

**PREPARATION**

**FOR THE**

*Pulpit*

**By**

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## **Preparation for the Pulpit**

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## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to God Almighty who keeps directing my path each day in the ministry that He has assigned to me. He has been the source of my strength since I started this project. As a pastor, studying for personal spiritual growth, for weekly Bible classes, and researching sound biblical materials for the spiritual growth of the flock that the Lord has entrusted to me, and also writing this book; I have enjoyed God's grace and faithfulness.

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## **Introduction**

Preparation is one thing that scripture clearly recognizes. Without preparation, an individual does not only create problems for himself, but also for others who are associated with him. Christianity today is experiencing all kinds of teachings from the pulpit. It is almost as if the church doesn't have any authority. The question is, must every Christian or pastor teach whatever he wants to teach or should there be a standard of teaching for gauging those who represent the God of the Bible?

Of course, we don't have the right to teach whatever we want to teach independent of the word of God. We are warned not to exceed what the apostles have already written in their authority under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 4:6). In spite of such warnings, there are those who disregard the teachings and the authority of the apostles. They demonstrate this by teaching and practicing strange doctrines that the apostles never ordered anyone to teach. The apostles' teachings, which should be our explanation to the whole realm of the word of God is being attacked seriously in modern times. Unfortunately, the attack is not coming from unbelievers, but rather fellow Christians who do not regard the authority of the first century apostles. Must Christians study the Old Testament and the four gospels? The answer is yes. No one explains the Old Testament scriptures and the gospels better than the apostles. Therefore, our explanations and interpretation of the bible cannot go beyond what is already written by the apostles.

Having become a student of the Bible for years, I have realized that there is a great gap between what the apostles taught; what they instructed the first century pastors or

shepherds to teach the flock and what is being taught today among many churches. This book draws the attention of pastors, seminary students, evangelists, missionaries, and church members to the fact that every teaching from the pulpit today should not be different from that of the apostles of Jesus Christ.

This book also talks about issues like purpose of spiritual gifts, understanding the dispensations, and God's provisions for the spiritual life. Lastly, this book will enlighten the reader concerning biblical promises and faith.



# **CHAPTER 1**

## **Preparation Precedes Performance**

Quality is loosely defined as the degree of excellence of a thing. As a rule, people prefer something of high quality to one of low quality. In simple economics, people will generally choose quality over quantity when buying goods and services; and will increase or decrease their demand for a particular item based on its quality. The real value of a thing is measured by its quality. For example, a shop may display two identical gold rings for sale, but their prices will differ. When you ask why, you would likely be told that the more expensive ring is of a higher quality.

God values quality just as much as human beings. As a matter of fact, Christianity is founded on quality: God gave His best, His only begotten Son, for humanity (John 3:16). God has repeatedly demonstrated in scriptures that He stands for quality; and on the basis of quality will every Christian be rewarded. If quality is important to God, then quality should be important to us too so that we do not substitute quality with quantity. Quantity is only important so long as it is dependent on quality.

If quality is so important, how then can we attain quality life?

The answer is preparation.

Preparation is very important in everything we do in life, and Christianity is no exception. Christianity is that quality life lived through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary, by depending on God the Holy Spirit and the infallible Word of God the Father. Without proper preparation, it is difficult to achieve anything of

quality in life. This book is to the Christian minister, so our emphasis on preparation here, is how it concerns that particular person. Only preparation can lead to the attainment of quality in our individual ministries. Living that quality Christian life that God demands should be the motivation for not only the minister, but every Christian.

One business dictionary defines preparation as “a state of making something ready for use. Preparation is typically done in anticipation of an event occurring in the near future”.

What this definition tells us is true in all professions. For example; one who has an ambition of becoming a medical doctor prepares himself for a period of about seven years with the hope of saving lives in the future. Within that period this person goes through a lot of studies. The purpose of his preparation is to enable him come out as a qualified medical practitioner. Notice that the person being a student prepares himself in the sense of receiving training from professionals in that field. He willingly puts himself under the authority of a qualified institution and experienced practitioners in order to get the training he needs to become a medical doctor. No one becomes a master without first being a student and subjecting himself to being trained by others. No one trains himself in a field that he knows nothing about. Therefore, he who seeks to be in charge of any local Church should also humbly seek for a way of preparing himself in the knowledge of the word of God. Every person who is serious about becoming a medical practitioner gets himself ready or prepared, knowing that he is going to handle health problems of many sick people in the future. If doctors and other professionals who cater to the physical wellbeing of man

devote themselves to training, more so ought ministers of God who aspire unto the higher calling of the pulpit – pulling men out of the pit of sin, darkness and despair – and caring for the eternal soul and spiritual wellbeing of man. There is no point in occupying the pulpit if the pastor is not willing to prepare by way of training and diligent study in order to be better equipped to feed the congregation that has been entrusted to him. (John 21:15-17). A pastor cannot show his love for Jesus if he does not study and feed the congregation of Jesus Christ. The grace of God is not a substitute for preparation. That is why Jesus Christ did not exempt Himself from training (Luke 2:46). God who is the author and executor of grace demands preparation of his servants.

*“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. <sup>25</sup> It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!”* (Matthew 10:24-25).

From the passage of scripture above, we see that a believer in Christ not only has the promise of persecution because his Master was persecuted; but he must also seek to prepare himself, just like his Master did. Hence Apostle Paul urges the believer in Christ to:

*“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”* 2 Timothy 2:15

We see, therefore, that luck or happenstance have no part in God's plan for equipping His ministers for the ministry.

Like I stated earlier, preparation is necessary for every kind of life – not just the life of a minister. God sends opportunities for success every day. It takes a person who is prepared, to recognize and maximize such opportunities, and go on to become successful. This is what Bobby Unser emphasizes when he says, “Success is where preparation and opportunity meet.” Some people look at a successful person or ministry and say they are lucky. Others ask, ‘What is the secret?’ The reality is that luck or secrets have nothing to do with it. It takes preparation, which requires hard work, to build a successful life or ministry.

The question for the aspiring minister, therefore, should not be: “What is the secret why that person is so lucky?” Rather, “What kind of minister do I want to be: The prepared or un-prepared type?”

*“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” Hebrews 13:17*

Once you recognize that there is a task ahead of you to watch over the souls of the members of the congregation that God has charged you with, and also that you will render account of your stewardship at the judgment seat of Christ, you will realize that you have no choice but to commit to preparation. Sadly, there are those who ignore the need for preparation, and in time, they come to reap dire consequences of their lack of preparation; both here

and on eternity. What do you think would be the fate of a congregation whose pastor ignores the need for proper preparation, but goes ahead to load them with incorrect and inaccurate information? If all professions in life require preparation, what makes some young men who aspire to the pulpit think that they do not need preparation? I have heard people say they don't need training from anyone, because it is the Holy Spirit that teaches. This is wrong! What those who buy into such ideology fail to understand is that the Apostles of Christ humbly learnt under the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. Even Jesus Christ, the greatest teacher who ever lived, gave Himself to preparation and the tutelage of others (Luke 2:46-47). The three and half years that our Lord spent in ministry, were devoted to communicating various truths about God and His Kingdom to the disciples who didn't know those truths before. The Holy Spirit was not given for us to be self-taught. He (Holy Spirit) was not given to Christians to teach us one on one without the assistance of any prepared person.

*“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come”.* John 16:12-13.

Many believers, especially those who oppose the need for preparation and tutelage by others, have misinterpreted the words of Jesus in the portion of scripture above to mean that they don't need any training, because the Holy Spirit

would teach them and guide them in all truth. This is not correct.

In studying the Bible, one must be aware of the concept of primary and secondary audience. You and I were not in Jerusalem during that first century when Jesus Christ uttered those words. That makes us the secondary audience. As secondary audience, the statement, ***“but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth”*** cannot be applied to us today. This is because the Holy Spirit is received today at the moment a person believes in Christ. God doesn’t wait for even a minute before He gives the Holy Spirit to the person who has believed. Also, we don’t have the difficulty of understanding the teachings of Jesus Christ today, because the Apostles explained them in their writings. That was not the case for the Apostles and early disciples, who, although they were already saved, didn’t have the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit did not come upon them until the day of Pentecost. This was why Christ asked them to wait.

Again, the statement, *“He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come”* does not refer to us today as secondary audience or recipients. This is because the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christians today is not to disclose to them what is going to happen in the last days of the Church, the tribulation, or the millennium, but rather to illuminate or enlighten their understanding as they study what the Holy Spirit has already revealed through the Apostles concerning the tribulation or the millennium, which are also written down in the New Testament. It was

the Apostles who did not have the Holy Spirit then, but had to wait. Today, if an unbeliever believes in the gospel, he must not wait or does not need to wait for even a second before he receives the Holy Spirit. The moment the unbeliever believes in the Good News, he instantly receives the Holy Spirit at the same moment. The fact that those words of Christ had their complete fulfillment in the primary audience (Apostles) does not mean those words mean nothing to us today. They really mean something great but we have to look at the context.

For years Christ had been with his disciples (students) and had been teaching them many doctrines which are referred to as “*things*” in John 16:12-13. Knowing that they could not comprehend those doctrines or “*things*” because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given, he uttered those words as a promise. Now, when the Holy Spirit came, He fulfilled that promise which was made by Christ as the Holy Spirit indeed taught them everything regarding the revelations of the Church, including the future or the destiny of the Church. Clearly, we see those promises fulfilled in the first century as the Holy Spirit progressively brought into their memory all that Christ had taught them, specifically the Eleven. The Holy Spirit also progressively revealed many different categories of doctrines belonging to the Church. Those doctrines were to become the foundation for the Church. This foundation wasn’t built at once; it was gradually given to the Apostles, especially the Apostle Paul. In anticipation of that perfect foundation, the Apostle said:

*For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the*

*partial will be done away.* 1 Corinthians.  
13:9-10

The Apostles who became the recipients of the many doctrines belonging to the Church had to put them into writing so that the Church would learn from them. Writing to the Corinthians, Apostle Paul stated:

*“To the Church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified on Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.”* 1 Corinthians. 1: 2

Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians but he expected the letter to go beyond the region of Achaia where Corinth was located.

Therefore, the phrase, *“with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours”*, refers to the Church in the region of Achaia, beyond, and to any other Church that would ever exist in the future regardless of the geographical location. Paul expected Churches everywhere to learn all the principles in his letter to the Corinthians (this isn't limited to Apostle Paul's writings alone, but also the rest of the Apostles). The Apostle, being one of the authorities and recipients of the traditions and the revelations to be obeyed as guidelines by all the Churches, both in his time and beyond (until the glorious rapture of the Church), expected nothing but that the Church would follow the Apostolic teachings. In his second letter to the Thessalonians, he writes:



*“So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught; whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.” 2 Thessalonians 2:15.*

The last part of the verse, *“whether by word of mouth or by letter from us”* indicates that all revelations, whether by verbal communication or written letter, needed by the Church to grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ have been given to us through the Apostles, and therefore, we must respect their commands as Apostles who were given special information.

The promise was completely fulfilled during the disciples’ ministries in the first century and there are no additional revelations to be received by us. Therefore, we do not have anything to add to the Bible; instead we have to learn all the completed revelations given to us in the New Testament by the apostles.

If the giving of the Holy Spirit was for direct teaching of each individual believer, there would not be any need for the giving of the gift of pastor-teacher for the Church and also there would not be any need for the institution of the local Church where believers are mandated to meet for the purpose of learning the word of God. The congregation is dependent on the pastor for the learning of the word of God for their spiritual growth (John 21:15-17) whilst the pastor’s preparation in the knowledge of the word of God is dependent on the number of years that he has faithfully studied the word, whether in some sound Bible College, seminary, or under the mentorship of a sound pastor who is grounded in the scriptures. Such preparation enables him to dig out certain truth from the scriptures which the

congregation by themselves cannot do. Such preparation also provides a foundation for advance learning during his private studies. In Hebrews, we read:

*“Not forsaking our own assembly together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”* Hebrews 10:25.

This command is given because God has ordained a place of corporate worship for the brethren. This place of worship could be a garage, somebody’s sitting room, under a tree, at a beach, large auditorium, etc. It is the base from which believers get spiritual strength for their everyday walk with God. Like a military camp, the Church is a place of training, and renewing of our thoughts so that we can function well against the attacks on our souls. Also, like a hospital, the Church serves as a place of relief or treatment, where all the filth picked up by the mind (sins, worries, pains, discouragement, disappointment, etc.,) are treated by the washing of the word of God. This is achieved through Bible teachings when a believer subjects his soul to daily instructions from and the authority of the pastor-teacher.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **The Need for Preparation**

The pulpit has been loosely described as a place from which people are pulled from the pit of hell. Just like the earthly ministry of Jesus (Mt.4:17), the pastor is on a divine assignment to call men out of sin and false beliefs by making them see the error of their ways, show them the way of salvation by pointing them to Christ, and teach them how to live ready and pleasing unto God as one new creation (2Cor.5:17). This is not an assignment that can be done lightly, without preparation. Even Jesus Himself, who was perfect man and perfect God, took time to prepare before launching into ministry.

#### **18 YEARS PREPARATION OF JESUS CHRIST**

Jesus Christ was God at the same time man. He is true humanity and undiminished (not lessened or not reduced) deity in one person forever. He is not two persons but one. He is one person with two natures; the nature of God and the nature of man. His deity never infused into His humanity or His humanity into His deity. Both natures remained independent, yet in one person.

Talking about the preparation of Jesus Christ sounds strange since God is said to be Omniscient (all knowing). How could a being that is “all knowing” need preparation? Since we don’t always know something about the living word except what God reveals to us in His written word, it is expedient that we believe everything that the Bible reveals to us. The Holy Spirit who is the divine author of scripture has revealed through a human instrument in the person of Luke that Jesus Christ grew in wisdom and stature:

*“And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”*  
Luke 2:52.

The name Jesus emphasizes His humanity, while *the Christ* emphasizes His deity. It was His humanity that needed wisdom and not His deity (God). His deity always knew and has always known all things, both possible and actual; and needs no new knowledge. But His humanity didn't know all things and therefore needed to learn.

*“Now we know that you know all things, and have no need for anyone to question you; by this we believe that you came from God.”* John 16:30

This truth or reality was acknowledged by the disciples during the upper room discourse before He went to the cross. The disciples recognized that Jesus Christ was God. If He was God and came from Heaven, then what kind of person was He in heaven before coming down to the earth? Of course He wasn't man in Heaven, but God. The disciples only confirmed who He really was. He was all knowing not because the disciples said so but because that is what He was and remains; both now and forever (Heb.13:8). Before we look at some passages concerning His humanity which needed preparation, we will first look at His deity.

