OBEDIENCE
The Path Unto Leadership

By Gbile Akanni

In our last edition we looked at the price every leader that matters in the programme of God must pay. Every leader is called upon to drink of the cup that Jesus drank and to be baptized with the baptism of Jesus. In this edition we shall be looking at the third component of **"the cup and baptism".**

The Cup Of Obedience

Finally, the third component of the **"cup and baptism"** is the matter of obedience. Again we see Jesus going through this cup graciously. We see Him showing any one who would follow after His own order, the path unto becoming all that God has purposed him to be. Though we have several examples in other men in the Bible, our Master's example is the standard. It is the yardstick. Let us examine Him closely at this training of His obedience.

> ***"So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest; but it was He who said to Him; You are my Son, to day I have begotten You." As He also says in another place, You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedek. Who in the days of His flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear; though He was Son, yet He learnt obedience by the things He suffered; And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.***
> *Heb. 5: 7-9 (NKJV).*

Let us note as a primary concern that all authority "exercisable" whether in heaven or on earth belongs to God. Power belongs to God. Every man who would bear any measure of authority would only be a delegate. For a man to stand in a place to exercise spiritual authority over others, it will only be delegated to him by God. The essential pre-requisite qualification for a man to be appointed a representative delegate of God is this proven submission and absolute obedience. Rebellion is defined as a desire to break away from an authority, that is a quest to become **"an authority"** in oneself: a personal drive for self independence. Adam's sin, which pushed him out of God's garden of service, was the sin of rebellion. It was a desire to be 'god' himself and not to take instruction from God again. It was also a desire to know things in himself and by himself without recourse to God who created him and placed him over His creation. Since the fall of man, the seed of rebellion or rather the spirit of disobedience passed on to every man born of a woman. Our redemption actually is unto obedience of Jesus Christ.

> *"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God, the Father, through the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" 1 Pet.1: 2.*
> ***"Chosen and destined by God the father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for the sprinkling with His blood."***
> *1 Pet.1: 2 (RSV).*

Unbelievers are called **"the children of disobedience."** The nature and character of the natural

man is disobedience. He is known daily, not just by the acts of disobedience he performs, but by his life, which is the life of disobedience. Disobedience in a man is not just a refusal to obey certain instructions; it is the desire, the instinct and tendency to refuse authority in life. A man may perform acts of obedience while yet bearing about the life of disobedience. He obeys quickly in order to be free to be left alone. He demarcates boundaries. He insists on who can exercise authority on him and who cannot. He may obey one and disobey the other in the same place and at the same time. The sin of rebellion in the heart of man is the manifestation of disobedience. It may be manifested in: **" reluctance to submit"**; frowning even at duty, a quiet demand of reward and recognition for services rendered; a persistent self defense, argument about one's position and insistence on one's will. Disobedience sometimes hides under the matter of "reason". Disobedience insists on doing only the things that are reasonable to him. He keeps asking, **"Why must I do this? Convince me on why this is what I must do?"**

It is not just one or several acts of obedience that God look s for in His children, He looks for a life of continuous, continual, and perpetual obedience.

The entire concept of self-life is the spirit of disobedience. Delayed obedience is disobedience in a measure. Pressurized obedience is disobedience needing an external push. Disobedience will appear to be obedience when it tallies with the self will. Every time you seek to do your own will (even if no one challenges it) it is the life of disobedience in action. Disobedience sometimes is a bargained obedience or conditional obedience. Each time God looks at a man in consideration for spiritual leadership, He checks how much of the life of disobedience has been removed! **"A broken and a contrite heart, which trembles at My Word"** is the man He looks unto. This is nothing but a life that is emptied of the spirit and life of disobedience. Disobedience does not bear a broken heart. It does not tremble at God's Word. It rather prepares to resist, to argue and to remain firm at its own choice and course of action.

Authority cannot be delegated to a rebel at heart. Leadership is a delegated authority to serve others. It cannot be vested on a man who is set in his own ways. He cannot suspend his own knowledge to adopt, embrace and adapt to another person's knowledge. This is why very few persons are qualified to bear genuine authority for God among men.

Though Jesus was the Son of God, once He took upon Himself the form of a man, and had appeared in human nature, it became necessary for Him to learn obedience, to prove obedience and to perfect obedience. What made Him different was not His dressing. It was not His miracles. It was His obedience. Even when obedience was not rational, He obeyed. Obedience for Jesus meant submission to God's authority and all delegated authority in everything. It meant waiting to be told where to go, what to do and what to say. It meant He would never speak His own word. He never moved or acted from His own personal will. He acted only upon instructions, as He could of His own do nothing.

The question God immediately asked Adam in Eden was **"Who told you?"** Who is the source of your knowledge and information? Who told you to do what you have done or are doing? This question of **"who told you?"** is still the question God asks each time a man acts independently of Him and of His leading.

Jesus in all His earthly life was able to say ...

"For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me He gave me commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

And I know that His commandment is life everlasting; whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak." *Jn 12:49-50.*

This is the extent of His own life of obedience; total acceptance to be subject and submissive to God. It is the release of His own personality to only further the course of God. He put aside His own ideas and only executed regularly and always (not just occasionally) the thoughts and will of His Father. He did it joyfully and with deep conviction. He said, **"And I know that His (My Father's) commandment is life everlasting"**. He accepted God's wisdom as final and good for life. He did not obey with grudges and murmurings. Disobedience manifests itself through murmurings. A murmur is a reaction of the heart, challenge of the authority where you are not bold to openly challenge or walk contrary to it. It is equal to rebellion; as if you picked a gun to shoot at the man who is insisting on your doing what is not from your heart. He did not open His mouth.

"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearer

is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment..."
Isaiah 53:7-8.

Note this very well. He did nothing to warrant such a treatment. He was only being trained in the life of obedience. Many suppose they are obedient because all they are asked to do is reasonable and rational to psychology. It is glorious, it attracts human applause. But disobedience will be obedient to anything it sees will be of profit to it. It will obey gladly whatsoever can so highlight his own ability.

"...Because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief..."
Isaiah 53:9, 10.

Can you imagine this? Yet despite His holiness, despite His past obedience and submission; it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; it pleased God to put Him to grief. Why? God was training His obedience, so He can qualify for the highest name that must be obeyed in heaven and on earth and underneath the earth. Obedience is submission even if there is reason not to do so! It is accepting to be used to boost the ego of another, even at the expense of personal convenience. Jesus went all the way in obedience, unto death, even the cruel death of the cross, just for God to satisfy Himself and fulfill His own pleasure, and to prove a point. A point that **"I have a Son who would obey Me implicitly and completely, even if it means dying just to do My will."** He declared at the point of the cross:

"...for the prince of this world cometh; and has nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Rise let us go hence."

This is His own obedience; He learnt it. He grew in it. He perfected in obedience, as He had to go through different facets of it. The training in obedience is to prove Satan and the rebellious wrong. It is to confirm that God can be our God, not because He cajoled us to submit by the good things He gives us. Not also that He threatened us into submission by the force of His power. Jesus had all the rights to defend Himself. He could have demanded for legions of angels to fight for Him and they would be at His beck and call. But He chose the path of obedience and released Himself to be molested by unworthy hands. He said to Peter **"Put thy sword back into its sheath: the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"** *(John 18:11 KJV).*

"***And behold, one of them, which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's and smote off his ear.***

Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.
Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?
But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? *Matt. 26:51-54.*

He saw it as the cup of obedience. It is when you voluntarily lay down your right to defend yourself and get exonerated from the treatment of an impostor especially when you sense this is **"the Father's will".** He would not even indulge in the opportunity of prayer to evade what was clearly written concerning Him in the Scriptures. His own resolve was to fulfill all that God had written and designed concerning Him, even if it meant suffering. He picked Judas Iscariot, though He knew him to be a traitor, just to obey His Father and to fulfill every Scripture. He would not drop Judas, though he stole regularly from the purse, lest it made obedience unto the death of the cross less possible for Him

It was not just one or several acts of obedience that God looked for in His Son. He looked for a life of continuous, continual and perpetual obedience; obedience unto God in anything and everything, in any place and at every time. This is still what He looks for to see in every man He brings into leadership position. The height and scope of leadership a man can stand and walk in, is dependent on the "perfection or maturing of the life of obedience" that he has attained. Paul spoke of when your **"obedience is complete"**. It is clear that God is looking for total, complete, matured and universal life of obedience: obedience to the great and yet obedience to the least of saints, whom God has given a ministry to discharge towards us. A man's ministry is the authority God has delegated to him. Receiving ministry from such of His least men may just be a test of our own obedience. He may not stand out here to receive and collect our obedience. If He does, most of us will rush to give Him more than what He demanded. But several times He delegates His authority to ordinary folks. He seems to say **"the obedience due to Me, carry it and give it to that man or woman, who will receive it and use it for men."** True obedience does not look at the face, the height, and the status of the recipient. He only submits to all men in the fear of God.

It may be your husband or just a young man in the fellowship. They are mere delegated recipients of our obedience. When we lift up our hands to the invisible but immortal God in adoration, but we shrugged our shoulders in resistance to a brother or sister who has been given a ministry in our lives; we do nothing but mock God! Jesus proved obedience to all. He

was subject to Joseph and Mary, though He knew the Scriptures more than them. He was humble and submissive to them though they had no power to change water to wine.

> *"And even though Jesus was God's Son, He had to learn from experience what it was like to obey, when obeying meant suffering. It was after He had proved Himself perfect in this experience that Jesus became the giver of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him."* *Heb 5:8-9 (Living Bible).*

Do note again this Scripture. Read it carefully over and over again. It was after (not before) Jesus had proved Himself perfect in this experience that Jesus **"became** (He was not that earlier), the Giver, the Author, the Source of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him," though He was born the Savior.

He was even called Jesus (the Savior from sin) at birth.... He would not actually become the savior (not just by name but by life and in actual practice) until He had proved Himself perfect in this experience of obedience. This was the way Jesus went. It was the way of obedience. He did not become our Savior arbitrarily. He met God's own condition. He had the baptism and He drank the cup.

> *"Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death; and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sins of many and made intercession for the transgressors"* *Isa 53:12.*
>
> *'The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things unto His hand'*
>
> *Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me; but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. No Man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father."* *John 3:35; 10:17-18.*
>
> *"If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."* *John 15:10.*
>
> *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name.Phil 2:9.*

As you look closely to these Scriptures, they all primarily point to Jesus, our LORD. You will also discover that there is 'therefore' and a 'because' (or reason) for who He is and what place God has placed Him today. God is faithful. God follows principles. He is not disorderly. If He sees again what He looks for in a man to be placed in His Eden of Service and spiritual delegation in you, He will do it again. Right away, God will do it!

He did it for Adam until the same iniquity that pushed Satan out of God's service was found in Adam. Every measure of brokenness unto obedience as a lifestyle brings a measure of spiritual authority to a man's life. If the measure of obedience grows, God also expands your scope of spiritual leadership. This kind of leadership does not come by the official appointment. It is not vested in vestures. It is vested in your life.This is the life of obedience you have grown and perfected in. Authority over demons is also hinged on this matter. Resurrection life that lifts you up from among men, into a place where your life can assert influence on others (without being a tyrant) also comes as you drink this cup.

So far we have been looking into the life of Jesus Christ, our Lord and pattern. But this cup and baptism is what He says all who will qualify to hold leadership position in His Church must experience. God arranges this baptism and this cup for every man whom He elects for leadership in this way. Let us explore one of such, as we seek to position our own hearts in readiness for this necessary pre-requisite for leadership in God's vineyard.

MOSES THE PRINCE OF EGYPT *(Acts 7:17-29)*

At his birth, Moses' parents saw a vision of what he was born to be. They saw ahead with their eyes of faith God's great plan for Moses, their son. It was this vision that made them jeopardize their lives to keep him and protect him from the death that had slaughtered other boys of his own age at the time, not fearing the wrath of the king.

It was apparent that God's eye was on Moses. He made way for him to be adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. This brought him into the palace of Egypt as a prince. He grew under the tutelage of his mother, who was now hired as a baby- sitter. He was exposed to every privilege in the palace. He was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds. He walked in that status as a prince in Egypt, wielding such influence as commonly exercised in the world system. In the world, Moses needed nothing more to assume the leadership status. He was reared up from the royal lineage, so authority was divulged to him by inheritance. He was highly educated in the science and philosophy of Egypt. Such was a pre-requisite qualification for placement in leadership. He was mighty in words. He was an eloquent communicator. He swayed men's hearts with brilliant political talks. Loud ovations greeted him as he drove round the town; **"Prince Moses! Prince Moses!"** They shouted. In the world, that was sufficient to win their votes.

Moses was also mighty in deeds. He did some philanthropic services; some celebrated social actions. This en-

deared him to the hearts of the down trodden. In the world system, Moses was more than qualified for leadership. He had all it takes to grasp the position of authority over men. Good as they were, these were very inadequate in God's own Kingdom.

At *40 years,* Moses had come to terms with the call of God on his life. He had renounced hypocrisy and deceit. He had refused to be called Pharaoh's daughter's son. He was set (so to say) to pursue the destiny for which he was born. He had already paid the price of total consecration. He seemingly had sold out his future place on the throne of Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. He rather chose to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt *(Heb 11:24-27)*. These, added to his physical qualifications, should have been sufficient for the service he felt God was calling him into amidst the people of Israel. Along with all these, he had passion for their deliverance. He schemed in his heart day and night, what he would do, to end his people's affliction.

> ***"Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed and struck down the Egyptian. For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. But they pushed him away, saying, 'who made you ruler and a judge over us? Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?' Then at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons."****Acts 7:23-29.***

This is a brief (summary) account of the turn -around in the life of Moses that led him into the 40 years' training in the college of leadership at the backside desert of Midian. Moses supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand. He presumed (upon his perceived qualifications and the acute sufferings of the people) that they would easily submit to his leadership. In the world system, it would be a walk-over for him but not among a people whose destiny was enclosed on prophecy and the divine hand.

Sometimes, many of us assume leadership over God's people, because we suppose that we are qualified. We shout it down their throat that we are the "Anointed man" of the hour. Some just arranged a self-promotion ordination for themselves, printed cards and labels flashing their bogus titles. Men, out of ignorance and much more, out of intimidation and hypnotisms seemingly succumbed to such self-appointed leaders. It was impossible for Moses with the children of Israel, though he came with the flashy rod of seeming deliverance. Though afflicted, they waited for the deliverer sent from above. It became clear to Moses that he needed different training and different introduction to the people, he was born to serve. The question **"who made you a leader over us?"** is very significant here. It was not **"what made you a leader over us?"**... In the world system, it is "what" but in God's vineyard, the question is **"who made you?"**

In the world, money, education, eloquence, social action; political campaign; gifts and talents; royal descent; self-acclaim, are the "whats" that make leaders; but not so in our midst as God's people. They demanded not the size of his bank account; they were least interested in his family background. They were only asking for the authority behind his own authority. No man taketh this honor upon himself except those who are called and ordained by God.

