Discipleship at any cost



Zacharias Tanee Fomum

DISCIPLESHIP AT ANY COST

By

Zacharias Tanee Fomum

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Chapter 1

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

A disciple of Christ is a person who has, first of all, received the Lord Jesus Christ as his or her personal Saviour and is therefore reconciled to God, and, secondly, has set his whole heart, mind and all to seek Him. The disciple makes Jesus his all and forsakes everything that may stand in the way of his fellowship with Christ. Such a one has Christ for his all in all and desires nothing outside of Him. Such a relationship with Christ in which he becomes our all in all is very costly and, since the Lord Jesus warns us to count the cost, let us look at the cost.

FORSAKE SIN

Becoming a disciple and remaining one will cost us the giving up of all sin. The Saviour, whose disciples we want to be, separated Himself from sin

and lived a sinless life, so much that He was able to challenge His enemies, saying, “Which one of you accuses me of sin?” They were silent because He was perfect. So the disciple who is a learner from Jesus Christ has no choice but to learn to walk in the same way of purity. Our Saviour is a Holy Saviour and we cannot really come after Him unless we definitely part with all the sin that is in our lives. It is impossible for a sin-hating Christ to lead a band of sin-loving disciples.

When we talk of sin, we are naturally reminded of the law - the Ten Commandments. We should, however, consider also their implications: Our Lord said that looking at a woman lustfully is, in fact, committing adultery; that hatred and harbouring anger against someone are equivalent to murder. Similarly, we should remember that pride includes rudeness, or considering ourselves a little better than others; that gossip is idleness and probably betrays a lack of real concern for the people that we gossip about; that drunkenness, masturbation and reading bad books are all part of sensuality. We are often tempted to exaggerate our problems, successes or even spiritual experiences. All exaggerations and half-truths are lies and therefore sinful before God. Sadly, people who know the Lord Jesus, and therefore should know better, are often caught up in sins like these; and we give the world the impression that there is no victory in the Lord. This is even more hopeless when we say to each other, “We are Spirit-filled,” and yet continue to live in sin. If sin rules in our lives, then one thing is obvious: we are not Spirit-filled; for the Holy Spirit cannot fill a dirty vessel. When the Holy Spirit wants to fill a person, He first cleanses that person of all sin, then permeates every area of that person’s life, bringing it under obedience to Jesus. Where there is sin, the Holy Spirit is obviously very limited.

If our attitude to sin is not settled, if we lack that Spirit-created hatred for sin and do not labour in prayer and in practice to be freed from all sin, then we cannot be disciples. We may continue as Christians and even deceive ourselves that we are serving Christ. Others may think we are serving the Lord, but let us not be deceived; for God does not see as man sees. Man looks on the outside, but God looks on the heart. The Lord is looking on our hearts today. What does He see? Does He see a clean heart that hates sin, or does He see one stained and defiled by sin?

If we are sinful, then the place to begin is at the cross. We must face God and tell him exactly what we are. We must tell Him, “Lord, l have sinned.” We must also name our sins before Him and be very specific.

It is futile to confess in a general way or to leave some sins out. That is mockery to God. After confessing, we must turn our backs to sin in a definite act and ask Him to forgive and cleanse us. This must be followed by restitution in which we restore that which we destroyed through sin. Finally, we must ask the Holy Spirit to take over every inch of our lives and possess it for God. This is basic to discipleship.

FORSAKE POSSESSIONS

Discipleship will cost us our possessions. The early disciples gave up everything when Jesus asked them to come after Him so that He would make them fishers of men. We are told of Peter and Andrew who, straightaway, forsook their nets and followed Him, of James and John who left their father, Zebedee, in the ship with the hired servants and went after Him, and of Matthew who immediately rose and followed Him. For the fishermen, following Christ brought an end to their fishing career. For Matthew, it brought an end to his comfortable financial position; yet he did

not wait to determine how his pension was going to be settled. The fish and the money were abandoned in one decisive act without regret or questioning. All they knew was that Jesus the Lord had asked them to come. His invitation was urgent and forthwith. These disciples had a choice. They could have offered a very intelligent and legitimate excuse: the business would collapse and their families would suffer. But they did not. All of them straightaway left all and followed Him. Compare these to the rich young ruler: He came to Jesus running, bowed to Him and asked a question of the utmost importance. He came running to show that he understood the urgency of things. He came to the right person, the Lord Jesus. He bowed down in acknowledgement of Jesus as Lord, and asked the right question. Jesus said to him,

> *"If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.' When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions." (Matthew 19:21-22).*

We may begin to say,

> *"Thank God we do not have great possessions,"*

but what about the one hundred shillings, or the ten shillings or the one shilling that we have? Are we willing to give it away for the Lord's work? If we do not give our ten shillings when we have little, we will not be able to give a hundred or a thousand shillings when we have much. It seems easier to have money for a new shirt or house than to have the same amount of money for the Lord. How sad!

