

# I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE NOR FORSAKE THEE

[GKS Press](#) February 16, 2022

*Being the full text of the Address of the Chairman of the Executive Board of God's Kingdom Society (GKS), the Church of the living God, on the Last and Great Day of the Christian Feast of Tabernacles in Salem City, Warri, Delta State, Nigeria on Sunday, December 23, 2012.*

Dearly Beloved Brothers, Sisters and Invited Guests,

Hail Jehovah and Jesus Christ!

May the Almighty God who dwells in the heaven of heavens, by Whose Power we are all gathered under the banner of the truth to celebrate this great Feast of feasts, the Feast of Tabernacles, be glory, honour and adoration forever through His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

We cannot thank God enough for keeping us alive to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for the year 2012, despite the various troubles with which the devil had afflicted people in Nigeria and other parts of the world during the year. It was Jeremiah the Prophet who declared: "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." – Lamentations 3:22, 23.

It is for the purpose of strengthening our faith to enable us face with fortitude and hope the perils of the times, that I have chosen as my address to celebrants this year the topic: "I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE NOR FORSAKE THEE".

His People

God Almighty will never abandon those who look to Him for sustenance and salvation by His grace. But while He will always guide, protect and care He will also not fail to hold them to account whenever they walk contrary to His laws. Referring to His chosen nation, the natural Jews, God declared: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." (Amos 3:2) This text underlines the privileged status which the natural Jews had in terms of their relationship with the Almighty God. This special relationship with God had earlier been highlighted in Exodus 19:4-6, where God Almighty spoke of His protection and care over the nation of Israel for the fact that they were a peculiar treasure unto him above all people. The "Israel of God" today, however, is no longer limited to the natural Jews but comprises all people of goodwill in any part of the world who believe in Jesus Christ and therefore worship the Father in spirit and in truth. (Galatians 3:26-28; John 4:22-24; Matthew 18:20; etc.) It is a great blessing to be counted among God's covenant people, hence in Psalm 33:12 it is written: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD: and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance." See also Psalm 65:4 and 144:15.

### **Divine Promise**

God Almighty had from time of old promised to protect, sustain and increase His people on the condition that they obeyed His commandments. It was to this end Moses the Prophet declared: "And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed." (Deuteronomy 31:8) It was important that Moses should give such exhortation to the people at that time in that he was about to leave them by way of death. He therefore made them to understand that though he would not be with them anymore, they should not harbour fears about the future because God Almighty Who is the Everlasting God will continue to be with them. He told them: "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, ... for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."

(Deuteronomy 31:6) It is instructive that God Almighty gave a similar assurance to Joshua the successor of Moses when He charged him to carry on the work with courage. – Joshua 1:5-9.

The promise of God Almighty to always guide and care for His servants particularly, and the rest of the faithful generally, is pointedly expressed with the use of picture language in Isaiah 49:15, where the Almighty God posed the question: “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?” Then He answered in the first person, “yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.” (See also Isaiah 41:10-16) That the attention of God Almighty will always be on the faithful, to continually direct them with His holy spirit and feed them with His word is a great source of comfort and strength to His children on earth. God gives us this much assurance in Isaiah 41:17, where it is written: “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.”

## Examples

Since our heavenly Father has made such precious promises to His people, some may wonder what is the need for this sermon “**I will never leave thee nor forsake thee**”. The fact is that the devil could be so hard and relentless in his persecutions that some among the faithful could be swayed or confused as to think that God had forsaken them. The devil confuses people by exposing them to hard conditions such as natural disasters, hunger, ill-health, wars, deaths, etc. He deceives or misleads people through false teachings and enticements. The ultimate aim is to destroy as many people as possible by making them to deny God or compromise their faith as a result of adversity. – John 8:44; 10:10; 2 Corinthians 4:3,4; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 2 Timothy 2:26; etc.

A ready example of a committed worshipper of God who suffered various

tribulations at the instance of satan the devil was the prophet Job, whom the Bible describes as “perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil”. (Job 1:1) The devil boasted that if God Almighty would remove His protection from Job and allow him to “touch all that he hath” Job would curse God to His face. (Job 1:11) This was a direct challenge to God Almighty that despite His goodness to mankind no one will remain faithful to Him when faced with intense and sustained tribulation. God allowed satan to persecute Job to prove to him that some people will still remain faithful even in the face of the most severe trials. Job remained undaunted even after the devil had killed his 10 children, his cattle, asses, sheep and so on. Seeing that he still remained steadfast with God, the devil went further to boast that if God allowed him to afflict Job with sickness that threatened his life, he will curse God. But Job’s faith remained strong by God’s grace. Then the devil moved his wife to tempt him saying: “... Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.” (Job 2:9) Rather than abandon his faith, Job declared: “All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils; My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit... till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live. (Job 27:3-6) The Bible says: “...In all this did not Job sin with his lips...nor charged God foolishly. – Job 2:10; 1:22.