This question, **"Who made you?"** pointed at another solemn truth: leaders are made, molded, trimmed, tried and tested by some hand. No one is a leader because he was born to lead. Leadership in the Church is not a birthright. It does not descend from a father to his son necessarily. A man must be made in the quarry site, before the day of his 'shewing' to Israel. John the Baptist (though born to fulfill a certain prophecy; named miraculously, angel Gabriel announced his birth) still had to remain in the wilderness for thirty years until the time of his 'shewing' unto the Israel of God.

Moses supposed his brethren would understand why he stepped from the palace of Egypt, the world system, to the pulpit of ministry, without passing through the molding hand in the wilderness. He thought they would appreciate the urgency that was pushing him to by-pass the cup and the baptism. He thought his status and his glowing personality, as the most educated of them all would bow their hearts to his leadership. No! He was mistaken. They understood not! They needed a clear answer to that question **"who made you a leader over us?"**...Though a very short question that would have required a one syllable answer, Moses was found wanting. It took him 40 years to secure that answer.

> ***" Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons. And when 40 years had passed..."*** *vs. 29-30.*

Please note:

"Then at this saying, 'Moses fled..' Moses fled not at the gunshot of Pharaoh. He did not run away because, the army pursued him out of the land. It was an inner deficiency that set him on the run. That saying was like javelin puncturing his personal ego. He realized his incompetence to step into leadership. He fled from leadership. What a matter each man must know here. Spiritual leadership is not what to clamor for, if you are in your right senses. Genuine men ran away from the limelight of leadership, because they saw their inner inadequacies. They fled to a place where God makes His men. Moses fled not for the fear of the king. He had already taken

a big risk to identify publicly with Israel. But he fled for the fact of his lack of qualification to lead God's people as yet. He had a rod that needed the exertion of human energy to slaughter one Egyptian at a time; but what he needed was a rod lifted before God that would discomfit thousands of Amalekites at once; break the Red sea into two and create a dry solid path for his followers to pass through. He needed a rod that would swallow all the serpentine rods of magicians; a rod that would bring water of refreshing from the Rock. Nothing short of this would suffice, in the day of his challenge in ministry. Such a rod is not cut from trees in the bush, with matchet. It would take a 40-year continuous exposure in the desert to carve such a rod for his ministry.

No one is a leader because he was born to lead. Leadership in the Church is not a birthright. It does not descend from a father to his son necessarily. Leaders are made, molded, trimmed, tried and tested by some hand at the quarry-site of discipleship.

Pharaoh became strong to slay Moses, only because of this lack of divine approval as yet on his life. Moses became a dweller, a sojourner, a pilgrim in the land of Midian. It is interesting to know that the place of formation for Moses was in the land of Midian and in the house of Jethro!

Dear brother, dear sister, beloved preacher; would you pause to discover your own land of training? Rather than shoot forth your chest where men's consciences keep querying "**who made him a leader over us?"** Flee to your land of divine molding. Locate the Jethro God will use to fashion you into what you have been longing to become. Moses left the scene of ministry at Goshen. He withdrew from the public eye and became a dweller in the land of Midian. Years passed, he was still waiting to graduate or rather to be commissioned and sent forth with a clear stamp of divine authority. He would not take another presumptuous step out of Midian. He got married and even had sons, all under the tutelage of Jethro, his father-in-law.

What were his lessons? What was the curriculum of his college training? Did he drink the cup of obedience and was he given the baptism of suffering and tenderness? What so occupied him, that forty years had passed before we hear of any fresh encounter that turned Moses to be the prophet, priest and leader he was called to be?

Though people were perishing daily in Egypt in affliction, Moses must wait patiently in the quarry site for forty years until he was sent forth with definite authority to deliver Israel from the hands of Pharaoh.

"Moses fled... and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.
Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.
And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them and watered their flock." *Ex 2:15b-17.*

Baptized Into A Life Of Lowliness

From the palace to the well side.

"...and he sat down by the well!"

Moses, all his forty years life in the palace, had never seen the sight of a well. He only drank potable water, treated and frozen for the pleasure of his appetite. Servants fetched water from the borehole to wash his wears. He only turned up the tap and shower every time. Famished for food, he sat down by the well. This looked like the well he read about when Hagar was driven out of the house of Abram by Sarah. He wondered, how Eliezer came to the well to meet a wife for Isaac; and the same for his great grand father Jacob. Must he also learn to find a wife by this same process of waiting by the well? In Egypt, you picked a wife in the dance hall, where ladies dressed up with make-ups, filed in half - naked in a parade of beauty. You picked the ones that suited your eye. In the world system, their means of choosing a life partner is not by the well of meditation; it is not by the well of humble service. At the well of naturalness, humility and hardwork are what come first. No one is dressed to impress. No special beautification! Girls would carry their jars of water on their heads. They would kneel down before the flock for the animals to drink from the bowls on their hands.

Moses had to find a wife in the same way the patriarchs found the "bone of their bones". He had to be taken out of Egypt to find the help meet for his life and for the ministry ahead of him. An Egyptian wife would have been a trouble in his flesh; traitor and another Ishmael in the house!

Like his progenitors, he had to begin to learn to fetch water from the well... They wished they also had a man in the family to help them. These girls did manly jobs! Moses, for the first time, stepped into service and the service of girls

for that matter. To become a lea serve. To serve the weak; and not girls as though he was their slave. He began quietly to learn to do what his brethren did daily as their life trade. He must be made in every way like his brethren before he could qualify to lead them. He started by drawing water from the well and watering the flocks. His interest was to serve, without an eye on the gain. He had a different burden on his heart. It was to get a definite divine mandate for his call.

Moses was baptized, soaked into another lifestyle entirely. Waiting still at the well, the girls returned so quickly home that their father Reuel was surprised at their speed.

> ***'"How is it that you have come so soon today?'***
> ***'An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock.'***
> ***Jethro asked his daughters to bring him home that he may eat bread. And Moses was content to dwell with the man..."*** *Ex 2:20-21.*

Whatever the condition of the man's house was, Moses had now learnt contentment. He was content to dwell with the man. Greed and high taste have left Moses now. He could now eat anything set before Him. He could sleep anywhere given to him. He could not minister to men whose infirmties he was not familiar with. He would not be a merciful priest, if he only stepped into the ministry from the palace of Egypt.

> "***Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father -in- law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the back side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb."*** *Ex 3:1.*

Moses Learnt Faithfulness...

As a pre-condition for divine trust, Moses had to prove himself faithful in that which is least: he had to learn faithfulness in the unrighteous mammon and worldly business. He had to perfect faithfulness in that which belonged no hope of personal gain. Before this n, Moses had never been proved in faithfulness. He never handled the least and lowly things. Such was delegated to slaves in the palace. No one had given him the chance to prove himself in doing menial things. He was just to spring up to become the "Prime Minister" of Egypt. He hoped to keep millions of men as a leader and issue commands from his own untested knowledge. In Egypt, it could be done, but not among the covenant people of God. He had to learn faithfulness in these three dimensions.

a. He handled menial things...

Moses, a priest, a celebrated orator, a man of substance, driven about in kingly chariots, with retinue of officers at his beck and call...; now assuming the position of house- boy, in the house of Jethro. He fetched water from the well; filled troughs to water the flock. Being the only male among seven daughters, he did all the odd jobs on the field. He ran errands for Jethro and served him in very little things of life. He broke firewood for Mrs. Jethro. He went to the backyard garden, weeding and planting the vegetables.

Jethro watched this man whom he thought (at first) was an Egyptian, and wondered: when had Egyptians become so humble, as to serve like this? Egyptians were arrogant. They were the super power in their days. They demanded service from everyone, in exchange for their corn. Jethro wondered day and night of "the stock from which this one was carved" until he finally discovered the truth. This man, Moses, bearing an Egyptian name; reared up in the palace of Pharaoh; learned in the wisdom and science of Egypt; was a descendant of Levi (Jethro's cousin - for Jethro himself was a descendant of Midian, the son of Abraham, born to him of Keturah after the demise of Sarah).

He discovered that the seed of God was in him. He had a different lifestyle and was molded and trained secretly by Jochebed his mother, in the fear of God. As a reward for his faithfulness in handling the family wares; being a defense for the girls against the wicked shepherds out there, Jethro gave him one of his daughters in marriage. He married as a disciple.

Moses proved faithful in keeping himself pure. Among seven daughters - seven young and beautiful ladies, he did not mess up. He did not become the object of jealousy among the sisters. Unlike Jacob, who came in to the family of Laban, and ended up marrying four ladies from the same house, Moses lived beyond reproach in the house of Jethro. He was not found flirting with other girls. Heavens were watching how Moses would pass this crucial test, before he would be approved for spiritual leadership. There were temptations to fornicate; he resisted them all. He met those seven girls as virgins and left them intact for God and their future husbands.

My dear brother, how are you in this matter? Pastors, have you not defiled the young sisters who came near you for spiritual ministration? Have you not defiled the secretary in your office; or the choirmistress? Have you not found yourself knocking the heads of several girls as you made faces to each of them?

What happened after the night vigil, when sisters got stranded in lack of transport. Did you not take advantage of them lying on your long couch in the sitting room? God watches all these little acts of unfaithfulness and wonders why you are running for leadership in His work. Moses was tested and he proved faithful to God; faithful to Jethro, faithful to the girls.

b. He kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law...

Moses was being tested in handling the things, which belonged to another man. It is so amazing to me that Moses was not like Jacob. Jacob kept the flock of his father-in-law as well. He swindled the man of his flock, leaving him with the weak ones. Jacob served for wages. He bargained over his salary and seven times there were disputes in wage settlement. But Moses served and kept the flock of Jethro for no wages. He was content dwelling with the man. The key word here is contentment, not covetousness!

At the point of departure, Moses only left the house of Jethro with his rod- which God had now made his staff of ministry. He did not leave with a drove of cattle and asses; he did not leave with an entourage of wives and children. He was not carrying sacks and bags containing silver and gold and gods! He left seemingly empty handed but, with divine approval and with the rod of God in his hands. He did not leave Midian with goods. He left with God! Nothing was amiss. Jethro was a spiritual father to Moses. He could offer sacrifices of praise on behalf of Moses and the work God has called him unto, later in life.

Friends, how did you part ways with your master in business? Did you not jilt the man and start your own business out of his money?

Pastor, how did you start this ministry you call your own? How did you leave the man God brought you under his tutelage and discipleship? Did you not go away with his church members? Did you not begin your ministry with other people's labor? You were given gracious exposure to that man's pulpit and you turned the hearts of the church members after you! You gave those feeble, unstable souls, positions and offices to lure them into your ministry.

You left with droves and droves of stolen 'P. A.' equipment; of men and women; and of the man's messages! You stole his style and his special programmes. You stole his days of meetings and duplicated all he genuinely conceived in prayer and printed your name on it. You wonder why God is holding approval unto greatness. Jacob did not enter the promised land with all that. He had to be crippled for life, for him to become what God wanted him to be. Even at that he suffered break away; defilement of his marriage by his own son; the raping of his own daughter; the deceit of his children. He wept for years for Joseph, whom he was told died of an attack by a lion.

Friend, what are you doing with unfaithfulness? Where are you going with craftiness in serving God? Unless your faithfulness is proved in the things which belong to another man, who will give you your own?

Moses proved faithful. He led the flock of Jethro in search of green pastures all the time. He fought against dangerous wolves in order to safeguard those animals. Even at departure, despite the strong hand of God on his life, he still sought the permission and the release of Jethro his discipler. He brought everything back safely, before he left. He did not go secretly...

"...And Jethro said to Moses, go in peace" *Ex 4:18b.*

c. He was faithful with the unrighteous mammon...

Though money was not mentioned all through the story of his sojourn in discipleship; it was not because they did not spend money. It was not a matter with Moses. He left money in Egypt. He turned his back on the riches of Egypt. Why would he be struggling for wages from a priest?. The rewards of divination had no attraction for him. He did not bargain for payment from all his services once he had food and where to lay his head. Each night Moses was content to dwell with the man. Here again: contentment, not covetousness, was the key word.

> ***"Godliness with contentment is great gain... for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be thereby content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and snare, and into***

many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition."
1 Tim6: 6-9.

I believe this instruction was in the heart of Moses all the time. Even during his 40-year ministry, he could testify before God and the entire congregation;

"... I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them."
Numbers 16:15b.

He left Jethro's house, taking nothing out except his rod- the rod of God! He left Jethro's home not with goods and materials; but with the rod of anointing. What will you take out of the place where God has sent you for molding? Is it goods, sermon notes, money, girls and unstable men, or will you be content to cleave unto the rod of anointing? He came back to Egypt not as a businessman, with cattle also. He returned just as he left, but now with the rod of God in his hands. Are you in discipleship; what will you take out of it? What will you return to your place of divine calling with? Moses did not return with gadgets. No! He came with the only pre-requisite and sufficient implement for ministry. He came with a divine stamp of approval on his head and a *rod* for ministry in his hands.

Moses at the beginning was such a confident man. Confident however, not in God, but in himself. While at Midian, in the house of Jethro the priest Moses learnt to pray...It was at his usual place of meditation that God encountered him

Moses Learnt The Art Of Praying

Moses at the beginning was such a confident man. Confident however, not in God, but in himself. He thought the brethren would understand that he was the one to deliver them from Egypt. He trusted his eloquence then. He was a bold speaker, mighty in words.

While at Midian, in the house of Jethro the priest, Moses learnt the art and the act of praying. He learnt the issue of building altars in supplicating for the problems of men. He sought God to help his own life and to send help to brethren in Egypt. He no longer saw himself as capable of doing anything for their deliverance. He pleaded with God, to send another man to rescue His people. Moses lost all his impatience then. He became gentle and meek. Self-defence was no more his choice. He would wait for God to fight his case for him. His heart burned for God! He always sought out a quiet spot where he could be alone with God. Moses' practice of going to the mount began with him while in Midian. He even designated a particular hill "the mountain of God". It was at the backside of the desert. Severally, while the flock were grazing around the foot of the hill, he climbed up to seek God's face for his own life. It was one of those times, when he had the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb, that the angel of the Lord appeared to him, in a flame of fire.

It was at his usual place of meditation that God encountered him. Though busy with the bleating sheep, Moses turned aside to hear God and to see what peculiar scene God was showing him in the midst of the burning bush.

By this time, 40 years had passed quietly while he learnt in the house of Jethro. Gems of grace were deposited in his life. A furious man, who could kill at the least provocation, became the meekest of all men at the time. He had become broken and bent for God's will to be done in his life. God waited for the forty- year- training and discipleship to produce effect. God now stepped in to call Moses again...

"Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people, the children of Israel out of Egypt." *Gen.3:10.*

Moses Had Learnt Humility

"God, who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" *Gen.3:11.*

See Moses now! He now wondered, **"Who am I? What do I have that I should go to Pharaoh"?** He had lost all sense of adequacy and qualification. He was actually content to be a servant of Jethro for life. All ambition was dead in his heart now. Moses never saw any possibility in and with himself any more. He had become empty and it is an emptied vessel that God can use. He saw nothing in his hands

again. Even the rod he used to slaughter the Egyptian had become the shepherd's staff in his hands now. He had become so tender-hearted that he could only use the rod to guide and direct flock but not to strike and kill. Moses had now entirely, new lifestyle where he would rather carry a lamb on his neck back home to Jethro, than kill it to eat. He became a shepherd at heart!

LORD, what have I, that I should go and bring forth Your people? God had found in Moses now, what He looks for in men. He had found now in Moses, a broken and contrite heart. A heart that was not presumptuous. Empowering was all that remained, once God had found the right heart in Moses. God now introduced Himself to him and taught him His name **"I AM."** The Great I AM; the Supreme Authority! The Creator of Heaven and Earth had now commissioned him and sent him. The question **"who made you a leader over us?"** is finally answered after forty years of discipleship at the quarry of Midian.

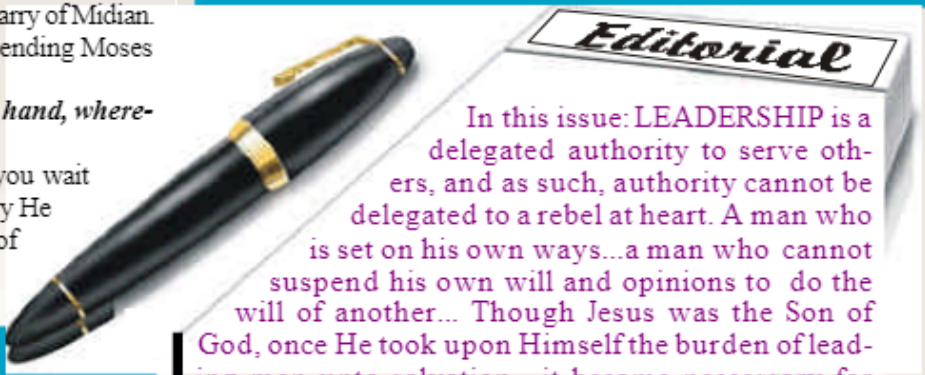
At the end, it was glorious to see God sending Moses with the rod

"And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs."

You know the rest of the story. Will you wait until you have been made by God for the ministry He sets before you? Will you wait at the quarry of discipleship until your empty rod of wood, becomes a shepherd's staff and then the rod of God in your hands? Will you endure the various qualifying tests until God can certify you as fit to bear the mantle of leadership?

Jesus our Lord waited; Moses tarried at the quarry of Midian, under Jethro; others have endured till heavens finally released them with definite commission. Why rush out without getting heavens' credentials?

Now, no one can push Moses away again: Not even Pharaoh! If you rush without this molding and if you carry only the empty rod which you cut off the green tree, men will push you around and out! You will keep contending with the snakes of the magicians. There is no other authentic way to step into leadership in the Church. God's leaders are made, molded and marked with the stamp of divine authority on their lives.



Editorial

In this issue: LEADERSHIP is a delegated authority to serve others, and as such, authority cannot be delegated to a rebel at heart. A man who is set on his own ways...a man who cannot suspend his own will and opinions to do the will of another... Though Jesus was the Son of God, once He took upon Himself the burden of leading men unto salvation, it became neccessary for Him to learn obedience, to prove obedience, and perfect obedience untill He became distinguished not so much as by His miracles nor His sermons, but by His absolute obedience. Thus, **OBEDIENCE is the path unto LEADERSHIP** for any man in God's Kingdom.

To have **"VICTORY OVER MAMMON"** and a mastery of the spiritual life we must understand ploys by which it enslaves.

BEDROCKS... discusses the keys that unlocks the various helps that have been divinely parceled into wives.

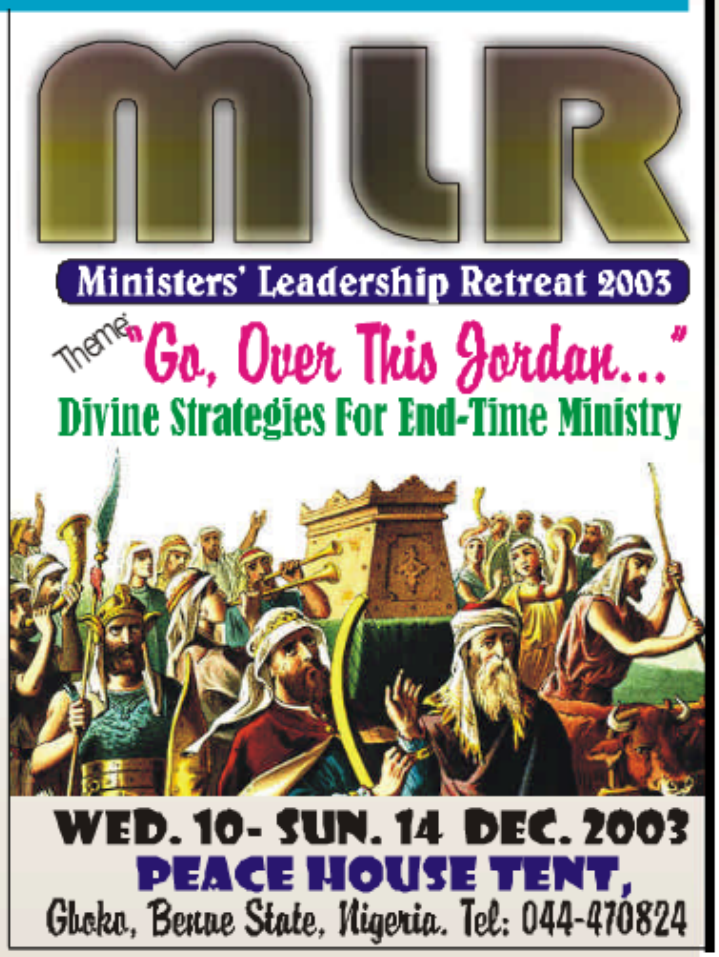
In **CORNESTONES**, find out how situations of discouragement inadvently becomes the platform of victory in the hands of an Almighty and All-knowing God.

In the concluding part of **"DEFAULTERS OF GOD'S GRACE",** Samson wishes every young man with an anointing to learn from his experience and avoid his pitfall.

We bring you these and others as our Lord's further investment unto making you into what you were destined to become in His purpose.

MARANATHA!

Ene Aideyan



Overcoming Mammon

By Dennis Tserga

One issue the entire world system is built around is money. It is the secret force behind all struggles, and a direct reason for all the evil that pervades our generation. It wiggles its way into every human structure and has become the only definition by which riches are measured in the world. It sets up an agenda of pursuit for every man and seeks to entangle him. Unless, a man is particularly delivered by the LORD JESUS from the claw of mammon, he will start his life pursuing it and he will surely end on his death bed, lamenting how much of it he has not been able to make and leave behind for his children. But Jesus says:

> ***"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold on to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon".*** *Luke 16:13.*

Though every man born into the world system begins to serve mammon (knowingly or unknowingly) from infancy, it is a definite hindrance to serving God and walking in His own principles. No man can serve two masters. Definitely, mammon is a master. God cannot accept any thing else if He is not the Lord of all!

To gain a full experience of God's grace in life, we must first gain a total victory over the god of this world and his principal instrument of servitude, which is mammon.

Ploys By Which Mammon Enslaves

To keep men in its grip, mammon lifts up some critical issues before their eyes. We shall analyse some of these, as we seek God's way for overcoming the god of mammon daily, as we walk the pilgrim's way.

THE FEAR OF TOMORROW

One notable ploy the devil uses to deceive people into serving mammon is the fear of tomorrow. Incidentally, every today begets a tomorrow and every tomorrow ushers in a next tomorrow. There is no definite count of the morrows for which a man should store up wealth to have adequately provided for the balance of his years and those of his descendants. Consequently those who set out to store up for tomorrow never complete their task until they die. Is it wise to live one's life under the anxiety of tomorrow? No, it is a trap. Every manifestation of such fear is the natural evidence of lack of faith in such a heart. We fear tomorrow when we doubt the God of tomorrow. If we repent and turn back to know God and trust Him, as we should, the fear of tomorrow can no longer thrive on our hearts. He has already made adequate provision to cover every life, with every approaching tomorrow. He commands every morrow never to dawn without all the relevant solutions for its attendant challenges. **"...For the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself"***(Matt.6:33).* Therefore a believer should entertain no anxiety for tomorow.

God expects us to rest our lives on faith in His word rather than to merely depend on the physical supply we hold in our

Beware, Mammon Can Be A Terrible Master!

hands. God who is your faithful provider, the ever-present help in trouble, He never fails, and never changes. He neither slumbers nor sleeps.

But the unbelieving world scorns at this kind of God-dependent life. It is looked down upon as **"living from hand to mouth"**. It is described as risky, naïve and fanatical. Yet the Word of God still maintains that **"the just shall live by faith; but if any man draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him"**. *(Heb. 10:38).*

We cannot have a genuine faith and be able to walk with God until we can live on God solely and be at peace within. And we cannot work with God if we do not walk with God. The blessings of a life of obedience to the Word of God include an abundance of material prosperity. *(Deut. 28:1-14).* Even then, it is still foolish to rest your soul on the abundance of riches.

When God fed His people in the wilderness, He supplied day by day their daily need for a stretch of forty years. You consider that to be a risky way of life? But the daily supply (and the double portion on Sabbath eve to cover the supply for the Sabbath) never failed for once. Those who can afford to depend on God experience no disappointment. This you can confirm from any fowl of the air or from any faithful believer *(Mt. 6:26).* In *Deut. 8:3* the Bible says that God often chooses to keep us on a day by day supply, not because He has any difficulty with supplying all,but that they might know that **"man doth not live by bread only; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live"**

THE VANITY OF VARIETY

"And having food and raiment let us therewith be content:

"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drowns men in destruction and perdition." *1 Tim. 6:8,9.*

Often, when the Bible speaks of "riches", the concept is that of "any excess beyond the need of today".

There is, however, an even subtler concept of money that is no less sinister. It manifests in discontentment with what is plain and simple. Though such a heart is supplied adequate food to shield it from hunger, it cannot yet be content. Though it has enough clothing to cover nakedness at all times, it cannot be satisfied. Why not? It is a heart ruled by the love of variety. It ever seeks after changes in taste, appearance, smell, feel, Etc.

The love of this aspect of riches is as much a snare of mammon as any other, and is capable of unsettling a heart spiritually. There is spiritual security in the discipline of simplicity and moderation. And there is such a glorious quietness and peace that comes with such a discipline. Do not give it away for the folly of sophistication, which is a worldly mentality.

The world believes in the vanity of variety as a direct rebellion against God who is simply profound and profoundly simple. The book of *Deuteronomy* is the complete summary of God's dealings with the children of Israel in the wilderness, under Moses. In *chapter 8*, we discover that God chose to feed them on the same menu (Manna) all through the week, every month, for the whole journey of 40 years. Yet, no one suffered malnutrition nor did any life fall sick for lack of variety in the diet, all through the years! What simplicity! Yet how amazingly effective beyond all human imagination and sophistication the simplicity of God is. In spite of such convincing results, those whose hearts are overtaken and overcharged with the deception of variety are unable to rest in contentment with the moderations of godliness.

When a believer begins to compare his God-given diet with the diet of the ungodly, he has become "mixed" up in heart. His heart has been ensnared by the empty sophistication and vain decorations of the lost. Even if he survives the temptations in the wilderness and successfully crosses Jordan, he may perish at Jericho. His first spiritual break through may occasion his eternal break down, as it happened to Achan because of his uncurbed appetites for the **"riches of the Gentiles".**

Achan, the son of Carmi almost made it spiritually were it not for the lust of riches in his heart. He almost made it with God were it not for the interruption of his hidden ambition to make it in riches. When Achan finally came face to face with riches, covetousness had the better part of him. His eternal destiny, which he had come so close to fulfilling, was irreparably spoilt by the spoils of Jericho. Listen to Achan's confession:

"When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them..." *Josh 7:21.*

Achan died. He passed on as another victim of the mammon of unrighteousness. Several others have been ru-

ined by the love for riches since then. Many more are still being ruined today.

Knowledge of this snare alone does not save the soul. Otherwise, it would certainly have saved Judas Iscariot. Remember that Judas followed Jesus right from the beginning until the very last supper. But he ended up a victim of mammon, in eternal ruins. Our response is not yet good enough until we reject and evacuate every mentality of worldly-mindedness. We must arrive at the point where our passionate love for riches is replaced by a rabid hatred in our hearts, until our ambition to be rich is brutally murdered.

RICHES AS A STATUS

The devil projects riches to the world as a mark of success and importance. In keeping with this mentality, the world respects and honours the rich more than the poor. The poor envies the rich, while the rich looks down,oppresses and exploits the poor.

Pathetically, even believers can come under this worldly mentality if they are not watchful. Even in the days of the first generation of disciples, this corruption had begun to gain ground. This is what Elder James is confronting in the second chapter of his letter:

> ***"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons."***
> ***For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;***
> ***And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:***
> ***Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?"*** *James 2: 1-4.*

Today, recognition of the rich has grown worse in the congregation of God's people. The rich stand a better chance of becoming our elders and deacons than the poor, even though the poor may be the more qualified in character. In our wedding feasts, the poor may hardly secure a seat on the high table, even though their homes may be the better example of love and harmony.

God does not value any life based on his or her wealth. He is not a respecter of persons. Faith is the basis on which God commends any life. Therefore, God does not recognize the status acquired by wealth. It is a deceptive glory, which attracts no enduring benefit. And to rate people based on their wealth is ungodly. Even the very thoughts of such an attitude are "evil thought" *(James 2:4)*

Nevertheless, the regard of riches as the way of success in life is a worldly mentality that softens men's hearts for the oppression of mammon. Anyone who is so deceived is already set-up for the deceitfulness of riches to thrive in his or her heart.

How To Overcome Mammon

In spite of the deceitfulness of riches, God is not scared of money. The snare of mammon notwithstanding, it is possible to be directly engaged in a business or money-making career, such as manufacturing or trading or construction or real estate or professional consultancy. However, there are some fundamental principles we must follow and some basic rules we must observe, to conduct ourselves safely through the unrighteous territory of mammon.

