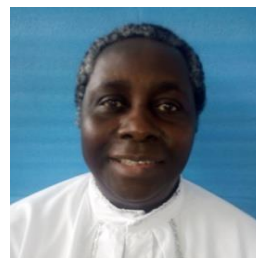


CHALLENGES AND REWARDS OF 25 YEARS OF PARTNERING WITH CHRIST: DAKIBIYU CHURCH EXPERIENCE



Debo Olateju
(Chairman, 25th Anniversary Committee)

INTRODUCTION

Paul, the Apostle in his letter to the Church in Corinth (I Corinthians 1:9) reiterated that “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord”. The word “fellowship” as used in the referenced verse can mean a partnership and I believe that was the interpretation in the context in which it was used. In another version of the Bible, the same verse read “Faithful is God, by whom you were called into the partnership of His son Jesus Christ”. Paul’s business concept of partnership with Jesus Christ is without doubt, one of the greatest privileges given to man. If you are in Christ and you have come to Him and accepted Him as your Savior, then you are in partnership with Christ. Christ is ever willing to be our partner.

To be in partnership with the Lord Jesus Christ means that, in business, you own things together with Him. Thus, everything that you own belongs to Jesus Christ. It belongs to Him as much as it does to you and therefore, He is interested in what you own. There are two distinct aspects of this divine-human partnership. First, God calls each of us to partner with Jesus Christ by walking in his footsteps and carrying out his ministry in all the distinct contexts of our own everyday lives. We partner with Christ by using our imaginations to think with the mind of Christ, determining how we can embody Jesus in any given situation; how we can incarnate His ministry in settings as diverse as our homes, workplaces and churches.

In the second instance, as we “walk worthily of God,” partnering with Christ to carry out his ministry in our daily lives, God faithfully works through us to bring healing,

deliverance and reconciliation to a broken and divided world. It is this God’s unparalleled faithfulness that has been brought to bear on the Holy Order of Cherubim and Seraphim Church Movement, Dakibiyu District, Abuja, and its congregation in the course of the twenty-five years of the Church’s existence.

Accordingly, celebrating God’s faithfulness by the Church at its 25th Anniversary cannot be an accident. It has been designed by God Himself. The Psalmist, in Psalm 89:1 says “I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations”. Although, I can’t write as an historian or a theologian and neither can I write as a foundation member of the church, but I can offer an eye-witness account of God’s actions since the establishment of this Church and of his faithfulness to the congregation and the church at large over the years. All that had happened to the Church from birth till now, in terms of teething challenges, tribulations, growth to maturity can be aptly summarized as the challenges and rewards of partnering with Christ.

THE BEGINNING AND ASSOCIATED CHALLENGES

Some challenges can seem so big and so daunting that we feel discouraged or even hopeless. Yet, we have the ultimate home court advantage – Jesus Christ. By

partnering with Jesus through prayer and hard work, we can help ensure our own success. The above assertion was made good in 1 Samuel 17:49 in the recorded encounter of David with Goliath. *“David put his hand into the bag and took out a stone, hurled it with the sling, and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone embedded itself in his brow and he fell on his face to the ground.”* The feat that David achieved in this recorded encounter was ordinarily not humanly possible. However, because he partnered with God, impossibility became possible.

From the written history of the Church, the beginning was undoubtedly very rough and it had its challenges. Right from the prophecies, through to the birth of the Church; the maiden service on Sunday, 2nd September 1990 and the exodus from one location to the other, the challenges appeared daunting and insurmountable. However, God’s faithfulness manifested its might in seeing the Church through the challenges of the early years. God further confirmed that He is a God of possibilities asserting that nothing shall be impossible with Him as emphasized in Luke 1:37; *“For with God nothing shall be impossible.”* The spirit of partnering with Christ kept the church leadership and the congregation focused on Christ believing that He who has started His work is able to bring it to successful completion irrespective of whatever the challenges are. The Church’s strength was undoubtedly in partnership with Christ, knowing fully well that only those who partner with Him can be strong in Him.

