

THE LIGHT & THE SHINING LIGHT

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

---Matthew 5:16---



Moses Ayomikun Oladipupo

“What star is this, with beams so bright,
More lovely than the noonday light?
'Tis sent to announce a newborn King,
Glad tidings of our God to bring.

'Tis now fulfilled what God decreed,
"From Jacob shall a star proceed";
And lo! the Eastern sages stand
To read in heaven the Lord's command.

While outward signs the star displays,
An inward light the Lord conveys,
And urges them, with force benign,
To seek the Giver of the sign.

True love can brook no dull delay;
Nor toil nor dangers stop their way
Home, kindred, father land and all
They leave at their Creator's call.

O, while the star of heavenly grace
Invites us, Lord, to seek Thy face,
May we no more that grace repel,
Or quench that light which shines so well!

To God the Father, God the Son,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One,
May every tongue and nation raise
An endless song of thankful praise!"

---Charles Coffin (1676-1749)--

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&
THE SHINING LIGHT**

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By

Moses Ayomikun Oladipupo

Scripture quotations are taken from the
HOLY BIBLE, KING JAMES BIBLE

First Released in 2015

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INTRODUCTION

This book is directed to the Christian individual as opposed to the Christian church. I believe that if God will move through his church, he must first move through his individuals. It is not intended for anybody seeking a good read. As all my books are, it is intended for that man, woman, boy or girl who desires to know God, or to those who know God and desire to know him more and see him in the perspective of yet another believer. My knowledge is little, my vision into the mysteries of God dim, and my light dull, but as in the words of A.W. Tozer, I say “if my fire is not large it is yet real, and there may be those who can light their candle at its flame.”

I got the inspiration to write this book on the nineteenth of August in 2012. At this time I had been through some very distressing moments of my life. Times of swimming against the tide of criticism. These were times of hard realisations. But all I can say about it is that it breaks my heart to realise that there are Christians holier than Christ. There are Christians who have resided in heaven longer than Christ has and thus know about the realities of heaven more than he does. There are Christians who know more about life and all things else than Jesus Christ who is the life, in whose academy Jesus is just a little boy. O, it breaks my heart. We live in times of horrible blindness where groping men assume that heaven's gate are so wide that they can't miss it. It breaks my heart that those who claim to be watching for the souls of the children of God are only feasting, becoming fat, wearing expensive clothes, and living a luxurious life and looking aloof while men troop to hell in mass.

It took a great while writing this book as I had intended to write just a little book, but I thought it better to merge a few other books I had started writing or intended to write into this book, as they do have a lot to say on the subject so that it crosses every aspect or at least many aspects of the personal Christian life. However, with time, I once again changed my mind that it isn't the best to do so. Therefore, I broke it up again into fragments of different books. The books I "broke off" were more in number than those I merged, and with time, God willing, and by his grace, if laziness or depression doesn't set in, will be published very soon too. This book and others to be published soon, are therefore good to help prepare the Christian for the "end-time" joys.

I pray that as you read it as light, you will come to be a shining light, and as a shining light to be brighter for Christ. I also pray that as you read, the Lord will bless your soul. AMEN.

Brother Ayomiḱun

CHAPTER 1

THE UNKINDLED CANDLE

Matthew 5:14 "Ye are the light of the world."

Ye are the light of the world said our loving master, and that is what we ought to be, but he didn't say that is all we can be or should be. Many professing Christians today accept that Christ died for the sin of the world. They believe in the virgin birth, and every other Christian doctrine. But they don't come to the fullness of the gospel in their words or deeds. Such are a light. I liken them to an unkindled candle. Yes there is a wick, but where is the flame? Yes, it is meant to shine but why the darkness? Like an unpowered street light, it can't serve its purpose.

Mind you, such candles are not useless, it can't be bundled up with thrash and thrown away. No, that would be a waste. It is still useful. If it is not shining today, it will shine tomorrow. This is the way such are in the house of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are not serving their purpose, but they can't be thrown away. Just like the Lord said in Revelations 3:15 "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot." Yet the Lord knows they are useful having possessed the seed of the word, having believed in him, he won't throw them away because though he says in the next verse "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" which may cause us to think that such are useless. Rather he still went on to say in the verse after that "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." Because he knew that, though at the moment he could have spued them out of his mouth, they were still precious in his sight, he still gave them this counsel in verse 18 "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." He knew that they could still be zealous for him.

Such Christians are converted. They are born again. They are born of water and spirit, else they can't be Christians at all. They can't be a light without these experiences, but having received the word of Christ, they are a light. They have receive the word of God but still follow the crowd. They still base their decisions on what others say and not on the word of God.

This behaviours is like that of Martha, they are not at the master's feet to learn of him. They are always here and there trying to please people. Remember, to please someone is a sign of love and we are expected to love. Infact all the law is just an extention of the two commands; "love the LORD" and "love your neighbour." The constant factor is love. But must this be the only expression of love? Must pleasing others be the ultimate goal? If it is, then what place do we have for pleasing God?

Because of not being at the master's feet, it becomes impossible for such Christians to know exactly what he wants of them. Not just for instructions alone, but how can you fall in love with one you don't spend time with, whose voice you don't hear and who doesn't hear yours. Where will the love come from? And what can kindle the flame of zeal if not love and love alone? And where will it come from if not from fellowship and communion with him.

Our Lord did not say to Martha "you have chosen what is evil and Mary has chosen the right thing." He only said "one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." What Martha was pursuing was good but not needful. There was something better

and that was what Mary had chosen: Seating at the master's feet and learning of him. So also such people are not unbelievers. They are not doing bad things and they have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. They fellowship with the brethren, and may as well render services to the church, but they are not at the master's feet to learn of him.

The result of not being at the master's feet is that they follow what men teach and act without really considering what Jesus says or did because though they have heard about it, they are not aware of it. They make decisions saying things like "other Christians are doing it," "our pastor says it is okay," or "how can it be wrong when something like that will result from it." These and other like-things are what they consider when making their decisions. They consider these because they love God. They consider their pastor and not a pop musician because they believe in Christ. But is that all?

In believing, they have a deposit of the word of God, just like a candle with a wick, but they are not at the master's feet to learn of him. They love God but worry more about the cares of this world. Such cannot be kindled with the zeal of Christ. The reasons for not being at the master's feet may be because of the busy life style they live, the wild ambitions they pursue, timidity and overdue respect for the persons of men. However it is certain that these are not needful. The master said and as is applicable here "one thing is needful." One, not two.

They simply follow the dictates of their own hearts in what they think is right or wrong. They have not sat at the master's feet to learn from him about what is right or wrong, thus, they yield to pressure all too easily. Any little persuasion and they are gone. There is no zeal that drives them against the negative forces of life. Once this forces are applied on them they just seem to look at what is "not bad" and do it even if the master would have wanted better.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:7 "we walk by faith, not by sight." This is the way to please God: walking by faith and not by sight. Not everything that looks wrong is wrong, and not everything that looks or feels right is right. If Jesus says it is wrong only then is it wrong, and if he says it is right only then is it right. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." So, how can one ever think he can ever live a holy Christ-pleasing life away from the master's feet?

To be kindled one must sit on the floor at the master's feet and let that pure celestial holy fire of zeal burning within his heart kindle a flame of zeal in your heart. Let it set your heart ablaze. Be kindled today.

Prayer: *Dear God, your command to us is "Let your light so shine.". Lord forgive me for all the times I have refused to shine and save me from this unkindled state. In Jesus' name have I prayed. Amen.*

CHAPTER 2

THE KINDLED CANDLE

Matthew 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Let your light so shine said our dear loving master, a city on a hill top that cannot be hid. He said "Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house."

What does it mean to be a shining light? This goes beyond just being a potential light source to be an actual emitter of light. This is not just being a dull light, it means to be a "shinning light." It means that your life is serving its purpose. Not just that it has the dormant capability but it is actually putting into use its abilities and capabilities. Such are a delight to the master.

From the parable of talents recorded in Matthew 25:14-30 we can learn that the servants of the man who wanted to travel were given a certain amount of talent. The amount given to each were not equal to the others, but they were all given something according to their abilities. The servant having five talents traded and made five talents. The servant having two talents also gained two. But the last hid his talent. When the master returned he was happy with those who put their talent into use and rewarded them accordingly, but he was angry with the one who hid his, and took what belongs to him and gave it to the servant with five talents and punished him saying in verse 30 "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Those who put their talents into use are those who I liken to a kindled candle. They don't hide their light but let it shine for all to see. They put their God-given gift of salvation and freedom from dead works into use and they'll get their reward in due time. These are they which are kindled. They are a city on a hill that can't be hid emitting light for all to see.

Let me ask a little personal question: what are you doing with the deposit of grace given you? That word that you've accepted, what are you doing with it? The enablement given through salvation and freedom, what are others benefiting from it? Are you letting the light of the word where your salvation is founded shine for all to see to the glory of your father who saved you? Or, are you hiding it? Are you keeping it so that men don't know what you have? Let your light so shine said our loving Lord.

To be a shining light is to be a beacon to others leading them in the right direction and causing them to see where they are erring so that they can make corrections if they will. This second group of Christians are such that are like Mary, they are those who the master commends. They are those who sit at the master's feet.

The two disciples on their way to Emmaus who had a conversation with Jesus Christ ended saying "didn't our hearts burn within us as he spoke to us." This is Jesus. Just a conversation with him and your heart burns within you. If you knew about the zeal that drove Christ you will know that talking with him will surely set your heart ablaze and get you going for God.

Those who sit at the master's feet and hear him as he speaks are first in themselves enlightened, then

they enlighten others too. Jesus said in Luke 11:34-36 "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." Thus, we know that the Christian whom Christ commends has no part dark in him and so is entirely illuminated in himself and will in turn illuminate others too.

Such people don't walk by sight, they walk by faith. They have sat at the master's feet and have known from the master's lips the things that are good, things that are wrong, and things that are worthy or not worthy of doing. Thus, they don't base their decisions on how things look. Whether they look bad or good doesn't matter, all that matters are the master's own words and nothing else. They move only according to the convictions they have in their hearts as produced by their prayerful meditation upon the word, the revelation of the spirit, and through fellowship with God. They have been firmly built at the master's feet.

They have fallen in love with the master. Their love for the master has kindled their zeal to do and live for him everyday of their lives without putting him off their sight. They are following him everyday of their life not being affected by the heresy that are flying all around. Let the whole world dance to a tune, they are undaunted. Let all the mighty personalities yell, they are still undaunted. What matters is Christ and Christ alone. Other opinions are accepted only as it falls inline with the words of Christ.

Such people like Mary do not really care about the presence of the people around so as to start worrying about what they were going to eat. She didn't care so much about what the people were going to say whether good or bad so as not to sit at the master's feet. Not even did the activities of her sister make her change her mind from sitting at the master's feet. She found out the needful thing and nothing was going to make her not to do what she knew was needful. Despite all odds, all she did was to sit there at the master's feet.

[This, of course, is not to say that it is wrong to be hospitable, infact it is wrong not to be hospitable.]

However, such people like Mary don't settle for the good act of hospitality but go further to do that which is needful. They love God, they believe in Christ, but go ahead to act appropriately in response to their love for God and belief in Christ.