Let us consider the lessons of the parable of the unfaithful steward in *Luke 16*. Jesus says:

> ***"And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into eternal habitations.***
> ***He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.***
> ***If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?***
> ***And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?***
> ***No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."*** *Lk 16:9-13.*

BE GOD'S STEWARD

The first necessary condition for anyone to overcome mammon, though in active business, is to be God's steward in one's entire life. Surrender your life to be wholly owned by God and for God. Let God's will and purpose be the sole reason for everything about your life. This is the only proper way and correct attitude to life. For, we were created by Him and for Him, and daily we live for His pleasure. Also, we are not our own because we have been bought with a price and are therefore under obligation to glorify God with our whole being which rightly belong to God. When Jesus died for us, it was with the understanding that any span of time we have to live on earth after we have given our lives to Him should be lived for Him and no longer for ourselves. A man's life is already out of order, if his entire life is not dedicated to serve his maker in everything he does.

Whatever measure of who we are, of what we do and of what we have, which God does not have total control

over, is the measure of our rebellion against God and against His kingdom. It represents the quota of our contribution in support of the devil and the world system. Such a life cannot muster sufficient will power from within to defeat the deceitfulness of riches, due to his or her divided loyalty.

The stewardship attitude is a comprehensive shield against the wiles of the devil. Knowing that who you are, what you have and what you do all belong to another will automatically deliver you from every temptation to be proud. I cannot be tempted to become proud over the success or fame of someone else.

BE CONSISTENTLY FAITHFUL TO GOD

In particular, *Luke 16:12* says the businesses we run on earth are "that which is another man's". This consciousness must not elude us at any point. We must always remember that all we do must be for God and so should always meet the standard of His taste. Secondly, we must be conscious to conduct ourselves faithfully.

Faithfulness is the first and last rule in stewardship. There are three standard temptations against faithfulness. *Luke 16:10* introduces the first:
"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much..." Do not succumb to the suggestion that anything you are entrusted with by God is insignificant. Faithfulness is as important **"in that which is least"** as **"also in much"**. Whether your handling of the unrighteous mammon involves a few naira or millions of US dollars, the same accountability to God and man is necessary if you would be blameless.

The second is in the next verse:

> ***"If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon..."*** *Lk 16:11.*

This is highlighting the snare to follow crooked ways, which is characteristic of money matters. Our rightful master is impeccably righteous. Any step we take in unrighteousness is a disservice to Him. We must insist on doing only that which pleases Him if we are honestly working for Him, and not for ourselves. A steward must be careful to know his master well, and to understand very fully what He is expecting him to accomplish on every assignment. This is very important. Whether God plants us in the field of business or academics or public service or private consultancy, His foremost need from us is to shine there as lights of righteousness in this world of darkness. As a trader or industrialist, God is first of all seeking godliness from you. Gain is secondary. This is an important aspect of the challenge of faithfulness we must beware of. The wealth that God arranges for you cannot come in unrighteousness. And He is not unrighteous to require from your hand what He has not first given. So, do not be anxious and do not be overzealous. Wait patiently on God in righteousness; while not slothful in business yet fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. *Luke 16:12* reveals to us the temptation against our faithfulness in stewardship of earthly riches.

The third parameter of faithfulness is : **"...if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's..."** *(Lk 16:12)*. Our knowing that the fruit of our labor is going to enrich "another man" presents us with a double-edged temptation to be unfaithful.

On the one hand, we are tempted to be slack, relaxed and half-hearted about it. After all, it is not our own. We are tempted not to give it our best time, energy, mental concentration, spiritual effort, Etc. Rather, we may resort to gimmicks of eye-service and hypocritical zeal. We must overcome such a temptation to be faithful toward God, in the conduct of our lives.

On the other hand, we are tempted to hide some things away for ourselves. It is the temptation to take undue liberty over what belongs to the master for ourselves. This is the sin of covetousness. The Pharisees were very sharp to understand that this is what Jesus is cautioning against. Look at their reaction:

> ***"And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things; and they derided him".*** *Lk. 16:14.*

We need not covet our master's goods. He will more than adequately take care of us. Beyond the scope of resources He has committed into our hands, He will spend to keep us secure under His shadow. Do not limit your life in the hand of God by a covetous attitude. Do not waste His goods either, let Him alone decide on how to spend your life and his goods in your possession.

LABOUR TO GAIN THE ETERNAL RICHES

It is not by preaching and by giving money for God's work alone that we invest for eternity. Our conduct in business with God and for God as faithful stewards of His, is a major avenue to eternal riches. We should do business on earth as a means to an eternal end, not as an end in itself. It is not what you earn here in your business that really matters. It is what you earn hereafter through it that matters most.

In our daily handling of earthly wealth, whether we are in the process of earning, keeping or spending it, we must keep our focus steadily on eternity. Our faithfulness should be motivated by: *(Lk. 16:9)*.

i. The **"everlasting habitations"** awaiting us. We cannot afford to ruin our relationship with men, striving to "make it" here only to close our entrance into everlasting habitations. For the Bible enjoins us to **"follow peace**

with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" *(Heb. 12:14)*. Today, business has become synonymous with strife and rivalry, for those who are serving God in business, **"the servant of the Lord must not strive..."** *(2 Tim 2:24)* must be their charge.

It is senseless to insist on gaining money when you will be losing heaven in the process. In such a situation, rather protect your entrance into eternal habitations by gladly suffering a loss in the transaction.

ii. The promise to **"commit to your trust the true riches"** only if you stay faithful implies that earthly riches are not the real things. They are mere toys. Can any sensible adult exchange a real, brand new Boeing DC 10 aircraft for the toy of it, which a boy is playing with in sand? Can we compare the two in value? We ought to know that what we are handling now is not the true riches. We are only being tested with these vain things to determine our qualification or otherwise for the real thing. Then our understanding will be gloriously enlightened.

iii. The plan of God to **"give you that, which is your own"** *(Lk. 16:12)*. For now, we are dead and our lives are hid with Christ in God. Someday, Jesus, who is our life, shall appear, and then shall we also appear with Him in glory. *(Col. 3:3,4)*. We shall surely have our own, not in corrupted form, but in eternal glory.

Why would we covet the perishable riches we are holding in trust for Him here, when our own, a far more glorious and eternal portion, is already arranged for us? God forbid us to try to arrange our own here by ourselves, and thereby distract our hearts from pursuing our real portion. We would have tragically cheated ourselves by so doing. Knowing that our own is already arranged, we have no excuse to be unfaithful. We can no longer fall in to the temptation to be either slothful or covetous. The Word of God says:

> ***"Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.***
> ***Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven".*** *Prov. 23:4,5.*

We ought to labour diligently in business not in pursuit of physical wealth in this life, but in pursuit of the wealth of possessing God. So, even when the wealth of this earth comes to us in abundance, our personal expectation does not shift from God to them. This is the way of safety in handling earthly riches.

BE NOT HIGH-MINDED

> ***"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;***
> ***That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;***
> ***...That they may lay hold on eternal life".*** *1 Tim. 6:17-19.*

In order to avoid the snare of mammon, everyone that is handling money, however small or big, must beware of pride. There is nothing a man has which he has not received by the mercy of God. It is not the smartest, fastest and strongest that often becomes the richest. For the race is not always won by the swift and a fight is not always won by the strong. Yet when we are doing well in anything we are likely to be tempted to feel special and to consider others to be inferior. This is just the snare of the devil. Because, as we rose to prominence overnight, so we can equally fall into insignificance overnight.

Be ye charged, never to be high-minded. Do not become proud over what you possess (for they are not your own). Rather, be ready to distribute however He directs your heart. As a steward, whatever you receive, your question should be. **"What would you have me do with this, Lord?"** High-mindedness comes from the attitude of a steward that misappropriates the resources belonging to his master for his own benefit. With the correct understanding that what you receive is entrusted into your hand for God's purpose, your heart will cease to feel important because of it.

"... neither trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God..." *(1 Tim. 6:17)*. It is trust in riches that makes us happy when we have money and sad when it is no longer in our possession. Such a heart cannot be **"ready to distribute, willing to communicate"** *(1 Tim. 6:18)*. Trust in riches causes us to project our lives based on our wealth. When we are tempted to build a house because we can see money, not because God has spoken, our trust is in riches. And when we would never dare to take a step to build even if God speak and we are yet to see the money, it is the same attitude. To trust in riches is to be sure of money than we are of God.

DO NOT LOVE MONEY

> ***"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare,...***
> ***For the love of money is the root of all evil..."*** *1Tim. 6:9,10.*

We do not have to love money to make money. And we do not need to nurse an ambition to be rich before God can place riches in our hands.

When money wins a man's heart, he becomes a slave of money. When your heart loves money, you can no longer use money. Rather it is money that uses you. There are several lives that appear comfortable from afar. Others envy them because of the wealth around their lives. If you get closer to

them you will discover that the true picture is quite different. Several business tycoons are not to be envied. They are to be pitied. They do not control money, but money controls them. They do not possess money, as is thought by many of us. Money possesses them. Mammon has tricked them through the love of money. They are no longer free to do what God tells them. Mammon would not let them. And for fear of losing money, they cannot obey God anymore.

There is no evil that a heart that loves money is not capable of. The love of money is a strong bail in the hand of Satan to lure hearts into destruction and perdition. He has lured many young men and women into secret cults by it. Some have signed away their souls, just to become rich for some years on earth. Some have been drawn into ritual killings. Yet others have sacrificed their own relations, family members or dependants to the devil in a covenant for uncertain riches.

Some of these persons whose hearts are already offered to mammon still attend church and answer 'brother' or 'sister' in our Pentecostal assemblies. Some thought that after they get the money they would repent and use the money for God. Yet, such repentance never comes to them, they have no knowledge of the peace, assurance and joy that attends the heart of the redeemed. This is the case because their hearts still love money. They still "will to be rich" *(1 Tim. 6:9)*. So, even though they are eager to serve God, their heart is not available. It is already committed to mammon.

Do you aspire to be rich for your personal benefit? Do you cherish riches in your heart, for their glamour, their power and their comforts? Does the amount of money in your coffers determine your joy? Do you suddenly become irritable when you are broke? Whereas you take things easy when you suddenly are failing to lay hold on God

There is no evil that a heart that loves mammon is not capable of... Some have been lured into secret cults to sign away their souls while others have sacrificed even family members in ritual killings for money.

and to experience His presence in your life, are you not literally in panic when you no longer have money? Do you not miss money more badly than you miss God? Would your life not continue undisturbed, week after week, as long as you have all the money you want, even though the grace of God is lacking in your life?

These are clear indications that your heart is given to mammon and not Jesus. This is evidence that the spiritual thorns of **"the deceitfulness of riches"** have already taken over your heart. As long as you are sowing, God's grace in your life among thorns, you can never expect to bear the fruit of divine life. Why not stop running around and rather bend down to weed the thorns of love of money from your heart, so that the love of God can really begin to grow there.

CONCLUSI ON

Here is a parting word from the Psalmist:

> *"Hear this, all you people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world:*
> *They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;*
> *None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:*
> *For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.*
> *Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue forever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah".* *Ps.49:6,7,10-13.*

May God deliver our hearts from the folly of trusting in riches, and becoming preys for satanic deception through the love of money in Jesus Name. For, Jesus says:

> *"Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the Kingdom of God!*
> *It is easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God".* *Mark 10:24, 25.*

If God has particularly assigned us to manage much earthly wealth in this life, we must be extra careful to avoid being ensnared by it. You cannot afford to take things for granted. Riches have a tendency of bloating a man's heart so that he thinks himself too big and too important to enter the strait gate with the rest of us. Do not permit riches to deceitfully blow you up into the size of a camel. If you sense that you have already been tricked by riches to outgrow the narrow way, then quickly do yourself a favour, puncture your heart and come down in your spirit. Return to a life of humility, meekness, temperance and true dependence on God again. Or else, how shall a camel ever hope to enter the eye of a needle?

BEDROCKS

Tapping God's Help in Your Wife

By **Sade Akanni**

"And the Lord God said it is not good that man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh thereof; And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman and brought her unto the man." *Gen. 2:18,21-22.*

It is important to note from this scripture that God saw the need for a helper in the life of the man, a need, which Adam probably did not even see at first. He kept labouring alone, doing what the Lord gave him to do. But the Lord who knew the need ahead of Adam, decided in His mercy to make a suitable helper for him. The making of the woman for the man is an act of God's mercy and kindness. There may be men in our time who, like Adam, are busy serving the Lord but may not yet know the need for a wife, a helper in their lives. God is thinking about you all the same. He did not wait until Adam saw the need, neither did He wait for him (Adam) to request for a helper before the Lord set in motion the process of making his wife.

"Whosoever findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord." Prov. 18:22.

The woman is God's help unto a man irrespective of his full understanding of the need, though this is necessary.

Again from *Gen. 2:21-22* above, you will discover that God used part of Adam's bones to make his wife. The woman was made from the man; she was not made from another source. This is a divine favour indeed, which we need to see in order to relevantly tap God's resources in our wives.

Adam's bones were used to make a helper for him. Every woman is her husband's bone, magnified and multiplied. Both the man and his wife were of the same make. She was made to fit him and to fit his situation.

As men, the task that God reserved for us is quite enormous. There are some certain good works, which God has ordained before, that we should walk in them *(Eph 2:10)*

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him." *1Cor.9.*

Because God sees ahead of us, He also thinks ahead and prepares the right wife for each of His men at the right time in their walk with Him. Every unmarried man must therefore learn to receive this divine favour from God. You must open your heart to God so that His help may not pass over you. You may have had a rough experience in choosing a marriage partner, but that is not enough a reason to close up your mind over this matter. Your experience may be an interplay of several factors. You will do well to pay close attention to what lessons God may want you to learn in that situation and trust Him to bring His will to pass in your life.

God particularly made your wife from your inner being (your bones) in order for her to be a wife that fits your situation. God, who knows the end from the beginning, saw the great task ahead of you in making that woman for you. He who knows your need and your future decided to plan ahead for you. You can now see the need for you to make the most of this privilege, this favour in order to accomplish God's purpose for your life.

Again, God made the woman out of the man's bones, because a suitable help was sought for him among the beasts

of the field **"... but for Adam there was not found an help fit for him"** *(Gen 2:20)*. There are some men who in order to avoid marriage try to find help and company in animal pets. No matter how much you try to make up no one else can fit into that hole: not your father, mother, friends or children, not even yourself. Only your wife can fit into it because she is the one that was taken out of there. Why not therefore settle down with her to discover what help God has hidden inside her for you?

> ***"Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labor***
> ***For if they fall the one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up.***
> ***Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? "*** *Eccl 4:9-10.*

Furthermore from this scripture, God saw the possibility of man falling. It is not His perfect will for us to fall, but peradventure man falls, there should be a 'helper' to help him up. That was another purpose for marriage in God's mind. She was made a helper suitable for him even in time of falling. "But woe to him that is alone when he falls...' It is a hard experience to enter into. Even God says it is a **"Woe"** for a man to be alone when he falls.

Things may look good for you now but you must not think you are complete and that you will never have a serious need of her in the future.

Again, there is spiritual (and even physical) warmth that God ordained for men to have as they relate with their wives. Even if we have friction in relating together, scientifically speaking, friction normally produces warmth. God expects that such friction should only lead us into having a deeper relationship, a warmer fellowship between us as we tolerate each other.