*“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on his shoulders; and his name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,*

*Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah  
9:6*

The second phrase in the passage above states that “*a son will be given.*” This raises the question: How did Christ look in Heaven before He was given as a child on earth? This question is pertinent when we recall that *He was already the Son (in Heaven) before He was given (to the earth)*. While in Heaven, was He a human being with all the human parts and features (like legs, head, teeth, finger nail, intestines, etc.)? I don’t think so, because as the Son in Heaven, He was God. And as God, He didn’t need to learn, and He didn’t have need for any human feature.

*“BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL”, which translated means, “GOD WITH US.” Matthew 1:23.*

Careful meditation on the meaning of Immanuel reveals that God is present with man; not God in an agent but God Himself is present with man on the earth. That same God was now seen with human features because He came and took on human form.

*“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.” John 1:1*

The Greeks believed that speech, word, message, principle, thought, idea etc., existed in the mind. Therefore before a thought can be expressed, it must first exist in the mind. John uses the same Greek concept to describe Jesus Christ

who is the expressed image of God the Father as the *logos* (or Word). Jesus existed not in the mind of the Father as a thought exists in the human mind, but instead, He existed in Heaven as a Person different from the Father. He existed as a Person with a mind just as the Father has always existed with His own mind. He is not the Father, neither is the Father the Christ. They are different persons with their independent minds but co-equal and co-eternal. Christ, being deity appeared in form of a man just as a thought or idea comes out of the mind in the form of a speech or communication.

*“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a born servant, and been made in the likeness of men.”* Philippians 2:5-7

All these verses prove the deity of Jesus Christ and therefore, He needed no knowledge for application (wisdom). However:

- ✓ As a human being, He needed wisdom.
- ✓ As a baby He needed to grow.
- ✓ As a twelve year old boy He needed to grow in age in order to be able to reach 33 years.
- ✓ As a man, He needed physical growth in stature to gain physical strength so that He could overturn tables in the temple.

The humanity of Jesus Christ is clearly taught in the Bible.

*“Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when*

*He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the feast; and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But his parents were unaware of it, but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for him among their relatives and acquaintances. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for him. Then after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at his understanding and His answers." Luke 2:41-47.*

From this passage, we know how our Lord in His humanity learned under authority even at that young age. Now, if our Lord Himself was so serious about learning the word of God at that age, what do you suppose He must have been doing from the age of twelve till about thirty when God the Father commissioned Him? If you subtract 12 from 30 you have 18. That means Jesus had about 18 years of training, before launching into his earthly ministry.

Do you know what it means to have 18 years of Bible preparation? It means our Lord had great respect for the word of God and He saw it as a necessity for fulfilling God's plan for His life. If Jesus Christ being God and our Master saw the need to prepare adequately before entering into His ministry which lasted for only three and a half years, what justification do we have for rushing to the pulpit with little or no knowledge or preparation? Even

Jesus Himself states that a servant is not greater than his master (John 13:16). By implication, therefore, not only can Christians suffer just as our Lord suffered, but they also need thorough and adequate preparation (like Jesus) for the call of God upon their lives. Note that in His humanity, Jesus Christ also learned in subjection to His earthly parents' authority.

*“And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart.”* Luke 2:51.

Obviously God cannot be subject to anyone. He is sovereign and all powerful, and cannot be subjected to any inferior or human authority. Mary and Joseph were inferior creatures to God the Son; yet they were His earthly parents and the ones to whom that parental authority over Him was given. And Jesus, despite his sovereignty and all-powerfulness, humbled Himself to their authority to learn how to survive as a man. Jesus had to fetch water, go on errands, and do other assignments that His parents demanded of Him. All this constitutes the phrase, *“and He continued in subjection to them”*, i.e. His parents. This subjection in Joseph's house was to teach Jesus how to be submissive when He faced outside authority. By implication, every form of submissiveness in our lives, whether working for somebody that we are not comfortable with or working at a comfortable place form part of our preparation for something we could do in the future. That aspect of preparation only teaches us a little about how to be submissive wherever we find ourselves, but should not be taken as Bible preparation. Bible preparation requires maximum concentration and discipline.



The Bible also records the following about Jesus' humanity:

*“Now in the morning, when He was returning to the city, He became hungry.”*  
Matthew 21:18.

If Jesus Christ was God how could He be hungry? Does God eat food? If yes how was He able to sustain Himself long before He created food? Of course God didn't need food to sustain Himself. The hunger of Jesus Christ was only related to his human body and not His deity. It is also said that He was thirsty.

*“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, \*said, “I am thirsty.”* John 19:28.

Again, deity cannot feel thirst; it was His humanity that felt thirsty. Knowledge about the difference between the humanity of Christ and the deity of Christ should form part of the pastor's frame of reference.

## **PREPARATION OF THE TWELVE**

You may have heard of the expression, *“Even the apostles of Jesus Christ did not go to school but the Lord used them”*. When you hear anyone make that comment, know that you are listening to a person who is looking for an excuse to avoid preparation or study. Usually, that statement is taken out of context. The complete verse reads:

*“Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they*

*were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.” Acts 4:13*

Note the last part of the verse, the amazement of the Pharisees at the seeming lack of training of the apostles died down the moment they recognized Peter and John having been with Jesus. Why? The reason is because Jesus, Himself, had taken time to prepare them (Mk.3:14). Yes it is true that the apostles had not been trained like the Pharisees in any of the Jewish educational institutions or universities of their time. But they were trained by the all-knowing Master.

What is the purpose of education? Before we look at the purpose of education, it is important we first look at the reason for education. Concerning reason, we are born ignorant with an empty mind without any meaningful information in our souls, be it spiritual phenomena or human educational subjects like mathematics, science, philosophy, history, etc. In order to fill our empty minds with knowledge of certain human phenomena, we get ourselves prepared or trained in educational institutions. This brings us to the purpose of education, which can be found in many definitions. Dictionary.com defines education as follows:

1. The act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgment and generally of preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life.
2. The act or process of imparting or acquiring particular knowledge or skills, as for a profession.

These two and many more definitions for education convey the idea of acquiring knowledge, skills, or imparting the

same. The purpose of education today is not different from the purpose of education in Jesus' time. The objective of educational institutions has always been the same; to impart knowledge or skills. Interestingly, whilst the educated Jews (in a formal setting) saw the disciples as untrained and uneducated, Apostle Paul also described the 'educated' gentile unbelievers of his time as ignorant:

*“Being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart.”* Ephesians 4:18.

Juxtaposing the two verses, Acts 4:13 and Ephesians 4:18 we see something very interesting. For example, one thing was certain about Peter; he was an expert fisherman. If the Pharisees, the scribes, or the Greek philosophers in ancient Ephesus, Corinth or Athens had been given a net to go for fishing, they would have probably answered, how could we? We are scared of the sea. This is because they did not have any training as to how to catch fishes in the sea by using a boat or canoe. Not only did Peter have training in fishing, he had also received bible training from Christ.

Concerning the Pharisees and the Greek philosophers, Paul described them as ignorant not because they didn't know certain human phenomena, but because they didn't know spiritual phenomena. This means that they were ignorant of spiritual things. They were ignorant of how a man could have a relationship with God (Romans 10:2-3; Ephesians 4:18). They didn't know spiritual things because they didn't have what it takes to know spiritual things. They didn't have Christ and they didn't have the Holy Spirit either, therefore, they could not understand spiritual phenomena.

But they knew rationalism. They had been trained in Platonic or Aristotelian ideas. Whether Plato, Aristotle, Euripides, Socrates, all who lived in BC, or the Epicureans or the Stoics of first century were all ignorant. Were they Ignorant of philosophy? No. They were experts in philosophy. So, what were they ignorant about? They were ignorant of spiritual life! The gentiles were ignorant of the spiritual life, and so were the Pharisees and religious leaders of the Jews.

Yes, it is true that the Apostles, except Paul were not trained in any of the two leading yet opposing universities in Jerusalem (Hillel and Shammai). However, these twelve were trained for a period of about three and half years by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. That three and a half years is equivalent to or more than the number of hours we spent for our first degree today. Note that whereas we have semester breaks every year in our educational set up, the disciples especially, the twelve Apostles did not have any semester breaks. You say, how do you know that? Well, I will prove it to you right away.

*“Then Peter said to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed you; what then will there be for us?” Matthew 19:27. cf. Mark 10:28, Luke 18:28.*

Did you get that? Peter said they *left everything*. In understanding Peter’s statement, we need to understand that the chapters of the Bible were not written in chronological sequence (except the epistles and probably the book of Revelation). What that means is that the arrangement of the chapters of the Bible does not follow the order of the events in a chronological sequence. What is

recorded in chapter B does not necessarily follow the events in chapter A, nor does it imply that events in chapter A came before those in chapter B. In reporting the events in the bible, especially the historical books, the writers did not follow the principle of first happened, first recorded. Therefore, the placement of Peter's statement in Matthew 19:27, does not mean that they had just followed Christ or been with Him for only a few months. To clearly understand that Peter's statement was made at the end of the three and half years, let's look at the consistent order and more detailed information from Luke:

*“Peter said, “Behold, we have left our own homes and followed you.”<sup>29</sup> And He said to them, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,<sup>30</sup> who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life.”<sup>31</sup> Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished.<sup>32</sup> For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon,<sup>33</sup> and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again.”<sup>34</sup> But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.”*  
Luke 18:28-34.

When you look at verse 31 carefully, you would see the order of time period between verse 28-30 and verse 31. This means Jesus, having responded to Peter’s question, pulled them aside from the crowd and told them they were about to go to Jerusalem (V31) where He would have to go to the cross (V32-33).

Therefore, the Apostle left their homes for the purpose of preparing themselves under the Lord Jesus Christ.

NUMBER OF SEMESTERS FOR FIRST DEGREE TODAY

Year	Number of Semesters
Year 1	2
Year 2	2
Year 3	2
Year 4	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	8

There are semester break and holidays within each year

NUMBER OF SEMESTERS SPENT BY THE APOSTLES UNDER JESUS CHRIST’S MINISTRY

Year	Number of Semesters
Year 1	3
Year 2	3
Year 3	3
The Last Six Month	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	10

No semester break within each year

After the three and half year’s preparation under Professor and Lord Jesus Christ, God the Holy Spirit also came and continued with the preparation of the twelve minus Judas Iscariot because he was an unbeliever (John 13:10-11). In anticipation of a continuous preparation of the eleven Apostles and also to fulfill John chapter 14:26 and John 16:12-14 through the writing of the New Testament, Jesus gave this promise:

*“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup>But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on*

*His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. <sup>14</sup>He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. John 16:12-14.*

Jesus had taught the disciples so much and He still wanted to teach them other things (doctrines) but they could not bear them. For this reason He reserved those teachings or doctrines for the Holy Spirit to come and take over. The three and a half years extensive preparation under the authorities of Jesus Christ and the subsequent months and years under the Holy Spirit when the Church began was enough preparation for the Apostles to move out. This is because they had a lot of doctrines in their souls to feed the flock of God or every congregation that the Lord would give them.

The fact that the Apostles were not trained (educated) according to the standard that was regarded as education in those days, does not mean that they weren't educated or trained in spiritual things. They were prepared by the Greatest Teacher who ever lived. In fact, they were directly prepared by God Himself.

How wrong it is for anyone to justify his laziness or unwillingness towards preparation with the misconception that, "even the Apostles didn't go to school." If all the knowledge of the best lecturers in all the universities in the world were put together, their collective knowledge couldn't come close to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Only one person's knowledge is above the collective knowledge of the whole world. It was this same person who trained the Apostles. Therefore, never ever

underestimate the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. The same stupendous, unique and incomparable thinking (mind) which Christ possesses, is said to be available for all Christians. This truth is clearly stated in Paul's letter to the Corinthians:

*“WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 2:16.*

The mind of the LORD (YAHWEH) or the mind of Christ is everything that the Holy Spirit brought into the memory of the Apostles to be written down. Therefore, the MIND OF THE LORD is simply the Bible. If you want to be wise, never give more attention to anything than the Bible. But the Bible is no good unless it is properly communicated, believed, and becomes resident in the soul of the believer.

### **What Courses Did the Apostles Study Under Jesus' Teaching Ministry?**

To understand this question is to reflect for a moment on the program that you read at school. Was it Management? Accounting? Medicine? Law? Agriculture? Or Fashion? The purpose was for you to be equipped to do something effectively after school. Having successfully completed your training, you were given a certificate of honor. The Apostles also studied a special program under the tutelage of Professor Jesus. Not only that, they went on to master their program under the permanent lectureship of God the Holy Spirit. You may call the course, “theology” or “the word of God”. Throughout His ministry, Christ carefully taught His disciples the Old Testament, from Genesis to



Malachi. He also taught them certain doctrines (you may consider them as ‘subjects’), which were related to the Church. The Church and her related doctrines were hidden in the mind of God (1 Corinthians 2:7, Ephesians 3:9) until the Jews rejected the Savior. If Jesus’ ministry is to be likened to a university, the courses read by the disciples would be as follows:

(A) **The study of the kingdom (Matt. 5:1-2, Matt.13:24-47).** One of the courses that Jesus

Christ lectured his apostles was about the kingdom of Heaven on earth. Jesus brought the kingdom of heaven down to the earth. He was ready to establish it by first fulfilling it nationally. This is because He was the rightful heir and qualified candidate to David’s throne. Three things should be known concerning every kingdom. Concerning the three things, an excerpt from J. Dwight Pentecost’s book titled, *Thy Kingdom Come*, has this to say:

“A logical starting point is understanding the word itself. Within the word kingdom (Basileia), there are three interrelated ideas which must be considered in establishing a biblical concept of the term.

- **The right to rule:** The first of these concepts or ideas is the right to rule—the authority vested in a king, or the sovereignty or dominion granted to someone reigning over a kingdom. This idea is clearly seen in Christ’s parable in Luke 19:11-27. This same idea is seen in Revelation 17:12, where we read that “*the ten horns you saw are ten kings, who have*

*not yet received the kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast*". Notice that the terms kingdom and authority (power) are used interchangeably. The ten are given the right to exercise sovereign rule and share the same authority or power the beast exercises in his kingdom. Therefore, the word kingdom includes the concept of a person's right to rule.

- **The realm of rule:** The second concept is that of a realm in which ruling authority is exercised. This involves the subjects of the one in authority rather than the authority himself. The Lord's statement that "*the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit*" (Matt.21:43) shows that he has subjects in view. The same idea is seen in the announcement, "*the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!*" (Mark 1:15). Because only people can repent, the kingdom must include a realm in which kingdom authority is exercised over people. Again, in Acts 1:6, the Eleven asked, "*Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?*" The word restore implies reestablishing what had previously existed. Since Israel's kingdom in the Old Testament involved a specific realm of rule, that concept must be seen here as well.