Job knew that God allowed the evils to befall him as trial of his faith so as to build him up to be a better person. The experience was also part of his work of salvation. In course of time, God Almighty, Who can never lie, showed His faithfulness by restoring to Job even double of all that he had lost. (Job 23:10-12; 42:10-17) From the experience of Job it could be seen that the devil tries by all means to turn men against God but when the worshipper remains faithful, God will never forsake him or her.

Another instance is the case of the woman of Zarephath. At a time when there was great hunger in the land of Israel, God Almighty sent Elijah the Prophet to a widow who will feed him until the famine was over. When

Elijah came to Zarephath, where the woman lodged, she was gathering sticks to make fire. The prophet then asked her to bring him water to drink. At a time when there had been no rain for months, water was of course, precious as gold. Yet she obliged him for God's sake. As she went about that, Elijah raised the bar by asking her to bring some food for him to eat. It was at this stage that she opened up, telling him that the little food available would only sustain her and her son for that day, after which they would wait for death.

However, in spite of the desperate condition of the widow Elijah told the woman, "Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth." (1 Kings 17:13-16) The Bible shows that "she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah."

The level of faith shown by this poor widow was so high that our Lord Jesus Christ recalled it during his days on earth when he told the Jews: "But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow..." – Luke 4:25, 26

As true worshippers of God, we should follow the example of faith shown by the widow of Zarephath. The fact is that God allows some of the devil's persecutions to meet us so as to try our faith and manifest His great power – all for our spiritual benefit. Faith, could as our Lord Jesus Christ said, move mountains. (Matthew 21:21, 22) We must continue to trust Him so that He would help us to overcome in the hour of temptation. This was the

attitude displayed by St. Paul in the heat of persecutions when he declared: “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.” – 2 Corinthians 4:8, 9.

The story of the widow also shows that with God all things are possible and that we should trust firmly in Him even when the odds look overwhelming. David the prophet stated: “The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.” – Psalm 9:9, 10. See also Psalm 55:22.

### **Perils of the Last Days**

Brothers, sisters and our friends here gathered, this exhortation is even more pertinent in this age known as the last days, the most turbulent time in the history of mankind. In the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, the onset of the last days in 1914, when the devil was driven down to this earth was “the beginning of sorrows” for mankind. This meant that the world would be marching into harder and harder times as the last days progressed. Our Saviour Jesus Christ said that the last days would be marked by distress and perplexity and that men’s hearts would be failing them for fear for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth. (Luke 21:26) Apart from the world wars which would have wiped out mankind but for God’s intervention, (Matthew 24:22) there have been so many other wars through which millions of people have died. Moreover, so many groups around the world, complaining of one grudge or the other, are causing mayhem and destruction largely to innocent citizens through terrorist acts and these have put big and small nations in a permanent state of fear.

Apart from resurgence of such vices as kidnapping, there have also been revolutions in various parts of the world as well as economic crises that exposed the frailty of man and his utter helplessness in dealing with the

problems of the world. The former President of Brazil, Lula Da Silva, declared in the thick of the 2009 global financial crisis, that present world problems have shown that the wise men of the world “who before seem to know everything, and now have shown that they do not know anything”. (*The Guardian on Sunday*, October 14, 2012, page 53) This calls to mind the words of the Prophet Jeremiah to wit: “The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?” – Jeremiah 8:9.

Some people feel God has forsaken them because of financial difficulties or because they have not realized their ambition to become rich overnight. This should not be, for God Almighty has assured us that He will always provide for us. He will always answer the prayer “Give us this day our daily bread”. (Matthew 6:11. Compare Psalm 68:19) Indeed, David declared: “I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” (Psalm 37:25) We should be contented with what we have and not be in a haste to become rich. St. Paul warned: “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” – Hebrews 13:5.