As all these (and many more) **'helps'** have been packaged in your wife's life - you, therefore, have a need to earnestly look up to God in order not to receive the grace of God in vain.

Finding a help fit for your life.

Having seen at least a glimpse of what great grace God has embedded in the life of a woman, it becomes necessary for us to find out how an unmarried man can find a help fit for him.

> ***"Houses and riches are the inheritance of the fathers; and a prudent wife is from the Lord."*** *Prov. 19:14.*

Only the Lord gives a prudent wife. There are many ways of getting houses and riches. They can be passed to you as inheritance from the fathers or through your own hard work, but a prudent wife cannot be got that way. We discovered earlier that it is God that makes. He is the One that said **"I will make him an help fit for him"** *(Gen. 2:18)*. A prudent wife can only be got from above, not from **'abroad'**, nor from **'around'**.

Some brothers look for a virtuous wife from among their own tribe, thinking that having the same language and tradition will make her prudent and understanding. Some look for her among their social class, thinking education is the key. Others look for a prudent wife through their mothers, fathers, friends or relatives, thinking they can see better. May you be wise today to know that a wife with prudence and understanding is only from the Lord. Though all these other ways may look like short cuts, they are dangerous. They are not the way.

How did Adam get his own wife from the Lord? .

> ***"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman and brought her unto the man."*** *Gen 2:21-22.*

It was God that conceived the idea for him. Let God think for you. Let it not be the pressure of your parents or friends. Let it be God who will inform you of His intention. Just get busy doing the will of God. An idle man does not need any help. Get busy serving God and at the right time God who knows your needs, will provide a wife for you.

Furthermore, God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept. God is always willing to give you grace to relax and refuse to be worried over the matter. But you must agree to sleep. Stop 'trying' girls like a pair of shoes. Stop your trial and error method. Pray earnestly..., seeking God's face to know who is the will of God for you to marry, who it is in particular that God has prepared for you. The Lord is good unto those that wait for Him, to the soul that seeks Him. He will speak to you. He will answer you. He will not give you a stone instead of bread or a snake instead of fish. He will give you the best. So then, have your rest over the matter. Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there. Do not take it upon yourself again. The matter is beyond you. Just as the Lord did unto Adam, He will bring her across your way at the right time.

Finding a "wife" in your wife

> *"**Whosoever findeth a wife findeth a good thing"***
> *Prov 18:22*

As earlier said, God parcels the help you need to live a practically satisfying Christian life and fulfill God's call on your life into your wife. If you are yet single, you can serve God and your service will be acceptable. Your help is not yet tied into any woman's life. Just as Isaac's destiny was not tied unto Rebecca's life until she said, **"I will go"** *(Gen 2:17,*

18; 24:58-60). But as a married man your wife is the suitable helper that God made for you. All that she is and has, whether spiritual or physical, is for you. God parcels all those things into her life for you. However it is one thing to be married, it is another thing to find a 'wife' (a helper) in your wife.

Every parceled gift has to be first received and then opened, before you can know, enjoy and use what is inside. And there is a right key to open each parcel. It is possible that some may think that a wife is an automatic machine that will begin to release all that was put in her as soon as you marry her. We saw in an earlier edition, the responsibility of a wife in ensuring a continuous flow of God's grace placed in her life for her husband. We shall not go into that again here. But as a married man, you also need to know, without cajoling your self, that this is not automatic. Even for Jesus Christ our Lord, it was not automatic. For the Church to become the kind of wife He will cherish, a wife without spot or wrinkle, the wife that will help Him rule in the midst of His enemies and fulfill His ministry. He had to leave His glory above, and leave His father to come and lay down His life for this to happen. Even up- till- now, He continues to intercede for us.

A good wife is the most suitable help from God unto a man...

Tapping God's help in your wife does not come automatically. As Christians, you may begin to enjoy a little of that help immediately after wedding but that is only because of what Christ has done previously. For you to enjoy that help and that favour of God in full, there are things you must do, just as Christ did to the Church. If you study *Eph 5:22-30*, you will discover that your relationship with your wife is likened to that of Christ with the Church. Note the phrases

"...Even as" "So ought men..." in *vs. 23, 25, 28, 29.* There is a nourishing you must do to your wife before she can become cherishable. Every finding is normally preceded by a seeking. **"Whosoever findeth a wife."** To find **"a wife"** in your wife, there is a seeking that you must do. The little help and submission you are getting from her now cannot be compared with what lies in store for you in her life if you will obey God and be responsible.

Money cannot give a prudent wife. We have seen men in our times whose homes are battle grounds despite the riches they lavish on their wives. Your physical strength can also not give you "a wife" in your wife. She cannot be got by the use of punches. Reporting her to her parents or yours cannot make her prudent either. God has not yet given man the recipe for making his wife to become prudent by his own ability. Your desire for your wife to be godly, a woman whom you can be proud of, can only be met by the Maker, the Father of lights. With Him nothing is hidden. He knows you and your wife inside out. He is the One that makes women and makes them prudent. Wait on Him and for Him. The Lord is good unto all them that wait for Him.

Furthermore, there is a process unto getting a prudent wife from the Lord. There are also some steps a man needs to take in order to obtain prudence in the wife he has already married. Let us look at that scripture again:

"Whoso findeth a wife..." *Prov 18:22.*

There is a seeking that must be done before finding. Praying to get such a wife is not just a matter of asking. It is a prayer of "seeking". You must be willing to persevere in the place of prayer and you will surely find.

Once you are married, there is no room for looking back (except a man who married another man's wife). Whichever way you contracted your marriage, marriage is honorable in all. *(Heb 13:4)* It is time to stop playing gimmicks and making excuses. No matter her present situation, you will do well to open your heart to receive her as from the Lord. God is still in the process of making His women up- till- today, if you care to take her up to the Lord in prayer.

Is your wife strong-willed and stubborn that she always wants to have her way? Is she nagging and complaining, never satisfied with anything you do? Is she quarrelsome or lazy and individualistic? Is she unproductive? Isaac entreated the Lord for his unproductive wife *(Gen 25:21)*. I am a living testimony of what God can do in response to a husband's prayer. There is no woman who is beyond God's making. Have you taken her to the Lord in prayer or are you still using the arm of flesh? Each time you do that God simply removes His hands leaving you with your struggles. He suspends whatever dealing He has been giving your wife. You see her suddenly become worse than before as soon as you put in your own self-effort. No flesh must glory in God's sight. When you are tired of your efforts and you hand over the matter to God again, He will have to start all over again. That is the picture in many homes today; many husbands keep taking their matter to God and taking it away from God again and again

to handle it by **SELF**-effort. And so there is little or no progress.

Seek the face of the Lord over this matter. Pray until something happens. There is always a shell covering the life in an egg. There is chaff covering all wheat. The hard shell in her life will soon give way and the grace within will begin to ooze so much that you will be amazed. Christ is the One that has the keys of David who opens and no man shuts. And if He shuts, no man can open *(Rev. 3:7)*. He is the only one that has the key to open unto you the treasures placed in your wife for you. He knows what to do to break her. He knows the little wisdom to give you that can melt her and bring about a release of the treasures within. His wisdom may sound foolish to you, but if you seek His face and heed His instructions, what you are looking for will soon be yours. But remember! Only the man that seeks, finds.

Receive Her ... From The Lord

"Whoso findeth a wife ... obtained favour of the Lord." *Prov 18:22.*

Every wife is a favour from the Lord. That Scripture did not say, **"Whoso findeth a good and submissive wife findeth a good thing."** The present state of your wife not withstanding, she is a good thing, a favor from the Lord, a good gift from the Almighty. **"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."** *(Jas 1:17)*. God the Father of lights, who knows you and your future and the needs and the tendencies of your life, decided to plan ahead for you by giving you that wife. She is a good gift. She is from above, posted from the father of lights.

Open your heart and receive her. A gift does not become yours and useful to you until you receive it first of all. Even though that woman is in your house already, you are yet to receive her. You have been complaining about her or you may have even been struggling to use her but have found it difficult because you have not received her as from the Lord. Open your heart to God in prayer and receive that your wife with a thankful heart. Even if there are some complaints you have against her, those shortcomings are only from what you see on the covering of the parcel. There is a treasure within. Receive her and every other matter can then be taken to God in prayer. He knows how to handle them.

If you give your child a gift and the first thing he does ever before receiving it is to complain about the dirty and rough covering, what will you do? Definitely you will not be happy with that child. Even your earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more our heavenly Father? When you complain about your wife without first of all deliberately and consciously receiving her as from the Lord, even God wonders at such an action. Whatever you need in your wife will only be molded into her life as you first receive her with thanksgiving from the Lord. All the potential to be the help you need is already inside her. These things will grow and burst forth in her life with time, but receive her first, and then she will be yours.

Pray To Know Who She Is

"Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge..." *Is 5:13.*

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from a man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man." *Gen. 2:21 -23.*

Lack of knowledge normally brings languishing. Anywhere ignorance is found, it is always accompanied by unnecessary suffering. But knowledge brings light and things are made easier when there is an accurate knowledge of what you are dealing with.

Even though you are married; it will be wrong to assume that you know the wife you have married. No man knows the things of a man except the spirit of a man, which is in him *(1 Cor. 2:11)*. Only God knows the heart of a man (or a woman), and He does that even by searching *(Jeremiah 17:10)*. I then wonder how you think you know or can know your wife by ordinarily relating with her in marriage.

Before the Lord started the process of making the woman, He put Adam into a deep sleep. From the beginning of the operation to the end of it, the man was deeply asleep. So how did he know that God used his bones to make the woman? How did he know accurately what was inside the life of that woman? After all, the Lord had already closed up the hole from which the rib was taken. It could not have been guesswork. It must have been by the Spirit of God. He got the correct knowledge of who she was, and what God put in her life for him. He said **"This now, is the bone of my bones, and the flesh of my flesh:"** He knew by revelation that what was missing in his life was hidden inside his wife. That formed the basis of his relationship with her from that point. It formed the reason behind the name he gave her (woman). It was that same revelation that formed the basis of a man leaving his father and mother to cleave unto his wife. That was also what inspired him to be naked to his wife without feeling ashamed or having a fear of losing out.

Many husbands call their wives different kinds of names today: Love, Darling, Honey, my dear, etc. If there is a God-given revelation behind what you call your wife, it is

quite all right. But certainly many are based on fantasy and cajole. This is evident in the way they handle their wives. In the same way, you will find it difficult to cut the umbilical cord that ties you to your parents, and break the bridge connecting you with them if you have not known who your wife is. Furthermore to be open and naked to her without feeling ashamed will also be difficult, as this is only made possible when God opens your eyes to see the treasure inside her life for you.

Eyes have not seen, ears have not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of any man, what the Lord has laid in store for you inside your wife. It takes the Spirit of God, it takes revelation from Him to see this help stocked in your wife. Tapping God's resources in your wife only becomes meaningful and effective as you know what treasures lie within. Therefore you must pray. You must not be complacent. Pray for your eyes to be opened to see. As God revealed this to Adam, He will do it for you also.

Leave... And Cleave

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." *Gen. 2:24.*

It is difficult to get a full release of God's help embedded in your wife when you are still holding tight to your father, mother, brothers, sisters and friends. It only shows that you have not yet seen that whatever help you can receive from them cannot be suitable enough. It cannot be compared with "You", "Yourself" helping you. When God shows you who your own wife is, and the job description she has been given for you, you will run away from all else and cleave to her without needing to be begged. Again it shows that you have a need to know her by revelation. You must pray.

As you leave all else and cleave, fitting tightly and properly to her, the current of God's help and resources in her life will flow towards you without any leakage or wastage.

Be Naked To Her

"And they were both naked, the man and his wife and were not ashamed". *Gen. 2.25.*

This Scripture would still have made sense if it read: **"And they were both naked, and were not ashamed"** ...but God added **"...the man and his wife"**. It is important to note even the order of nakedness. Nakedness is expected from the man. This will automatically provoke nakedness from his wife. This is contrary to what happens today. The man often demands, and some even by force, that his wife opens all the fabrics of her life unto him while he keeps his own secrets. If she dares to cover up something and her husband accidentally discovers it, she is punished severely. But if any husband will follow the Word of God, you will note that God demands your own nakedness first

A woman will easily open up her life unto a man who has proved selflessly open and trustworthy. That is the key. Most women will withdraw into their shells even though they are not supposed to, when they find their husbands selfish and exploitative. This makes it difficult for a husband to tap and receive help from her life.

Some say, "My wife is like a parrot. Anything you tell her, you will hear it in the market place." That may be true. But will you disobey God and close up eternal things meant for you in her life because of that? As said earlier, God is still in the business of making. He will make her to be able to keep secrets and control her tongue if you take the matter to the Lord in prayer.

Love And Shield Her...

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it"
Eph 5:25

This is another crucial key unto tapping God's help in the life of your wife. How did Christ show His love to the Church? By laying down His life for her. He left His glory and the beauty of heaven to come down into this wicked world to pay the price for our redemption. And He did all this not when we loved Him, not when we were obedient to Him. While we (His bride, the Church) were yet sinners, wicked, rebellious, disobedient, Christ died for us. Can you see what God is expecting from your life as a husband?

Many husbands will not mind dying for their obedient, loving caring wives. However that is nothing extra-ordinary. Even unbelievers do the same. There is no reward for that. But if you love your wife when she is uncaring and disobedient, you will be obeying God and following Christ's example. Such moments are God-given opportunities for you to prove the love of God and resemble Christ. Unfortunately there may be husbands who miss such opportunities and so have no record of love in heaven. Christ loves the Church and shields her from dangers, even from the tongue-lashes of men. Variously we see Jesus do this to His disciples in the Scriptures. He protected them from being destroyed by storms on the sea and shielded them from the tongue of the Pharisees. That built confidence and trust in the hearts of the disciples towards Him. It propelled them to go all the way with the Lord, even when it meant suffering.

Do you desire your wife to go all the way with you? Check your behavior towards her. Do you really love her according to God's own definition of love? *(1John. 4:10)?* Do you shield her in time of trouble or do you dissociate yourself from her? Do you shield her from the blackmail and tongue-lashing of your parents and people? How do you expect to reap what you

have not sown? Love, confidence and godly resourcefulness will ooze out of her life towards you as you apply the right key.

Teach Her God's Word

> "***Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."*** *Eph 5:25-27.*

For any godly character to be developed, for any heavenly fruit to be produced, the seed must be sown , that seed is the Word of God *(Lk. 8:11)*. It is the only seed that produces any thing godly in the life of any man. When God desires to use a man to accomplish a purpose in ten years, He plants the seed today.

No woman is an angel at the point of marriage. Even men are not. We are all still growing in our spiritual lives moving unto perfection. Therefore just as the Lord Jesus had to teach the Church His Word in order to sanctify her and remove every blemish from her so, also God expects every husband to do to his wife. It is your responsibility to teach her. You are her head as God has placed her under your authority. If she is at present not submitting to your authority or yielding to your teaching, you may need to check your life. Even the human head controls the body effectively without any noise. Check your life. May be your life does not yet command respect.