- **The reality of rule:** The third concept inherent in the idea of the kingdom is that of the actual exercise of royal authority. Even if sovereignty has the right to rule and realm in which to rule, there cannot be an actual kingdom apart from the active exercise of that authority. The relationship between possessing authority and exercising authority is found in various contexts in scripture. In Matthew 16:19 Christ said to Peter, *“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven”*.

The Apostles’ preparation brought them to the understanding that Jesus Christ was the rightful heir to the Davidic kingdom. They were certain that He was the one qualified to set up the kingdom (Acts 1:6). The kingdom was presented to nation Israel (Matt. 3:2; 4:17) but they (the nation) rejected it (Matt.23:37-39; John 18: 37-40; 19:12-15).

**The study of the Church:** one other subject or course read by the Apostles under Christ ministry is the “Church”. The Church came up as Israel rejected their Savior. As a result of their rejection of Christ, the savior also announced a judgment that was going to come upon the entire nation (Matt.11:20-24). That judgment was fulfilled in AD 70. Christ spoke about the Church, for the first time, after His rejection (Matt.16:18). He also spoke about the permanent

indwelling of the Holy Spirit which was going to exit after He had left for heaven:

*“I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; <sup>17</sup>that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you”.* John 14:16-17.

The Apostles also received teachings on the destiny of the Church. Note that the three different groups in the world (Gentile, Israel, and the Church) have their beginnings and their ends. Their ends do not mean that they are not going to exist again. What it means is that God called each of these groups for a purpose. Therefore His ultimate objective or aim for these different groups is what I call their destiny or their end. Jesus first communicated it in this way:

*“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup>In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”* John 14:1-3

During the rapture, Jesus Christ will come for the Church in the air, but during the Second Advent, He will come from heaven to the earth. Most of the Church-age doctrines were communicated by Christ during His earthly ministry, but were expounded in details by His Apostles in their

epistles. Those details given in the epistles are part of the reason why the Holy Spirit came. The Holy Spirit came so that He could bring into the memories of the Apostles the information they would need to write the New Testament.

**The spiritual life (fellowship with God).** This is another wonderful course read by the disciples under their Professor, Jesus Christ. They probably spent six to eight semesters on this course. If there is a primary purpose for our calling in time as Christians, then it must be spirituality. God has called us into fellowship. The purpose of the calling is for you to have fellowship with God. You were not called just for calling sake. Concerning our calling for fellowship, Paul has this to say:

*“God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”* 1 Corinthians 1:9, cf. 2 Peter 3:18.

The believer, especially the pastor, should know that there is no fellowship with God the son, the Father, or the Holy Spirit without the filling of the Holy Spirit. The Lord taught these doctrines and more to the apostles, not only because he wanted them to write them down at a future date, but mainly because the doctrines were about the Church – the new species of people He was about to introduce into the world.

Throughout Jesus’ ministry, He communicated a lot of things to the disciples. Even though the disciples were the recipients of those teachings, some of the teachings were not about them. What does it mean by saying some teachings were not about them? It simply means that they were not the subject matter of such teachings. There is a

great deal of difference between being both a recipient and the subject matter of a message and being a recipient but not the subject matter of a message. Some things that Jesus' teachings emphasized included the following:

1. He presented himself as the Savior.
2. He taught about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.
3. He taught about the judgment that would befall the nation of Israel.
4. He taught about the coming of a new group of people or species (the Church).
5. He taught about what should be the guiding principles of the Church.
6. He taught about the age that would be coming after the Church was raptured.
7. He also taught about His future one thousand-year reign on the earth.

All these teachings were received by the disciples, but they were not all about them. In anticipation of the Church, Christ communicated doctrines on spirituality by using the analogy of the vine:

*"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup> "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. <sup>5</sup> "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are*

burned. <sup>7</sup> "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. <sup>9</sup> "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. <sup>10</sup> "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. <sup>11</sup> "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." John 15:1-11.

He also communicated this particular doctrine of fellowship to the disciples and expected them to practice it, with the same fervor that they would transmit it to the Church at large. Later in the epistles, more details concerning spirituality or spiritual life were given by the Apostles. The epistles explain to us in detail that the vine analogy is impossible without the filling of the Holy Spirit. (Notice that in Jesus' analogy of the vine and the branches, the Holy Spirit wasn't mentioned at all. This is because the Church had not yet started). When the church started on the day of Pentecost, the result of abiding in Christ, i.e., love and unity (Acts 4:32-37) became obvious to all men in Jerusalem. This achievement was as a result of their dependence on the word of God, prayer, and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

**The study of the Tribulation:** The Tribulation is yet another course of study that Jesus took His disciples through. As earlier stated, Jesus taught His disciples concerning events that would happen in the future. Even though the disciples were the ones present and heard those teachings, they were not the subject matter of those teachings. The Tribulation is one of those teachings for a

future time, and the disciples rightly understood that they didn't have to depend on teachings like the Tribulation to make their everyday decisions; at least not as much as they had to depend on teachings like that of the vine and branches.

The essence of Jesus teaching them about the Tribulation was to make them aware of what lay ahead. Oftentimes, people get confused as to how Bible teachings should be applied. They think that because Jesus was speaking to His disciples, everything He said was both “for” and “about” the disciples. And since the disciples also became part of the Church, they conclude that anything that was spoken to the disciples was automatically about the Church too. Such ideology is the basis of so much misinterpretation of scripture today. For example, the passage below concerning the Great Tribulation of the future was received by the disciples, but had nothing to do with them. This is because they were not the subject matter of that information; they were just recipients and recorders of the information. If a journalist goes and records a message at a press conference, it does not automatically make the recording about him. It simply means that the journalist was present, but he was not the subject of discussion or the subject matter at the press conference.

Suppose communities whose natural resources like forest and rivers are being destroyed by illegal miners (called *Galamseyers* by the people of Ghana) decide to demonstrate or protest against such activities to express their grievances and dissatisfaction towards the government and the chiefs of their communities for allowing such negative operations to go on. These suffering communities may express their bitterness towards the media present. The



journalists present at the protest may carry the news to the entire nation during their news broadcast. Now, this is the point: the fact that the journalists were present and listened to the protesters and recorded their grievances expressed doesn't make them (journalists) the subject matter of the whole issue. Were the journalists the recipients of the grievances expressed? Yes! But were the grievances or the protest about them (the journalists)? The answer is a big no. The protests were all about the government, chiefs and the illegal miners. This is the kind of picture that believers must have in mind when reading the Gospels. Some of the teachings received by the disciples were not about them. This include,

*“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), 16 then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. 17 "Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. 18 "Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. 19 "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 "But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. 21 "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. 22 "Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. 23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. 24 "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. 25 "Behold, I have told you in advance. 26 "So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the*

wilderness,' do not go out, or, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe them. 27 "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be. 28 "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather. 29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days **THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL** from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the **SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY** with power and great glory. 31 "And He will send forth His angels with **A GREAT TRUMPET** and **THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER** His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other." Matthew 24:15-31.

If you look at the description of the Great Tribulation given above, you realize that there are certain mandates or instructions that the people to whom this message is directed needed to heed to. Even though the people to whom this message was concerned did not exist at the time Jesus gave the warning (they may not be in existence even today, depending on when the rapture will occur); yet Christ did not have to wait for their arrival or existence before giving them such a message. That future generation will come and identify their information in the Bible. God will cause them to realize that the information they are reading is about or concerns them, just as the Church of today reads the Bible and identify messages that are about us. This is the reason why the study of dispensationalism is very important for every believer. For example, it would be wrong for Christians today to pray the prayer found in Matthew 24:20:

*But pray that your flight will not be in the winter,  
or on a Sabbath.*

This is because the circumstance in which such a prayer is demanded has nothing to do with the Church, which at that time would have been raptured to heaven. It is so easy for the reader of the Bible to confuse himself with so many passages if he doesn't have other related doctrines to juxtapose them with one another. This is why I keep emphasizing that it is the pastor who is supposed to know and bring these things to the attention of the congregation.

**The Second Advent:** The second advent of Christ Jesus is always used in relation to the first advent. Just as in the first advent, there was a physical, literal, observable or outward appearance of Christ, so shall the Second Advent be. Again, the disciples received a Second Advent message which had nothing to do with them. They received the message because Christ anticipated the writing of the New Testament. In Matthew 25 Jesus tells us that there will be a future judgment after He has returned from heaven with the Church which is His body. He will then assemble unbelieving Jews, Gentiles and the living saints (both Jews and Gentiles) who will refuse the mark of the beast (antichrist). He will judge the unbelievers on the basis of their secondary decision towards Christ. The Secondary decision is explained in the sense that those unbelievers had already made their primary decision against the person of Christ. In other words they did not believe in Him. Those unbelievers' rejection and unkind attitude towards the saints of the Great Tribulation were just a manifestation of their rejection of Christ.

*“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 "All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; 36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' 37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? 38 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.' 41 "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; 42 for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; 43 I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' 44 "Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' 45 "Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to*

*Me.' 46 "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." Matthew 25:31-46*

From the quotation above, we see Jesus talking to the disciples about the fate of the unbelievers at the end of the Tribulation. Once again we see the principle of “being a recipient but not the subject matter of the information being played out here. Recall that in the Bible, all the information about each group of people or the dispensations, whether the Gentiles, Israel, Church, Tribulation, Millennium, eternal state, etc., are not grouped in special books or chapters. It is therefore the responsibility of the pastor-teacher to, through diligent study, identify the different doctrines and teach the same to his congregation. This passage of Matthew 25:31-46 should not be misconstrued as salvation by works. This is because no one goes to heaven just because he gives water or food to the saints in prison. The idea that the unbelievers in the era of the Great Tribulation who will be cast into the lake of fire because they did not feed or provide water for the third group (144,000 Jewish Evangelists) assembled before Christ at His second advent is teaching salvation by works is not true. The Bible teaches that the unbelievers will be thrown into the lake of fire because they *did not believe in the Gospel* that was preached by the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3, the angels of Revelation 14:6-7, and 144,000 Jewish Evangelists of Revelation 7:4-8. Their refusal to feed or provide water (works) for the saints of the great tribulation will be a reflection or confirmation of their inner rejection of Christ.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Understanding Biblical Promises and Faith**

In addition to all that Jesus taught the apostles, another thing that the aspiring pastor needs to know in his pursuit of knowledge of the word of God as far as his preparation in the Bible is concerned is how to distinguish between the various promises given in the word of God. Learning the different promises given in the Bible are so important because without it the pastor or the reader of the Bible can mistakenly pick up a specific promise and generalize it without knowing that it belongs to a specific individual or group of persons, who also belong to a particular age with their specific needs. The Bible teaches about different promises. Such examples are as follows:

- ❖ Personal Promises – Examples are specific promises to individuals like Abraham, David, Mary, etc.
- ❖ National Promises – God’s promises to the nation of Israel. (See Deuteronomy 28, 29, 30).
- ❖ The Disciples’ Promise – Specific promises to Jesus’ disciples during His earthly ministry. (See John 16:12-13, Luke 10:19, Luke 9:27).
- ❖ The Church’s Promises – These are unique promises to be fulfilled only in believers in Christ. (See John 14:3, Romans 12:19, 1Thessalonians 5:9)
- ❖ General Promises – These are universally applied truths for all those who are in relationship with God. (See Romans 8:28, Romans 12:19).

Please, notice that whilst these promises are not boldly written and highlighted in the Bible, they are clearly taught in the Bible. This is why the pastor’s preparation

becomes so important because the average believer cannot distinguish between these promises. It is important for the pastor to learn these things so that he can easily transfer such knowledge to the congregation through Bible teaching. This is the chain of information sharing. This means that if the pastor doesn't learn, then, the congregation cannot know; except the flock reads it somewhere in somebody's written material. For this reason the Bible demands that the pastor devotes time to diligent study or preparation:

*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15, KJV*

A pastor that fails to understand that the Bible teaches about different promises will automatically assume that every promise in any passage of the Bible is for everybody's application. This results in serious confusion in the lives of many believers, thereby leading many into false hope. It is false hope because **HOPE** is something we have not seen but we believe in it because God has spoken it. Therefore, if God has not promised you something and you claim it for yourself because it was a specific promise to somebody in the Bible, then you are living in false hope or in the dream world. For example, let's look at some of the personal promises that God gave to Abraham, which many believers today, for lack of understanding of personal promises in the Bible, have taken out of context and distorted as though they were general promises.

God called Abraham and promised him a son. This promise was made to only Abraham whilst he was without a son. The fulfillment of the promise was totally dependent on God's faithfulness and not Abraham faithfulness (continuous faith). God had to fulfill it whether Abraham believed it or not since God was the one who unconditionally promised Abraham. Abraham didn't beg or ask God for the promise. God initiated the move by promising Abraham, and Abraham had to follow suit by responding in faith. Abraham needed to trust God since God had spoken. Abraham also needed that continuous faith to maintain his happiness, since lack of faith leads to worry, misery, and bad decisions. Often times some ministers teach that Abraham received Isaac because of his faith; and therefore if he had not believed God, he would have died without receiving Isaac. Such teachings place much emphasis on faith, forgetting that there is no power in faith except one's faith is dependent on a worthy object. The Bible doesn't credit Abraham's faith as the reason why Isaac came; yet this kind of teaching is very popular, even though it is false and dangerous.

God had to fulfill this promise to Abraham in order to establish a nation through which the savior would come and save the world so that the world can have its curses removed in order to receive God's blessings. Faith is one of the principles we will encounter while studying the life of Abraham. We should be careful not to base our application of faith on Abraham's application of it; rather, it should be based on the principle of faith. That principle is what the eleventh chapter of the book of Hebrews teaches. The need and circumstances of



Abraham are not the same need that exists in our lives since God has not promised individual Christians sons or nations. We need to learn about the general and the Church promises and rest or put our faith in them because it is God who has spoken them.

Abraham had two objects; one is object of faith which was the spoken word from God that “**he would have a son from his own loins**”. Another object that existed **was object of application** (trial). Object of application simply emphasizes a need, challenge or situation in which the object of faith (i.e., the word of God; that which we believe) must be directed to (this is called application). Just as faith never works alone because it requires a working object, the same way application never works alone without a need, situation or a challenge. So, any time Abraham remembered his need of a son, he was to trust, rest, rely or keep believing the promise, i.e. “*and I will make you a great nation.....*” Genesis 12:2; meanwhile he didn’t have a child with his legitimate wife. This unique promise to Abraham had to be remembered and believed each time he realized he was getting worried about not having a child with Sara. This is what the Bible means by ‘Abraham walked with God by faith’.