They may find it hard to cling to Christ in certain circumstances but they would still hold on to him in the end. They are a light because when a strong wind of difficulty blows and everyone else lose grip and fall into all manner of misdoings, they hold on and are strong in well doing and others will know by observing them what they ought to be doing and make things right.

An example of this was Martin Luther. He stood for the truth of the word of God against the popular heresy of the time. They wanted to kill him but it didn't stop him from standing for the truth. He was not afraid of what men could do to him, the message of Christ was all that he cared for. It wasn't easy for him but he loved Christ so much that his life wasn't so precious in his own eyes. His light shone to all even in the face of death and many came to the right understanding of the word of God through his light. Today we have Christians called Lutheran Christians called after him. In-fact his light so shined and is still shining that the king of the whole nation of Denmark most be belong to the Lutheran Church to this present day though I am endorsing that particular church or country. Now that is a blessed light.

This fire that drives such is zeal. They are zealous for God. Sitting at the feet of one as zealous as

Christ will set any cold heart on fire for God. As many that are driven with the knowledge inspired zeal, they are not just lights, they are shining lights.

The twelve disciples were not just lights, they were shining lights. When everyone else stopped following Christ, they stuck close to him and because of this, other disciples found their way back to Christ so that on the day of Pentecost, there were not only twelve in the upper room, there were hundred and twenty disciples. Ten times the number of the twelve. Isn't that wonderful? When others lost their way, the twelve were the shining light, the beacon to which they returned.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, just as your twelve disciples were the shining light to which all the others of your disciples which had turned from you aside returned, please let your hand be strongly upon me to be a shining light in this generation to which your children which have turned from you aside may return to. So that when you return you may find faith in the earth. In Jesus' name have I prayed. Amen.*

CHAPTER 3

BEING AT THE MASTER'S FEET

Matthew 11:28-29 "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..."

Now, what does it mean to sit at the master's feet? In the text above Christ invites "come unto me." His invitation is directed to those "who labour" and those who are "heavy laden." To such he says he will give rest. This is the salvation call. To as many that are laden with the burden of life and the fear of death, he says "I will give you rest." This is the rest that comes through salvation.

Being the call of salvation, he didn't just stop there, but went ahead to say "take my yoke upon you." This is what many wouldn't like to hear or do. To receive rest from the master would be wonderful, but how about taking his "yoke upon you?" Not many Christians would have been happy that he didn't just stop at giving rest to his own.

Along with this he says "learn of me" in other words "let me teach you." It is on this statement "learn of me" that I will like dwell upon. Many today lack who or what to learn from while others have these or those from which they can learn but have nothing meaningful to learn from such. While some are lazy and unwilling to learn, others are very willing and eager but either they have nothing or no one to learn from or they are only offered meaningless and profitless things to learn. Those who are lazy won't like to go through any learning process. Idleness is their hobby. They would not even go to church on Sundays just because of the possibility of learning something there. Others, willing to learn, may learn things as profitless as mathematics, physics, accounting, chemistry etc. But what can these profit? Can they save a soul? Christ says "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). Pastor A.W. Tozer defined us as humans saying "we are not a body with a soul but a soul with a body." Thus, we have lost all if earthly things are all we know and if we know that which is capable of saving our souls, we then can confess that such are not worthy to be considered as anything compared to the knowledge of that which is capable of saving our souls. These earthly things are good for the now, but becomes profitless when the body dies. Our true profit lies in the salvation of our souls.

Many would have even learnt a lot of profitable things but only end up learning from the wrong ones and are misled. Such are those who give heed to heresies, lies, and diluted truth.

While this is the sad case of most of our time, there are still those who have people they can learn from. People of which they can sit at their feet and learn something to profit the soul. I have sat for long at the feet of Pastor A.W. Tozer even though he died about twenty six years before my conception, but he has thought me a lot that has profited my soul like no other has. I have been mended where damages were incurred by his words and built up in the faith by him. Many there are like him who would lead the child of God aright to green pastures and have them well fed with the word of the living God.

However, while this is very good, our Lord's injunction is "learn of ME." Tozer is good, Martin Luther is good but "learn of ME" says the Lord. Christ said "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am." (John 13:13). Being our master he is to guide us. He is also our teacher.

Tozer is a good brother just like any other brother whether John Wesley, Saint Francis, or Thomas à Khempis, and they can help lead us in their little capacity but Christ our master still says "learn of ME." So there is the difference between the brothers and the Master. They can profit us but he must lead us and teach us.

There are depths of understanding that reading and learning from other men can take us to. There are people who can divide the word of truth so much that you wonder if you have ever read the Bible before. But all that such knowledge can produce cannot be compared to that which the saviour has to offer. Knowledge gained by our efforts or the efforts of other men can only end up in the realms prone to error and misconceptions. The things we learn of men and their efforts are useful no doubt but the knowledge we get from God through the richness of our experiencing him is far richer. There is a knowledge we have or can have of God that is not as a result of our effort or struggle but in deep thirst to have an answer to pressing questions or in the bid to know God personally, we just look to him and he begins to unravel mysteries to us. There is an understanding of God that comes not out of reading for hours until our heads starts aching, there is an understanding of the things of God that comes not as result of packing our bags, travelling the distance to a seminary to have a professor lecture us. But there is a deep knowledge of God that comes in the deep silence of our closets, all alone as our souls just gaze heavenward to God. There are deep impartation of knowledge that comes as we sit still there at the master's feet as we hear our closets start resonating with the voice of the master from heaven.

Our effort brings none of this to us. Saints down the centuries have had this experience and often refer to it as manner. John G. Whittier in his blessed hymn titled "Dear God and Father of Mankind" wrote the following words:

*With that deep hush subduing all
our words and works that drown
the tender whisper of Thy call,
As noiseless let Thy blessing fall
As fell Thy manna down,
As fell Thy manna down.*

Just as the children of Israel simply walked in the pillar of cloud and fire and found manna all around without being able to explain where it came from, so is such knowledge. We love the mango that comes from the orchard, we love the cassava that comes from the farm, we love the fishes from the fisheries, we love the meat from the pottery, but from where comest these manna down? Many saints from the apostles down to recent times have experienced this divine impartation of knowledge. Peter got to know the extent of God's acceptance of the Gentiles when he fasted and prayed and saw the vision where he was asked to eat creeping things. Ray Palmer's hymn "My Faith Looks Up To Thee" was a product of a vision he had seen and not some long hours of study. William Cowper too was a man whose hymns were revelational. All these they cannot trace back to any study or long lecture but to the point where they were at the master's feet learning of him in holy contemplation.

We may assume that our efforts are what grant us deeper knowledge of the things of God, that is the bigger our effort, the deeper our knowledge, but they are not. Our useful effort is just to steadfastly fix our gaze on the Son of God in prayer, study of the Word, and holy contemplation. When we think that it is by the amount of books we read or the amount of sermons we listen to that gives us deeper knowledge of God and act accordingly in our quest for God, it may not help us. I do not mean that these are not helpful but while we must do these, we must never forget the paramount importance of being at the master's feet learning of him in prayer, study of the Word, and holy contemplation. Sometimes our struggle in these other activities can drown the voice of the master so

that it becomes very hard to hear him. His voice becomes just another voice in the midst of very many others. When Christ says "yes" it becomes very hard to hear him in the midst of many other voices saying "no" or something else entirely. Also when we are busy in activities whether spiritual or not, it becomes hard to hear his voice. Many at times think that the amount of church activities they attend makes them dearer and nearer to God but how wrong. What draws us nearer to God is sitting at the Master's feet and learning of him. The beauty of the hymn of John G. Whittier above is not so much of the tone as it is the profoundness of truth it contains. It is for the reason that our work and struggle that we think are useful can drown the Master's voice that he gave this expression "With that deep hush subduing all our words and works that drown the tender whisper of Thy call..." It is in the deep hush of solitude with the Master that we can receive the manna from heaven.

This call to learn of our Master is a glorious one. How would a literature student feel if Shakespeare were to be reincarnated and say to him "learn of me." He will probably go to all his friends one after the other and say "could you believe that Shakespeare asked me to learn of him?" What if a music student were to have Bach, Beethoven or Mozart come say to him "learn of me." Wow, what a feeling that would bring as the desire to attain mastery would by this one request be made a sure possibility. Being invited by the best personality in any field to be taught of him without fees would be a great and unmerited honour. But it is not Shakespeare or Bach or Mozart that invites us here, it is Christ the very Lord of life, the eternal and all knowing one. Tell me, what would one become just by sitting at the feet of such a Majesty and be taught of him?

If we ever attempt to describe Christ we would never successfully describe him adequately. One of the hardest things a friend of mine has ever told me to do is this: In one sentence describe who Christ is to you. He didn't say all that Christ is but who he is to me. I gave it a failure-bound attempt but the content of my heart could not be expressed in one sentence, not even the use of several commas could rescue the situation. How can this be possible when all the tongues of saints down the years and that of angels from eternity put together has not been able to ascribe to him the honour equal to his name. My heart just flowed with sweet words as I consciously thought of this glorious master of ours. If describing Christ were impossible for his excellence, then tell me what we will become for excellence when from day to day we sit at his feet learning of him in the deep hush of solitude with him in prayer, study of the Word, and holy contemplation. This call is a glorious one, let us all respond positively to it.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, grant that we may steadfastly sit at your feet to learn of you in clarity of voice removing from us all the things that will make your voice obscure to our hearing. Teach us your will and bring us to maturity in you. In your dear name have we prayed. Amen.*

CHAPTER 4

BEING A LIGHT

"While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them." (John 12:36)

Let us see exactly what it means to be light. We know of course that light is something that guides people aright like a light house. We can guide people to their doom as lights and we can guide them safely to heaven's shores as light. As lights we are to live a life that influences others. A life that people can observe and pricked in their hearts if they live a bad life. Living a life of emulatable influence is all that being a shining light entails of.

Being an emulatable influence, what manner of influence ought we to have? The influence of movies that makes children desire to hold a gun? The influence of immoral men that makes it look like godliness is a waste of time? But what manner of influence ought we to be? It is a good thing that any time Christ gives an instruction, admonition or anything at all to guide us in life he always gives us an example so that we can understand fully what he meant.

Ambassadors Of The Kingdom

"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:5)

"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." (Ephesians 5:8)

à Khempis Thomas in the beginning of his very beautiful and spiritual book "The Imitations of Christ" said "'HE WHO follows Me, walks not in darkness,' says the Lord. By these words of Christ we are advised to imitate His life and habits, if we wish to be truly enlightened and free from all blindness of heart." Thomas made us to understand that being a light is all about imitating Christ. To be enlightened by him as the psalmist says "in thy light shall we see light." (Psalm 36:9). Being a light also means being free from blindness of heart. The blindness of the heart is a severe one that every living soul is suffering from except most of those who have come to accept Jesus as their Lord and personal Saviour. "Ye are the light of the world." Awesome. He that is the light calls us lights together with himself.

"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12). Here Jesus speaks for himself saying that he is the light of the world. Now that is great. He uses exactly the same expression when describing himself to describe us. "I am the light of the world" and "ye are the light of the world." This was what à Kempis Thomas meant. If he describes us the way he describes himself, then we know that he truly advices us to imitate him completely. We are the light of the world just as he was the light of the world.