Considering the task incumbent on all who have a mind for Heaven, it was imperative that the job of establishing a virile church that would win souls for Christ in the Federal Capital Territory was a must and to do this, they had to be strong and spiritually alive. This imports three things:

- To be ready for action, anticipating all the difficulties they were likely to meet in the course of accomplishing the desired objectives;
- Need to be resolved. Thus David exhorts Solomon, *“Take heed now,”* said he, *“for the Lord hath chosen thee, to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong and do it.”* 1 Chronicles 28:10. This was a call to be fully resolved and peremptory, so as not to be diverted by any emerging difficulty;
- To be of good courage as emphasized in Psalm 31:24; *“Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord.”*

The above is a further admonition to be strong in anticipation of the enormity of work before the congregation. This is in consideration of the fact that each individual’s salvation is upon their hands (Philippians 2:12) and that the service being rendered is for current and future generations by the will of God. It also had the connotations that the work would meet with much opposition but we must never give up. The assurance is that the grace that is in Christ Jesus through partnering with Him is only sufficient to bear us through.

THE BIRTH OF THE CATHEDRAL AND MIRACLE OF COMPLETION

The resilience of the church leadership through all the persecutions facilitated the need for a fresh application to the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) for a parcel of land for place of worship and school. The success of this development was responsible for the Cathedral being commissioned and dedicated to the glory of God at the Church’s 25th anniversary celebration. This was indeed another manifestation of God’s faithfulness to His Church and congregation.

The actualization of what started like a joke and mission impossible in November 1998, when the foundation stone of the Cathedral

was laid, can best be described as a miracle. *"Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, this is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."* - Zechariah 4:6. A thorough analysis of the whole event would make human justification of occurrence practically impossible. This is because the church does not appear to command the crowd and the wealth that would have brought into existence the cathedral of the magnitude that is being dedicated at this 25th anniversary. We are therefore grateful to God who established His words as said in Zechariah 4:9 through this great miracle – *The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; and his hands shall also finish it,...*

The celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Church together with the dedication of the Cathedral has afforded the whole congregation and our well-wishers a rare opportunity to reflect on God's enduring faithfulness to the Church and its congregation. What began in 1990 "at the residence of M/I/I O. A. Adegoke (of the blessed memory) at Block 2 Flat 1, Niamey Street, Zone 2 Wuse, Abuja (popularly known as Block 406) with eleven members.." has become a full blown District with several branches and a "talk of the town" cathedral. It is pertinent to mention that God has blessed His Church with godly men and women to lead this body in an unbroken heritage of faithfulness including a focused and God fearing Leader.

REWARDS IN PARTNERING WITH CHRIST

It is very difficult, if not impossible to quantify the rewards and/or benefits that accrue from partnering with Christ. The real fact is that God does not put Himself in a position that he would be indebted to any living soul. Whatever you are able to give to God in the course of partnering with Him, He is able to return it in several folds.

Aside from wonderful statements that are made and recorded all through the Scriptures to those who come in partnership with God, practical examples abound about people who have benefitted immensely from partnering with God either through physical projects execution or propagation of the gospel of Christ. The author of this article is a living beneficiary. Time and space would not permit exhaustive discussion in this write-up, of the rewards and promises of God that are accruable to those who painstakingly partner with Christ. I will however mention a few of these goodies for the benefit of the readers of this article.

In Luke 6:38, the scripture says *"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."* The interpretation of this is if you give, you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use in giving – large or small – it will be used to measure what is given back to you. Those who have taken active part in making this Cathedral a reality through partnering with God have testimonies to give. As such, whatever you have as an individual to offer the church and you are willing to give in terms of talents, time, money and hard work, etc., God is willing to give back to you in multiples of folds – talents, time, money and hard work, etc. Through this, God will continually increase His church.

Also, in Hebrews 13:5, *"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."* This is loaded and good enough for the whole thing by itself. It means if you partner with Christ in any endeavor, you can never be left alone and

once He is with you, you have become a majority.

God's objective in partnership with men who surrender fully is not to accomplish our will, but to accomplish His will. The purpose of the partnership is to shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life.

CONCLUSION

Let us all seize the opportunity of this 25th anniversary celebration to truly follow him

and celebrate His faithfulness to us, not only during the festivities but through the week, this month and throughout our lives. We are all admonished to be real partners with God and remember that with all these wonderful promises, and all the guaranteed victory, these words of encouragement when we need them, can only come from being in partnership with Christ. Let us therefore commit ourselves completely and without any reservation to a real partnership with Christ.