There have also been epidemics of various proportions as well as natural disasters such as earthquakes, wild fires, floods, hurricanes, cyclones, volcanic eruptions, famines and so on. These natural disasters, according to the American Psychological Association (APA) take a serious emotional toll on victims which range from disrupted eating and sleeping patterns, strained personal relationships to physical symptoms such as headaches, nausea or chest pain.

In October this year, at least 24 [states](#) in the United States of America (USA), were devastated by the superstorm, “Hurricane Sandy”, resulting in a storm surge which flooded streets, tunnels, subway lines, and killed dozens of people up and down the U.S. East coast. For days millions were

without power. The losses in property has been estimated to be from \$10 billion to \$20 billion. Here in Nigeria we have had our share of political, social and economic problems as well as natural disasters, the most recent of which have been the floods that affected no fewer than thirty states. The floods made major roads impassable, resulted in the collapse of bridges, houses and other structures and caused the deaths of hundreds of persons. In Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State, a woman and her five children were among no fewer than 38 persons who were reportedly swept away by the floods. Moreover, it was reported that four farmers in Kogi State and another in Delta State committed suicide because floods had overrun the farms in which they invested loans taken from banks. (See *Vanguard-on-line* of October 15, 2012; *Daily Sun* of Monday, October 8, 2012, Page 9) The prospects for the future do not look bright as scientists have predicted that rains would be more intense, floods heavier and winds stronger in years to come, due to the effects of global warming.

Some people also become so frustrated as to take extreme measures due to financial difficulties, problems in getting marital partners, difficulties in the marriage union such as childlessness, etc.; joblessness, failure in examinations, and so on. Recently, two female students who failed the last WAEC exams in one of the states committed suicide, allegedly, because they had written the exams three times without passing Mathematics and English Language. That was foolishness on their part. If one studies hard and effectively he or she should be able to pass by God's grace. If one does not succeed today he could succeed tomorrow, God willing. But those who are not academically inclined could take to other professions. Many people who are well-off today were not bright in academics. However, no one should contemplate taking his life because of difficulties, as such a person would be adding sin to sin. No one created himself and no one has the right to take his own life or that of another. (Job 1:21) The belief in the providence of the Almighty God which instills in the believer the hope for a better tomorrow, is the basis of the Christian endeavour.



## Sure Promises

Those who have become hopeless and depressed because of the troubles of this evil world should turn to God, our Fortress, Shield and Saviour in the day of affliction and calamity. We all should continually look to God Almighty, Who has given us sure promises of deliverance anytime we are in trouble. God declared through the prophet Isaiah, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” (Isaiah 45:22. See also Proverbs 18:10) Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd who stands for the children of God, stated: “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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30) He further admonished us not to be overly anxious because of the wants of this life but to make the quest for God’s Kingdom our priority. – Matthew 6:31-33.

Dearly Beloved celebrants, let me emphasize that those whom God has called to serve Him must have strong faith in Him and exercise perfect patience in order to be in close fellowship with Him. St. Paul tells us that, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6) And our Saviour Jesus Christ exhorts: “In your patience possess ye your souls.” (Luke 21:19) We must be determined to remain on the Lord’s side no matter the situation, believing that there is no difficult situation God cannot reverse. This calls for good heart condition and the doing of righteousness at all times. Hanani the Seer told King Asa in those days: “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him...” (2 Chronicles 16:9) Our Lord Jesus Christ himself stated: “And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.” – John 8:29.

The truth is that all true Christians must go through a fiery trial but God Almighty will certainly deliver us from such situations in His own due time, by His grace, when we trust in Him. (1 Corinthians 10:13) Moreover, St. Peter, exhorting us on the importance of faith and patience in the midst of tribulations, stated: “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” (1 Peter 5:6-9) Our Lord Jesus Christ drove home the point that God will always preserve us no matter what the devil may do or plans to do, when he stated: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” – John 10:27-29.

Let us therefore forge ahead without fear, without doubt and with complete assurance of God’s power to save and not be dampened in spirit in any way by the troubles that may come our way. I exhort all people of God in this age to take to heart the exhortation of King David to his son Solomon to wit: “Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee”. (1 Chronicles 28:20) Indeed, “The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.” – Psalm 9:9, 10.

May God Almighty, Who is a present help in time of trouble, the hope and strength of spiritual Israel, continue to help us in these perilous times as to remain faithful in Him at all times so as to enjoy His blessings in this world and everlasting life in the end by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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OCTOBER 2012