In the first chapter of the book of John we read "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." (John 1:4 - 5). This

speaks of Christ. Christ, we are made to understand is the light of men. He gives men light and shines in the darkness. Christ's coming revealed a lot of things to men. He opened their understanding to see the things of God and to know God. Such was Christ. He lived a life that turned people around from sin to God. He met with the woman caught in adultery and her life never remained the same again. He met with the Samaritan woman, and her entire village got converted and believed in him. He met with the apostles and they all followed him abandoning all and Peter made the confession "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16). Hearing this he responded "flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 16:17). To all his disciples he said "But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." (Matthew 13:16 - 17). They had come out of darkness to the blessed light through which God now reveals things freely. He never lived in uncertainty being the light as he saw everything clearly in his perfect light. He lived such a perfect moral life that the people said "he hath done all things well."

As an influence, it is the influence that he had that we ought to have too. We have to obey all his commandment and teach others to do so too. We can't be the light as he was and inspire people to fight. We can't be the light as he was and inspire people to be rebellious to the government. We can't be a light as he was and inspire people to fornicate and commit adulterous acts. It is his holy moral influence that we ought to have on this world while we yet live. Jesus has made us to understand to what extent we should imitate him. Let us imitate him all the way.

That said, let us just look briefly at some things to imitate in Christ.

Loyalty To Powers

*"There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?"
(Luke 13:1 - 2)*

I once sat in front of a television watching a news station, and to my great astonishment, I heard that a group of "Christians" had joined in protest aimed at ousting a seating president and forming barricades against the armed forces. I was surprised because, these were claimed to be Christians and I had to write to the station broadcasting this news. The body of my message went something like this:

Hello, I'm one of the people that follow your station very closely. I have noticed some error of which I'm quite sure is not common only to your media. This is regarding the people you call Christians. That is your saying that Christians are participating in the revolt against the government in [that country]. But it is absolutely impossible for a Christian to be involved in a revolt against any constituted authority. Especially not on the basis of economy or whose ally is who, which is most definitely the reason for the protest. Economy is certainly out of the way. On what basis can you call a person a Christian? Because he goes to a building called church? No. However to bring this misconception to an end it is good to know that people were first called Christians (meaning Christ-like) in Anthioco, when the people there said these people who preach Christ are like the Christ they preach. So a christian is a Christ-like person and the other parts of the Bible emphasises this too. Consider now the person of Christ. Is it possible for Christ to involve himself in rebellion

against a constituted authority? Christ too had a brutal person in authority during his time. I'm not saying [the president] is brutal or not, but you say he is, or at least support those who say so. People in Christ's time complained to him that Pilate had committed the atrocity of brutally killing people who were sacrificing [note: they were performing religious obligations] and mixing their blood with the sacrifice (Luke 13:1), but this didn't make him rebel against Pilate. He even paid his tax and remained submitted to authority even till death. A Christian is basically a person who has the Bible as the final authority in his life. I am not taking sides on who is good or bad, but clearly saying that no Christian can fit into the category you are describing. So every time before you call a people Christian (even if they say they are), do be careful to observe if these people's actions are like that of Christ or not. Not any religious person who goes to church is a Christian. Please promote this true meaning of Christianity or if you won't at least don't say any of those protesters are Christians.

So, we as Christians know of a lot of crisis going on the world, but we should know our role. Our role is that of praying for our leaders and not to go to the streets in violent protest and confronting security forces. I am not saying that we should pray only when there are crisis, we ought to pray for them always (1 Timothy 2:1-3). Those who protest don't know that often, they are just like flies that can be squashed. That is how weak they are. We know that Gaddafi was killed by protesters but it was not by the powers of protesters that this happened. Never in history have a people rebel against their government and prevailed. They may record some minor success, such as was recorded in the world's greatest revolutions of which one of them is the French Revolution but in the end they were still a failure. But on our knees, we have the greatest power. While Herod was going about brandishing his sceptre and throwing godly men in jail including Peter, Peter himself slept, but the church prayed hard for him and he was set free. Thereafter, God moved the heart of Herod to be arrogant and struck him dead miserably. I haven't heard of any group of rioters who on their own could execute full justice on a leader but God on behalf of the church on her knees did so. All these things were written for us to learn, but it baffles me that people who read the Bible could take to the streets in protests and say they are Christians. How?

Of recent, I heard of a bomb blast in Lahore, Pakistan, targeted at a church which claimed many lives and injured many. The role the church of Pakistan played after the incident was very noble indeed. All they kept appealing to the Christians for was simply, "keep calm." They kept reminding the obviously grieved Christians of who they represented with such powerful expressions and meaning. They did not make railing remarks against the government or security forces. Rather, their comments tended to appreciate their effort that made the loss less grievous. They condemned every form of violence that ensued, they denied the so-called Christians who were involved, and they made sure the name of the noble Lord was not tarnished. It is not news that the Pakistani Christians are about the most persecuted in the world, yet they have been very noble in their conduct. These they did because they knew the loyalty of Christ to government. They knew they ought to be a shining light in this dark world. They knew that the Lord says "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matthew 5:39). In this respect, I give kudos to the church of Pakistan. Being involved in violence has never been God's will for his church. For this reason, Paul said in Philippians 2:14-16 "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." Contrary to those who were withstanding security forces, the church of Pakistan and those who like them heed Biblical injunctions are the true shining lights.

If we have any grievances, we should appeal to the government in supplication and by modest means. We have seen men who related to their government in the kindest manner. The letter to King James written by the translators of the King James Bible is an example of this. Very humble, polite, and noble. He was given all his rightful honour. One will only have to read through history to see

how Christians have always prevailed through quiet and peaceable lives as well as fervent in prayers. The saints have trod this path of imitating Christ in being loyal to the government, let's fall in line. Be a shining light.

Love For Sinners

"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:32)

It was saint Francis of Assisi who made the hard statement "There is only one mark by which I can know whether thou art a servant of God; namely, if thou compassionately bringest back wandering brethren to God, and never ceasest to love those who grievously err." This is a tasky one. How do you love a person who is an heretic. But saint Frances says this is the mark of a true servant. How hard yet true.

First he says as servants of God we ought to passionately bring back the wandering brethren. That is that we should first of all look into the household of God and passionately ensure that the brethren are standing. That we help the weak and when they live in error we help them back to God. I believe this is our primary responsibility before we talk about going out to preach to the dying world. This is another character of Christ the good shepherd. He did not lose even one of his sheep except Judas. In bringing back wandering brethren, we have to remember that we are to contend for the faith (Jude 1:3). This should be our primary assignment. Evangelism is good but this is better.

Next he says we should never cease to love those who grievously err. This is a profound and broad statement. We ought to love all sinners, both the blatantly profane and the hypocritical heretic. We ought to love them all and act according to that love, whether it is by evangelism, prayer, rebuke, and so on. This is what we owe them. It is possible to love somebody for a while and try to convert them but after a while, we stop, thinking it is no use. However Saint Francis points out to us that we ought never to cease to love such.

Love for sinners in and out of the church is what we are called to do. Christ did it. When his disciples abandoned him, he sought each and everyone of them after his resurrection. He restored them, and turned their hearts around from unbelief to fervent faith. He then showed his love for those outside what we can call his church by commissioning them saying that they should go and preach to all the world. Those within had the priority and those without were not left out. He, in love, kindled a fire in their hearts that kept burning till Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came to sit in their hearts. Let us pray for the grace to do so.

Placing The Things God Ahead Of And Above The Self

"But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." (Matthew 16:23)

Many professing Christians today put the things of men ahead of the things of God however from the text above, Jesus was not that way. God was ahead of self, his disciples, wealth. God was ahead of everything. Peter tried to dissuade him from thinking he was going to die, but at that point he rebuked the chiefest of his disciples who had received a revelation from God that he was the Son of God. This same Peter saw him transfigured on the mount. But here Jesus rebuked him sharply

evening calling him Satan. Such was the nature of Christ. Anything that stood between him and his Father or between him and his Father's will was condemned as if it were the very Devil. Jesus had nothing competing with the will of God in his heart, whether it were for his well being or not, God was first. For God he came into world being born in a manger, and for God he died being crucified on the cross. Dare we, beholding such a Lord as ours, put anything ahead of God in our lives.

Well, the sad thing is that most Christians have many things ahead of God. It was A.W. Tozer who wrote in his book "The Pursuit of God" that "the world of fallen men does not honor God. Millions call themselves by His Name, it is true, and pay some token respect to Him, but a simple test will show how little He is really honored among them. Let the average man be put to the proof on the question of who is above, and his true position will be exposed. Let him be forced into making a choice between God and money, between God and men, between God and personal ambition, God and self, God and human love, and God will take second place every time." I agreed at the very point of reading that this was true, but I became very shocked when I started to see it in reality. At the time I withdrew from the university, I saw many claiming to be Christians surprisingly apostatising their belief. All I began to hear was throw God away and get your degree, brother, be wise. But it ought not be so. If for a trivial thing such as a degree, that can't guarantee a good future as much as the biblical injunction of diligence, study, and hard work, people will become apostates, such will never survive the pressure of receiving the Mark of the Beast. I believe they'd say, brother, let go of all that archaic belief that such a mark is evil, have you not heard that you should submit to the greater authority.

Let us as individuals think about and ponder our ways to see if there is anything we value above God. If Christ had God above all things and was the light of the world, nothing short of it will see us be and remain as shining light.

Meekness And Humility

"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." (Matthew 11:29)

There is a room for humility in every life that must be lived well. Christ was the meekest of all who had ever and has ever or will ever step into this world. So meek was the King of kings that he washed his disciples' feet. Meekness is being humble despite one's loftiness. It is still being in perfect control of the self giving honour to every man and refusing to keep one's self in a high class despite being in a state of honour. Our Lord is the paragon of meekness.

We too not being close to him in honour in all ramifications must be humble knowing our beggerly state and nature. If the King of kings is meek how much more meek should his servants be? Should they be puffed up and intimidate others. Should not humility mark their every action? Being the light as he was the light entails that we be meek and have a lowly estimation of the self.

Now we know that we are not nobodies. To think of ourselves as a bunch of rubbish, thinking this is humility is wrong. We are not a bunch of profitless worms crawling this earth. If it were right to have such a view of ourselves, then why did Christ die for us. If truly we were nothing more than worms before Christ saved us, certainly after he saved us we became useful and people of value to him. We are now children of the Most High God. We are now a peculiar people, a holy nation, and a chosen generation. We are more than conquerors. The least amongst us is greater than the greatest of the world. We are dear to God. We mustn't have a disdainful view of ourselves though we should

have a lowly view of ourselves knowing that all we are is of God and not of the self. This is how special we are and how valuable we are but meekness is being humble despite these. Christ had every cause to be proud and arrogant and would not be ridiculous doing so, however he chose meekness for a life of meekness is the greatest standard or form of existence. Dear brethren let us imitate our Lord in this also as in every thing else.