We should look at our possessions and prayerfully ask the Lord if we should give some away to people in need. One resident Christian University student decided to offer his lunch for one term to a poor non-resident student who had very little money. Every day, this Christian young man had breakfast and supper and gave his lunch to the poorer non-Christian student. It was costly, but by the end of the term, this sacrificial love won the non-Christian to the Lord.

Maybe we should face up to the fact that we are lovers of money and possessions; indeed, lovers of the world, and that the command which says,

"Do not love the world or the things in the world," (1 John 2:15),

has not been obeyed. Could it be that the "love for the Father" is not in us? Very few of us are giving anything substantial to the Lord's work. Of course, we can throw in one silver coin, or five or occasionally ten of them, but is that giving? God is not a rubbish heap on which we throw the things we do not want. If we give God just what we can give away comfortably without its hurting us, then we have really not known what it means to give. We ought to give until it hurts. God is not a beggar, and many of us today say, "Praise the Lord," whereas, in fact, we, like the rich young ruler, are too rich to forsake all.

If we are to be effective disciples, then all our property must undergo a twofold separation. Firstly, it must be separated from the devil and the world, so that the devil can no longer control its use. Secondly, it must be separated from us; so that our selfish selves no longer have power to hoard it. Property and money thus separated must be presented utterly to the Lord - not only a tenth, but all of it. When all our possessions are thus consecrated to the Lord; so that we have nothing except that the Lord is our

possession and our inheritance, we shall be truly rich. The Lord will make us stewards of his riches; so that whether we give one hundred shillings to the Lord's work or we spend it to buy food, we can remain at peace because we are stewards discharging His command. No disciple has any right whatsoever to keep or to give any money away without the Lord's specific instructions. We shall give account, not only of what we keep which ought to have been given away, but also of what was given away outside the Lord's will.

Some will still be called by the Lord to literally "go and sell all and give to the poor." Are we ready, should the Lord so call us? That is part of the cost of discipleship. Anyone who does not forsake all that he has cannot be a disciple of the Lord Jesus.

FORSAKE YOUR OWN AMBITION

Many people are very ambitious. Some want to be very rich, others want to be top doctors, engineers or scientists. Few, however, really want to serve the Lord Jesus. There has been the tragic myth that if a man failed "Ordinary" or "Advanced" levels in his School Certificate Examination, he should go and work in the Church or even become a pastor. As far as many people are concerned, only failures are good enough for God. What a tragedy! God deserves the best that can be obtained. If a person had three distinctions in the "A" levels, if he had first class with honours in his first degree or if he had a master's or doctorate's degree, is that not the person God wants? Of course, he can use some failures, but who deserves the best, if not our God? As we think about our life and all that lies in the future, it will be good to remember that we shall pass this way but once. We have just one life. If it is not wholly spent for the Lord, it is wasted and, what a sad waste! If we cling to our selfish ambitions, even if they are selfish

‘spiritual’ ambitions, we will fail utterly. The sons of Zebedee wanted to sit, one on the left and the other on the right hand of the Lord in His Kingdom. They were concerned for their own greatness and the Lord would not grant it.

When we have forsaken our own ambitions, we ask the Lord for His own purposes. What does the Lord want us to do in this country today? What is the Lord’s plan for our people? If we ask such questions and receive answers from the Lord, making his purposes our ambition, if we then go out to serve Him and die, if need be, to accomplish the desires of God’s heart, we shall have begun to live truly.

FORSAKE YOUR LOVED ONES

The Lord Jesus said,

> *“A man’s foes will be those of his own household.” (Matthew 10:36).*

It may be that the Lord will call us to an obscure place to do some job for Him that the world considers insignificant. He might call us to serve Him full-time in the gospel enterprise, which is not financially lucrative. What shall we do if our families say, “No”? Jesus said,

> *“He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.” (Matthew 10:37).*

Should such a conflict arise, the disciple is called, out of love for both the Lord and the family, to obey the Lord who has prior claims on his life.