In Genesis 12:10-20, Abraham didn’t take Egypt by faith when he fled there to escape the famine that broke out in the land of Canaan. He was a coward who didn’t even believe that God, who had promised him a son and a nation, would fulfill his word before he (Abraham) died. He was a coward not because he didn’t take or claim Egypt by faith (faith is not about claiming material things as some teach today), but

because he lied and also asked her wife to lie when they got to Egypt. He was scared of death and didn't know that God was able to protect him. But later he advanced spiritually and was ready to sacrifice Isaac because he had now grown to know God more. Therefore, he believed that even if he sacrificed Isaac, God was able to restore him to life. The weak and cowardly Abraham had grown in faith. He later became the hero of faith of his day, and remains a hero today. He was a gentleman and respected only what God had promised him. This is the pattern set by Abraham for our lives. The Old Testament is written for our example. Today, if you are 100 years old with a 90 year old wife, and both of you are still expecting a son or daughter, you have a right to your faith, but remember that you cannot be sure whether God will revive your system as He did to Abraham and Sara. With Abraham, He gave him His word; direct and unconditional promise that he would have a son and also would become a great nation. God had not given you the same promise, but has made available so many other promises that can still make you happy even if you were to live the rest of your life without ever having a child of your own.

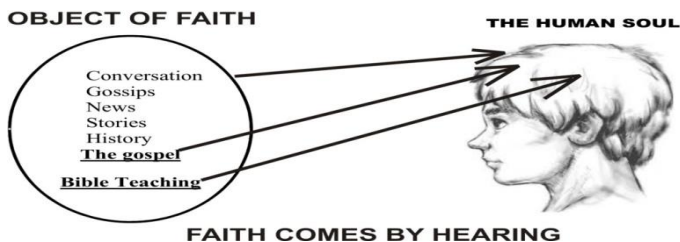
## **WHAT IS FAITH ABOUT?**

Saving faith is a non-meritorious system of perception wherein the merit lies with the object of faith, Jesus Christ (R.B. Thieme, Jr.). Therefore, it is the object of faith that has merit and/ or efficacy. The merit of faith is in the object, not in the subject. "Believe", or "faith, is not a work". There is no value to faith in and of itself. The information could be conversation, gossip,

news, story, history, scriptural revelation, etc., faith never works alone; it always requires a working object. Whilst the working object is independent of one's faith, the subject's faith is dependent on the working object (be it news, gossip, the gospel, or any biblical doctrine). When a Christian hears Bible teaching, it comes into his soul. So whether he is in the office, at home, or out in town, he is expected to solve every challenge with the word of God which he had studied earlier. Beyond saving faith, biblical faith is a continuous trust in the promises or teachings in the bible. This is how a Christian walks by faith. The scripture says that we walk by faith and not by sight. This means that our walk with God is about trusting God day by day, through Bible teachings concerning every situation in this life. You have heard about the biblical phrase "*without faith no one can please God*". "To please God" does not mean that He will do what Christians always ask.

*"You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motive, so that you may spend it on your pleasures."* James 4:3

If what the Christian asks is not in accordance with God's plan, the request wouldn't be granted. "Pleasing by faith" simply means a continuous trust in what God has spoken. Whilst every believer desires to have good



meals, a house, good health etc., not everyone gets these things. In such situations, the Christian pleases God by believing in what God has said in the Bible concerning such situations, and not what some supposed prophet claims God has revealed to him.

Supposing you were listening to a football commentary and the commentator shouted gooooooooooal! and you started jubilating; the jubilation was as a result of hearing the news from the commentator who was reporting from the stadium. You did not jubilate until you heard your team had scored. Therefore, without the news you could not have believed that your team had scored. For this reason, your faith responded to the news and without the news you wouldn't have had any faith in the goal scored. This is why the Bible says, "*Faith comes by hearing*". Therefore, faith requires a working object (something that faith must respond to). Trying to believe in something which is not grounded in the Bible is nothing but imagination.

## **EXAMPLES OF HOW CHRISTIANS PLEASE GOD**

### **Example 1**

You may not have food on your table, you may be faced with health or financial challenges but you have to keep trusting the Lord that "*all things are working together for good...*" (Romans 8:28)

### **Example 2**

In times of economic crisis, such as the world is facing today, a believer may be a victim of retrenchment.

Such a victim can only please God by casting his or her worries upon God through prayer and continually trusting in the Lord that “all things are working together for good”.

### **Example 3**

When facing maltreatment or unfair treatment from people, the Christian is to cast his complaint unto God by simply believing in God’s promise, which says:

*“Never pay evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay”, says the Lord.”*  
Romans 12:17-19

Therefore, pleasing God does not mean “naming and claiming things”. Such teaching is not from God. Such teachings are philosophical teachings of men, and believers are warned against such inventions of men (Colossians 2:8). Unfortunately, there are many Christians today whose mentalities (the thinking part of the soul) have been crippled by their emotions and therefore, they are not able to face reality by looking into the word of God to find out what God says about their situations. Other Christians are in denominational bondage by having their minds crippled or hypnotized by the flatteries and philosophical sayings of their denominational heads. Believers become victims of retrenchment and business owners face economic crises not because they don’t have faith. The Church or

Christians live within a state, therefore, whatever happens in that space, whether disaster or economic recession, affects the Christian just as much as it affects the unbeliever. Bad economic policies affect Christians' businesses just as they affect unbelievers' businesses. Your faith cannot change the tax increase; neither can your faith change fuel price increase. The price at which the company belonging to the unbeliever pays for electricity is the same price a believer's company has to pay for the same quantity of consumption. This is what we call reality. The "*name it*" and "*claim it*" by faith Christians substitute reality with denial, and they call it faith. But, this is not faith at all; this is misunderstanding of what the Bible teaches about faith. It is my prayer that the Lord liberates you from these speculative, traditional and philosophically lofty words of men that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God (what the Bible teaches).

#### Points to Note about **ABRAHAM'S FAITH**

- Abraham's faith was not about material blessings. Abraham was already rich when God called him (Genesis 12:4-5). He had possessions, including servants. Only the rich people in those days could have servants
- Abraham's faith was about what God said he was going to do in his life; concerning giving him a son. (Genesis 12:1-3). He believed in what God had directly and unconditionally promised him. Abraham did not believe in God independent of any promise from God. This explains that Abraham's faith did not precede the promising statement of God. Abraham,

having heard the promise through his ear gate, responded to that promise in his soul by faith.

- Abraham had to live with the attitude of certainty or surety. By implication, Christians are to live with the attitude of certainty towards the promises of God, just like Abraham. God had told him that he would have a son with Sara and he knew that as long as it came from the mouth of God, it was a done deal. Even if Abraham had still failed to trust the Lord for the rest of his years, God would have still given him the son. This is because the promise was **unconditional in nature** and God was bound to fulfill it; if not God would have become a liar.
- Abraham was content with what he had (Gen. 14:22-24). If there is one other character that Christians need to emulate in Abraham's life apart from his faith, then it should be his contentment. He was a man who was very content with what he had. He believed that blessing came from God, and therefore, there was no need to rush for what was not his. Unfortunately, this great character of contentment demonstrated by Abraham is often overlooked among Christians today.

### **CAN CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM BE IN A LACK?**

There are some strange teachings today concerning being a child of Abraham by faith. The teaching says that being a child of Abraham is a guarantee of physical blessings. This teaching creates the impression that once a person believes in God through faith just as Abraham also believed in God

through faith, material blessings should be the person's portion in life. The Bible gives us a record of believers who were also children of Abraham by faith, yet they had a lot of financial and physical problems. Below are recorded examples showing the unpleasant conditions which some children of Abraham experienced.

### **EXAMPLE 1**

*“Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the Church of God and shame **those who have nothing?**” 1Corinthians.11:21-22.*

These Corinthian Christians were also children of Abraham by faith. They had personally believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet they were described as believers who were poor or had nothing and therefore, could not prepare food for themselves.

### **EXAMPLE 2**

In Romans the Apostle writes,

*“But now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem” Romans 15:25-26*



Here we see believers who were also children of Abraham, and even more children of Abraham because not only had they believed in Jesus Christ, they were also true physical descendants of Abraham by birth, and yet they were described as poor because they didn't have material things, including money.

### **EXAMPLE 3**

In the book of Acts, when a man who had been lame from his mother's womb asked Apostle Peter and Apostle John for money, we read:

*But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!" Acts 3:6*

We see another descendant of Abraham by faith acknowledging that he didn't have money. This was a man who had so much from his fishing business. Having followed our lord for a period of three and a half years, he apparently must have spent all the money he saved from fishery and now he had no money. This doesn't mean following Jesus Christ will make one broke. It also certainly doesn't mean following Jesus Christ and automatically becoming a descendant of Abraham by faith is a guarantee of material blessings or riches. People become rich or poor for so many reasons which have nothing to do with being or not being a descendent of Abraham. In fact, the richest people in the world may not necessarily be Christians.

#### **EXAMPLE 4**

*“I have been in labor and hardship, through much sleepless night, in hunger, in thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.” 2 Corinthians 11:27 (NASB).*

Again, we have another description of a descendent of Abraham. This is a reference to the great Apostle himself (Paul), a man who made a tremendous impact in human history. His impact still lives on today. In the passage above, we see this great man of faith giving a true testimony of his life experience about his walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. The phrase, “*often without food*” shows that it didn’t happen just once, but many times.

These few verses and many more in the Bible show that there were many children by Abraham by faith whose lives were not characterized by material blessings as some advocate today. Therefore, beware of philosophical teachings (Colossians 2:8) that distort Abraham’s faith into material blessings. This is because Abraham’s faith was not about wanting to be rich. None of those verses pointed out that those descendants of Abraham found themselves in those situations because of lack of faith.

This is the reason why the pastor needs enough preparation so that he can identify all these false teachings that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. Preparation before mounting the pulpit is very important. Later chapters of this book will deal with some characters trained by God before they were sent out.

If a person cannot drive a car, fly a plane, become a professional boxer or teacher of any subject, without preparation and training; then we must never despise

preparation when aspiring to occupy the pulpit. Ability to read something is one thing; understanding what is read, is something else. The fact that a student can read physics, chemistry, and biology text books because they are written in English does not mean that he understands them. Ability to read and pronounce words correctly does not constitute understanding. One has to be guided by way of explanation and teaching. The same is true with reading the Bible. The fact that you are able to read the Bible, pronounce words correctly, and even memorize verses does not mean you have come to understand the Bible. Techniques or insight have to be learned. Not human techniques; but divine techniques or insight need to be learnt.

*“Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God in behalf of the Holy mountain of my God, while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously came to me in my extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering. He gave me instruction and talked with me and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding”. Daniel 9:20-22*

This means that one needs to learn all techniques required in understanding and interpreting the Bible. Daniel was not an exception. Today, we don't need angels to descend from heaven to give us interpretation. All the information we need to live the Christian life has been given to us through the Apostles. We only need open minds to search the scriptures.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Spiritual Gifts and the office of the Pastor-Teacher**

At the moment of salvation, God bestows on each believer a spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 12:13). The gifts are given by God as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:11, 18). The gifts are different, but operated by the same Spirit (Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:4). Christians are commanded to use these gifts (1 Peter 4:10), for the building up of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7, Ephesians 4:16). While some may discover their spiritual gifts at an early stage of their relationship with God, others discover theirs as they grow spiritually.

A spiritual gift is a divine enablement or ability given to a believer for the purpose of building or edifying the local Church and for the purpose of ministry. There is a difference between a spiritual gift and the office to be occupied by the one with the gift. The gift is a special ability which the Holy Spirit gives every person at the very moment he/she believes in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:6-8, 28, Romans 12:6-8). The gift is never given to edify oneself, rather to build up the body of Christ. Concerning this fact, Apostle Peter stated in plain terms:

*“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”*  
1Peter 4:10

A spiritual gift is not something you feel; it is something you come to know or identify as you grow spiritually; it must not be mistaken for a talent. Talents belong to all members of the human race, irrespective of whether a

person has entered into a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ or not. Whilst talent must be developed through training, a spiritual gift is an absolute enablement that does not necessarily need development per se, but the individual with the gift needs knowledge as to how to use the gift. This explains why some evangelists confidently communicate the gospel in sincerity but with wrong information. In the plan of God, the right thing must be done in the right way. This is because; doing the right thing in the wrong way makes it wrong. This point will be developed later in our studies.

### **Identification of one's Spiritual Gift**

Like any other Christian, the aspiring pastor must discover his gift of teaching by himself; not by some supposed prophet. If God is calling His servant into the ministry, then it is because He has already endowed such a person with a gift. He (God) is gracious enough to create awareness in the person; and not necessarily hiring somebody who may call himself a prophet to go and inform that person. Such kind of attitude has misled many to mount the pulpit without personal convictions of their spiritual gifts. If God is calling anybody into the ministry, there will definitely be an inner conviction for the individual to be sure. Creating such a conviction is not a problem to God at all. The inner conviction, drive, or desire in an individual to share the word is enough evidence for him to know that he possesses a gift or a particular ability to do something among the saints of God. How do we know this? In his first letter to Timothy, Apostle Paul writes:

*“It is trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do”. 1Timothy 3:1*

In other words, an aspiring pastor’s desire to occupy the office of the pastor could be a pointer to the pastor’s spiritual gift of teaching. In order to be able to occupy the office, the individual must have the ability to teach. The Apostle further clarifies how these desires are actually stirred or propelled by God:

*“So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to **will** and to work for His good pleasure.” Philipians 2:12-13*

If God is at work, and even willing to work in us, then He definitely knows how to cause those who have been called into the pastoral ministry to be aware of their gifts. This does not mean that God is going to control the individual like a robot to respond to his gift. It rather means that He will cause the person to be aware so that the person will decide whether or not to respond to that office. If one cannot teach or feed the flock, it is also an indication that the person may not have the gift at all.

### **The teaching gift**

The gifted teacher is the one who has the ability to analyze and explain the Christian faith or doctrines to the church. This is done as he correctly teaches principles and applications in their proper contexts. One may have the gift

but not necessarily occupy the office of the Pastor-teacher. Such men can occupy the office once they meet the qualifications stated in 1Timothy 3:1-7.