Swear Not

"But I say unto you, Swear not at all..." (Matthew 5:34)

David G. Hagopian in his article said "Contemporary culture faces a growing integrity crisis. The bond of a person's word is flippantly broken. A Biblical view of oaths and promises calls us to a higher, if not more painful, commitment to our word." Christ said swear not and he himself did not swear. If we must emulate Christ then this is essential for us. Christ said that any thing beyond our simple affirmation is of evil. There is no righteousness in swearing but only evil, meaning there are no circumstances in which we may find ourselves when swearing becomes right, whether we're in ancient Egypt or modern Dubai. If we do it for any reason at all, whether we say it is in obedience to powers and authorities or not, it remains evil. We should be able to bear whatever loss we may incur by refusing to swear.

James gave a stiffer warning against this act of swearing when he said "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation."(James 5:12). Mark that he said "above all things." James said this in the concluding part of his epistle. He had said many things but concerning this he said "above all things." He said that swearing leads to falling into condemnation. If we swear, we will fall to condemnation. I think this is plain enough and needs no careful explanation.

Despite these two portions of the Bible warning against swearing, I was shocked at the amount of people that debates this issue. Never has it been the practice of saints to swear for any reason at all. All these who call themselves Christians and still go ahead swearing for gain or protection, are an odd species of the saintly fold. Odd because they don't belong to the fold. In the days when the Lollards were miserably killed daily, one of the practices they stood against was swearing. Though they were burnt alive and brutally killed, being chased from town to town, they remained adamant in the truth, but cowards of the contemporary times, afraid of the possibility of being put in jail for a crime they didn't commit would go ahead and swear and say "well, all I swore was the truth." William Henry Beckett in his wonderful and insightful book on the history of the English reformation made us to understand that the accusation against the Lollard consist of "disbelief in transubstantiation, condemnation of pilgrimages, prayers to images and saints, of confession to priests, and of taking of oath." Look at that. Along side the grievously evil practice of bowing to images was taking of oath. All through the Christian history, taking of oath was evil. I suppose anyone who for benefit or protection go ahead to swear to an oath are on their Hell-ward journey.

James 4:13-17 makes us to understand that it is not good even to speak about tomorrow in regards to what one will accomplish, except we say "if God wills it." If even just saying I will go there and here and do business and make profit and so on is wrong, how much more the taking of an oath to do something in the future, when you don't even know what will happen the next second. On this bases also, oath taking is wrong. Can this explain why there is an increase in divorce rate as couples begin their matrimonial life in the evil of oath taking? I don't know, but it may explain why.

True, God swore an oath to David, Abraham and so on, but ask yourself this question, "Christ knew this, why did he not swear?" If God's swearing of oath to these men was a good excuse for us, that was not all he did. He also created heaven and earth, why don't we go ahead and create heaven version 2 and earth version 2. He struck Uzzah dead, is that not enough reason for us too to commence striking people dead. Would we because we want to excuse sin so much as compare ourselves with God? I suppose that if the self is too precious so much that we can't displease it to please God, one can just brazen up and prepare for his eternal doom. James was clear and straight forward: swearing results to condemnation. Though every sin is evil and detestable to God, no other sin was categorised this way.

Some argued that when Christ gave the commandment not to swear, he referred to those embarking on religious duties. But what does the introduction of the chapter say about the category of people he spoke to? "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him." (Matthew 5:1). Not Pharisees, not scribes, not Sadducees, not the Sanhedrin, but the multitude. He spoke to a crowd having people from all walks of life including those similar to mine and yours. It is to such a crowd he says "swear not at all." He says to me and to you "swear not at all." You see how deception creeps into the church? By errant interpretation of scriptures many are led astray by blind guides of the blind.

Others argue that Christ meant that you shouldn't swear by an object, or that it were not possible to swear without an object so the word is just there for nothing. By this they mean just saying "I swear..." is okay, but saying "I swear over my dead body..." or "I swear by ancestor's grave..." is what he condemns. But this is false for the commandment was not "Swear not at all; THAT IS by heaven; for it is God's throne..." But rather "Swear not at all; NEITHER by heaven; for it is God's throne..." (Matthew 5:34). Simple knowledge of good English will make this plain.

Still others argue that provided it is for a noble organisation, it is alright to swear that Christ only doesn't want us to swear at a shrine or as a demand by an occultic organisation. But how occultic or ignoble is heaven that Christ said "Swear not at all; neither by HEAVEN; for it is God's throne." (Matthew 5:34). And how ignoble is the name of the LORD that he made this commandment to be contrary to those who swear to God. If we should not swear by even heaven, then how much less are the institutions of men? Excuses are many but the commandment in its simplest form still is "Swear not at all..."

The best way to avoid such an evil is to remember our freedom. We can always turn down anything and embrace its consequences. Many people often think that once there is a consequence attached to something, it becomes compulsory and thus it is no longer a sin to do it. They could say "if I didn't swear, I could lose my job. Should I do what will make me lose my job?" Sometimes it could be something more tricky like "should I do what will make me lose my only child?" But as Christians we should always learn to turn down things once they are against our faith. As said before, many down the years would rather be burnt alive or killed by some other brutal means than to offend God. A classic example is Polycarp. He chose rather to be burnt alive than to denounce Christ. He didn't see it as a compulsory thing to denounce Christ since there was a consequence as brutal as death attached to it. He chose the consequence and died a noble Christian.

In an article Andrew V. Ste. Marie told a story about two Moravian Missionaries. He said:

"Early in 1745, young David Zeisberger had set off with Christian Frederick Post to learn the language of the Mohawk Indians. The two young Moravian missionaries were arrested and charged with refusing to swear an oath of loyalty to the King of England. The colony of New York had a new law which stated that 'Every Vagrant Preacher, Moravian, Disguised Papist [Roman Catholic], or

any other person presuming to reside among and teach the Indians' who had no license and had not taken the oath 'shall be treated as a person taking upon him to seduce the Indians from his Majesty's interest.' The council read the new law to David, and asked him if he would take the oath.

He replied, 'I hope the honourable Council will not force me to do it.' They said, 'We will not constrain you; you may let it alone if it is against your conscience; but you will have to go to prison again.'

'I am content,' David told them. So back into jail he went, with his companion, for a total of fifty-one days. 'We count it an honor to suffer for the Saviour's sake,' David wrote."

They chose the consequences for they know they are free to choose that. Today, many are called Christians but would deny Christ to have a job, would denounce Christ to be promoted, and would denounce Christ to avoid being sacked. Many in the Nigerian civil service swear at one point or the other before they can work there, yet for the security of income many Christians flock into it swearing without looking back. These are really doleful times. May God help us. May God preserve us and keep us from all evil. May he continue to keep the gaze of the remnant few on the kingdom of God. May we not miss it for little profits here and there. May God help, O, may he help us.

The truth is that the word swear is being defined wrongly in recent time. The definition of swear is made to concur almost perfectly with that of affirm. But if the two means the same, why don't we get rid of the word swear and make use of affirm instead everything having to do with agreement. The truth is that the world is so heathenised that instead of getting rid of the word "swear" from our system, it seeks to change its meaning so as to render the injunction of Christ unintelligible and make it look daft or unreasonable to stick to his command. There is a huge gap between swearing and affirming. Saying yes or no is an affirmation. What differentiates swearing from affirmation is that swearing is either the invocation of a pending curse to come on one's self upon failure to speak the truth, or perform that which one has promised. Secondly, it is to call upon a deity to witness. Since God has commanded us not to swear, the only other alternative deity is Satan and his devils. Lastly swearing is the binding of the soul (Numbers 30:2). No dictionary I have come across points these out. All are craftily defining the word in such a way that you will wonder why did Christ then say we should not swear when it is simply saying yes or no in a solemn way? It is not the solemnity or the formality of an affirmation that makes affirmations become swearing as the writers of dictionaries wish to convince us. Invocation of a curse, calling of a deity to witness, or binding of the soul, these make swearing evil, and this evil will draw many to condemnation.

What if we swear with the understanding that it is just a solemn "yes" or "no?" It remains evil, for having read it in the Bible not to swear, whether we think it is just a "yes" or "no" or none of the two, we are to obey the Bible.

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." (John 8:36). If we have been made free by Jesus Christ, it is God's will for us to be free. Is it not therefore evil for us to abandon his freedom to bind ourselves again by swearing. Let's be wise.

"Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend. Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids. Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler." (Proverbs 6:3 - 5). Here we see the value of freedom. It is worth denying ourselves sleep. Why should we throw our freedom away so easily as if we don't know its value. Also, we are admonished that even when we have spoken what is not to our best interest we should keep it even if it means humbling ourselves or denying ourselves sleep. We should just go ahead and do what we have said even though we have now been snared by it. This is the way of delivering yourself, not giving excuses. I'm not giving a remedy to those who may have sworn to an oath, but rather to let us see to

what extent we ought to strive to be men and women of your words letting your yes be yes and your no be no. We should keep it even when it hurts.

Jesus being the light never swore to an oath. Let us too free ourselves from the snare by being as he was in this respect. This is how to be a light. You'll be surprised that when we play our role as the light of the world, the world can quit this bad way of life by observing us. But when we join them in their evil we will just be what Christ describes as salt that has lost its savour profitable for nothing. He said such will be cast out and trodden under foot. "He that followeth me walks not in darkness" says the Lord. Walk not in the darkness of oath swearing. Be a shining light.

Confidence And Fervency In Speech

"Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jeremiah 23:29)

It was Martin Luther, the reformer, who said "The ears of our generation have been made so delicate by the senseless multitude of flatterers that, as soon as we perceive that anything of ours is not approved of, we cry out that we are being bitterly assailed; and when we can repel the truth by no other pretence, we escape by attributing bitterness, impatience, intemperance, to our adversaries. What would be the use of salt if it were not pungent, or of the edge of the sword if it did not slay?" And I say that was a man of war speaking. The good Christian soldier.

This is one of the things we must learn from our saviour. We shouldn't seek to be soft tongued for our Lord who was the light was not such. I suppose that if the Spirit of God comes upon a man, he also brings along fire and hammer to put in his mouth. Did not the Bible witness to us that on the day of Pentecost, what they saw that descended on the apostles were not described as cloven tongues alone, but cloven tongues like as of fire? Did we not also see the evidence of fire and hammer in the tongues of the apostles after this experience? Who was Peter to stand before such a great congregation consisting of people from all parts of the world asking them to repent? Automatically by asking this great multitude to repent, he accused them of being sinners and that without timidity. Was he not that same timid man who was afraid of men that were not after his life so much as to deny Christ? How came such confidence into him? The cloven tongue of fire. We see other evidences of fire and hammer in the mouth of the apostles every time they confronted heretics, whether they be pharisees, church members, foreigners and so on. Hear Peter's words to Simon the converted sorcerer who had spoken by what we would say was ONLY out of ignorance. He said "Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." (Acts 8:20-23). Hammer I say, not toffee.

There is no way we can serve God truthfully and wholeheartedly by being soft tongued. Jesus calls his adversaries a generation of vipers, blind, hypocrites, and children of the devil. He called Peter "Satan" for just a "little act of ignorance." He was not sorry for it because he had done the right thing. He wasn't soft tongued and the nice man in town. Just go through the epistles of the apostles and tell me how soft tongued they were. Even the softest of saints, Saint Francis of Assisi, rebuked his followers sharply at times. This cowardice which we gallantly cloak with the word "niceness" ought to stop. Can't you call a thief by his father's name, can't you call a liar by his father's name? We always seek to look for the nicest word to call people lest they get offended. Our Lord was not

such.