What about those contemplating marriage or planning it? Whatever we do, we should settle one question and it is this, “Is the Lord in it?” l am not

talking about a relationship between a Christian and a non-Christian which the Bible forbids (2 Corinthians 6:14). l am talking of something that looks quite legitimate. Are we prepared to seek God's will earnestly? Of the Lord's twelve apostles it seems that those who were called when unmarried remained so all their lives. The work of the Kingdom gave them no room for marriage. That same Lord still calls some today to become "eunuchs for the gospel's sake," Are we prepared, should the Lord desire that we should never get married, to forsake marriage for His sake? Can we surrender to Him our right to be married and say to Him, "Lord, l will gladly remain single for Your sake should You so desire"? This is not just for those who cannot find someone to get married to, but it must be a deliberate choice now, with the future unknown to leave our right to marriage at the cross.

SURRENDER YOUR LIFE

It is possible to surrender money, property, time, career, parents, friendships and marriage to the Lord and yet hold our very beings, our lives, back. When we have given away our things, we still have our beings. The Lord Jesus does not stop at things. He wants the surrender of our very beings.

> *"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24).*

This means that as far as we are concerned we are in a way written off. We are willing to die for Him, willing to be great for Him, and willing to be nothing, should He so desire. The apostle Paul said,

> *"It is no longer l who live but Christ who lives in me." (Galatians 2:20).*

If we enter into this life of daily denying our very selves and surrender to the demands of that life, then we can truly be His disciples. Discipleship means the surrender of all for all time.

The Lord Jesus wants disciples today. He wants people who have parted company with sin and self. This is not something to be left for tomorrow; anyone who is unwilling to yield himself fully to the Lord today, is unlikely to be yielded in the future . Some may dream of action tomorrow, but the Lord demands action today.

We cannot postpone the decision of absolute surrender to the Lord. He or death may come sooner than we expect. Whichever takes place first, we will be unable to serve the Lord then. Heaven is for praising and glorifying His name, and not for toil and service. The opportunities lost now will never be regained. We are called to live this minute for God's greatest glory.

Furthermore, the forces of the Enemy are rising high. No one knows how near the time is when it will be a crime to preach the Christ of the cross. We must make the most of the opportunities to preach the gospel now. For this, we must totally surrender ourselves to Jesus Christ.

A prayer like: "Lord Jesus, today l give up all my own ambitions, plans, desires and hopes and l accept Your will for my life. l give up my life, my very being, my all, utterly to You to be Yours for ever. Take over all the people l love and all the property l own and will ever own. l surrender my all to You now in an act of commitment from which only death shall release me. l gladly accept Your will for my life and will continue to gladly accept that will daily, whatever that will may be. Let me be all that You saved me for and all that You want me to be at any cost," is one we should pray sincerely and live out daily.

Does it sound too much? Is it too costly? It was not too costly for the One who left all the glory of heaven to die on a lonely cross. How can it be too costly for us who are called to follow in His steps? Does it sound like a waste of life? Not if that life is spent for Him who emptied Himself of all so that we might be filled with His divine majesty.

Chapter 2

THE FOUNDATION OF DISCIPLESHIP

Complete surrender of self and all to Jesus Christ is just the beginning. It is the gateway into the life of discipleship. It is not the end, and anyone who makes it the end will find that it is ineffective. The One whose disciples we want to be, made the once and for all commitment of Himself to the human cause in heaven, and had to live out that commitment on earth. In fulfilling His Father's will, two things had to be done. First of all, that will had to be known and, secondly, it had to be done. Knowledge and obedience were the key words in our Lord's life. If we are to be His disciples, we must start from a firm foundation of knowing His will and doing it.

A STUDENT OF GOD'S WORD

The Lord Jesus Christ knew the Scriptures thoroughly well. He frequently said, “It is written,” when He faced the devil. He used the Scriptures when He confronted the Pharisees, in teaching the masses, and in instructing His followers,

> *“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Luke 24:27).*

The Scriptures which Jesus expounded were Old Testament Scriptures. The Psalmist loved God’s word and hungered for it. The apostles’ primary duty was the Word and prayer. The command of the Lord to Joshua was:

> *“This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success.” (Joshua 1:8).*

For us, God’s word is the whole Bible.