### **The Office of the Pastor**

*“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,<sup>12</sup> for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;<sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”* Ephesians 4:11-13

What does the designation, “pastor” mean? The word literally means “shepherd”. His Job is to feed the flock or the congregation of God. The office is not a spiritual gift; it is a position that the already gifted teacher can occupy. In fact, the person who desires to occupy this office must be somebody who can teach or feed the flock. One of the qualifications required for the office of the pastor is clearly stated in 1Timothy 3:2, **“able to teach”**. The Apostle goes ahead to emphasize on the teaching when he repeated the same qualifications for the office of the pastor in Titus 1:5-9. In verse 9, he wrote:

*“Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with **the teaching**, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to **refute those who contradict.**”* Titus 1:9

You see, the office is to be occupied by men who hold fast or keep the teachings of the Bible. How do we know the exact teachings of the Bible? They are the teachings that the Apostles taught and are clearly recorded in their letters. The question we should ask ourselves is: “Are the things that we teach from the pulpit the same things the Apostles taught?”

The Apostles teachings are specifically called, **“the teaching”** in Titus 1:9. The use of the definite article, **“the”** is a pointer that there are specific sound doctrines that were specifically given to the Apostles for the entire universal Church (in the past, present and future) until the rapture. Therefore, local churches are not to teach anything that wasn’t taught or instructed by the Apostles. Again, if the Pastor doesn’t understand the Bible, then he can’t fulfill the later part of the instruction in Titus 1:9, which says, **“to refute those who contradict”**. Who are those who contradict, and what do they contradict? There are church leaders who do not care about the doctrines taught by the Apostles. The false teacher is an authority to himself; he teaches what he wants to teach; not what Paul, Peter, or John taught. They quote from the Old Testament and interpret it the way they want without looking at how the Apostles even interpreted the Old Testament. This was what Apostle Paul had to say about them:

*“Wanting to be teachers of the law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertion.” 1 Timothy 1:7*



Once a person decides not to compare his teachings from the Old Testament to the teachings of the Apostles in the New Testament, he might think that his teachings are right, and as a result, even speak with confidence, or make confident assertions. Paul's reason for writing Titus 1:9 is given in Titus 1:10-11. He writes:

*“For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision,<sup>11</sup> who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for sordid gain.”*

False teachings upset the soul of the Christian. Such teachings always question the assurance of the believer, making the person feel that he is not saved yet unless he does certain things. Others include teachings that put fear in the congregation so that they can dread or venerate the preacher. Pastors are warned against such strategies for sordid gain.

The office of the Pastor is also described with terms like: elder, overseer, or bishop. The use of these terms in the Bible is a reference to the Pastor of a local church. The terms are never used for a special class of leaders. They are terms that simply describe the functions and the authority of the Pastor of a local church

### **Wrong use of Spiritual Gift Because of Ignorance**

Knowledge is very important in everything we do in this life, including the worship of God. God confirms this fact as follows:

*“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.” Hosea 4:6*

God’s people (Jews) were destroyed in the past because of ignorance, and God’s people today (Christians) are also being destroyed because of lack of knowledge. Ignorance or lack of understanding of the content of the gospel, and ignorance of the difference between God’s righteousness and man’s righteousness gets many people into destruction.

### **Ignorance of the Content of the Gospel**

A Christian, for example, an evangelist, or a pastor can be very zealous and sincere in his gospel presentation, but ignorant of the true biblical message. If a preacher does not get the proper understanding of what constitutes the gospel, he may scream at people at lorry stations, road sides, inside buses, in the market, etc., telling them that “unless they give up certain things in their lives, they will end up in the lake of fire”. This evangelist may be very sincere and zealous in his presentation of the gospel, but he is preaching the wrong gospel. Such a preacher is exercising his God-given gift in the wrong way because of ignorance. The content of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is not about what a person gives up or should give up to be saved. If giving up or forsaking something saves a person from going to the lake of fire, resulting in his/her staying with God forever, then that person is saved by what he/she gave up. Such a person can be rightly said to have been saved by personal efforts or works and not through faith in

Christ. In that case, a moral person who is humanly good and does not have anything to give up does not need to believe in the savior. This is because by logic, he is already saved by his good behavior or works.

Think about this for a moment: If all sinners unanimously agree to stop committing sin for the rest of their lives, they are still not saved from going to the lake of fire. Shocking? What this tells you is that sin is only an issue with the believer in Christ, but not with the unbeliever.

Sin always puts a believer out of fellowship with God. When I say out of fellowship, I don't mean out of relationship or ceasing to be a child of God. Being out of fellowship doesn't cancel your birthright or birth relationship with God. Being out of fellowship simply means that the sinning believer is not filled with the Holy Spirit who is indwelling him.

### **Ignorance of the Difference between Man's Righteousness and God's Righteousness leads to false Gospel**

The preacher of the Bible must have a clear understanding of God's righteousness as opposed to man's righteousness. The Bible teaches about two kinds of righteousness: man's righteousness (from what a man has done), and God's righteousness (from what God has done). Therefore, God's view on this subject must be read with an open mind. Remember that in the matters of faith, it is what God thinks and says that matters, not what we (humans) think, feel, or say. The Bible clearly rejects man's righteousness or works by the use of such negative expressions like: *not a righteous man, there is no one, no longer on the basis of works, not of yourselves, not as a result of works, not*

*justified, not on the basis of deeds* etc. God's view is presented in the following verses:

1. *Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.* Ecclesiastes 7:20
2. *They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.* Psalm 14:3
3. *Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.* Galatians 2:16
4. *Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH".* Galatians 3:11
5. *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.* Romans 11:6
6. *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; <sup>9</sup>not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.* Ephesians 2:8-9
7. *He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup>whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our savior.* Titus 3:5-6

God has given enough information concerning what does not and cannot justify a person. Why is it so difficult for

man to accept this truth of God? Why do some people think that they can be justified or accepted by their own works or righteousness? Where did man get his view from? Is it from another man? Are we supposed to listen to God, or we are to listen to a fallen man, whether saved or unsaved? We have been asked in Romans 12:2, to allow our minds to be renewed so that we may prove what the will of God is. Unfortunately, some have become too adamant to allow God's view to renew their preconceived views on spiritual things.

Someone may ask, "Are works not important at all?" Good question! Works are very important, but not as the starting point, or as the means for salvation or justification. Works are post salvation (justification) expectations. God expects Christians to produce good works; this is because we have been saved to produce good works. But we have to understand that good works are not guaranteed; even though they are expected from the person who is already saved (Christian). The saved person can produce good works or fruits only when he/she uses the provisions that God has given to him/her. Between salvation and good works is a gap of divine provisions to be used by Christians through the mechanics of continuous faith in the numerous promises of God for only Christians (not unbelievers). The only promise in the Bible that is useful to the unbeliever is the promise of eternal life to everyone who believes in Jesus Christ (through the gospel). As Christians, we are not to believe in Jesus Christ for a second time, or third time (it is only once); but we are to keep believing in all the promises that are in the Bible, and apply them in their proper contexts.

Now, let's assume for a moment that there is such a person (unbeliever) as a good man; and the supposed good man has 100% goodness, what does that goodness mean to God? Well, the Bible has a very nice answer to that goodness. His "good" is like a menstrual rag. It stinks in the eyes of God. While such a person's goodness may be commendable, morally worthy of emulation and acceptable for the benefit of society; it is nonetheless an unacceptable measure for entering into the kingdom and presence of God. This explains why God rejected Israel's moral righteousness. This is because their righteousness was not righteousness at all; it was fake and an offense to God. There is nothing wrong with works, but works must come after a person is saved or justified.

One sad thing is when a person is zealous over something, but without knowledge; it is always dangerous to be in such a state. A typical example is when Paul gave his evaluation concerning the Jews and their view about God. They had a wrong view about God. Paul, who was once like them, expressed his wish in this way:

*"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is for their salvation. <sup>2</sup>For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. <sup>3</sup>For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. <sup>4</sup>For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes."* Romans 10:1-4

All Christians, especially, those who occupy the pulpit must understand the content of the gospel, and also understand why man's moral righteousness is unacceptable to God. Like the Jews, they were very zealous and sincere, but didn't know (ignorance) that they were wrong. They failed to recognize that there is a difference between God's righteousness and man's righteousness. God had already stated in the Old Testament, and like we have also seen from the New Testament, He still stands by His word today, that He will not accept man's righteousness

*“For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deed are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.” Isaiah 64:6*

Prophet Isaiah, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit described man's goodness as *filthy rags*. The Hebrew word says 'menstrual rag'. Since there was no pad to soak the discharge during menstruation, rag was what the women used in those days; rags from their cloths. What is a person's attitude towards seeing somebody's pad or menstruation rag today? It is always uncomfortable to look at, right? Well, that is exactly what God's attitude looks like when he sees our sin nature producing human good independent of the filling of the Holy Spirit. Bible translators used the euphemism to try to capture the original meaning of the word God used, but the expression "filthy rags" does not really communicate anything to us today since we hold, touch and use filthy rags to clean our shoes, etc. Anytime you think in your mind that you are so righteous, just meditate on this verse from the book of the Prophet Isaiah for a moment. The correct translation should

have been “menstrual rag”. You see, you don’t know who you are until God discloses it and what your righteous deeds look like. Therefore, the zealous evangelist should clearly understand what actually saves a person; and that is nothing but the gospel of Jesus Christ. The basis of the gospel is given in Apostle Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians as this:

*“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, <sup>2</sup>by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. <sup>3</sup>For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”*1Corinthians. 15:1-4

The gospel is about what Christ came to do for humanity as far as our sins are concerned. Therefore, by simply believing in this fact of 1Corinthians 15:1-4, the person gets saved (receives God’s life and righteousness). Therefore, our spiritual gifts must be operated according to knowledge. And since knowledge doesn’t come overnight, preachers need discipline to prepare so that they can have sound teachings not philosophical teachings of men (Colossians 2:8).

Pastors are God’s gifts to the local church, and they must be a blessing to the church of God, not a curse or destruction as a result of lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6).





RECOGNITION OF ONE'S GIFT AND  
PREPARATION TOWARDS MINISTRY



USE OF THE GIFT

## POINTS TO KNOW ABOUT SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1. A spiritual gift is a supernatural enablement that is given at the moment of salvation.
2. Identification of spiritual gifts differs. Some identify their gift early; others identify their gifts when they begin to grow spiritually.
3. A spiritual gift is not a feeling; i.e. it is not a sensation. It is not felt like electric shock or fever.
4. Spiritual gifts do not come with knowledge. Having a Spiritual gift is one thing; and acquiring knowledge is something else. Knowledge is needed for the gift to function effectively.
5. A spiritual gift does not control our volition or freewill like a robot: "... *the spirits of prophets are subjects to prophets.*" 1 Corinthians 14:32
6. Whilst the Holy Spirit may help you to use a spiritual gift in accordance with knowledge, He (Holy Spirit) is not the gift.
7. Between the time of recognition of one's spiritual gift (gift of teaching) and the usage of the gift (office of the Pastor), lies a period for such an individual to prepare himself in the word of God. This is very important because failure to learn the word of God leads to using the gift without knowledge. Bear in mind that you cannot render any Christian service in ignorance or give an excuse for your unacceptable service; else you risk

reducing your service to wood, hay, and stubble, which have no reward at the judgment seat of Christ (1Corinthians.3:12-15).

God regards the methodology of a thing; the how, the means, mechanics, or way by which a thing is done, as very important. God's righteousness cannot accept everything done by believers unless it is in line with His laid down principles. This is why He has given us various doctrines in scripture to help boost our understanding of divine methodology or the way of God so that our services to Him are pleasant and acceptable unto Him.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Understanding the dispensations**

#### **(Dispensationalism)**

The Bible is very broad with different doctrines communicated in different chapters and verses. One of the major doctrines in the Bible that the pastor has to be grounded in through diligent preparation is the doctrine of **“Dispensationalism”**.

From the Greek word *“oikonomia”*, dispensationalism is about administration of a household or religious economy. It forms the bedrock of how God relates with man. Without understanding of this particular doctrine, it would be very difficult for the pastor to interpret the scriptures correctly.

Those who do not understand the dispensations always see every mandate or instruction in the Bible as something to be applied to the Church. Doing this is not different from applying a section of a national constitution that deals with the swearing-in of an elected president to the children in that nation, since the constitution also talks about the rights of the child. Although the rights of the child and the president are covered in the same constitution, that doesn't make the child the president. Both the child and the president have to know the respective areas that talk about them and are applicable to them.

Both men and women in every country have the right to their national constitution. Maame Juaben Serwaa can walk into any bookshop in Ghana and buy a copy of Ghana's constitution for the purpose of knowing what is stipulated in Ghana's constitution vis-a-vis the Judiciary. Asante Forkuo of ATL FM can grab a copy of Ghana's

constitution if he wants to know what the constitution says about the women in Ghana and their rights. Now, the fact that Asante Forkuo has access to the constitution of Ghana and he is reading those sections that talk about women in Ghana does not make him a woman. Likewise, Maame Juaben Serwaa's quest to know what Ghana's constitution says about the judiciary doesn't make her a Judge.

Unfortunately, that is how a lot of believers handle the Bible. They read a portion of the Bible that has no bearing upon them (like the man reading about women's rights in the constitution) and automatically conclude that since the Bible is a guide-book for every Christian (like the constitution of Ghana is to every Ghanaian), that whatever Bible truth they come across, is for them. This is an error. The only way to avoid this erroneous way of interpreting the Bible is to learn and understand the doctrine of the dispensations.

If a pastor doesn't understand the dispensations; he can't put all the doctrines related to each dispensation together. His ability to piece doctrines together to make meaningful whole is very important. This is not achieved at once. It often takes a lot of commitment and sacrifice before this is achieved. I am sure you have heard people say: "All that you need is to read your Bible and you will understand everything". Well, it is good to read your Bible or study it, but then, you can read your Bible for the rest of your life and still not understand many doctrines in the scriptures. Haven't you heard others who say: "I read my Bible but I don't understand it"?

If you are reading this book and you have the same mentality that you can read the Bible by yourself and

understand it, you need to know that it is a big, fat lie for anyone to think that he can by himself read the scriptures and dig out their meanings just because he reads them in English or in his local dialect. There are many doctrines in the Bible, which, unless you are guided or taught, you will by no means come to understand. This is where a lot of people miss it, and either rejects any training program or anything that would subject them to the authority of an instructor. You can't reject authority and expect to be successful. Subjecting oneself to authority is one way of learning humility. The aspiring pastor needs to be prepared, equipped and taught by someone who knows more than him. This is the reason why we have institutions that train pastors in the knowledge of the word of God and God will certainly bring every student to the truth, whose heart is set on knowing the truth.