God has placed in your hands, the tool to change your wife and remove every spot, wrinkle or blemish from her life. Every blemish you see in her life has a verse or an apprioprate passage from the Scriptures to move it. What effort have you made to teach your wife the Word of God? You go to conferences, retreat and conventions and feed fat in the presence of God, while you leave your wife at home languishing and suffering with the children and home. How many times have you bought Christian novels and tapes specifically for your wife? When have you ever taken it upon your self to stay at home with the children while you release and sponsor your wife to go for a retreat? Some men do not even care enough to pray with their wives. Know for sure that God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows that shall he reap. She can only become godly and resourceful towards you as you start planting the seed of the Kingdom in her life from now on. May you heed God's instruction to you today in Jesus' name.

Nourish Her

> ***"For no man ever yet hated his own body: but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord, the Church."*** *Eph.5: 29.*

There are things, treasures that are cherishable inside your wife's life but which are still mixed up with rubbish. But men unfortunately encounter the rubbish first, so they decide to throw away both the treasure and the rubbish. The rubbish you encounter in your wife today is not enough reason to abandon her and put her at an arm's length. If you do, you are only harming yourself. Where else, will you get those treasures, those **'helps'**, those 'graces' that God put inside her for you? Friends or parents are not given the ability to supply that need in your life. They can help you to some extent, but their help is not suitable for you. Even though your wife is lean spiritually (or even physically) today, she will soon become fat and resourceful if you nourish her. Just as the Lord nourishes the church spiritually and supplies her needs physically, so God commands you husbands to nourish your wives. We have talked about spiritual nourishing. Physical nourishment is also a very important key unto tapping God's grace in the life of your wife. It is your God-given responsibility. Even though you have no big bank account to be spending on her, Jesus Christ, your spring, never runs dry. Each time you see a need whether for food or clothing or any other physical need in her life, you can pray and receive provision from God who gave her to you. He will never fail, nor put to shame those who trust in Him.

There is a cherishing that normally follows nourishing. Is your wife prayerless, lazy or does she gossip? Is she disobedient and complacent? Those are signs of spiritual malnutrition. Nourish her with the Word of God and with your prayers. She will soon become a cherishable wife to you.

Conclusion

When a man sees a pearl of great price hidden in a field, he sells all that he has, to buy that field. Let God open your eyes to see the great treasures that yet lie dormant in your wife for you. If you see it, you will do all that you can, to reach unto it and tap it, especially since there is no other help uniquely suitable for you to fulfill God's purpose for creating and saving you. The man sells 'all' he has and buys that field. Sell all that you have: Sell out all other affection; sell out all other women that flock around you; sell out all other fields that look inviting, though with no **'pearl'** uniquely embedded therein for your life and ministry... Buy this field.

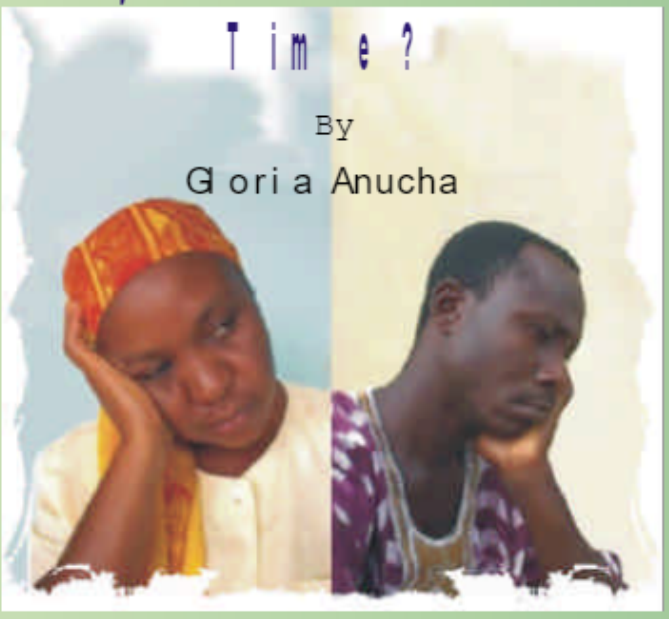
Boaz advertised **"the field"** to the near kinsman but the kinsman wanted the field without the **"Ruth"**... The pearl is in the **"Ruth"**... Buy this field... Take all that is of your wife - the sweet and the bitter...and tap all the treasures stored up. Buy it all and you will possess the hidden treasures. May you not eat the bread of idleness and complacency over this matter. May God cause you to arise in the life of your wife for you in Jesus' name. Amen.

DISCOURAGED?

Why Do God Give Time?

By

Gloria Anucha



Are you discouraged? . Your source of discouragement as a young person could be anything. It could range from failure in school - "I did not pass my exam" to trouble at home - "My parents are at loggerheads with me, nobody understands me." Perhaps the simplest way to express it for you is: "I don't know what's on. I am going nowhere." Possibly no admission into higher school though you have taken the entrance examination several times. Perhaps, your present situation makes it look like one side of the wall of your own world has caved in.

Are you even contemplating suicide? Well that may sound big or far-fetched at this stage, but I remember as a Primary six pupil wishing to die when my entrance result and admission letter into secondary school were delayed. I actually threatened both God and my parents that I would kill myself if nothing happened fast. I could not bear seeing all my mates, some of whom I rated lower than myself in academics getting their admission letters while I stayed home every day, expecting a mail from the post office that never came.

Failure could come in other dimensions for those who are of marriageable age. A broken engagement for instance, especially if all your friends are married and you are getting on in age. "Where do I even begin now? You seem to be asking. "Anyway where is God in all this?" Whichever the case, do you know the picture I get? It is like you are behind a glassy window, watching a busy road in a busy town. Everybody seems busy, everybody is getting on: going somewhere, but you are locked up. Everybody seems to have things going on well for him or her, but you are left out - going nowhere. You are caged. And sometimes, you can't even explain whatever it is that has caged you. Are you in that situation? It is even worse when it is happening to a believer; someone who has a miracle God; so you may be asking, "Why me?"

There is an interesting story of a great battle in the Bible that illustrates your situation and perhaps should provide an answer to what God is about. It is found in *Judges chapters seven and eight*. In that battle, God fought a host of men with only three hundred soldiers. Three hundred soldiers with no explosives or bombs discomfited an army of three nations (the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the East) whom the Bible described to be like **"grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels without number, as the sand by the seaside for multitude"** *(Judges 7:12)*.

These men must have felt great. And you know soldiers are usually respected, even revered, even if they have never gone to a battle in their lifetime. To pass the examination, be recruited and wear the uniform actually sets one ahead of his friends. But think about the soldier who survives a battle and comes home a victor, he becomes a hero. Gideon's three hundred men must have been great in their time.

Consider the way they were selected. Initially, there were thirty-two thousand men who responded to Gideon's call in *Judges 7:1*. By the time God, the owner of the battle, appeared to inspect them, He said they were too many for the work. When He took them through the first test, there remained only ten thousand. Twenty-two thousand, more than two thirds of the total number failed the test and returned home. They were found not fit for the task because they were empty inside and were likely to vaunt before God saying, **"Mine own hand had saved me."** Their eyes were more on the gain than on the work. They lacked inner strength (no qualification for a battle), but were too proud to accept it. So they followed others and of course, like empty vessels, they were going to make a lot of noise at the end, taking the glory for what they never did. That meant ten thousand men only had been short-listed. When God sized the remaining ten thousand, He felt and said:

> ***"The people are yet too many, bring them down into the water and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be that of whom I say unto thee, this shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee and whosoever I say unto thee, this shall not go with thee, the same shall not go."*** *Judges 7:4.*

This next test was to screen out nine thousand, seven hundred men. Amazing!

If you have ever been in anything that involved a selection process such as this, you know that deep down, it does not feel good to be rejected, denied or left out, especially if it is something you have yearned to do or have with all your heart. And this could be anything: an interview, an election into ofiice, an admission into school, even the approval and appreciation of people around you. Any time rejection, failure, neglect or lack of recognition of any kind is our lot, we feel it.

In *Judges eight, verse one,* we can see a group of people who found themselves in a similar situation. They voiced out their feelings as soon as they got the opportunity;

> ***" And the men of Ephraim said unto him, why has thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they chided him very sharply".*** *Judg.8:1*

The Ephramites were not only unfortuante not to be numbered among the three hundred, they were not even told about the battle. Others were given a chance, but they were not. "Why not us?" they asked. This looks like our normal question when we are ignored. We do not only talk to ourselves, we chide others sharply when the opportunity arises. Resentment and other wrong attitudes set in and we find ourselves reacting and spoiling issues. Some other times we may rebel against the authority or withraw if it is among equals with the explanation: "I am not needed. I am not useful." When this is the case, several gifts or abilitities in our lives lie unutilized.

We need to watch against the wiles of the enemy. The devil always comes to steal, to kill and destroy. The Bible warns: **"Looking diligently ... lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."** *(Heb.12:15)*

This is even worse when it happens in Christian service. With all your zeal as a young man, you want to serve the Lord, but you are not even given the opportunity. God's work suddenly looks like some other person's personal work which you have to struggle to fit in. Is that why you are discouraged? Are you feeling left out and probably struggling with all kinds of negative thoughts and attitudes? There is no need for all those. Keep your heart pure and wait on God.

Give God Time

> ***"For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him."*** *Isa. 67:4.*

Our God is faithful! Can you believe that? He has something great for you. Something great is coming your way. No man has heard it or even seen it. God is the one who prepared it. So He is the only one who knows it. But you can hastily or even out of rebellion go for something else. There is a preparation going on even in your own life to enable you fit for that job. When it is time, nobody will reject you. If you don't let God who is working out this to do all that He needs to do to qualify you for what He has, it might not be safe for you. So wait for Him.

Wait On God

Though the Ephramites were not among the first three hundred,but God later called them and used them;

> ***"And Gideon sent messengers throughout all mount Ephraim saying: Come down against the Midianites, and take before them the waters unto Bethbareh and Jordan".*** *Judg. 7:24a*

Your own time is coming too, and God will give you that which is your portion. At the right time He chose to use the Ephramites, just as He used Jael, the woman that abideth by the tent *(Judg.4: 17-22)* At the right time, He sent for them.

I do not want to delve into why God will not call you now or had not called you. The important thing I want you to know is that at the right time, God will also call you. When the battle got hot, the Ephramites were sent for. At that time Gideon and the three hundred men had discomfited and scattered the host and they were fleeing. But they were alive. Even their princes were alive, so they could still gather again. Incidentally, Ephraim was along the route they took as they were running away, so Gideon sent for them. It means the Ephramites just stayed where God had placed them and whatever they were to do came on their path. When they were sent for, the Bible said,

> ***"Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Bathbarah and Jordan.***
>
> ***And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb, they slew at the winepress of zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan"*** *Judg.7:24-25*

It was the Ephramites, not the three hundred chosen men that took the waters unto Bathbarah and Jordan and slew the two princes of the Midianites - Oreb and Zeeb; and brought their heads to Gideon on the other side of Jordan! It was not even the Abiezites, Gideon's tribe - those fortunate to be called first or Gideon himself. It was much later that God enabled Gideon to kill Zeba and Zalmuna the remaining princes. Talk about latecomers!

You might not appreciate how great what they did was, until you look at what Gideon told them in *chapter 8:2*

"And he said, what have I done in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer? God had delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and zeeb; and what was I able to do in comparison to you?"

Gleanings are leftovers- after the real harvest had been done. It is usually about **"two or three berries in the top of an uppermost bough or four and five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof"** *(Isa. 17:6).* They are left intentionally by the harvesters for the poor, according to the law in Israel. A vintage is a whole farm filled with trees all still full with their fruits! How could the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim be better than the vintage of Abiezer?

The answer is simple. God! David's three stones could defeat Goliath -something his well-equipped three big brothers and the host of Israel's army could not do. If you wait for God and for His time, what others would have called left-overs, two or three grapes or four and five grapes, will be greater than the whole vintage - a whole life work, the totality of what those who seemed to have gone ahead of you can ever do or amount to. Something great is coming your way if you can wait.

In *Ps.83,* we find David praying about the enemies of Israel said:

"Make them like Oreb and like Zeeb."

It means Ephraim's' lot or achievement was not only great, it was enduring. It looks as if it became an adage in Israel, not only during Gideon's time, but people as late as David's time could pray with it. It could be remembered several generations after.

What are you discouraged about? Why are you annoyed both with God and fellow brethren? When the Ephramites got opportunity to talk to Gideon, the Bible says:

"And the men of Ephraim said unto him,why has thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they chided him very sharply".Judg.8:1.

But their own inheritance was going to be better or equal to Gideon's. It was only a matter of time. What are you looking for? Are you looking for temporary things or for that which will endure to the end? Is it an admission that if God does not intervene will end up to your detriment that you are after? Or is it a temporary job with quick promotions ending in a forced and early retirement? Could it possibly be marriage that will last only a few years? Are these what you are after? David said:

"The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea I have a goodly heritage." Ps.16:5-6.

It is the Lord who ought to be the portion of your inheritance and cup. He it is that should maintain your lot. Sometimes the cup can be bitter as it was for Jesus at a point. But we would finally say, **"my lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places! Yea,, I have a goodly heritage."** Praise the Lord! Do you want a goodly heritage? Listen to this counsel in *vs. 7-9.* I see David confessing about a **"night"** season in his life: a time when it is difficult to reconcile our experiences with God's very good promises for them that love Him. But in his night season, he could listen to counsel and let the rein of his heart instruct him. It says:

"I will bless the LORD, who has given me counsel, my reins also instruct me in the night season. I have set the LORD always before me: Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore, my heart is glad and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. Ps.16:7-9.

Can you, like him set the Lord before you and refuse to be moved - to be discouraged [illegible] your he[illegible] Thank G[illegible] though i[illegible] yourself [illegible] to the b[illegible] Christian[illegible] known knowing that the Lord is still at your right hand, while you rest in hope. Jesus was so sure that God would never leave His soul in hell or suffer Him to see corruption.

But don't forget His confidence! It was because He had set the LORD before Him.

Be sure to have done away with sinful acts and habits. I know the temptation to find a short cut could be strong at a time like this. Don't yield to them. Commit yourself to the LORD, fix your face to receive all the insults and humiliation today. God will see them and remember you.

Don't forget, the night is not going to last forever.

"Weeping endureth, but for the night. But rejoicing cometh in the morning." Ps.30:5b

You may weep now. But your day is coming. Weeping is normal in the night. Jesus' cup was bitter. When Jesus saw it, he also wept. He cried, but he hoped. *(Ps.16:11).*

Your day is coming. Can you wait for it? Waiting can be very difficult and you might be tempted to ask the Lord questions. Be free to ask Him.