In Jeremiah 23:29 God did not qualify his word with the words "butter" or "cheese" or "salad cream" or "honey" or "ice cream." No. He qualified it with "fire" and secondly with "hammer." Fire in the mildest contact scorches the skin and causes severe pain, so is his word. It is pain to all. Even the saints who have lived or are still living were several times scourged by this word. He said his word is also like Hammer. Not just a hammer that pushes a needle into fabrics of the hat maker, but a hammer that breaks rocks capable of breaking any heart, no matter how hard it may be. Such is the word of God and such was the speech of Christ. Martin Luther completed his statement above by quoting Jeremiah 48:10 "Accursed is the man who does the work of the Lord deceitfully." To be Mr. Niceman while a battle rages on is to be accursed. To call what is evil bad, wicked unpleasant, to call a son of the devil they of variant opinion, or any other way that one seeks to use mild expressions just because one would not like to say things the way they really are is to Luther to do the work of the Lord deceitfully and to do such is to be cursed.

+1 Corinthians 15:35 says "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" What is so bad about this question? Is it not just a question to know more? But hear the response in the next verse; "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." (1 Corinthians 15:36). Paul was not the only one to speak this way.

"One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are alway liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith." (Titus 1:12 - 13). Not rebuke them kindly, but sharply. I have never read of any holy man in history that were nice men as we have today. Martin Luther, John Wycliffe, John Wesley, or Tozer, for example were men that will not so much as speak kindly to a man in his error, even if his error were a result of ignorance. They spoke harshly of the heresy that were challenging the integrity of the church of Christ. While they yet lived, heretics had to speak with a low tone lest they hear their conversation. But when their likes passed away and left us with nice men who will so much as dream all day of the possibility of signing a peace treaty with the Devil, compromise set in and heretics became bolder. Never had the Adventists or Mormons had a loud voice as they do now. Our nice men are throwing pebbles in the pond in the presence of ferocious enemies. We ought to pray to possess boldness in wisdom from God. This is how to be a light as he was the light.

Let us examine Christ in a Bible passage I love so much of which the drama in it causes me to laugh. This passage is Luke 11:37-52. In it Jesus was invited to dine at a Pharisee's house. Jesus, despite knowing very well that it was a Pharisee who invited him, sat down and began to eat without washing. I think that was deliberate. And when the Pharisee so much as was shocked within himself, right there at the table of his host, Jesus began to chide him. He rebuked and needled him, and even prophesied misery to him saying "woe unto you." He needled him to the extent the lawyer there got provoked and though he should have remained silent, he couldn't. Then Jesus turning to him began to needle him too. That was at his host's house. That was impolite we may say but Christ is holier than we. Service to God demands total instant action and proclaiming his word as directly expressed by him. If he says "Woe" don't say it will be impolite to say it for he is holier than you and you are carnal. If he says rebuke don't do otherwise given your circumstances which will compel you to do otherwise. Jesus' circumstances would have compelled him to say "I could have rebuked him but this is his house and he has invited me here. This is not the right place to say anything of that nature." But Jesus spoke the mind of God at every given time he needed to. This does not mean we should be offensive or abusive out of headiness but letting the Spirit drive you on in confidence to rebuke and warn those in error.

To give this admonition is a risky thing to do, because of those who will do the wrong, like insult people, and become abusive and say they are being like Christ. But what pious acts of men have not

been ill represented throughout human history. When we speak about being zealous for God, people go about rioting and killing and say that is zeal. When we say there ought to be holiness in our outlook, they make masquerades out of themselves in the name of decency. Right from time, every pious acts have been ill represented to the extent that it even looks evil to do the right thing. Despite this it must be maintained that to be soft tongued is contrary to the nature of our beloved Lord. And it were safer to take the risk of having abusive people than to take the risk of having people with flattering lips.

Let us emulate Christ fully. To the brethren who were walking in righteousness was always words of comfort. But to heretics and reprobates fire and hammer were his words. Let us do likewise. Be a shining light.

Acute Spiritual Perceptivity

"And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, Came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd. And Jesus said, Who touched me? When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." (Luke 8:43 - 46)

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The last characteristic of Christ I'd like to talk about is his acute spiritual perceptivity. In our text above, we see how spiritually sensitive Christ was. So sensitive was he that though the multitude thronged him, he knew in himself, when a particular person touched him, that virtue went out of him and he wasn't mistaken. He knew with certainty for great was the acuteness of his spiritual perceptivity. To be a shining light as he was means that we ought to be sensitive in the spirit. Throughout his earthly ministry Christ was ever spiritually sensitive. It is written about Christ "But there was certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts." (Mark 2:6 - 8). While they still thought on the matter in their heart he knew already in his spirit. If our Lord was this sensitive, we have no excuse to be spiritual numb or dead seeing that "as he is, so are we in this world." (1 John 4:17). If truly we are to be a light as he was, we must have an acute spiritual perceptivity. If we are not spiritually sensitive then we are not a shining light.

I believe that the acute spiritual perceptivity is lacking in today's church and individual Christians. Looking at how people do things yet feel nothing about it just shows that they are spiritually numb. There are questions that shouldn't even arise at all if we were spiritually sensitive. Questions such as should a Christian youth have an intimate relationship with the opposite sex? A sensitive Christian should know that it would displease God if he were to be in a relationship with the opposite sex more intimate than casual if it were not with the intent of getting married. But these days, in the

church, it would even be a thing of debate. As if that were not shameful enough, the debate would tend to support encouraging younger ones to go ahead to relate intimately with a person of the opposite sex. "By the way you who say they shouldn't have no adequate scriptural reference." Shame! Such and others like it are the fruits of spiritual deadness.

There was a time, when I was in the university campus, I and a lady decided to go to the library to read. After reading, we quickly agreed to come to the library again the next day to read together again. I felt nothing much about it. It was just that academic activity to help you perform better. But, at night, when it was time for my quiet time, as I began to pray, I didn't feel the move of God as I should. When we are sensitive to the spirit, even to a little extent, we can perceive it if God were listening to us or not. At least you'll have that inward feeling that you were being heard. That inward joy just has to be felt. But that night, as I prayed, I just felt as if I were talking to the wall. I felt very uneasy about this. I later asked God why I felt this way. Then, as I began to look back at my activities for the concluding day, there on my knees, I saw how distasteful this sinless looking action, though uncondemned by scriptures, was in the sight of God. I felt nothing when I did that, but on my knees where I was more spiritually sensitive, I felt sorry. I confessed to God immediately and told him that our agreement for the next day stands cancelled and that as matter of fact I wasn't leaving my abode the whole of the next day. Thereafter, that joy flowed in my spirit so abundantly as I prayed and worshiped. Just as Jesus knew with certainty when the woman touched him, we too can know a lot about how God feels and perceive much more than is accessible to our senses or intellect, if only we would surrender ourselves to God to make us spiritually sensitive as he was.

At that time, I was on campus, there was no father or mother to watch me. If they were there, they wouldn't condemn my actions. It wasn't armed robbery. Their boy was just being a grown up who knows what could help him academically. Your pastor would not condemn me. If he cared and were in his right frame of mind, he'll just say "be careful." If he were a backsliden man, he'd wink and say "go for it boy." Not even the written word has anything in it to precisely condemn me. I couldn't have known of my wrong doing if not for that moment of spiritual sensitivity I had when I went on my knees to pray. We ought to be spiritually sensitive everywhere we go. It shouldn't be only on our knees only like I was, but every point in place and time we find ourselves. We ought to always tune our hearts heavenward where God is seated. To live a victorious Christian life, we ought to walk in the Spirit for it is written "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." (Galatians 5:16). Let us not limit this only to when we are on our knees, in church, Christian gathering, etc. Let us always walk in the Spirit everywhere. In the classroom, at home, at the bus stop, in the office, or anywhere else.

When people seem to give meaning to the words of the Bible where it says "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." (2 Corinthians 3:6), they make it seem as if we are not to live by that which is written, such as women having a covering on their head when praying, or that we should go ahead and eat things sacrificed to idols. By this, they mean that we are to hold the things written with laxity for Christ has died and what we do does not matter any longer and that it is by continuing in the grace, as they call it, not caring if we sin or not that we live. If we are to follow that which is written, we die. On the contrary, we are admonished that the spirit makes us alive and sensitive (though we be dead in sin). But what the Bible means here is, if we are to limit our obedience to just what is written, we will die. This death will usually be by slow degrees. We will slowly backslide. If we smoke just because we can't find anything written about cigarette in the Bible, we will die. If go hanging around late at night where fornicators and adulterers go about their activities, just because we didn't see it clearly written anywhere in the Bible that we should not do so, we will fall and die. We must be spiritually sensitive if we must live and not backslide. I am not saying that what is written is inferior to what we feel in our spiritual sensitivity, for the written word of God is our ultimate guide. In truth everything we feel in our spirit must have its foundation in the word. For example avoiding places where fornicators and adulterers carry out their activities has its

foundation in the portion of scriptures where it is written "Abstain from all appearance of evil." (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Everything must have its foundation in the Bible. Everything must be approved of the Bible else we can conclude that it is a demonic sensation. More so, when the Bible says "the letter killeth," it refers only to the legalistic laws meant to guide us. This is in consonance with what was written in Hebrews 6:1 where it says "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God." Note, it said leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, but it didn't say that we should leave it behind. I believe it was in consonance with this that Jesus said "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20). Therefore, our righteousness ought to exceed that of the Pharisees who live based on the letter that killeth. For you read about how they justified their evil deeds by the law, you could only conclude that they were dead. They crucified Jesus, persecuted his church, killed Steven, and stoned Paul. The spirit that maketh alive shouldn't make us a lawless people but to be more righteous. Paul, in his deadness, persecuted the church, but when he came to life through the quickening of his spirit by the revelation he had of Christ, he edified the church. He didn't become sinful, nor did he neglect the law, neither did he encourage anybody to do so in living a sinful life according to the flesh, rather Paul in Galatians 5:16 says "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." It is through the Spirit of God that we can truly live that righteous life that exceeds that of the Pharisees. When our spirit is quickened that we have an acute spiritual perception, then can we say we are moving unto perfection. So the letter killeth, but the spirit maketh alive. Alive unto works better than that of the law.

This is very timely for us to know for we see a lot of carnality and inexpediency in the Christian fold today. A man will embrace another man's wife and pat and rub her in the back and talk in ways that is so endearing. They'll see this as just being social. They are in church so they ought to have been conversant with at least a little bit of scriptures. However they haven't seen where in the Bible it is written "thou shalt not embrace another man's wife, patting, rubbing her in the back, and talking endearingly to her." They didn't see that, neither did they see an archangel peeping through the clouds saying with a voice like the roaring of lion "hey you over there, stop that." These do such shameless things for reasons that we can say that they have been killed by the letter. For by the letter they certainly were not committing adultery. Young ones too, when they see a person of the opposite sex after a long time with shrieks throw their arms around them. Where is our holiness? Where is our purity? Where is our sanctification?

They who are alive by the working of the Spirit need not the voice of the archangel to correct them when erring. That lively spirit in them will caution them. If that were not the case, why would the Holy Spirit through David say "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." (Psalm 32:8) A person who is not spiritually sensitive can't be guided by the Spirit of God. For he'll not shout, he'll seek to guide you with his eyes. If you are not willing to sharpen your spiritual perception to understand every gesture on his face, you'll not be guided by him.

