction as the Holy Spirit leads?

“Lord Jesus, I am a wretched, lost sinner who has sinned in thought, word and deed. Forgive all my sins and cleanse me. Receive me, Saviour and transform me into a child of God. Come into my heart now and give me eternal life right now. I will follow you at all costs, trusting the Holy Spirit to give me all the power I need.”

When you pray this prayer sincerely, Jesus answers at once and justifies you before God and makes you His child.

Please write to me (ztfbooks@cmfionline.org) and I will pray for you and help you as you go on with Jesus Christ.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zacharias Tanee FOMUM

1945-2009

Founding Leader,

[Christian Missionary Fellowship International \(C.M.F.I\)](#)

Professor Zacharias Tanee Fomum was born in the flesh on 20th June 1945 and became born again on 13th June 1956. On 1st October 1966, He consecrated his life to the Lord Jesus and to His service, and was filled with the Holy Spirit on 24th October 1970. He was taken to be with the Lord on 14th March, 2009.

Pr Fomum was admitted to a first class in the Bachelor of Science degree, graduating as a prize winning student from Fourah Bay College in the University of Sierra Leone in October 1969. At the age of 28, he was awarded a Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry by the University of Makerere, Kampala in Uganda. In October 2005, he was awarded a Doctor of Science (D.Sc) by the University of Durham, Great Britain. This higher doctorate was in recognition of his distinct contributions to scientific knowledge through research. As a Professor of Organic Chemistry in the University of Yaounde 1, Cameroon, Professor Fomum supervised or co-supervised more than 100 Master's Degree and Doctoral Degree theses and co-authored over 160 scientific articles in leading international journals. He considered Jesus Christ the Lord of Science ("For by

Him all things were created...” – Colossians 1:16), and scientific research an act of obedience to God’s command to “subdue the earth” (Genesis 1:28). He therefore made the Lord Jesus the Director of his research laboratory while he took the place of deputy director, and attributed his outstanding success as a scientist to Jesus’ revelational leadership.

In more than 40 years of Christian ministry, Pr Fomum travelled extensively, preaching the Gospel, planting churches and training spiritual leaders. He made more than:

700 missionary journeys within Cameroon, which ranged from one day to three weeks in duration.

500 missionary journeys to more than 70 different nations in all the six continents. These ranged from two days to six weeks in duration.

By the time of his going to be with the Lord in 2009, he had preached in over 1000 localities in Cameroon, sent over 200 national missionaries into many localities in Cameroon and planted over 1300 churches in the various administrative provinces of Cameroon. At his base in Yaounde, he planted and built a mega-church with his co-workers which grew to a steady membership of about 12,000. Pr Fomum was the founding team-leader of Christian Missionary Fellowship International (CMFI); an evangelism, soul-winning, disciple making, Church-planting and missionary-sending movement with more than 200 international missionaries and thousands of churches in 65 nations spread across Africa, Europe, the Americas, Asia and Oceania. In the course of their ministry, Pr Fomum and his team witnessed more than 10,000 recorded healing miracles performed by God in answer to prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. These miracles include instant healings of headaches, cancers, HIV/AIDS, blindness, deafness, dumbness, paralysis, madness, and new teeth and organs received.

Pr Fomum read the entire Bible more than 60 times, read more than 1350 books on the Christian faith and authored over 150 books to advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ. 5 million copies of these books are in circulation in 12 languages as well as 16 million gospel tracts in 17 languages.

Pr Fomum was a man who sought God. He spent between 15 minutes and six hours daily alone with God in what he called Daily Dynamic Encounters with God (DDEWG). During these DDEWG he read God's Word, meditated on it, listened to God's voice, heard God speak to him, recorded what God was saying to him and prayed it through. He thus had over 18,000 DDEWG. He also had over 60 periods of withdrawing to seek God alone for periods that ranged from 3 to 21 days (which he termed Retreats for Spiritual Progress). The time he spent seeking God slowly transformed him into a man who hungered, thirsted and panted after God. His unceasing heart cry was: "Oh, that I would have more of God!"

Pr Fomum was a man of prayer and a leading teacher on prayer in many churches and conferences around the world. He considered prayer to be the most important work that can be done for God and for man. He was a man of faith who believed that God answers prayer. He kept a record of his prayer requests and had over 50, 000 recorded answers to prayer in his prayer books. He carried out over 100 Prayer Walks of between five and forty-seven kilometres in towns and cities around the world. He and his team carried out over 57 Prayer Crusades (periods of forty days and nights during which at least eight hours are invested into prayer each day). They also carried out over 80 Prayer Sieges (times of near non-stop praying that ranges from 24 hours to 120 hours). He authored the Prayer Power Series, a 13-volume set of books on various aspects of prayer; Supplication, Fasting, Intercession and Spiritual Warfare. He started prayer chains, prayer rooms, prayer houses, national and continental prayer movements in Cameroon and other nations. He worked with leaders of local churches in India to disciple and train more than 2 million believers.