The disciple will take God’s word seriously. First of all, he will read it, the whole of it. This can easily be done in a year. An average reader needs only 77 hours to read through the whole Bible, and not just favourite passages. He will take both the old and New Testaments seriously. Apart from reading it, he will study it, He will use his mind to reason and understand as he thinks through what the Word is saying. Thus he will apply his whole mind to it and on his knees ask God for revelation of the deeper meanings. These two aspects must be present as we study the Word of God: a mind fully alert before God’s Word and a spirit submissively asking the Lord to reveal the deeper truths that cannot be received with the mind alone. Too many of us fear to think through God’s Word as if our minds were not created by Him.

So we need to ask ourselves the following questions: Do we love God's Word? Do we read it and study it while praying for revelation from the Holy Spirit who is the Author of the Word? Do we memorize some of it so that like the Psalmist we too can say to God,

> *"l have laid up thy word in my heart, that l may not sin against thee"? (Psalm 119:11).*

There are a number of reasons why the Word should not be neglected and why it must be read, studied and meditated upon daily. The first is that if this love of His Word is absent, it speaks out clearly that we do not love Him; for someone has said, "The Bible is a love letter from Jesus to us His beloved." Can anyone refuse to read and re-read a letter from the one who loves him and whom he loves? The second reason is that we shall not know His will for our lives, if we do not read His Word.

The Bible is God's main instrument for guiding His children. Of course, the Holy Spirit will at times speak directly to our hearts, but only the one who is well versed in the knowledge of God's word will know how to handle these direct communications and avoid being seduced by the devil's mimicking of the Lord's voice. Obedience to the Lord is essential and we cannot obey unless we know what to obey. Thirdly, anyone who neglects God's Word will backslide and probably make shipwreck of his Christian life. A child who does not feed dies. Also, a child who stays on milk for too long will not develop properly.

If we have not been taking God's Word seriously and yet we want to become disciples or remain disciples, then we must repent, ask the Lord for forgiveness for not loving His Word, and start to study it at once. There will be times when we do not feel like reading it; but love is not just an emotion.

It is reason as well. There have been times in my own experience when l have not felt like reading the Lord's Word; but when l have forced myself to read it in spite of my feelings, God has been glad to bless me. He is very gracious. The righteous shall live by faith and not by feelings.

A WRESTLER ON HIS KNEES

It is said of the Lord Jesus Christ that

> *"In the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed." (Mark 1:35).*

> *"In these days he went out to the mountain to pray; and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples, and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles." (Luke 6:12,13).*

It appears strange that Jesus Christ who is the Lord Almighty needed to pray. Yet He seems to have had a formula which someone has put this way, "He decided not to see the face of any man until he had seen the face of God; not to talk to man about God until He had talked to God about man." This, in many ways, sets the pattern of life for the disciple. To Jesus, prayer was of such critical importance that He gave it that part of the day when He was most fresh. It was His number one business; the disciple too must give it the same priority. He must begin the day with serious prayer, and not just a few sentences thrown out at God to ease the conscience.

Prayer is not a waste of time. Jesus spent the whole night in prayer before the all-important job of selecting the twelve apostles. We should also learn from the example of Martin Luther who once said, "l have so much work today that l must spend the first three hours in prayer." He had discovered

that prayer makes work much easier. The disciple ought to pray before beginning any work; he ought to pray while the work is in progress and after the work is completed. Unless we are determined to pray, we should not bother about doing any work for the Lord.

THE PRIVACY OF PRAYER

The Lord sought a lonely place for prayer. He also taught that personal prayer should be private. Corporate prayer as well as praying with a friend have their place in the disciple's life. However, spiritual status is not determined by public or group prayer. Many can easily be carried away and therefore pray for self glorification. It is private, personal prayer that reveals a person's spiritual status and progress. Only a few of God's children seek lonely places for prayer. How much time do we spend in prayer each day? Five minutes, ten minutes, thirty minutes, one hour? Our answer to this question shows how much we love Him. We must face up to the fact that if we do not enjoy talking to Him alone, then maybe our love for Him is non-existent.

THE THINGS PRAYED FOR

Jesus taught in the Lord's prayer that the priority in prayer was to be: "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done..." rather than: Give me this, that and the other." He meant that the disciple's primary concern should be the hallowing of God's name, the establishment of His kingdom in men's hearts, and the doing of His will. He meant that requests for our own personal needs should be secondary. We need to ask ourselves if our prayer requests reveal such an attitude of heart. If not, that is probably why there are so many unanswered prayers among God's children. James says,

> *“You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.” (James 4:3).*

The Biblical injunction is

> *“Seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.” (Matthew 6:33).*

If we seek His kingdom and glory in all our requests, then we can also ask Him for our needs.