There are times when on the very spot of perceiving evil you may not even be able to trace that feeling to any particular scripture but you know fully well that it is wrong. Though you know, you can't tell exactly why. I have had these experiences some times when I perceive something to be wrong yet I can't at the point see, Biblically, why it is wrong. One of such occasions was when I was invited to a meeting organised by of some of these over ambitious preachers. In the meeting the preacher, wanting to convince us that we ought to leave fellowshiping in our respective churches and join his own church, said that there are places in heaven for the rich and places for the poor. There were beautiful places like Paris and other places in heaven that were mere ghettos. He said that the thief crucified on the cross at Jesus' right hand would end up in the ghetto, while men like

Paul would live in the Paris-class section of heaven. He said that if Paul found the prisoner in the Paris-class section of heaven, he had all the right to walk right up to God and complain about injustice. He said many things but his point was that other churches could get you to heaven and land you in the ghetto, but they were going to see to it, and help you get to the Paris-class section of heaven, so leave your church. On hearing this anybody with the even with the slightest spiritual perception will disagree with everything he said though they may have no scriptural backing in their mind at the time. Yet they'll be right in their judgment as Jesus clearly, by his parable, explained that in heaven there will be much equality (Matthew 20:1-16). Secondly what manner of well meaning city-builder or city-planner would make room for ghettos in his city? The Bible tells us that the builder and maker of Heaven is God (Hebrews 11:10). All that this man said was wrong and he had a selfish and perverted motive in it. But this we can, with a spiritual sensitivity as numb as ours, perceive the faults in his statements. What can we say about a man such as Peter who was so spiritually sensitive that he knew without being told when Ananias and Saphira told a lie (Acts 5:1-11). Is God not able to make us that sensitive too? O yes, he can.

As a matter of warning, being spiritually perceptive also entails being able to differentiate the voice of man from the voice of God. I do not mean that by being spiritually sensitive we should take heed to every thought or opinion that rises up in our head, nor do I mean that we should become superstitious. I don't also mean that we should seek to make ourselves people who easily believe the voice of every man who says he speaking in the name of God. Having an acute spiritual perceptivity is not taking heed to every feeling we may have. On the contrary, when we have that acute spiritual perceptivity, we learn to ignore a whole lot of voices that rise up within our imaginations as well as the voices of vain men. Just as there is the voice or guidance of the Spirit which we may feel, there are also other feelings that we can confuse to originate from him. I don't have much to say about this, neither do I think I could give you a formula with we can identify the voice of the Spirit except this; the Spirit of God cannot contradict the written word of God. Apart from this, all I intend doing is to create in us the awareness that we ought to be spiritually sensitive. I am trusting God to guide every reader into the perfect understanding of his voice. It is said that a problem known is a problem half solved. Now that we know that it is possible and that we ought to have an acute spiritual perceptivity, let us therefore seek to be spiritually sensitive.

There are many things we could go on and on saying and un-saying about this but the summary of the issue is this "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Romans 8:14). Spiritual sensitivity is the distinct characteristic of a Christian.

Let us imitate Christ also in his acute spiritual perceptivity and sensitivity. Let us allow his spirit to dwell in us so richly and make us alive. May he help us in his dear name's sake. Amen. Be a shining light.

Conclusion

*"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."
(1 Peter 2:9)*

These aspects of Christ's life mentioned here are not all there is to be mentioned. My book as well as every other work of any author is not meant to and cannot do your own thinking, meditation or contemplations for you. They just help you do your own thinking. Let us ever gaze on this blessed Lord of ours and never stop adoring and imitating him. As we gaze on his majestic holiness through

his word, let us imitate each and everything we observe in him. Let us be a shining light having all the influence on our world that he had.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, I see that the major aspect of walking successfully with you is to be a light as you were the light. The grace, Lord, to be transformed into thy perfect likeness and be a good representative of your majesty, grant to me. May I have all the holy influence of yours to influence my world in all godliness. This I ask in Jesus' precious name. Amen.*

CHAPTER 5

GOING BACK TO THE ANCIENT PATHS

"Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." (Jeremiah 6:16)

Walking in the light of God is walking in his ways, in the path he has set for us to walk in. In the text above, we are told of what the path which God wants us to walk in is like. It is defined as "the old path, where is the good way." "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." (Hebrews 13:8). Surely our faith has not changed, our God is still the same as he was in the beginning, so what explains for the gap between we and those who have walked with God of old? Is it not because we have left the old paths?

God admonishes us to stand in the ways and see. Today many believe that religion held with shallow understanding is the best way to walk with God. They say if you try to delve too deep into spiritual matters, you will only end up confusing yourself and others. They instigate endless arguments that yields no result. But how wrong is this belief. We ought to stand in the ways with the intent of knowing or discovering. We ought to see. We shouldn't close our eyes to the truth all in the bid of avoiding arguments and confusing one's self. With much understanding comes a surer form of certainty. The most confused people are the ignorant ones. They hold their faith in ignorance and when someone comes over and flaws their belief with a superior argument that they are not able to refute, only then do they realise how confused they are. Many times they respond with angry reactions such as exchanging words or walking out on someone.

For the fact that God says "Stand ye in the ways" makes us understand that there are many ways calling for our attention. This makes us to know that to walk in the way of God is something that demands care, caution, constant prayer, and constant examining and amending of one's ways by the scriptures. If there were just one way then certainly we may not need to be so cautious, but now there are other ways which can be mistaken for the right way, therefore the instruction follows "ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." This is also in line with what Christ says "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." (Matthew 7:13). There is that broad way that seems to be the right one but the end is destruction. There is that broad way that can fit all heretics and profane people ranging from the unrepentant adulterer to the hypocritical man on the pulpit. It is wide enough for all of them. But there is this strait path, ancient in its outlook, yet endures forever. There is this strait road that fits only those who are on there heavenward journey by care, caution, constant prayer, and constant examination and amending of the self through the scriptures. It is those on this strait path that shall enter into heaven. Only they shall reign with Jesus.

God tells us further to ask for the ancient paths, the path of which he is the founder and perfecter. This call is to any who have left the old path. God calls us back to the right way telling us that we should walk in it. The reward of walking in this path is rest for our souls. We may never know how far we have derailed until we have carefully put our ways under the scrutiny of the scriptures, then we will realise that even what we thought was goodness is evil. This practice of scrutinising our ways with the scripture should be a daily one then we will realise that from the moment we stop reading scriptures we start derailing and must keep ourselves in constant remainder of these things else we stray in just a short while. If we have left the old path, then let's return.

Knowing Our Personal Backsliden State

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Corinthians 13:5)

The biggest problem of most Christians is knowing the backsliden state they are in. There is so much backsliding that people don't even know when they have backsliden. The Bible says we should examine ourselves but many would not do so or do so to justify their evil ways. Many would even call God a liar just to call themselves righteous people. This is wrong.

The first step to restoring a healthy relationship with God is knowing our backsliden state. We cannot be our own standard of examining ourselves. The Scriptures must be our standard. We must also learn to ignore some of the men who preach that sin is a light thing, or that what we do, think, allow, or wear don't matter. We must go back to the scriptures. And there, accept whatever is said of us and repent.

But what does it mean to backslide? "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself." (Proverbs 14:14). To backslide is to relapse into bad ways and errors. It is a product of being fed up with the good way. It is a product of not being satisfied with walking in the ancients paths. "The backslider in heart... filled with his own ways... A good man... satisfied." Not being satisfied with the ancient paths is the cause and product of backsliding.

"Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up... I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will shew them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity." (Jeremiah 18:15,17). God is ever angry with a backsliding people who stray out of the ancient paths. The path which he has cast up for us to walk in is ever the same and not prone to change. When we leave it thinking that every age and era requires us to bend and twist our faith to fit the present circumstances we would find ourselves in a way that is not good. Rather we ought to stand strong in the faith and refuse to yield to the enticement of the wicked one and our faith will always prevail.

If our hearts be filled with love for God, knowing our backsliden state of necessity results in contrition which is able to espouse us to God far more than perfection can. Then shall our walk be close with God. Then shall we walk in his ways and have that Christ-like influence in our world.

The Doleful Sun Down

*"But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way."
(Matthew 13:25)*

At six am, Adam and Eve were created. Before seven they sinned and fell short of the glory of God. By eight God called Abram and changed his name to Abraham. By nine, God gave the Law to Israel through Moses. By ten, Israel got tired of having God as their King and wanted a man to be king over them in the place of God. Their excuse was that they were giving heed to a popular demand. At

five after ten, the greatest King of all time reigned in Israel in the person of David. So perfect in the sight of God was he that God made him a promise. At eleven Israel sinned and were taken into captivity. At twelve Christ was born to bring man the whole way back to God. He it was that established the Church. From that time on was all about the Bible, the persecutions, and thanksgiving. At two pm, was the reformation championed by the likes of Martin Luther. At three pm, the King James Version was successfully translated into English and was appointed to be read in the churches by King James, the English King. At four pm, J.S. Bach's Cathedral was built as modern day music theory was given birth to in the church. At five, the puritans ran off to America.

Time has gone and now is the doleful sundown. The day is far spent and the eyes of the church is now heavy, yet the Lord has never ever stopped saying "watch!" How can one watch when he has become drowsy. The church is in a sorry state of backsliding and compromise.

My mentor, Pastor A.W. Tozer, made me to understand that entertainment in the church is as evil as bid counting practiced by the Catholics. But that is the order of the day now. A church service is not blessed unless you have been entertained by some entertaining oratory sermon, good beat from the music band, and it hurts me to include, being entertained by the silly jokes of comedians. All these have become a part of the church. I once sat in a congregation where young people were talking about what would be good for the young people's church. They said many things like dancing, choreography, movies, drama, etc, but none mentioned the preaching of the word, or studying of the Bible. All is entertainment now. A father would chide his son for not being spiritual and would be satisfied when his son starts enjoying Christian rock, or Hip-praise (which I think should be called gangster-praise). Not that to praise God with music (good music) is carnal but in this doleful time of sundown when the eyes of the church is now heavy, entertainment and enjoyment is spirituality.

Hymns which the Bible expressly commands us to sing is now boring (Ephesians 5:19) . When a man raises up his hand to sing a hymn, people just say "you are boring." But this is due to the entertainment malady. There is no rhythm to nod their head to. There is no drugster shouting to thrill them. Neither is their any drummer to beat his drum for them to shake their buttocks and sweat. For the absence of these it is not worth while listening to it. It doesn't matter anymore whether the hymn says "Praise to the Lord the Almighty the King of creation," no, it doesn't. Because that praise does not entertain them they don't get thrilled and if they don't get thrilled then what is the point. This is because we have more hypocrites than there are spiritual people. They already despise the church and her ways and they are on the verge of puking. To restrain themselves and to avoid being seen as carnally minded people, they do spiritual things in a worldly way. They have no reason to be amidst us. Hypocrites!