Writing from a Roman prison to the Church at Ephesus around AD 60, Apostle Paul states:

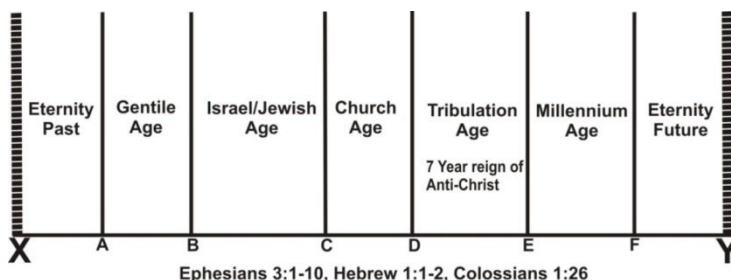
*“If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel of which I was made a minister, according to the gift*

*of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power" Ephesians 3:2-9*

The mystery doctrines were specifically given to the apostles to communicate the new relationship that has come to the world from the Father through the spiritual birth by faith in the finished work of our Lord Jesus.

Those doctrines were hidden in the mind of God until this new group of people called "the Church" was revealed. Just as God chose the nation of Israel and revealed His plan to them through Moses, which plans became guiding principles for the Israelites as to how they were to live their lives in the land and to be different from the rest of the nations in the world; the same way God, having called the Church, which is neither Gentile nor Jew, but a different group which came into existence as a result of Israel's rejection of their King (Jesus Christ), ordained new governing principles for this new species of people. This new species – the Church – is not governed by the Mosaic Law; since the Law was meant for a special and specific country called Israel. The Law was not given to the other nations or peoples that were contemporaries of ancient Israel; be it Egypt, Moab, Assyria, Edom, Philistia, Babylon, etc. In the same way if all the nations in the world today had existed at the time of the Law, they still would have lived apart from the Law as rest of the gentile nations that existed then. The Law of Moses was Ancient Israel's national constitution. Anytime you think about the Law, just remember your own national constitution which guides your nation and realize that living under the Law of Moses as a Christian is like using the Japanese constitution to govern Ghana, or the Nigerian constitution to govern the United States of America. Isn't that funny? Yet that is

exactly some self-professed Bible-believer's orientation today. Having begun in the Spirit, they seek perfection in the flesh (Galatians 3:3). But God has different programs for Israel and the Church; and this is where the understanding of the dispensations becomes very important. Israel has her beginning and her destiny just as the Church has her beginning and destiny. They are different people with different revelations. Any attempt to make the Church a substitute for Israel, cripples Bible interpretation.



The diagram above is a clear illustration of the concept or doctrine of the dispensations as taught in the Word of God. When you flip the pages of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, you will not see this diagram, yet it is a doctrine deeply entrenched in scripture. The Bible is one revelation of God for all people belonging to all ages. All the ages you see in the diagram have their unique information recorded in the Bible. God sees the end (or the Y) from the beginning (the X) of the diagram and deals with the human race through specific groups or people that He chooses to become stewards or administrators according to His divine purpose; and who are expected to function in line with clearly laid down divine instructions.

Whilst some things were known from the beginning concerning the tribulation, the millennium, and even man's eternal future state, nothing was ever known concerning this special group called "Church" (see **CD** on the diagram). So when the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians in chapter 3:2-9, he meant that there were doctrines concerning the Church that were not revealed in the Old Testament; whether in the 613 laws given to Moses or the revelations received by the prophets who came after Moses. But God in His grace revealed those doctrines to the apostles, who, in turn wrote them in their epistles. Their verbal communications (and later writings or letters) became the constitution for the Church (the early Church, the Church since then, and on to the Church of the future that shall experience the rapture).

*"So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught; whether by word of mouth or by letter from us." 2 Thessalonians 2:15*

The Church today is to follow the apostolic teachings just like the Church of the first century did. Therefore, pastors must be guided by verses like the above if they are to escape the snares of the philosophical teachings of today, which have no basis in Scripture.

The pastor is supposed to understand the different dispensations covered by the Bible in order to put the right information in its proper place. He has no excuse to be ignorant of the doctrines that specifically belong to the age in which he lives. These doctrines are known as mystery doctrines (doctrines or teachings that are specifically for the Church). These doctrines are not for Israel (**BC**),



neither are they for the people who will not believe in Christ during the Tribulation (**DE**) when the antichrist shall rule the world in a period of seven years; nor are they doctrines for that generation that will make it to the Millennium during the Second Advent of Christ. These doctrines are unique in their nature because of the uniqueness of the people to whom they have been addressed.

One may ask; **how many dispensations do we have in the Bible?** The number of the dispensations is not as important as whether or not the Bible teaches about the dispensations. If a person comes to understand that the Bible teaches about different dispensations, only then can such a student begin to study about the specific dispensations and whether there are two, three or seven dispensations.

From the diagram, **XA** illustrates eternity past when only God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit existed. There were no angels with them; which means that there was a time angels did not exist. Eventually, God created Angels. They were all created Holy (without sin) until Satan sinned against God; and one-third of the Angels also made their decision against God and joined Satan. This eternal existence also explains why Jesus Christ is God. This is because the Bible teaches about only three rational beings – **GOD, ANGELS, and MAN**. If these are the only rational beings in existence, then Jesus could only be God since there is no other rational being apart from the three revealed in scriptures. Any denial of the existence of His eternal deity as God before the incarnation presupposes that He was an angel or man in eternity past. And if Christ wasn't God, then He was one of the created angels who came and took human form to die for the human race. In

that case, Christ could only be described as “Angel-man”, instead of God-man. But in John 1:1, the One who became flesh is not said to be an angel, but God. Therefore, we must accept or believe what God has said through the Apostle John.

The dispensation of the Gentiles represents that time period in which God did not have a specific nation as His people. Later on, God formed a particular people and made them a nation; and this is what we call the “nation of Israel”. This nation had a responsibility of reflecting God to the rest of the world; including believing in their Savior whom God had long ago promised. But when the Savior came to His own people, they (Israel) rejected Him. Having been rejected by His people, He prophesied about a new group of people, who would be neither Gentiles nor Jews, but the “church”.

This Church is a unique assembly that God started building and forming on the day of Pentecost and perfection or completion is still in progress until all those ordained in eternity past to be part of the assembly are gathered. When the assembly of the Church is complete, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Arch-angel, with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ (from the day of Pentecost to the day of the rapture) will rise up first, then those believers who are alive and remain on the earth (at the rapture) shall be caught up together with them and meet the Lord Jesus Christ in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

After the rapture has taken place, the Jews shall be given the remaining seven (7) years to complete their age (see

Daniel 9:24-27). This does not mean that only the unbelieving Jews will remain on the earth. The unbelieving Gentiles who would not believe in Jesus Christ will also be on the earth. They will form the basis of the goat nations of the “sheep and goat judgment” of Matthew 25:31-46. This is the period that the antichrist will rule the world for seven years, and Palestine or Jerusalem will be the object of the world’s attention. After the seven years has ended, the Lord Jesus Christ will come back with the same unique group of people called the Church (which He raptured) and He will rule on the earth with them for one thousand years.

In the diagram we see five major dispensations; but there are those that break down the dispensation of Gentiles into their various categories to have minor dispensations. They do this because of the uniqueness of certain specific instructions that were given to different people who lived between the time of Adam and the formation of the Jewish people. After judging all unbelievers at the end of the great tribulation, Christ will finally establish His long awaited kingdom (**EF**) which was postponed during His first advent when the Jewish people rejected Him. During the one thousand kingdom reign, Satan will be caged inside the bottomless pit. After the one thousand years are over, Satan will be released and cast into the lake of fire together with all those who rejected Christ during the one thousand reign of Christ. After that the eternal state will be ushered in (**FY**).

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Sanctification in the life of Christians**

Another area that the pastor needs preparation is the area of the sanctification doctrines. There are three works that God execute in the life of a believer in Christ. Some of those works are permanent, and for that matter result into permanent relationship with God. Other work of God in the believer's life is progressive in nature, and such work requires the subjection of the believer's soul under the authority of the word of God. The last of the works of God in the believer's life is the final and permanent deliverance of God. This work, which is deliverance, will enable all Christians to be with God face to face. The doctrines are categorized as follow:

- a. Positional Sanctification (Rom. 6:22, 1Cor.1:2, 30 ;)
- b. Experiential Sanctification (Rom. 12:1, 1Pet.1:15,1Thess.4:3-7)
- c. Ultimate Sanctification (Rom.8:30, 1John.3:2, Eph. 5:25-27)

These truths and doctrines are unique to the Church alone. The terms, “positional”, “experiential”, and “ultimate” are adjectives that are used to describe the three different phases of spiritual realities that take place from the point of faith in Christ to the point that a believer finds himself face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ.

When you flip the pages of the Bible, you will see the words sanctify, sanctification or holy; but you will not see it used with adjectives like positional, experiential, and ultimate. They are chosen for the purpose of easy

communication and understanding. When the same word is used in different contexts, its meaning automatically changes to reflect the context in which it has been used. This is important since the usage of a word in different contexts represents new concepts. This is why it is said that the meaning of a word is determined by its context of use. For instance, the word ‘heart’ means different things in different contexts. On the one hand it may refer to the biological organ that pumps blood in the human body, but in yet another context it may refer to the centre or core of a thing. It is also referred to as the thinking part (or mentality) of the soul. The Bible, which is also a book belonging to a language must equally follow the same rule. Therefore, for the sake of easy and better understanding, Bible students prefer the use of distinguishing terms as positional, experiential, ultimate or final sanctification. The pastor’s understanding of these three different truths is very important.

### **Why is it important to learn positional truth?**

Failure to learn it will affect your understanding of other doctrines that are not positional in nature but have to be built on the positional truth. When the pastor doesn’t understand positional truth, he will eventually mistake any experiential or ultimate truth for positional truth.

Always remember the principle, “knowledge is built upon knowledge”. Therefore, advanced knowledge is built upon basic knowledge. Failure to understand basic knowledge means that you cannot understand any advanced knowledge that is connected to the basic knowledge.

If a junior high school student understands the principle that when you have  $2x$  it means “2 multiplied by  $x$ ”; then, when he is given “ $x$ ” as 5, he can understand that “2” is multiplying “5”, making “10” as the answer. But if he doesn’t understand this basic principle early in his educational life, then one day when he is confronted with a little advanced lesson which is connected with that basic mathematical principle, he will struggle to solve it. For example, if such student is confronted with  $ax+bx+c=?$  And the variables have been given their respective numbers for imputation as  $a=2$ ,  $x=3$ ,  $b=5$ , and  $c=4$ , he will still have a hard time solving it, because something (a basic or fundamental truth) is missing.

### **WHAT THEN IS POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION? (Romans. 6:22, 1Cor.1:2, 30)**

Positional sanctification is one of the many realities that exist because of our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. This positional relationship is simply about the things that each Christian shares with Christ. This means that, Jesus’ death on the cross became our death, His burial became our burial, His resurrection became our resurrection, His life became our life, etc. It is an unbroken unity or relationship which has been made possible by God through the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every Christian is tied up with Jesus Christ, and all those realities that become ours by reason of our unity with Christ are termed positional. For example, every believer is once and for all saved (delivered) from sin and its penalty. This act of deliverance which was carried out by God alone is an instantaneous act and not repetitive or progressive. Also, our sharing of Jesus’ substitutionary death on the cross, His burial, and resurrection is also not repetitive or progressive.

These are the realities we term as “positional truths”. When a person believes in Christ, there are a lot of things that he instantly shares with Christ. The believer doesn’t share those things because he or she accomplished them by personal efforts, but because of the believer’s position in Jesus Christ who accomplished them Himself and imputed them to the believer as his or hers.

Besides salvation, positional truth also includes such works of Christ as sanctification. Both salvation and sanctification come in phases in the plan of God. It is because of the phases or stages that exist in God’s plan, that designations like “experiential” and “ultimate” are used for the subsequent but progressive and final work of God in the life of Christians that are already *positionally* connected with God. We should also understand that the experiential and ultimate phases, which are dependent on the positional phase, exist as a result of the sin nature which every person still possesses even after he has believed in Jesus Christ. Therefore, God has designed a progressive plan for dominating and controlling the soul of every Christian against the sin nature so that the willing Christian can be set apart by God in moment by moment for any service or spiritual growth. This is necessary since a believer in carnality cannot be experientially set apart for any service of God or for spiritual growth.

This moment by moment deliverance and separation plan of God is what we call “experiential salvation” and “experiential sanctification” respectively. They are both secondary to the fundamental truth called positional truth.

By epistemological definition, truth is that which is a reality or that which exists. “*Episteme*” is a Latin word,

which means “knowledge” or “knowing”. Therefore, epistemology or “*knowledge-ology*” is the study of knowledge or knowing. In other words, how we know what we know. The ultimate aim of knowing is to know the truth. The following questions arise from the foregone: “How do we know what we know?” “How do we know what we know is the truth and not false?” “How do we throw away that philosophical concept that says truth is relative?” When a person’s thoughts and frame of reference are built on human opinions instead of divine opinions, he easily falls for this type of misconception that truth is relative. Those who say, “truth is relative”, in effect, are saying, there is no absolute truth. Therefore, something is true to you but not true to me. Proponents of the relativism of truth are the ones who claim for example that: “Jesus is Saviour for you, but not for me.” They argue that this position allows for liberalism and open-mindedness, which they feel is more consistent with modern thought than the teachings of the Bible. But the Bible is not an open-minded book which is tolerant to all kinds of opinions. It is a dogmatic book that doesn’t smile and give room to the opinions of man. It condemns man’s opinions about life, and demands that all men change their ways and come to the true knowledge of the Creator (God) through faith in His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

Human beings learn or acquire knowledge through different methodologies. It is not as if God is against any of these methodologies as each one fits perfectly somewhere and is tailor-made for a specific field. For example, the solution to mathematical problems is not found in the Bible. An engineer must use mathematical formulas and methods to arrive at the exact quantity of materials that he will need for a particular building or road project. The



engineer doesn't have to wait on God for those answers. In fact, God wants the engineer to use his mind, so that he can reflect the image of God since God is the ultimate designer. Again, there is nothing wrong with science to engage in experimentations or research to find out why certain people in a particular community are dying. They don't need to go to the Bible for an answer, for they will not find it there. In order to reflect the image of God, those in science are expected to do series of tests to identify the cause of those deaths. Again, we shouldn't forget that rationalism and empiricism are abilities that have been entrusted to mankind to manifest the image of God. They form part of the reason why man is a steward of everything that he possesses. If God owns all things, then the human race is just a steward. Therefore, how to use things entrusted to us is the issue. For this reason, the Almighty God does not expect man to have confidence in these methods as the ultimate source of knowledge. When all kinds of knowledge, whether from the source of reason or empiricism conflict with divine revelation (now the written Word of God), men are expected to believe and make decisions based on the written word (Divine Revelation). Systems are created by God, but the purpose is not for man to rely on the systems independent of God. This is because the system can be used wrongly when men do not recognize the one who entrusted them with those abilities, systems or methods. Some of the methods or systems which men rely on as the ultimate source of knowledge include the following:

**Rationalism:** This is the belief that truth is what the mind can perceive independent of any revelation and experimentation. Here, the mind is on its own. The mind

doesn't need any help to facilitate a thought. Therefore, it is unaided reason or reason without any assistance.