We must be specific; for Jesus said, “If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain...” He did not say, “You shall say to a mountain.” To pray in a very general way is to lose a lot of blessings; for we shall not be able to discern when the prayer is answered. Personally, l record most of my petitions, including the date l first prayed, the scriptural reference which shows that God has promised to answer a prayer in that direction, the date on which the answer was received and the manner in which God answered. In this way l am helped firstly, to be specific, secondly, to give thanks for answers, thirdly to discover something of God’s pattern of answering, and lastly, the record serves as an exhibit which l show the devil in times of difficulty to prove that God is faithful and answers prayers.

Anything prayed for outside God’s will will not be granted. Our first duty then is to seek His will about the things we want to ask for. This will save us a lot of pain and disappointment; for God cannot change His mind and give us things outside His will, unless it is part of His judgment, as Scripture says,

“He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.” (Psalm 106:15 A.V.).

How sensitive we need to be to the Spirit’s leading!

A DISCIPLINED FOLLOWER

The disciple must be disciplined. He cannot just allow things to take their natural course. He must wrestle against all floppy tendencies in his life. Bible study and prayer are hard work. Naturally, it is easier to neglect them. To command ourselves and say to ourselves whether or not we like it that we must do the things the Lord demands, is the pathway to progress. The apostle Paul said,

“l pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others l myself should be disqualified.” (1 Corinthians 9:27).

This means that we must say, “No!” to all lazy tendencies. A lazy person cannot be the disciple of the Lord Jesus. There is no room for those who cannot get down to serious work. If we eat too much, play too much, talk too much and sleep too much, we should cry to God for mercy. As disciples of the King of glory and in knowledge of the fact that we shall give account for every word we have said and for every minute we have spent, how watchful we need to be to ensure that we are slaves of the Lord Jesus and of no other thing! The challenge before us is such that agonizing intercession and fasting are called for. Are we disciplined enough to face up to these?

AN OBEDIENT SERVANT

It is said of the Lord Jesus Christ that He became obedient unto death on the cross. In this way, He paved and carved the way for all His would-be

disciples. Obedience was part of His cross, borne daily throughout His lifetime, culminating in death at Calvary as the final act of obedience.

The disciple must obey. If in our Bible study we seek God's will, and after knowing it we run away from it, we deny ourselves the privilege of being His disciples. There is a type of obedience that comes out of resignation to God's will. Such says, "l must obey because there is no way out. God is greater than l. l am a prisoner in His hands. What else can l do?" This is only second rate obedience. It is not the obedience of love. The type of obedience that God gladly welcomes is that glad obedience that springs from love for Him. We may be called, out of obedience, to suffer greatly for His name's sake, but we shall miss the mark unless we suffer gladly. This is not emotional joy, but that joy which says, "It is my Father's will. l love Him and l will do it."

God will demand obedience in small things. We might be required to do just a simple thing such as not to say a particular word, not to think a particular thought, not to sit near a particular girl or boy, to visit someone or to give some money to someone. God demands instant obedience, even in small things like these. To disobey is to disqualify from being asked to do big things for Him.

He will also demand obedience in greater things. Take Abraham, for example: he was asked by God to take his only son Isaac whom he loved very dearly, and go into the land of Moria and offer him there as a burnt offering to the Lord. What a demand! His only son to be sacrificed! It is hard to imagine how Abraham must have received it. It must have been an awkward situation for him to find himself faced with a choice between God the Giver, and Isaac the gift. Abraham did not discuss it with Sarah his

wife. The Lord demanded instant obedience, and Abraham was determined to render it. It was not just an emotional obedience; he had three days to think about it and change his mind, if he wanted to. But he obeyed to the end and thereby became the father of the faithful. l have often thought that there is a mount Moria and an Isaac in each Christian's life, and that God will call us individually to ascend it and there sacrifice our Isaac. What do we treasure most? Does God not demand an offering of that thing? Shall we obey?

The apostle Paul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. That obedience cost him everything. We are not exempted. Obedience is the most crucial test of discipleship; for the Lord said: "You are my disciples if you do what l tell you."