One 'Christian', when he heard me listening to a hymn he said "put off that thing and put on music." I shouldn't have had any problem with that but this one too claims to be a Christian. And this Christian would listen to a music as meaningless if not as diabolical as "Lost in Paradise" and sing along with all the might. The church is fast forgetting the sweetness of hymns and heavenly melodies and are turning aside to meaningless crash and bang music. To you who love to listen to Christian reggae, Christian jazz, Christian rock, gangster praise, and traditional hand clapping songs so as to forget your hymnbooks, my question is this, did Jesus sing? If yes what did he sing? Read Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26.

The world has always been fund of doing things with a defeated purpose. And now the church is imitating them. Sometimes you find them worshipping a god that can't save them, or practicing morals that can't justify them. James said in his epistle "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27). But what spot of the world can we not find in the church today? The church is now worldly and are doing things with defeated purposes too. The defeated

pattern of dressing has crept into the church. Christians will wear trousers, only to sag their boxers out. Christian ladies will wear skirt, but only wear those so short they dare not sit opposite you else you find yourself in hell. Christians would put on clothes and still look naked. Defeated, I must say, completely defeated.

The madness of the present times is evident in the fact that people do things based on excuses rather than reason. In his poem called "The Vision of William," William Langland described conscience to say "Unless Reason advise me, rather will I die." Today however people hoping to live lives devoid of reason hope to sustain their conscience with excuses supposing that excuses were a good substitute to reason. Despite the craftiness of excuses, the conscience still dies all the same. Yes excuses has an effect, surely it does, but it has none other effect than to lay the conscience quietly and peacefully in the grave so that you don't know it's dead. I have sat down quite a number of times at a church meeting listening to or participating in a conversation during which the issue of dressing would come up and somebody will argue that dressing were not an issue and that what we put on doesn't matter. Such a person will say there is no problem for women to put on trousers bringing up some really ridiculous explanation of cultures he knows nothing about to defend his stance. The same person would put an idolatrous earring in the ears of his girl child and say "I can't do without putting an earring in my girl child's ear lest people mistake her for a boy." Hearing this alone you'll think that such a person really cares about having a distinct difference in the appearance of the different genders, but it is the same person who said that it were okay for women to put on trousers. If reason were really responsible for his utterances, he'll throw the earrings away and would rather not allow his girl child put on trousers "lest people mistake her for a boy." All these are excuses and not reasons. Excuses rule the mind of the people of this generation and so there is a large crowd of religious people amidst true Christians who are going about with a dead conscience. Yet the voice of our Master remains "would thou be made whole?"

Many practices of the modern day church are just out of sheer disobedience to the Bible. Women worshiping with uncovered hair, women being allowed to speak in the gathering of saints, Christians swearing to oath as if it were not their Lord who spoke condemning it. And many other things the Bible has not commanded us that is practiced freely amidst us. So backsliden is the church that as the world is suffering from a severe moral crisis in which homosexuality, abortion, etc is being legalised in some parts of the world, the church is nothing to appeal to. It were more hopeful to appeal to traditions and cultures of men than to hope on the church. The reason for this were explained in my article titled "THE VERY FUNNY ALLEGORY ABOUT THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH." It can be found on my blog @ ayo32ola3.wordpress.com. These are really sad truths to admit but it were good to point them out so that we can weep and groan for the level of backsliding we have found ourselves in and maybe God will revive us again.

In this doleful sundown, we see from the world that they call this the age of enlightenment. Really? Well, welcome to the age where human right is the insanity of same sex marriage, Christianity is prosperity, service to God is bloodshed and oppression, education is void of morals, and money is god. Under the gross darkness of this sombre skies, ask the average man what he thinks and though his eyes were open and his specs on, he'll still say "this is the age of enlightenment." But asking Jesus what he thinks, this is what he says "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:23). Therefore this is the age of great darkness.

This is the doleful sundown. The time is far spent and the eyes of the church is heavy but the command of our Lord remains the same "watch!" This is the time to pray, this is the time to watch, this is the time to turn our laughter to mourning, this is the time to humble our selves before the Lord, this is the time to wake, shake ourselves and return to the right practices and marry our beloved Bibles.

May God help us to make the right decisions and so shall our walk be close to God. Calm and serene shall be our path and the blessed light of our Lord shall flood the way that leads us to God. Amen.

Wake Up Sleeper

"Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Ephesians 5:14)

We must wake up to reality. What do we think of ourselves? Just a bunch of happy people? We are called to be fervent in prayer, love, and zeal for the things of God. Dear brethren, it is not just to satisfy the conscience that we are called. This sleepy state that we are in is more deadly than poison. Awake thou that sleepest. Awake to right reasoning, awake to duty, awake to zeal, awake to God's calling, awake from coldness of love for the things of God, awake from indifference. **AWAKE!**

You call yourself a Christian and I don't doubt you, but what is your body? A house of fun? A house of entertainment? A house relaxation? But what is your body? "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer." (Matthew 21:13). Brethren, if as Christians, your body is God's temple, then your body ought to be the very house of prayer.

A man, even if it were just a little piece of paper that catches fire will put it out quickly. But if he were asleep, his whole house can get engulfed with fire without him even moving a muscle to remedy his situation because he is not the least aware of it. So also is the sleeper who sleeps spiritually forgetting who he is. Like a shepherd who sees a wolf charging towards his sheep and forgetting that he was to protect the sheep will do nothing and may even applaud the dexterity with which the wolf rips open the sheep. This is the state of most of the contemporary church. Lying in the most comfortable posture of sleep, the Christian individuals fold their hands as the world sinks into darkness. **AWAKE!**

I remember that once, when I was in need, I had a dream in which several people were counting money and giving them to me so much that I was happy. About day break my alarm rang. The thought flew in my head that this may merely be a dream. I struggled not to wake up so much that I almost went late to work where I could earn the real money. This is how we are in our sleepy state. Very many people just wish to believe that all is well. We needn't do anything at all. We are just to turn on our hinges like a lazy man. How many times have I had to chide some so called Christian who will chide another Christian for correcting others. They will say things as stupidly sheepish as "no one knows who is accepted before God," or "let's focus on getting rid of the beam in our eyes." They in the dreamy state they found themselves would even seek to justify homosexuals. But we both know those whose names are written in the book of life, because we have the Bible to inform us on what characterises them, and we also don't have to spend forever getting rid of beams or planks. When Jesus said "first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye," he was only telling us which action should precede the other. If Peter, Paul, or any other writer of the Bible were so engaged in plank removal and never taught us what is right in God's sight, shouldn't we have been eternally lost? Like I almost did, we give up the treasures of eternity for mere passing toys of life's vacume. If we don't want to wake up to a bitter reality, we will lose all including our very souls. We must jump to our feet at once and shake ourselves to action. **AWAKE!**

The dreams that can't neutralise your hunger are not worth it (Isaiah 29:8). Why abide in the realms

of dreams where things are always happening, feelings stirred, hopes raised, but nothing effected. Quit the realms of dreams and wake up to actions with which you shall be satisfied when you awake (Psalm 17:15). AWAKE!

I know the evil of denominationalism but if I were to go with a set of belief I think above all I tend to agree with the puritans the most. The puritans made it their central focus to emphasise personal devotion. When they gathered together, they had very short meetings in which they also reminded one another of the importance of personal devotion. I think that is how it ought to be. This flock religion we practice today in which nobody prays except in church won't help us. Imagine if Mr. A, Mr. B, and Mr. C were all on fire in passionate devotion to God in their closets, when they come together, you just need to sing one verse of a hymn with a heavenly tune and you'll see God move. In Acts 4:23-31 we read about the persecution of the apostles. When they got together, they didn't hold a three hour service, but because they were individually fervent, they only made one very sincere prayer that made God to move in such a way all our long church services hasn't resulted in to for donkey years. When we focus on our personal lives and be fervent in our closets, O how great a movement of God shall we experience in our gatherings every time we meet. But the contrary is the case now. No personal devotion. Everybody is only concerned their businesses, jobs, careers, and so on. We seek to make up for our spiritual bankruptcy by attending church activities. We only become spiritual when we step into the premises of the church. We only pray when we gather, and only sing hymns when we hear others singing too. We read in the Psalms "Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore." (Psalm 105:4). Seek God's face evermore, meaning everywhere we find ourselves, in the offices, bus stops, lecture rooms, at home, anywhere at all we find ourselves, we ought to seek God's face. It is unfortunate that some won't seek God anywhere and will still come to church to seek fun and excitement. The result; we sing, and clap, and hear wonderful testimonies, and listen to a sermon, and people will go home as empty as they came. Why? Closet spirituality is shallow.

I am of the private opinion that one of the reasons for backsliding is the failure to obey to the full what is written in Psalm 149:1 saying "Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints." The injunction saying "Sing unto the LORD a new song" was repeated in the Psalms thrice and was mentioned once in the book of Isaiah making it four times in which it was mentioned in the Bible. These tell us how important singing new songs to the Lord is to him. But we start backsliding when every Sunday, it just has to be "Amazing Grace" or "I Surrender All" or some very usual hymn. Isaac Watts alone wrote seven hundred and eighty nine hymns. Ira David Sankey wrote about a thousand and two hundred songs. Charles Wesley wrote over six thousand hymns. If these men wrote hymns in such large numbers, how come we know so few? A church will be happy if it had a hymn book of about two hundred songs, but only one man wrote about eight hundred. Some would be happy if the number of the hymns in their hymn book reaches about five hundred, but in their gathering, selections are only made from about fifty. The rest are for those to whom it may concern. The reason given for this is that "we want every body to sing along." I think we will all sing along if we all love hymns and sing it everyday on our own. We can't sing along when we only sing in church. If we sing a new song to God always and everybody who loves hymns and sing always on their own sing along, you will see what manner of dynamism and wonder would ignite our gatherings. But now if we sing only "Amazing Grace" always, I think we should be warming up for more severe backsliding. Let us also not be in the habit of limiting ourselves to just a few hymns on the basis "this is my favourite hymn." Let us even go ahead to keep making new melodies and writing new hymns. Let us not forget the old but let make new godly hymns. For this reason Paul said For this reason, I'm of the private opinion that repetition of hymns causes backsliding too. WAKE UP TO SINGING NEW SONGS!

In describing what heaven was like, Jesus said "the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he

hath, and buyeth that field." (Matthew 13:44). This makes us understand that discovery is essential for us walking with God... If a man sells all that he had to get something, whatever that thing is, we may think he is mad. But this man here was not mad. He had seen what is hidden to the eyes of others that was why he acted as he did. So also, we, not until we have begin to truly see the treasures of heaven can we start acting aright. If our vision is clouded by the things of this world, we will never be what God wants us to be. We live lives with awkward spirituality only because our eyes have been clouded. If we realise the treasures we have in heaven, gladly will we throw every earthly thing away in order to get those eternal treasures. Not until we wake can we with joy throw away all earths weights and run the race set before us. Jesus did not say he did these things with much sorrow, but rather with joy. The rich man who wanted to follow Jesus, of whom he told him to sell all he had, turned back with sadness just for this one reason, he could not see those treasures above (Matthew 19:16-22). Not that he sold all he had with a heavy heart, but he did not sell them at all. He cleaved to them not knowing that it were more glorious to forsake all that were his to gain the treasures of eternity. Contrary to this, the man who saw those treasure sold all he had with joy. Having a clouded vision can pose a major obstacle to us. St. John of Damascus saw the importance of having a clear vision and wrote in his hymn:

*"Our hearts be pure from evil,
that we may see aright
the Lord in rays eternal
of resurrection light."*

When our eyes have begin to behold the spiritual benefits which is our's in life and in death if we live and die for the glory of God, we shall with joy throw away all carnality and cleave to our Saviour. Not with heaviness of heart as if we have lost something or are losing something, but with a delightful heart knowing we are losing nothing. We must ever pray to God to open our eyes to see the glories of the things above, else we'll derail from that path too easily. We need to WAKE UP!