**Empiricism:** This methodology insists that truth is dependent on sensory perception. Here, man's trust or confidence is in his ability to touch, see, smell, and taste. According to empiricism, what the body senses and is able to communicate to the mind is what constitutes reality or truth.

**Divine revelation:** This is the only method recommended by God through which man can reach Him and know Him. God's revelations, which are clearly spelt out in the Bible, are the object of the Christian faith. With Christianity, divine revelation is what we call truth. Now, when I say divine revelation I don't mean what some people today sit on radio and television and claim to have received from God; I don't mean hallucinations, dreams or supposed visions and prophecies today. There is one standard revelation of God which is the final and ultimate revelation of God. Truth is what the Bible and only the Bible has revealed; whether the mind perceives it or not, whether the human senses can observe it or not. It remains truth whether men believe it or not. For example, Christianity accepts the existence of man as truth not because our eyes look around and see human beings; but because Biblical data says God has created man. Also, we believe that the universe exists not because we can feel, touch, taste, see, and smell things around us; but because its existence is clearly revealed to us in the written word of God. Therefore, positional sanctification truth is a truth that God has spoken concerning all those who have personally believed in Jesus Christ. This truth cannot be touched, felt, seen, smelled, and tasted. This truth is absolute because it

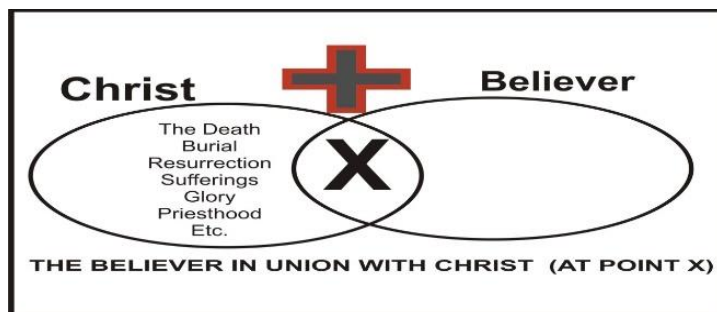
is the omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, immutable, and faithful God who has declared it. By what standard will man evaluate or judge divine declarations? And what will be man's conclusion?

Although positional sanctification and positional salvation are both works of God, they are not the same. Chronologically, we received every work of God and shared every position of Christ at the same time that we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, but logically, some works were received before others. Let me explain this: the moment an unbeliever believes in Jesus Christ, he is immediately saved and sanctified. At that same moment the believer is regarded to have died, been buried and resurrected with Christ. He becomes a child of God and is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who enables him to serve as a priest unto the Most High God. There is no time interval between these undertakings of God. They happen at the same time when one accepts Christ. However, logically, some undertakings must precede others. For example, a person must be saved from spiritual death before he is sanctified. No one can be sanctified before he is saved. For this reason, positional sanctification is secondary to positional salvation. Whilst positional salvation is about delivering a person from sin and its penalty, i.e. spiritual death; positional sanctification is about God setting apart the already saved person unto Himself for special use.

Understanding this doctrine is very important since God doesn't save a person and then leave him to himself. Any man can deliver somebody from physical trouble and then place the delivered one at a middle ground where he has to be on his own for the rest of his life. Once rescued and taken to a place of safety, such a person is no longer

dependent on the one who saved him. For instance, when a fire fighter rescues a person from a burning building, the fire fighter is no longer responsible for the victim once he or she has been taken out of danger. The fire fighter doesn't take the victim to his own house or provide for the victim. His mission as a fire fighter is accomplished the moment he is done with the rescue operation. He may walk down the street the next minute without even recognizing the victim and vice versa. But God is not a man. He doesn't save a person from danger and leaves him on his own. He is a God who cares. Therefore, He doesn't just save, but brings out and sets apart the saved person unto Himself forever.

**Positional truth is illustrated with the diagram below**



The diagram above showing two spheres intersecting each other illustrates a truth that is taught in the word of God. One sphere represents Jesus Christ; while the other sphere represents a believer in Christ. Christ and the believer meet at the point X, which represents the following:

- ❖ Faith in Jesus Christ alone, for salvation.
- ❖ The sharing of Christ's death, burial, resurrection and everything else that is Christ's.
- ❖ The point of faith in Christ Jesus, where the believer becomes, at the same time, united with Christ

(2Corinthians 5:17, Romans 8:1, Ephesians 2:7). It is also said in the Word that Jesus Christ is permanently indwelling all Christians, (*Christ in you, the hope of glory—Colossians 1:27*). **X** in the diagram shows the indwelling of Christians in Christ and vice versa. This is union truth. This position is irrevocable. It can never be changed by Christ or the believer.

In Romans 6:8, the Apostle Paul tells us that we died with Christ. What is your stand on Romans 6:8? Do you believe it or not? How did the Apostle Paul know that? Well, he didn't know it until it was revealed to him by God. As an apostle, he was a recipient of divine revelations which formed the foundational doctrines for the Church.

Experientially, only two other persons died on the same geographical location with Jesus Christ (these are the thieves who were crucified on his left and right); yet the scripture says we died with him. How do we know this truth, since we don't have any empirical data to support that claim? The methodology of knowing this truth is by simply believing that it is so because it is God who has spoken it. And if this God is veracity and cannot lie, then I must simply believe in whatever He declares. Positionally, this is truth because of our relationship with Him, which is based on the fact that He (Christ) has given birth to us.

*“Therefore, we have been buried with him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the father, so we too might walk in newness of life”* Roman 6:4.

When was the Church (of the past, present and future) buried with Christ in his death? It was at His death on the

Cross of Calvary over 2000 years ago. I am certain that nobody reading this book today, their parents or even grand-parents, were alive 2000 years ago. If we weren't alive then, how can we be talking about having died with Christ? Experientially, such a claim appears to be not only untrue, but also absurd. Whilst this, by experience is not true, it is positionally true, because if we *are in Christ*, then in retrospect, we *were in Him* when he was killed and buried. Therefore, as scripture further says, *we were* also raised together with Him from the dead.

*“Even when we were dead in a transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up in Him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”*  
Ephesians 2:5-6

This means that our union with Christ made it possible for us to rise with Him. If a man cannot wake up from sleep and leave any part of his body on the bed, so Jesus Christ could not have left us in the grave. This is because we were in Him, even, in the grave. This truth is about our unity, standing and oneness with Christ. No one in the Old Testament was in Christ and after the Church is raptured, no one will be added to Christ. Those who are in Christ are those who are His body and will be His bride. This special group, whose formation or development started on the day of Pentecost, will be perfected with the rapture or final resurrection of the Church. It is these specially revealed doctrines that are referred to as mystery doctrines.

Positional truth is always given in descriptive nature (informative). The truth informs a believer about his status

concerning his relationship with Christ. This truth is not given in mandatory or prescriptive form; rather it is given in descriptive form to inform a believer about his new relationship. The idea is to inform a believer, and not to instruct him to do something.

Let me explain this point with an example, if I met you at an event and told you how wonderful you looked, and how your shoes were nice on you, I would only be descriptive or informative by expressing how you looked. I would merely be stating things as they appear, not commanding you or asking you to do anything for me. This is what I mean by description (i.e., being informative). One example in the word of God concerning descriptive truth is given in 2 Corinthians which says that:

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things has come” 2 Corinthians 5:17.*

This verse is telling a believer about his status in Christ, since he no longer belongs to his old state of spiritual death; because he is alive with Christ. Unfortunately, this verse has been distorted to mean mandatory or instructive doctrine as though Apostle Paul was instructing the Corinthians to do something. As you can see, the verse is not instructive, but purely informative. It merely informs or tells a believer about his new condition, just like me telling you how good you look in your new shoes. The verse, like my comment about your shoes, is simply a statement of fact. The Bible is full of many instructions to a believer to change from his old ways since he is a child of God; but this verse is not one of such verses.

The pastor who has not been trained to recognize the different truths of the Bible will be prone to common mistakes in interpretation. The reason why the verse is not given in prescriptive or mandatory form is because its realization cannot be attained by means of the works of the believer. It is something God has done and the believer is only being informed so that he can understand.

On the contrary, mandatory or command doctrines are given in prescriptive, commanding or instructive form. These are usually experiential doctrines and they are given with the expectation that a believer will respond to them by doing something. Also known as experiential or progressive sanctification, the realization of this doctrine is not an instantaneous thing as it is in the case of positional sanctification which is realized the moment one makes decision to follow Christ (i.e. faith in Jesus alone in one moment of time to be forever united with him).

### **EXPERIENTIAL SANCTIFICATION (Rom. 12:1, 1Pet.1:15-16, 1Thess.4:3-7)**

The pastor in his preparation must master his knowledge not only on positional sanctification truth but also experiential truth. This will help him make a clear distinction between them as and when they appear in the Bible. Experiential sanctification is defined as the process whereby God gradually and progressively uses divine resources such as the filling of the Holy Spirit, the word of God to bring the believer to spiritual maturity. This stage of sanctification involves the cooperation of the believer. This means that the choice of the believer to keep walking in the spirit by not grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit is very important. The term “experiential” is so designated because



of the nature in which it is presented and the expectation of God towards us since He has given us a lot of doctrines which need to be realized through moment by moment faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. This realization is only possible so long as a believer decides by his freewill to use all that God has provided for his growth. The purpose of this continuous sanctification is to bring a believer into that position which God has called him, as it is stated in the first epistle of Apostle Peter:

*“But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, “YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY””. 1Pet.1:15-16.*

God is asking the already saved person to be holy in character. This means that each Christian is asked to reflect God. This is demanded of him because of the already existing relationship between him and God. God is not asking him to be holy so that he can be saved. He is asking him to be holy because he is already saved and belongs to Him as a child. The command is not to the unbeliever; but to the one who believes and had been saved. God has no business asking the unbeliever to be holy; because He knows that the unbeliever doesn't have what it takes to be holy. The unbeliever must first of all become a child of God before he can qualify to be a recipient of such command. And no unbeliever can be a child of God except he first believes in the lord Jesus Christ. Another word for “holiness” is the word, “sanctification”.

Since a believer still possesses the sin nature in his body, he is experientially not perfect and is supposed to use the divine provisions to control the sin nature and temptations

that may come from his body. The Bible describes that moment by moment decision to control the sin nature as:

*“...working for your salvation with fear and trembling.”* Philippians 2:12

The conquering of the indwelling sinful nature is what we also call experiential salvation (Philippians 2:12). You see, before experiential sanctification can be successful, experiential deliverance must first be successful. The sin nature must be under control before a believer can receive power, both for his spiritual growth and for the application of the word of God. The power of the Holy Spirit plus the power of the word of God progressively and gradually builds the willing believer into that original positional sanctification in which God has called him. This is God’s desire; that we are always set apart for His use. So the experiential sanctification plan is designed to achieve or fulfill the positional sanctification plan of God. Anytime this plan is accomplished in a believer, He is said to be holy. The longer we dwell in the filling of the Holy Spirit plus the word of God, the more we become set apart for God’s use. Not only has the Christian been given provisions to subdue the sin nature’s powers, but he has also been given provisions to resist the devil and also to overcome the world (cosmos) system and its operations.

**Please note:** Even though, a believer is expected to be experientially or outwardly a reflection of Christ’s character, it is not that outward reflection or expectation that will guarantee him eternal salvation. This is because salvation is already given to him when he first believed in Christ. Many who have not understood these differences have ended up teaching what they call, “loss of salvation”.

Those who advocate this doctrine do not recognize any stages taught in the word of God. They neither recognize stages of carnality nor stages of spiritual growth. To them, there is no difference in spiritual life: there is no baby Christian (1 Peter 2:2); no growing or adolescent Christian (1 John 2:13-14); no mature Christian (Hebrews 5:14, 6:1); no hero of faith (Hebrews 11); and no friend of God (James 2:23-25). As far as they are concerned, a believer must be like Christ outwardly; it doesn't matter whether he is a baby Christian or a hero of faith. Yet, to be like Christ requires power. And without the power of the word of God and filling of the Holy Spirit, which comes from the believer's experiential work with God, everything becomes pretense or works of the sin nature. Those who hold that idea, reject communicating the power from which a believer can gather momentum to live the spiritual life and concentrate on the externals. To such people, if the Nature of Christ, which can only come from the filling of the Holy Spirit, is not seen in a Christian, then that Christian is not saved at all. Their interest is on the outward, forgetting that any outward work outside the power of God or the filling of the Holy Spirit cannot be accepted by God. God is not interested in pretentious living. He is very interested in both what is done and how it was done.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **God's Provisions for Man's Rescue from Sin**

As we have seen, experiential truths are different from our positional truths in Christ. Positional truths are truths we walk into instantaneously by reason of our position in Christ. They are not dependent on our efforts, but on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Experiential truth, on the other hand, has certain characteristics. The characteristics are so unique from positional truth which guarantees our forever deliverance from going to the lake of fire. Experiential truth recognizes that even though we are saved from spiritual death and have escaped the lake of fire, there is still a daily work to do if we must permanently rid ourselves of the sin nature, which we inherited from Adam as members of the human family. Every member of the human race is a partaker of this Adamic sin nature. The only exception, and the one who has the power to free us from it, is the Lord Jesus Christ. His conception was not through human agency, but the agency of the Holy Spirit (Lk. 1:35) Experiential truth is also characterized by demands to do something. Once you read a command to a believer to do something, whether to walk, or behave in a particular way, immediately realize that you are dealing with experiential and not positional truth.

#### **Three things happened when Adam sinned:**

1. He died spiritually on the same day that he ate the prohibited fruit.
2. He and his wife, Eve, acquired the sin nature upon eating the Forbidden Fruit.

3. Adam was on his way to the lake of fire immediately he died spiritually unless he responded to the salvation plan of God which was revealed to them in Genesis 3:15

The three things that happened to Adam also flowed to every member of the human race. God in His grace has provided a rescue plan for each of these three consequences of Adam's action. The pastor has to know these provisions and plan of God and their various categories.