Pr Fomum also considered fasting as one of the weapons of Christian Spiritual

Warfare. He carried out over 250 fasts ranging from three days to forty days, drinking only water or water supplemented with soluble vitamins. Called by the Lord to a distinct ministry of intercession, he pioneered fasting and prayer movements and led in battles against principalities and powers obstructing the progress of the Gospel and God's global purposes. He was enabled to carry out 3 supra – long fasts of between 52 and 70 days in his final years.

Pr Fomum chose a lifestyle of simplicity and “self- imposed poverty” in order to invest more funds into the critical work of evangelism, soulwinning, church-planting and the building up of believers. Knowing the importance of money and its role in the battle to reach those without Christ with the glorious Gospel, he and his wife grew to investing 92.5% of their earned income from all sources (salaries, allowances, royalties and cash gifts) into the Gospel. They invested with the hope that, as they grew in the knowledge and the love of the Lord, and the perishing souls of people, they would one day invest 99% of their income into the Gospel.

He was married to Prisca Zei Fomum and they had seven children who are all involved in the work of the Gospel, some serving as missionaries. Prisca is a national and international minister, specializing in the winning and discipling of children to Jesus Christ. She also communicates and imparts the vision of ministry to children with a view to raising and building up ministers to them.

The Professor owed all that he was and all that God had done through him, to the unmerited favour and blessing of God and to his worldwide army of friends and co-workers. He considered himself nothing without them and the blessing of God; and would have amounted to nothing but for them. All praise and glory to Jesus Christ!



<http://www.cph.cmfionline.org>

OTHER BOOKS

THE CHRISTIAN WAY SERIES

[The Way Of Life](#)

[The Way Of Obedience](#)

[The Way Of Discipleship](#)

[The Way Of Sanctification](#)

[The Way Of Christian Character](#)

[The Way Of Spiritual Power](#)

[The Way Of Christian Service](#)

[The Way Of Spiritual Warfare](#)

[The Way Of Suffering For Christ](#)

[The Way Of Victorious Praying](#)

[The Way Of Overcomers](#)

[The Way Of Spiritual Encouragement](#)

[The Way Of Loving The Lord](#)

THE PRAYER POWER SERIES

[The Way Of Victorious Praying](#)

[The Ministry Of Fasting](#)

[The Art Of Intercession](#)

[The Practice Of Intercession](#)

[Praying With Power](#)

[Practical Spiritual Warfare Through Prayer](#)

[Moving God Through Prayer](#)

[The Ministry Of Praise And Thanksgiving](#)

[Waiting On The Lord In Prayer](#)

[The Ministry Of Supplication](#)

[Life-Changing Thoughts On Prayer, Volume 1](#)

[The Centrality Of Prayer](#)

[Spiritual Aggressiveness](#)

[Life-Changing Thoughts On Prayer, Volume 2](#)

Prayer and Spiritual Intimacy

Life-Changing Thoughts on Prayer Volume 3

[The Art of Worship](#)

THE PRACTICAL HELPS FOR OVERCOMERS SERIES

[Discipleship at any cost](#)

[The Use Of Time](#)

[Retreats For Spiritual Progress](#)

[Personal Spiritual Revival](#)

[Daily Dynamic Encounters With God](#)

[The School Of Truth](#)

[How To Succeed In The Christian Life](#)

[The Christian And Money](#)

[Deliverance From The Sin Of Laziness](#)

[The Art Of Working Hard](#)

[Knowing God - The Greatest Need Of The Hour](#)

[Revelation: A Must](#)

[True Repentance](#)

[Restitution - An Important Message For The Overcomers](#)

[You Can Receive A Pure Heart Today](#)

[You Can Lead Someone To The Lord Jesus Today](#)

[You Can Receive The Baptism Into The Holy Spirit Now](#)

[The Dignity Of Manual Labour](#)

[You Have A Talent!](#)

[The Making Of Disciples](#)

[The Secret Of Spiritual Fruitfulness](#)

[Are You Still A Disciple Of The Lord Jesus?](#)

[The Overcomer As A Servant Of Man](#)

THE GOD, SEX AND YOU SERIES

[Enjoying The Premarital Life](#)

[**Enjoying The Choice Of Your Marriage Partner**](#)

[Enjoying The Married Life](#)

[**Divorce And Remarriage**](#)

[A Successful Marriage; The Husband's Making](#)

[A Successful Marriage; The Wife's Making](#)

THE ZTF NEW BOOKS SERIES

[Power For Service](#)

[The Art Of Worship](#)

[Issues Of The Heart](#)

[In The Crucible For Service](#)

[Spiritual Nobility](#)

[Roots And Destinies](#)

[Revolutionary Thoughts On Spiritual Leadership](#)

[The Leader And His God](#)

[The Overthrow Of Principalities And Powers](#)

[Walking With God \(Vol. 1\)](#)

[God Centeredness](#)