But hear this:

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For you have need of patience, that, after you have done the will of God, Ye might receive the promise.
For yet a little while, He that shalll come, will come, and will not tarry." Heb.10:35-37.

Beloved, behold the day is at hand!

DEFAULTERS OF GOD'S GRACE

SAMSON'S ACCOUNT

Part 2

By
Gbile Akanni

One aspect of Delilah that broke my guard was her food! 'Delicious' was an understatement when it comes to her dishes... as soon as she came, my fasting life died! The grace of fasting just dissipated. At 6.00am, she woke me up with a cup of cold juice, then followed with 'fries' – it could be fried chicken, fried turkey; fried goat meat; fried fish, fried snails and other bush neat from their country home of Gaza.

Her service was another thing! She never delegated my food to house girls, she brought it herself: She never served me standing. She went on her two knees and pulled me by the ear with the pet name she coined for me: "Sam, the Great"... "Great is my Samson"! I also responded with "Del, the Den" My head swells up any time she tickles me with her finger and whispers "Sam, the Great", but my heart shrinks. Some measure of anointing just drop off my spirit...

She perfected my drinking spree, she never rushed me to finish a bottle. She knows how to mix different grill of wine. She served me sip by sip; "sip by sip', I wouldn't know when I have finished five bottles. She had all the time. She gave me full time attention! I never begged her for sex. She satisfied me to the full. I was the one who usually begged her to release me. I had no need to go out any more. She was never boring! She changed her dresses like chameleon, with assorted perfumes.

As soon as I married Delilah, I was also a full time 'house-husband'. I never went for raids any more. You know before now, despite my backsliding; these were occasions when the Spirit will remind me of my call: and my call was to kill and route out the Philistines from our Father's land. I will just jump up and go furiously looking for any Philistine's camp to raid. That was my own form of evangelism.

All of this finished for me. I began to actually cherish the Philistines. I reasoned: 'why should we insist they leave the land?' I began to propose a co-existence with these uncircumcised. Besides, I had put on so much weight that I could not carry myself easily about again. I had no disciple to send or any army that I have raised and taught the principles of warfare. I did not transfer the anointing to anyone. I was a loner. I was alone, now trapped between the breast and the lap of 'Del, the Den'.

When I proposed that we should have children, Delilah objected, saying the honeymoon had not finished; besides Children will interrupt our "love play" too early. Little did I know she was planning to cut me short out of the land of the living. That was why I had no descendant or do you know any of my sons that I gave birth to? My father's name perished in Israel with me. I squandered my father's inheritance, I left no next of kin. I was a useless son to my father and my cherished mother Manoah's name had since been forgotten in our tribe of Dan...

Delilah occupied me so much, I forgot my calling; I lost my vision and I lost contact with my people. None of them could visit me while Delilah was around, she stood at the gate and told them I was sleeping and none should disturb me. She cut me off from all who would have reinforced my life in fellowship; all who would have prayed with me, she estranged me from! She got me isolated from my roots. She so occupied me with vanities, that I

lost taste for my heavenly heritage. Philistines' music re-echoed all around me. The songs of Moses that I sang when I went for battles were fast slipping out of my heart.

Not long after, she resumed her real mission: she was actually a missionary. She was sent and sponsored to get the enemy of her people. What thousands of strong soldiers could not achieve, she volunteered alone to get it and that without a gun or a spear. While she cut me off from my own people, Philistines freely visited our home, they came even into our bedroom once in a while. She explored all my secret ammunition, but couldn't find any, since they were located not outside, but in my consecration! Beloved saint, this was my carelessness! Our weapons are not carnal. They are not located in gadgets, but in our lives – a life of unbroken communion with God! We may be tersely dressed, with mere string and smooth stones like David); but the force of our armour is in our relationship with Him, who never runs dry... the Almighty God! Our quiet consecration, that keeps us connected to the source of life, is the greatest secret of our strength.

Saul put up great armour, while his real armoury was ravaged with sin; David went only with a string and brought back the head of Goliath. What a matter? My friend, do not miss this point. Delilah sought every where around me for the source of the power; she could not find any extraordinary implement of iron, she was baffled at this power that has nothing to do with physical appearance.

She then began to probe into my life; she did it with much seduction. One night, she got me to sleep on her lap. She sat all the night, while I laid my head on her lap and slept off like a baby. She asked me several probing questions: "If you truly love me, must I remain a stranger to your inner life? You have not ceased to surprise me with your ability to dismantle things and dislodge troops; 'Sam, the Great' – where lies the source of your greatness? It has remained a mystery to all the astrologers and magicians of Philistines. For twenty years, you terrorised our people and no one has a clue to whom and what made you great."

She pestered me this way for several days. She sometimes began to weep in the middle of the night just to break my resolve not to let go off of this secret, which only my mother knew. She asked why my hair looked so curly, as if I have never shaved the hair I came out with from the womb. I would find some flimsy explanation to divert her from going further to that side of things.

I gave her several other secrets (which were merely external); she tried me on it by bringing the Philistines, but I would jump up with the residue of the anointing I still had left. And a drop of that anointing will discomfit a thousand troops of the giants any day and any time. Each passing day, I was digging deeper with her persuasion into the fabrics of my consecration and my resistance mechanism weakened out by the day.

The D – day came... A day I hated to talk about. A day I finally bowed to her high level seduction. That was the day what had not happened in the thirty – six years of my life happened. Razor came on the locks of my hair. The last lock of my consecration was shaved out. The weight of my hair was much. Imagine what I had grown for 36years. It did not take 36 minutes to cut off. But it was only a symbol of my loss: 36 years commitment and consecration was shaved off in less than 36minutes. My connection with the Almighty was gone.

As 'Del, the Den' set me on her lap that fateful evening. it all began with caressing, fondling and all that sort of thing. A little sip of mixed wine; a pulling of the hair of my neck; a tinkling of her breast and I lost the guard: She cut me unawares as she began to kiss me every where. She started to weave my unusually long hair, and tie the knots as if it were the Old "Suku" of the Yoruba lady of Nigeria. She discovered there were seven strong locks that built up the bushy hair I had carried since I was born. There was none like it in all of the country of the Philsitines (and as no one in Israel at that time walked in the Nazarite consecration), so this aroused her curiosity:

"Sam the great"' what are these seven strong locks for... if I cut it you will actually be more handsome!"

At this, I jumped up and said:

"No; never have I been shaved all of my life!

"Seven locks! Fullness of power...

"Seven locks! Unbroken, uncut, untrimmed consecration and communion!

"Seven locks! Unhindered anointing to deliver my people and to destroy the oppressors, especially the Philistines!

"Seven locks! The connection to the most high...

"Seven locks! Though I have broken all other strings and strands of a Nazarite; these remained the last anchor, and if cut I am gone! If shaved, I will be a mere man, like any other person...

"Seven locks! My aged mother treasured it. She dressed it! She never allowed it to be exposed, lest any one pulls it out by mistake. It is a secret between me and her.!

"Seven Locks... the locks that secures me and the anointing.

Cut off, I will be a broken man; a city without walls... "Del, the Den', don't go near the sacred locks..."

She went quiet. She knew I have released a secret. If she pressed more I may get back to my senses and strangulate her to death. She curiously changed the topic and gave me some more wine. She caressed me some more "Sam, the Great; You are the greatest I have ever met.A man with the heavy hair of anointing: Uncut,Unshaved; handsome as a little jelly, you will forever be my pet."

Little did I realise that she has got me, and forever I would be a mere pet. She did Nothing that night. She made me relax in between her lap. I remember those tender laps with utmost regret today! Young men, run away from the lap of strange women. The last lap of my anointing was squandered on those lap.

Delilah sneaked out early in the morning and consulted with her masters: "I have got him this time. He unwittingly told me the secret of his anointing. I am sure he did not know he has divulged the very treasure, while he spoke "rhetoric" on my lap yester-night. "Therefore get ready this night... I will do just one thing and I am sure you will catch him like a mere chicken. But be ready to damage him beyond repairs.... I am not sure if his relationship with his God will get a quick reconnection once I break off the locks tonight."

"Which locks are you talking about?" One of them queried. "Do you need hammers and chisel or iron cutters to break the locks?" "Are they padlocks? Where are they locked? Do you need carpenters or iron benders?"

"NO; the locks are strange locks. It is the lock of his hair. I will just need a new razor blade to scrape it up to the skin. I also need a deep sedative, lest he wakes up while we barb him. I perceive the locks would be very strong. It has remained uncut since he was born. Just stand by in case of any emergency..."

So, the plan for my 'downfall' was set. I foolishly played with those breasts again, while she played around the lock... tracing where to cut and all would be gone. She mixed the usual wine, but this time with some increased dosage of *"Valium 5"*. She also sprayed Chlorofon related air freshener in the room. I was knocked off, snoring with my saliva all over her lap. She reached out for the new razor blade, one after the other, she cut off the seven locks up to the skin. I was clean shaven by the time I woke up.

She woke me up first with a cynical laughter: "Sam, the Great" – my pet.... my household pet":
she tortured me, squeezed my hands, no muscle rose up. She beat me with cane; I was just looking dumbfounded.

For the first time, in *36* years, I felt light... I felt empty and emptied... I shook my head, it was all light and empty... I shook my body... there was no response..."Del, the Den" has actually become the Den of Lions now! I begged her for water to drink, she turned a deaf ear! I prostrated for her to protect me from the enemy, she only laughed and reminded me of how many of her people I had slaughtered.

I began to hear the footsteps of men around the sitting room. Delilah rose up with relish of a job accomplished. She opened the door into our bedroom and brought me out of her bosom into the wicked hands of the Philistines. They bound me with fetters and I could not resist. I was now an ordinary man. They brought their screw drivers and began to scoop out my eyes... I begged; I pleaded; I cried like a baby... No one cared. Delilah had changed. She has re-united with her people.

I called my mother, my father to no avail. I shouted to God – the God of Abraham, but Heaven was closed! I was lost. I lost my two eyes... I went into utter darkness. I tried all my old strategies, none worked. The Lord has departed from me: Ichabod! The glory has left. I was now a mere shadow of my self...

I was then bundled to the house of Dagon, the god of the Philistines – captive! A Captain now turned Captive. Loud ovation rose for Dagon that day! Delilah was crowned for a job well done. I was made to bow to Dagon as the supreme: Though my heart was crying out to the God of my fathers.

This was the beginning of my dark years. No one could trace me. I saw no one again. Right there, Delilah was given to another Prince in marriage, and I was made to dance and entertain them at her reception: O wretched man that I had become.

What my mother guarded jealously for years, Delilah came to destroy in few minutes... I became a grinder of stones in the prison. Dark years! Dark and dreary! I lost all friends. I saw no one again; I was blinded to all the beauty that attracted me to the valley years ago. I was made a sporting tool for their entertainment... Rather than do exploit, I became a sport for the uncircumcised. I blame no one! I accepted all the blame. I abandoned the mercy that could have been mine, as I pursued lying vanity...

Years rolled, but a ray of light began to dawn on

my heart... I knew I had missed my opportunity to serve the God of my fathers. I had wasted all the grace poured on me. I was now a debtor of grace; a debtor to my parents whom I insulted; a debtor to my country men, I was born to serve and deliver with the great anointing I bore for years; I was a debtor to myself, for dishonouring God; a debtor to my clan whose name and inheritance I had squandered. I was a debtor to God who called me from my mother's womb.

What should I do now to pay my numerous debts? The hope of recovery of my sight is none existent, I only waited for death. But I must seek forgiveness and restoration lest I end up in the eternal hell. I remembered Scriptures like;

> ***"If we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."***
> ***"Create in me a new heart O God, and renew a right spirit within me!"***

On my knees I fell one afternoon, in that dark prison room, I cried and cried! The prison wardens came, saw me soaked in the pool of my tears. I spoke in our Hebrew tongue. They left me alone. I cried until the LORD heard me. He heard me and dropped words of assurance of forgiveness in my heart.

It was difficult for me to accept forgiveness, I wanted to cry some more... "O God! My grace account is frozen! I have nothing with which to meet you! I was born to reproduce, but I squandered the anointing and I am coming to you empty handed. How will you forgive a wretched sinner like me? I disobeyed my parents... the birds of hell have plucked out my eyes (as you said in *Proverbs*); O Lord, have mercy on me! Draw me back to thy presence, even if I have become earthly useless, let me not miss heaven completely... etc."

Such were the cries of my heart every day. No one was knowledgeable enough to minister to me, but God by His Spirit cleansed my heart. I resumed my Nazarite consecration again: No more wine; no more fermented fruits; No more women; No more sight seeing. I refused any one to touch my hair again.

Now in the prison, I began my daily prayers. I could not read any scroll; I only recalled all that my mother taught me in my growing years; God in His mercy began to come to me again. I began to see Him in my vision and in my dreams! The more my hair grew, the easier I felt with the heavy stone I was assigned to grind.

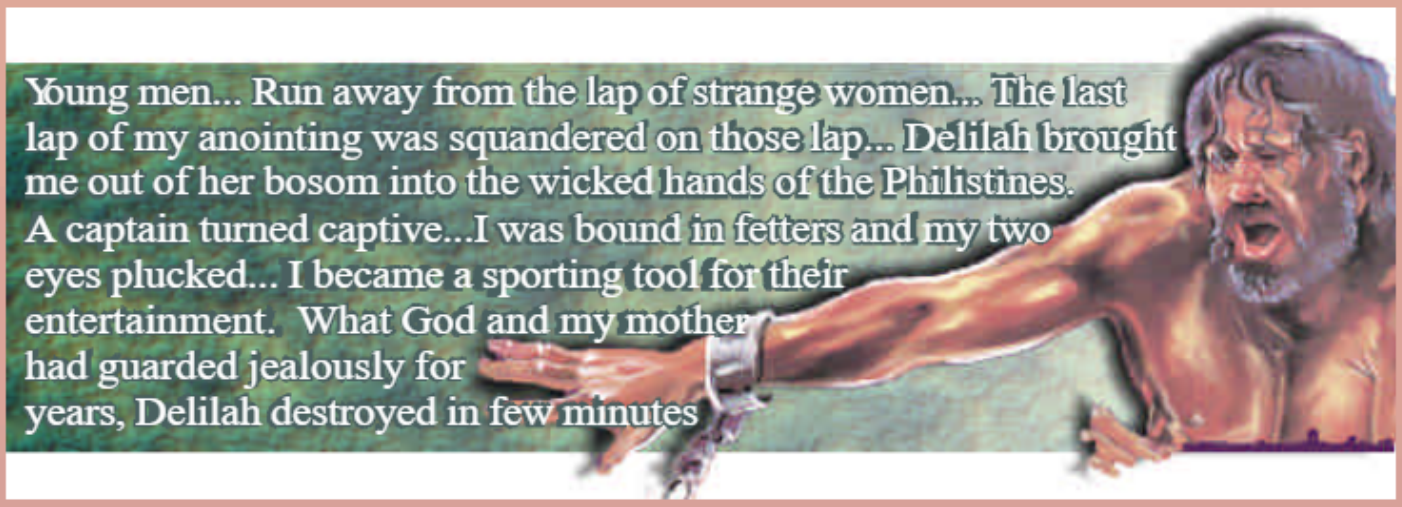
What hundreds of Philistines could not lift, I would push it with my hands. The prison warden marvelled at my strength, but he had no clue to this unusual power. Delilah forgot to inform them that if the locks grow again, I might become strong again. It was not the hair that grew back; it was my inner consecration. It was my relationship with God that started to grow...