THE TRAGEDY OF INCOMPLETE OBEDIENCE

Scriptures abound with examples of people who wanted to play games with God; men and women who thought that it did not matter to render partial obedience to Him. Ananias and Sapphira brought a part of the price of their land and pretended that it was the whole. In so doing, they lied to the Holy Spirit. The result was that God struck both of them dead. That was the price of hypocrisy and half measures in spiritual matters.

The story of King Saul is another example which reveals God's wrath against half-heartedness. It should stand as a warning to all disciples and all would-be disciples that God is not mocked and that we shall reap what we sow. Saul was sent by the Lord to go and smite the Amalekites and utterly destroy them. He went and smote them and destroyed them all, except for the fat cattle, rams and king Agag. He obeyed for the most part, but not

completely. He went ahead to tell Samuel that he had obeyed the commandment of the Lord. But Samuel asked,

> *"What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which l hear?" (1 Samuel 15:14).*

Saul tried to explain. He said it was for sacrifice to the Lord. However, God would not be moved; for He has a greater delight in obedience than in burnt offerings and sacrifices.

There may be sins, areas of disobedience, unsurrendered parts of our lives which we think no one knows about, and maybe indeed no one does but God. These are to Him like the bleating of sheep and the lowing of oxen. If we are half-hearted and continue to be so, then the verdict of God on Saul will be His verdict on us. That verdict was

> *"Rebellion is as the sin of divination and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king." (1 Samuel 15: 23).*

To emphasize this point, Samuel went on to say, "You have rejected the word of the Lord and the Lord has also rejected you from being king over Israel. The Lord has torn the Kingdom of Israel from you this day, and has given it to a neighbour of yours, who is better than you."

However, God lovingly and patiently waits for the repentance of a disobedient disciple. If we return to Him, He will accept us back. (Malachi 3:7 and Isaiah 1:18-20). If we persistently disobey and refuse to return to Him in repentance, He will let go of us; for He has no use for disobedient servants.

If we will not obey fully, we are opting out of discipleship. Immediately after Jesus had talked about the demands of following Him, many of His disciples withdrew and walked no more with Him. Jesus then said to the twelve:

> *"Do you also wish to go away?" Simon Peter answered: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:66-69).*

Can we re-echo Peter's words?

May the lord help each of us to reiterate Peter's words and demonstrate our seriousness by studying the Lord's word, praying to Him and obeying Him fully; and so become able servants who can rightly handle the Word of life!

Chapter 3

THE PURPOSE OF DISCIPLESHIP

Complete and continuous obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ will lead to Christ-likeness, but this is not something that can be accomplished overnight. The disciple enrols in Christ's school of character formation for life, and the longer he obediently stays in that school, the more the fruit of the Spirit will abound - love; joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control - which is really the character of the Lord Jesus, will be reproduced in his life. Although Christ-likeness in this way was necessary for evangelism, no one can be asked to wait until he has put on the full measure of Christ before he begins to be involved in Christian service. The consecrated and obedient disciple can go on to win others to Christ and disciple them.

Jesus' main task was

> *"to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10).*

He constantly said that He had not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. His purpose was to reconcile men to God. All the other things which He did like healing the sick, feeding the hungry and raising the dead, were secondary and were meant to enhance His primary purpose. His first disciples were also called to this primary task of reconciling people to God.

> *"And he appointed twelve to be with Him and to be sent out to preach." (Luke 3:14).*

He asked them to follow Him so that He would make them fishers of men. They were, however, charged with the responsibility of not only fishing men, but they were under command to teach others so that they in turn could teach others.

Since Jesus' main task was to save men from their sin and to build them up into His likeness, and since the first disciples were also entrusted with the ministry of winning people to Christ and building them up, it is obvious that bringing men to know Christ as Saviour and building them up into His likeness is the responsibility of every disciple. Everyone who has received Christ is under obligation before God to grow in the knowledge of Christ and to lead someone else to Christ who will also grow. God intends evangelism and spiritual growth to be chain processes. Each one of us must ensure that we keep the chain going.

THE RESOURCES FOR THE TASK

The main resource for the task is the power of the Lord Jesus Christ made available to the believer by the Holy Spirit. Every believer has the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16). The disciple who is rightly related to Christ and opened to the resources that the Holy Spirit wants to give daily will not lack power. l do not know a single person who is anxious to win men to Christ who does not have the power for the work. This is because when the desire to reach men for Christ and build them up in the faith becomes something of a consuming fire, it will reduce us to acknowledge our helplessness to Him, and on our knees, we shall ask Him to fill us with His Spirit. Such a prayer never goes unanswered. Easy going people, without a true desire for service, often unwilling to be humbled by prayer and fasting, who want power for kicks and displays, will often find that they receive nothing from the Lord. Whatever they think they have is not the power of the Holy Spirit.