[Victorious Dispositions](#)

[The Believer's Conscience](#)

[The Processes Of Faith](#)

[Spiritual Gifts](#)

[The Missionary As A Son](#)

[You, Your Team And Your Ministry](#)

[Prayer And A Walk With God](#)

[Leading A Local Church](#)

[Church Planting Strategies](#)

[The Character And The Personality of The Leader](#)

[Deliverance From The Sin of Gluttony](#)

[The Spirit Filled Life](#)

[The Church: Rights And Responsibilities Of The Believer](#)

[Thoughts On Marriage](#)

[Learning To Importune In Prayer](#)

[Jesus Saves And Heals Today](#)

[God, Money And You](#)

[Meet The Liberator](#)

Salvation And Soul Winning

The Salvation Of The Lord Jesus: Soul Winning (Vol. 3)

[Soul Winning And The Making Of Disciples](#)

Victorious Soul Winning

[Making Spiritual Progress \(Vol. 4\)](#)

Life Changing Thought On Prayer (Vol. 3)

Knowing God And Walking With Him

[What Our Ministry Is](#)

Practical Dying To Self And The Spirit-filled Life

[Leading God's People](#)

Laws Of Spiritual Leadership

[From His Lips: Compilation of Autobiographical Notes on Professor Zacharias Tanee Fomum](#)

[The School of Soul Winners and Soul Winning](#)

[The Complete Work of Zacharias Tanee Fomum on Prayer \(Volume 1\)](#)

[Knowing and Serving God \(Volume 2\)](#)

[Walking With God \(Volume 1\)](#)

THE PRACTICAL HELPS IN SANCTIFICATION SERIES

[Deliverance From Sin](#)

[The Way Of Sanctification](#)

[Sanctified And Consecrated For Spiritual Ministry](#)

[The Sower, The Seed And The Hearts Of Men](#)

[Freedom From The Sin Of Adultery And Fornication](#)

[The Sin Before You May Lead To Immediate Death: Do Not Commit It!](#)

[Be Filled With The Holy Spirit](#)

[The Power Of The Holy Spirit In The Winning Of The Lost](#)

THE MAKING SPIRITUAL PROGRESS SERIES

[Vision, Burden, Action](#)

[The Ministers And The Ministry of The New Covenant](#)

[The Cross In The Life And Ministry Of The Believer](#)

[Knowing The God Of Unparalleled Goodness](#)

[Brokenness: The Secret Of Spiritual Overflow](#)

[The Secret Of Spiritual Rest](#)

[Making Spiritual Progress, Volume 1](#)

[Making Spiritual Progress, Volume 2](#)

[Making Spiritual Progress, Volume 3](#)

[Making Spiritual Progress, Volume 4](#)

THE EVANGELISM SERIES

[God's Love And Forgiveness](#)

[The Way Of Life](#)

[Come Back Home My Son; I Still Love You](#)

[Jesus Loves You And Wants To Heal You](#)

[Come And See; Jesus Has Not Changed!](#)

[36 Reasons For Winning The Lost To Christ](#)

[Soul Winning, Volume 1](#)

[Soul Winning, Volume 2](#)

[Celebrity A Mask](#)

THE OTHER BOOKS SERIES

[Laws Of Spiritual Success, Volume 1](#)

[The Shepherd And The Flock](#)

[Deliverance From Demons](#)

[Inner Healing](#)

[No Failure Needs To Be Final](#)

[Facing Life's Problems Victoriously](#)

[A Word To The Students](#)

[The Prophecy Of The Overthrow Of The Satanic Prince Of Cameroon](#)

[Basic Christian Leadership](#)

[A Missionary life and a missionary heart](#)

Power to perform miracles

THE WOMEN OF THE GLORY SERIES

[**The Secluded Worshipper: The Life, Ministry, And Glorification Of The Prophetess Anna**](#)

[**Unending Intimacy: The Transformation, Choices And Overflow of Mary of Bethany**](#)

Winning Love: The rescue, development and fulfilment of Mary Magdalene

Not Meant for Defeat: The Rise, Battles, and Triumph of Queen Esther

THE ANTHOLOGY SERIES

The School of Soul Winners and Soul Winning

The Complete Works of Zacharias Tane Fomum on Prayer (Volume 1)

The Complete Works of Zacharias Tane Fomum on Leadership (Volume 1)

The Complete Works of Z.T Fomum on Marriage

Making Spiritual Progress (The Complete Box Set of Four Volumes)

THE OTHER BOOKS SERIES

A Broken Vessel

The Joy of Begging to Belong to the Lord Jesus Christ: A Testimony

THE BIOGRAPHICAL SERIES

[From His Lips: ZT Fomum - About himself](#)

From His Lips: ZT Fomum - About His Co-Workers

From His Lips: ZT Fomum - About His Missions

From His Lips: ZT Fomum - About His Work

From His Lips: Z.T. Fomum - School of Knowing & Serving God