### **RESCUE PLAN 1**

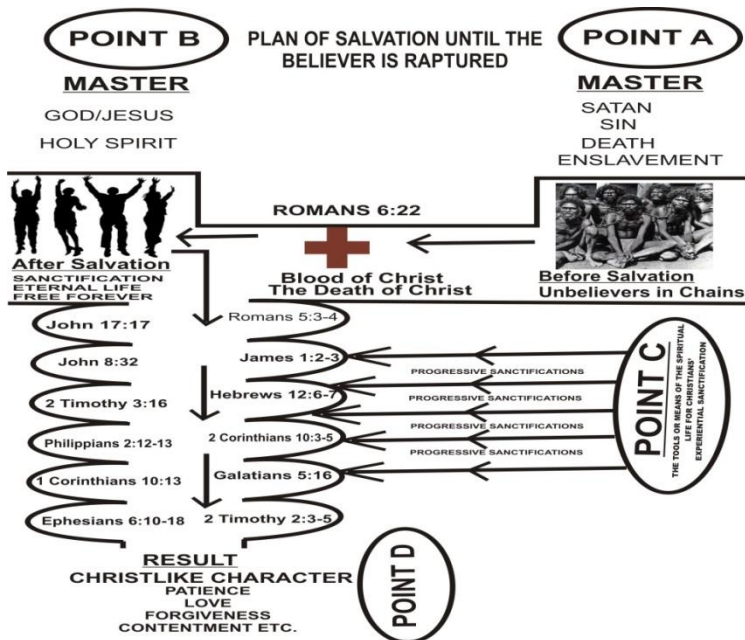
Deliverance from spiritual death and pending lake of fire has its provision. The provision is simply to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the ages before His humanity, Christ was revealed in ways different from His death, burial, and resurrection. He was revealed in a way that the people of those ages clearly understood that they were different from the Creator and needed to worship the Creator through faith. That faith was in the revealed information they had concerning the Second Person of the Trinity, who is also the creator of the universe, and through whom all things consist; so that no human race would say, I didn't have enough information to believe in God. Such excuse won't be accepted. (See Romans 1:18-32).

### **RESCUE PLAN 2**

Just as God has a rescue plan for saving mankind from spiritual death, in the same way he also has a rescue plan for delivering the already saved person from the control of the sin nature which still resides in a believer even after he

is eternally saved by the first provision(faith alone in Christ alone). The diagram below illustrates the progressive cleansing of the believer to make him holy or mature after salvation. This continuous rescue plan 2 is what is generally called progressive or experiential sanctification.



**Point A** on the diagram illustrates the position of all unbelievers. All unbelievers are in bondage of the Devil. The Devil holds them captive because they have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. **The Cross** represents the death of Jesus Christ which has removed the barrier of sin and Satan’s chains. Sin had separated the entire human from God, but God prepared a perfect sacrifice for Himself through the death of His only begotten son who completely defeated Satan on the cross. Therefore, God the Father

expects the whole world to believe in His son for deliverance from sin and its consequences. It is now up to every unbeliever to step out of Satan's camp by simply believing in Jesus Christ. Failure to believe in the finished work of Christ on the cross means that the unbeliever has willingly subjected himself to the authority of Satan and has willingly and freely chosen to go to the lake of fire. So when God cast all unbelievers to the lake of fire, He will only be confirming where they have already chosen to go.

On the other hand, once the unbeliever crosses the cross sign to **Point B** through faith in Christ, he has automatically entered into a new and irreversible condition called salvation and sanctification. He is no longer called an unbeliever but rather a believer in Christ; a saint and a Christian. At the same time this same person receives eternal life and shares everything that is Christ's. God now sees the righteousness of Christ in the believer and declares him righteous, i.e., he is been justified. At this stage at point B on the diagram, the believer may not know anything, except his knowledge of salvation. He may not know anything about spiritual growth, the means to spiritual growth, the filling of the Holy Spirit, the importance of Bible teaching, the consequences of not paying attention to Bible teachings, etc. All these guidelines which a believer must know do not form part of the gospel message. We live in a time when many are saved with the gospel message but are ignorant of what constitutes the spiritual life.

**Point D** illustrates the ultimate goal of God as far as the spiritual life is concerned, which is for the Christian to be like His Son. God is not going to need spiritual growth in heaven. Spiritual growth is only designed for time and not

eternity. In order for God to achieve the results at point D on the diagram, He has designed or set in place a mechanism through which His objectives can be achieved in us. This mechanism or tool is demonstrated at **Point C**. This is the stage where the true Christian life occurs. Maturity is only a result (Point D), but the means to attain that result is what Point C on the diagram is communicating. This includes Bible studies and application, all kinds of testing, discouragements, encouragements, the falls, progress, divine disciplines etc. Members of a congregation may not know this; but it is the responsibility of the pastor to humbly learn all he can, so that he can be properly equipped to teach the sheep that has been entrusted to him. Whilst it remains a biblical fact that God wants each Christian to grow into maturity (experiential sanctification), it is also a biblical fact that three things are constantly fighting the believer in Christ to see that God's objective for his spiritual growth are not achieved. These things are: Satan, the world system, and the sinful nature in man. They are the greatest enemies of every Christian.

The Bible teaches that every believer has sin. The sin (sin nature) is described in the following bible terms:

- ✓ “The flesh” (Romans 8:3).
- ✓ “Body of sin” (Romans 6:6).
- ✓ “Sin” (Romans 5:12; 7:14; 1Timothy 1:7-8).

Clearly, the Bible confirms that even after we are saved, we still have this fallen nature in us. Now, how do you handle that sin nature in your body which tempts you to sin? This is the issue with which all Christians should be concerned, rather than being emotional and filled with self-loathing, because they feel disappointed about their spiritual lives.



The answers are right there in the Bible. Just as the answer to who qualifies to go to heaven is clearly, logically, and consistently taught in the Bible, the same way God has left us provisions to live the spiritual life. Please note that the purpose of living the spiritual life is not about going to heaven, but about enjoying happiness in the soul whilst living on earth before going on to our heavenly rewards.

The provisions to live the spiritual life are already given in the scriptures and that's why we have mandates or commands to live the spiritual life. The commands to us to live the spiritual life are for us to respond to all that has been given to us for our spiritual growth. Before we look at some of the mandates or commands as we have them in the diagram at point C, it is expedient we also look at some of the provisions that God has given to the Church-age believer before first commanding him to live a life after those provisions.

Before I come to the provisions, let me explain this: The sin nature that resides in us is not the same as the sin that we commit. One is dependent on the other and not vice versa. The sin nature that resides in the body is the source or the root from which all personal sins proceed. It is that which tempts us or appeals to the soul to fulfill a particular lust; be it monetary lust, criminal lust, chemical lust, sexual lust, power lust, approbation or attention lust. And when lust is fulfilled, it becomes sin like mental attitude sins (jealousy, envy, bitterness); verbal sins (gossip, maligning, judging); overt sins (thieving, murder, fornication, adultery). All sins proceed from one source, called the **sin nature**.

### **Provisions for the Spiritual Life**

The provisions to live the spiritual life or experiential sanctification include the following:

**The permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit:** This is a provision that God has given us to guarantee our final deliverance from the power of sin. But the Holy Spirit also does something else.

- He fills each believer for the purpose of our spiritual growth whilst we live in this life.
- He fills us so that we can understand the word of God when studying it.
- He is the Person who bears the fruit of love in us, yet makes it look like we are the ones who do it. Interestingly, many people think that the Holy Spirit controls our minds turning us into mindless robots that merely do what we are programmed to do, completely devoid of our freewill; but that is not the case at all. The Holy Spirit is a Person and His fruit bearing in us depends on our freewill to study under His teaching through the divinely established authority of the pastor-teacher and our willingness to allow Him (Holy Spirit) work in us without grieving Him through sin or quenching Him by being disobedient towards a particular biblical mandate.
- The Holy Spirit requires certain tools to work with, and all these tools have been graciously provided by God.

## **The Word of God:**

*“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”* Ephesians 6:17

The Apostle Paul used this military analogy for the way the Roman soldiers dressed. As soldiers are dressed for battle so a believer must also dress his soul for the unseen battle that goes on in his soul. The battle can't be fought by a believer but can be fought by the Holy Spirit as He is given all the weapons. If a believer fails to give the Holy Spirit the prescribed weapons through daily intake of the Word of God, then it becomes difficult for the Holy Spirit to work. If you look at verse 17 of Ephesians 6 carefully, you will notice that a command is given to the believer to take the helmet of deliverance or salvation. Helmet is not an offensive weapon but a defensive weapon or a protective device.

Whereas the helmet is a defensive weapon, the believer must see the Word of God both as a defensive and an offensive weapon since we are engaged in an inevitable spiritual warfare. This is why the apostle tells us to: *“Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might”*. From the first to the third chapter of the Book of Ephesians, Apostle Paul talks about all that God has done for the believer through Christ Jesus. From the fourth chapter, he starts the mandates or the command doctrines, which I call the responsibility doctrines. Once a believer in Christ has been given so much information or doctrines, he becomes answerable or accountable to God concerning those learnt doctrines. These learnt doctrines are what the believer is expected to use to navigate successfully in this devil's world. From the fourth through to the sixth chapter, the

Apostle Paul no longer dwells on what God has done for the believer, but instead on what the believer is supposed to do. This has always been the style of God. Before God asks you to use a cutlass, He makes sure he has already given you one. God doesn't demand something that he has not made provision for. Consider the following mandates in the verses below:

- a. *“Therefore, I the prisoner of the Lord implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.”* Ephesians 4:1
- b. *“So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentile also walk in the futility of their minds.”* Ephesians 4:17
- c. *“Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE OF YOU WITH HIS NEIGHBOUR, for we are members of one another.”* Ephesians 4:25
- d. *“Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”* Ephesians 5:1-2
- e. *“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes to the sons of disobedience.”* Ephesians 5:6

- f. *“Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise.”* Ephesians 5:15

It is said that to whom much is given, much is expected. Since so much has been done or given to the Church from Ephesians chapter 1-3, it is also expected of every Christian to reasonably respond to what God has done for the Church. God is saying, from chapter 4-6, that we should also walk as people who have received unique things. So before the mandates came, there were already provisions given. So in experiential sanctification, God does not only give you provisions to walk the spiritual life but He also allows circumstances or trials to give you an opportunity to apply all that has been given to you. The purpose of these mandates or doctrines is for the believer to respond to all that God has done for him and all that God has given him. Application of the Word of God is always a response to the Word of God. Every believer who refuses to respond to biblical mandates will face consequences. These consequences are both for time and eternity when a believer is raptured or faces the Lord in resurrection at the judgment seat of Christ.

In Ephesian 6:10, the believer is asked to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Let's deal with this verse. First of all believers have the Lord, because the Lord has already been given to every believer. Christ in you is the hope of glory. Again, the strength of His power or might has also been given to the believer in the written word of God. In 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, the word of God is described as powerful to defeat speculations and lofty things that occupy the minds of people, whether from tradition, culture, or religion.

Ephesians 6: 11-12 tells us the purpose and reason why the believer ought to put on the armor of God. Note that reason and purpose are not the same. Whilst reason is the explanation, justification, or the cause of an action or event, purpose is the ultimate goal or the objective. For example, when you see somebody swallow analgesic tablets, the reason he is taking the medicine is because he is not feeling well; in other words, he is sick. But that is not the purpose: The purpose of taking that tablet is that he wants to feel better or get healed. In Ephesians 6:11, the Apostle asks his Christian audience to put on the full armor of God. The purpose why Christians need to do that is stated in the rest of the verse as:

*“...so that you will be able to stand firm against the scheme of the devil”.*

Beginning from verse 12, the Apostle now explains the reason by saying:

*“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the power, against the world forces of the darkness, against spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*

Every believer in Christ is at war with all the fallen angels, from the lowest ranked one through to the highest ranked angel, which is Satan himself. But since Satan and all his battalions were defeated on the Cross, it has made it possible for Christ to give us every riches or assets to resist the devil.

Putting on the whole armor of God is the believer’s overall means of achieving experiential salvation. This is how

Christ is formed in the believer. It is a gradual process. This experiential salvation truth is communicated in different ways in the word of God, and this is the area where the true Christian life is both formed and found. Unfortunately, some bible communicators often mistake every experiential sanctification truth that is not understood as teaching on eternal salvation.

The pastor, who desires to show himself worthy of his calling, cannot afford to miss this doctrine in his preparation.

### **Ultimate Sanctification**

This is the last part of the three facets of sanctification. This truth is dependent on the believer's final salvation (deliverance) from his flesh and the power of the sin nature.

The only moment that the Christian will lose the sin nature from indwelling his body is when he dies or is raptured. Until either of these two events occurs, the Christian will continue to have the sin nature in his body. Again, just as we studied earlier that positional sanctification is logically but not sequentially secondary to positional salvation, in the same way ultimate (final) sanctification is logically but not sequentially secondary to ultimate salvation. No believer can ever have a body like Jesus' own unless that person is first delivered from the presence of the sinful nature. Once every Christian is delivered from the presence of the sin nature, whether through physical death or the rapture, he is at the same time transformed into the likeness of Christ. This transformation or glorification is made possible because the believer no longer possesses the sinful nature. This is what we call ultimate sanctification. Here a

believer is delivered from the body of sin and is given a new body at the rapture.

*“Just as we have borne the image of the earthly, we will also bear the image of the heavenly” 1 Corinthians 15:49*

## **Conclusion**

From all we have seen in this book, so far, it is glaring that the major problem plaguing the Church today and the reason why there seems to be disorderliness in the Body of Christ, is the lack of preparation by those who have been called onto the pulpit.

This is the reason for the many erroneous teachings by pastors who mean well, but have not taken time to get well-prepared and grounded in the message the Lord has committed into their hands. In these days of so much knowledge and information (many of which are false and misleading), the pastor who does not give himself to adequate preparation before mounting the pulpit; is likely to end up paying attention to myths and fables (1Tim.1:4).

Without taking the necessary time to prepare for any venture, a person is not only liable to make embarrassing mistakes, but also runs the risk of not completing the venture. Jesus emphasized this fact when He said:

*For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup> "Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him,*



*<sup>30</sup> saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.(Luke 14:28-30)*

Despite His divinity, Jesus Himself, spent about 18 years (from age 12 to 30), preparing for His ministry. He devoted three and half years preparing the apostles for the work of spreading the Gospel after His ascension to Heaven. The result of such preparation was that both Jesus and the apostles fulfilled their assignments. It follows therefore that the aspiring pastor can only fulfill his call to the pulpit by giving himself to thorough and adequate preparation.

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