It is time to cast slot away and start realising things as the Bible teaches us, and start responding with the right responses of prayer and courageous works. "Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame." (1 Corinthians 15:34). When people go on in their sin, whether the church justifies it or not, it is either because they are asleep or they are completely dead. This call is to all to whom all hope is not lost. It is not a call to those who are dead beyond remedy but to the sleeping person or one who can at least rise from their deadness. I wish no one will condemn himself to be dead "For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion." (Ecclesiastes 9:4). I believe that so far as there is life there is hope, so WAKE UP TO RIGHTEOUSNESS.

"Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness." (Jeremiah 13:16). The darkness is here already. Let us begin to give glory to God in all things, maybe he will repent and send his light yet again and revive us again. Hallelujah thine the glory. Hallelujah amen. Hallelujah thine the glory. Revive us again. Amen.

Staggering In The Light

"Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire,

and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow."(Isaiah 50:10 - 11)

It is also sad that many times we see people who will rather than repent give excuses or pick up portions of the Bible, give it their own interpretation, and live by their own interpretation. These are people who are referred to in our text that they kindle a fire, and compass themselves with sparks of their making. This is what God says to them; "walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." That is the bitter end of not seeking God but seeking one's own way. Torment and sorrows lies ahead.

To those who will not justify themselves falsely, but simply obey the voice of God accepting everything it says is wrong to be wrong and everything it says is false to be false even when they are not able to stand with perfection in his commands, he says; "Trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon God." We know the blessedness that follows those who stay upon God; life, health, peace, and eternal rest awaits him above. These are they who stagger in the light.

Now what does it really mean to stagger in the light? To stagger is to move unsteadily causing the tendency to fall. This means that staggering in the light is to move in a way that is not upright in God's precepts. This is not to wilfully go on in one's sins but if you have found yourself in evil, admit it is evil and humble yourself before your God with a contrite heart. To stagger also involves trying to maintain one's balance when about to fall. So it is not throwing one's self to the ground, but rather striving to be holy. In this strife, one will always find himself a sinner in one way or the other. In this state that could leave one hopeless is when we are to trust on God and stay on him. It is when we are of such a disposition that God will help us. We are to keep striving, trusting in God and being persistent in our strife but never, I mean never, are we to justify ourselves in that which is evil so as to become comfortable in it.

On the other hand it speaks of those who would walk in their light. Not stagger, but walk. These are they who have made their own doctrines and devised a lie that they can easily fulfill and claim merit for it. They have left the Word for their own crafted lies which are but sparks and fires their own hands have kindled. These maybe because one's feeling of unworthiness or hopelessness to accomplish that which is written. Rather than trusting in God and being persistent in the strife, they just start giving excuses that it doesn't matter to do those things which are evil. Still others craft lies for the reason that they don't care about right or wrong. They just wish to do as they please and craft their lies just to be comfortable in them and persuade other people to believe in such lies so as not to appear vile. But one thing that is certain for any in such a case is sorrow. There, in sorrow and torment, they shall lie down though they walked before.

It is also for the purpose of pointing out evils of this nature that the Bible says "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (Jeremiah 2:12 - 13). Forsaking the ways and provisions of God to invent ones ways is to God a great evil which is described here as "two evils." Sinning is one, which God will pardon as long as we tremble at his word and seek to be holy with a humble and contrite heart. But the second is to forsake God and invent what is ours. This will he not pardon. Not my verdict, but the Bible's, for it is written "This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." Remaining at that fountain of living water (though there be guilt) is what pleases God and not going to hew cisterns by means of our feeble intellect or might.

David and Saul were two people that are great examples of men in these two conditions. While Saul justified himself when he sinned creating a doctrine that justified his actions, David accepted his sin and in contrition wept and fasted. Saul walked in his light justifying himself, but David staggered

not being justified of his own self. David was accepted even though his sin was grievous but Saul was rejected and lied down in torment even though his sin was amendable. This is how God has judged men in the past and on the day of judgment it won't be any different. Let's be warned.

Prayer: *Dear God, we pray that in the darkness of our world we may find you and walk right into your glorious light to fellowship with you, O most holy One. We may have gone all the way out of that ancient path in which we had enjoyed rest of our souls, guide us with your hands to bring us all the way back to the good path. Help us to walk in it and not to despise it. Keep us in it, and help us to love it, and draw others to it. O thou enemy, hear the words of the Prophet "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness." (Micah 7:8 - 9). Help us O God. Give us salvific help from our taunting enemy in these latter days. In Jesus' name have I prayed.*

CHAPTER 6

THE DANGERS OF BEING UNKINDLED

*“He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.”
(Proverbs 28:26)*

There are a lot of dangers in being unkindled. Even if there were none, there are certainly benefits of being kindled and being unkindled will deprive us from them all, therefore the danger of being unkindled is great.

One of the dangers of being unkindled is doing things with a limited vision and not doing things out of the light and illumination of God. One will always pay for such actions in the end.

I have been a victim of short-sightedness quite a number of times. I remember once, due to carelessness and unforeseen circumstances I lost my chance to book for a hostel space and that affected me a whole year. A mistake of just about thirty minutes affected me negatively for the whole year.

A Biblical example of someone who operated without the light of God was Joshua. He was the leader of children of Israel which were supposed to wipe out the inhabitants of Canaan land, but he took a hasty step in signing a pact with the Gibeonites being deceived by their craftiness. Joshua was a man who always inquired of God on what to do, but this time, he didn't inquire of God before he signed the pact with the Gibeonites. They were a constant pain in the neck of the Israelites.

Another danger is that of bearing what ever comes from the Lord being displeased. The Bible says “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the most high. ” Christ said of the Laodicean Church “ thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” It is a fearful thing for the Lord to spit you out. If the Lord were to spue the Laodicean church out of his mouth it means that they would be utterly rejected and cast off as a church.

It is sad enough to be rejected by the one who has loved you so much but how about the consequences of it. If the Lord doesn't save, who else would save. Peter says of Christ in Acts 4:11-12 “This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” If Christ does not save, no one else can save. If he rejects us, it means eternal damnation.

Whosoever the Lord loaths will bear the consequences in this life and the life to come. In Jeremiah 14:19 “Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble!” Because God loathed Judah, they were smitten by him, there was no healing for them. They looked for peace but found trouble. This is how it is in this life for those who the Lord loaths.

Also God says in Zechariah 11:8 “Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.” Another consequence of being loathed by God is that the

soul of whom he abhors will abhor him. When your soul starts to loath the only one who is able save you, then there is a problem of eternal consequence that it won't be wise to ignore. Definite and adequate actions must be taken to ensure the Lord does not speu us out of his mouth. That action is repentance.

The Lord continues in Zechariah 11:9 "Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another." The loving Lord can also be a consuming fire. He can devastate and destroy in a moment

The third danger is that it is to risk being deceived by false doctrines and false prophets. This point in time in the history of mankind is the very worst time for any to put their trust in any man to guide them in the doctrines of God. Gone are men like Paul who would weep and lament over anybody who errs from the truth, who said "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." (Galatians 4:19). Gone are they. Now you have men who would sell your soul for a good house, or even a loaf of bread. To be unkindled makes it is easy to believe every wind of doctrine. When one is not firm in the truth he will be blown away. When you follow anything that seems right you'll never know when you start heeding the voice of tempter. Christ said my sheep will not follow a stranger so when we follow a stranger it only shows that we are not his.

The fourth danger is that we will not be able bear fruits for Christ. Christ said if we abide in him and his word abide in us we will bear much fruits. Not being kindled is marching to the orders of our own imaginations and not to his will. It is a clear sign that his words is not dwelling in us. He said any fruit that doesn't bear fruit will chopped down. Be warned. It will be woeful to see the fierce side of such a loving saviour.

The fifth is that we will be misrepresenting Christ. We will be saying both in word and in conduct what he will never say or do. Our friend who spoke about ghettos in heaven is an example of this. I've heard many unkindled candles who seeking to the will of God in their own strength and learning pouring out of their mouth vain and destructive words. Products of the seminary, readers of mere books, runners about who never sat at the master's feet to learn of him. Don't be like them. Do the work of God in his light. Sit there at his feet. Don't get up. Be illuminated, and thereafter go about his assignment.

There are many other dangers but these should let us know that the dangers of being a light that isn't shining is to take risks that could have eternal consequences. Just like I made a little error that affected me negatively a whole year, so also a little thing we do in the brevity of our time here on earth could reap for us some woeful eternal consequences.

Prayer: *Dear Lord, keep negligence away from our hearts. Please O God, you who said those who put their trust in you shall not be put to shame. We trust not in ourselves to be kindled with your light and zeal. No, dear Lord. Our trust is in you. Don't let us be put to shame. Kindle us with thy light O God of host. Be merciful and let your light return into our hearts and shine brighter and brighter unto a perfect day in the life of each and every Christian individual. O God, do this for us, O Holy One of Israel, in Jesus' name have we prayed. Amen.*

CHAPTER 7

JESUS WILL NOT QUENCH

“A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.” (Matthew 12:20)

The text above tells us that Jesus will not break a bruised reed nor will he quench a smoking flax. This is a prophecy as well as a promise. Just as the hymn of Fanny Crosby goes “Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.”

If ever you find your light going out, just know this that Jesus will not quench it. Come back to him and he will do you good. What the Bible means when it says Jesus will not break a bruised reed it means that even when the things that hold to us to him are less strong than they ought to be, he still calls us his own. When the Bible says “a smoking flax shall he not quench,” it means that a even when our zeal for him dwindles to the point of being almost snuffed out, he still will wait for us to come to him. Our Lord is always waiting to see if we could wake from our slumber so that he could embrace us to himself again and revitalise us and kindle our candle. Such is the love of Christ.

He is a compassionate friend. Let's all return to Jesus in these last days and see him move in our midst. We need him now than ever. Let's open ourselves to him. Let us throw away everything that keeps him away. Let us allow his Holy Spirit to dwell richly in us. I pray God will grant us the grace to make a right response to what we have read in this book.

Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

Prayer: *We thank thee dear Lord for your light. I see that your words are true. Let it, I pray, be so with me; let Thy truth teach me, let it keep me and preserve me safe unto the end. Let it free me from all evil and inordinate affections, and I will walk before Thee in great freedom of heart. Call to mind Thy tender mercies, and fill my heart with Thy grace to make a light in these days of doleful darkness. Lord, teach me to do Thy will, teach me to walk humbly and uprightly before Thee. Oh send forth Thy light and Thy truth, that they may shine upon the earth; for I am but earth without form and void until Thou give me light. Pour forth Thy grace from above; water my heart with the dew of heaven; give the waters of devotion to water the face of the earth, and cause it to bring forth good and perfect fruit. Thank you dear Jesus for you will not quench my smoking flax. Thank you Lord. Amen and amen.*