I began to wish He gave me another chance to undo all the mess I had done: To unmarry the girls I had married; to restitute all the abuses I railed on my elders... I wish I had a little chance to confess before the congregation of Israel. I wish I am given a little chance to disciple at least one person... but all was just too late. I kept begging just for one more chance to rectify my destiny.

It was revealed to me in my spirit that I have been forgiven, but that I will surely die among the Philistines. I would have no chance to step back alive on the soil of Israel... I would have no chance to marry again...

I would rather enter into the "Eunuch consecration." I would rather prepare for death and wish to enter the presence of the Lord with some souls.

I changed my line of prayer and stopped the wishful thinking. I prayed realistic prayers. I would not sit



again on the bench of regret. I must maximise my opportunity in death...

I began to ask God: "O Lord, I was given twenty years to do exploit for you, but I wasted all. I only have one day left – the day of my death. Please, grant that at my death, I may destroy more Philistines and their lords and gods than I have done in years of my youth..."

Beloved brethren, do not give up! Let my story encourage you. God is merciful and gracious. While you may not regain the lost years, invest the little opportunity that remains. You can still strike a blow on the enemy, though you have been wounded, even if you must die. I could talk to you today because God granted me a second chance. He granted Jonah, Peter, Jacob and several others the second chance. Do not persist in sins. Do not cover - up with hypocrisy. Do not go for the bogus titles just to cover- up. Wait patiently through the prison into which your sin and carelessness has thrown you. Sin brings dark years, but if you repent the day would dawn again – either into fresh ministry or into His glorious presence.

For me, my second and last chance came when the whole country of the Philistines gathered to celebrate their victory over their enemies. The five lords were present; the President was sitted; Dagon was especially decorated. All its priests were on duty. Every citizen came for this national festival. I was brought forth from the prison as the number one exhibit of their victory. I was to be displayed and to perform some entertainment to their guts. The National stadium was the choice venue. Men were hanging on the galleries just to catch a glimpse. Delilah was again being honoured as the heroin of the day. My fellowship with God has built up again, my hair had filled up back and some fresh anointing is flowing in my heart. I was determined not to waste this chance. I pleaded with God again, that as I bow in death, I must not go empty-handed. I was no more interested in knowing the statistics or in receiving congratulations, I knew I would be dead by the end of the day...

I asked the young man leading me by the hand: "Where are the pillars on which the entire edifice rests? Can I please feel it with my hands?"
He showed me and connected my hands to the two pillars; they all thought it was another acrobatic performance I was about to perform. They watched with keen interest. As I pulled, God supplied the strength much more than the one I used to pull and carry the gates; it was more unique than the one I applied when I tore the lion.

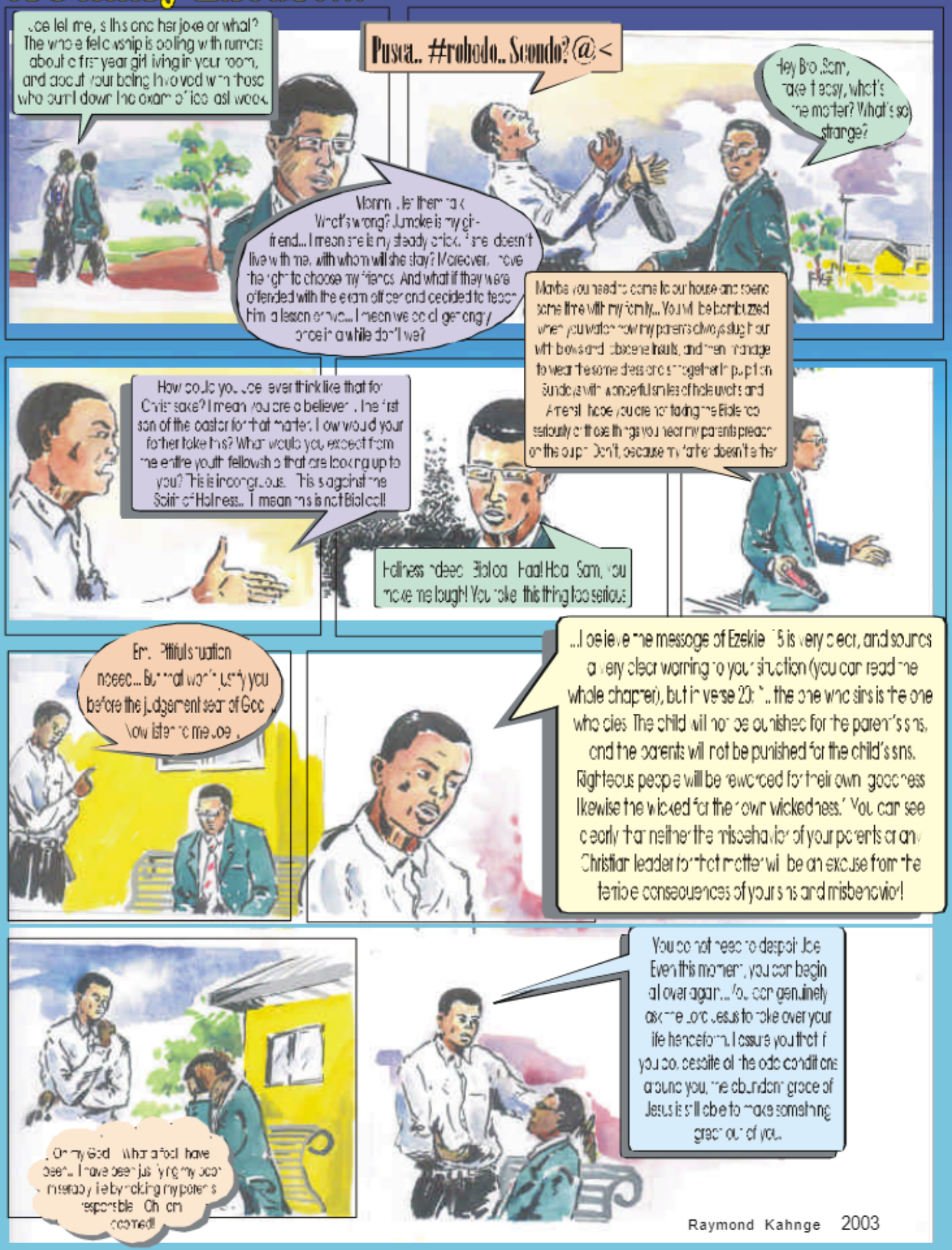
The pillars moved, and the stadium collapsed. Before any one could escape, they were trapped within the debris. I supposed Dagon fell into pieces... five lords were slaughtered at once. Delilah fell head long and uncountable number of giants became like logs of wood. Of course it fell finally on myself. I only opened my eyes on the other shore in the Master's waiting arms. You know the rest of the story.

I perceive you must pick issues out of this fragments of my life. If it can help you, I will be grateful to God that though I could not live to disciple men for God, this story of mine would contribute to other peoples' efforts at instructing you on the path of life.

I could not outline all the issues. They are in fragments. Sit down and pick out relevant portions for your own life. Others may need the other fragments... other casualties would not speak so clearly to you. Look into their own basket of fragments as well. Some unfortunately wasted their second chances again and they have ended in hell today. Yet, I counsel you, read their story again. Shake the basket of their fragments. Something of value may drop for your instruction. "Do I say good night? I am waiting for you up here... Do not let it be a good bye..."

Though the dead would not speak like this! Samson is dead, but *Hebrews 11* has listed him among the heroes of our faith. We have allowed his story to speak like this, so you can pick treasures out of the fragments. Bend your knees today O wounded soldier... God has not finished with you, the presumptuous preacher. Do not be arrogant; do not let results confuse you. Do not intimidate your parents in the Lord and your disciplers with the result of an anointing, though you yourself have lost your anchor of consecration. Learn his lessons; avoid his pits that you may climb on his back. Pray at this point.

"A Flimsy Excuse..."



JESUS

The Way Into What I Was Born To Be!

But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the Angels for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour…" *Heb. 2:9 (KJV).*

Only by the inexhaustible patience and tender mercies of God can it be revealed and replayed back to a man what was original ordained for him- What by an act of gracious benevolence was unequivocally bequeathed to him by a single decree of the God- head at creation…

> ***"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion..."*** *Gen. 1:26.*

The expanse and extend of that glory, honour and majesty is beyond what any heart (no matter how lofty the imagination) can presently conceive…

> ***"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."*** *1Cor 2:9.*

All that men has seen since creation, the earth with is store of wonders untold, is still a very poor premise upon which to forecast the magnitude of this inheritance…

> ***"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."*** *2Co 4:18.*

The wonder of wonders as you may imagine is not even the splendour of this "glory" that we are here thus unable even to express in human language: But that all of it was willed to a mere man like you and myself- not even to Arch-angels, or the other glorious heavenly beings: But man, the weakest of all God's creation. Even angels are far more superior; they are not made out of clay; they are immortal; they are omnipresent; they have no restriction and limitation of time and space…and you could go on and on. But;

> ***"…unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak."*** *Heb. 2:5.*

By this act, so it seems; that God, (the ancient of days, custodian and creator and sustainer of all that is perfect and excellent) has made a blunder to the whole witnesses of principalities, powers, and the heavenly hosts…Even the disdain, and the sarcasm of such a flaw couldn't be hidden;

> ***"But one in a certain place testified saying, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man that Thou visitest him?***
> ***Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and did set him over the works of Thy hands:***
> ***Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet…"*** *Heb. 2: 6-8.*

To further authenticate their fears and make God look like a flop, the first man Adam missed out. Instead of having dominion, he became dominated, he was every thing else, except a ruler and an overcomer- instead of ruling over everything

true to decree, every thing ruled him: passions, sins, satan, demons, poverty, fear, sickness, (a little out of the several others) that has become his masters. In reality, and for all practical purposes, this is the condition of man at present: Every thing is on top- he is under!

"…But now, we see not yet all things put under him." In God's eternal and unchangeable decree man is in –charge but in the present, he is a slave…

But we see Jesus...

"But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the Angels for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour…"

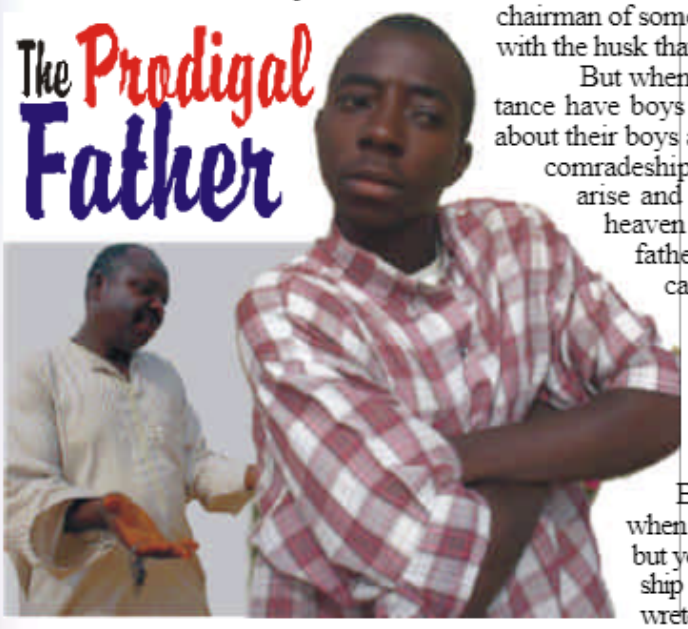
But we see Jesus who though (in heaven He used to be God), but for all practical demonstration and vindication of God's choice, was deliberately made to come to the earth as a mere man (lower than the angels). He was made to come to this world and begin from the clay just like every other man did. Yet, as a testimony, a validation to God's wisdom in putting man in charge (instead of arch-angels, demons, and what else have you). We see Jesus, a man among several men, a specimen of a man, now in reality attain to that loftiness.

Alleluia! What an assurance! What a glorious hope in the midst of the gloomiest scenario, that God has not made a mistake concerning me. Notwithstanding what I am presently, I see Jesus; I see in Jesus, a captivating, and an irrefutable evidence of what is awaiting me. God's will for my dominion, for the highest glory and honour will come to pass irrespective of the present overwhelming negative experience. For, it came to pass too for Jesus. Although we do not yet see all men in dominion, but we see a man- JESUS, who also started life (lower than the angels) like myself, now attained unto glory and honour.

What I was He once was, therefore, what He now is, I will become- if I just follow Him, if I believe on Him, if I become His disciple- I will become what He is…

"All things are delivered unto me of my Father: …Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." *Matt. 11:27-29.*

The Prodigal Father



A certain man had two sons and the youngest of them said to his father, "Father, give me the portion of thy time and thy attention and thy companionship and thy counsel and guidiance which falleth to me." And he divided unto him his living, in that he paid his boy's bills and sent him to a costly primary school, to college and to a higher institution, and tried to believe that he was doing his full duty to his son.

And not many days after, the father gathered all his interest and aspirations and ambitions and took his journey into a far country, into a land of stocks, shares, distributorship, politics, and ministries which do not interest a boy, and there he wasted his precious opportunity of being a chum to his son. And when he had spent the very best of his life and had gained fame and finance but no fulfilment, there arose a mighty famine in his heart and he began to be in want of sympathy and real companionship.

And he went and joined himself to one of the associations of that country, and they elected him a board member and chairman of some certain committees. And he fain would have satisfied himself with the husk that other men did eat, and no man gave him any real friendship.

But when he came to himself, he said, "How many men of my acquaintance have boys whom they understand and who understand them, and talk about their boys and associate with their boys and seem perfectly happy in the comradeship of their sons, while I perish here with heart hunger? I will arise and go to my son and say unto him 'son, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and I am no more worthy to be called thy father. Make me as one of thy acquaintances.'" And he rose and came to his son.

But while he was yet afar off, his son saw him and was moved with astonishment, and instead of running and falling on his neck, he drew back and was ill at ease. And the father said unto him, 'son, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and I am no more worthy to be called thy father. Forgive me now, and let me be thy friend."

But the son said, "not so, for it is too late. There was a time when I wanted your companionship, your advice and counsel, but you were too busy. I got the information and companionship I needed, but I got the wrong kind, and now, alas, I am wretched in soul and body. It is too late-too late-too late!"