So for everyone of us, the resources are available. Jesus is the Fount of living waters, and He bids us come to that fountain. We ought to drink at that fountain and keep drinking there. We should empty ourselves of everything, so that He may fill us with His Spirit. He is more than willing and eager to do so. If we ask Him now and keep asking Him all through our lives, we shall never lack spiritual power. This attitude of serving in power and yet confessing weakness daily to Him, is very humbling and we will be tempted to want something that will guarantee strength for ever. Saint Paul did not think so, he said,

> *“l will all the more gladly boast of my weakness that the power of Christ may rest upon me..... for when l am weak, then l am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:9,10).*

That should be our attitude if we are to be truly strong and mighty in the Master's service.

A SENSE OF URGENCY

Jesus had a definite task to accomplish. He called it, "My Father's business." This business motivated Him from the age of twelve to the end of His life. He was under compulsion to carry out the business and carry it out quickly. He said that He must bring the other sheep; must be about His Father's business and must suffer. He had no option. He knew what He had to do and set out to do it. The trouble with many of us is that we act too indifferently. We have no true commitment to anything. We have learnt nothing of the beauty of compelling duty. Jesus said,

> *"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." (John 4:34).*

What is it that sustains us? Is it the task which God has committed to our charge?

We are called to serve Him in a definite way. He has some special duty for each of us. We must seek this from Him and do it. It is useless for us to jump here and there probably trying to do what others should be doing and in this way cause confusion within the body of Christ. We need to take stock before God; to evaluate before Him what we have accomplished so far for His glory. If we have not yet done much for Him, then it is unlikely that we shall do much in the future, unless we have a crisis experience with Him which will change our attitude completely. We must act now.

The opportunities before us now may never come our way again. The world is not going to be any less hostile to Christ in the future. Perhaps all of us

who are called by His name and seek to serve Him need to look at Him afresh to have our vision brightened. This is indispensable, if the people committed to us by the Lord are not to perish.

ABIDING FRUIT

The Lord Jesus assures us that the permanent value of the fruit is God's sovereign work. However, it is also obvious from Scripture that whether or not the fruit abides is dependent on the spiritual quality of the one bearing the fruit. A.W. Tozer has said that the Gospel preached by the people of varying degrees of holiness will produce results that vary. This implies that a man in an advanced stage of holiness and consecration will produce more lasting fruit than a man who preaches the Gospel but still commits sin. l believe this is consistent with the Lord when He taught that lasting fruit is the product of abiding in Him. The falling away from the Lord of many who profess salvation is, l believe, partly due to the quality of the preachers we have. We should ask the Lord for preachers who know the cross experientially, whose union with the Lord Jesus in His death and resurrection is true, whose consecration is complete and who are definitely being filled with the Spirit daily. If we do not ask and receive such from the Lord, then we shall continue to have self-centred men who lack the basic and all-important qualification and consequently, the fruit will not last; for "like begets like."

Do we qualify for the task of bearing abiding fruit? Are our hands clean? Do we know the power of the promised Holy Spirit? Do our hearts burn with love for God and for man?

ABUNDANT FRUIT

Much fruit is a result of abiding in the Lord, of helplessly depending on the Lord of the harvest and on the Spirit of the harvest. The first disciples of our Lord learnt this lesson early in their walk with Christ. The scene of the event was the lake of Gennesaret. The disciples had toiled all night without success in an attempt to catch fish. Then Jesus said to them,

> *"Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." (Luke 5:4).*

Upon hearing this, Peter said,

> *"Master we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word l will let down the nets." (Luke 5:5).*

When he did this their catch of fish was so phenomenal that their nets began to give way. A number of lessons about abundant fruit are immediately obvious from this story. The first of these is that abundant fruit is the result of launching out at Jesus' command. We must each diligently seek to know whether the spiritual service we are involved in is of God's ordination. The work must be God-conceived and God-planned. It must be God's work committed to man. We must be called to it individually by Him. He does not just want occasional labourers. He wants definite persons in special jobs at definite places and times. The Holy Spirit, who is the Director of God's missionary enterprise, appoints men, selects the spheres and time of their service, gives necessary limits, and draws the boundaries. We need to stop and ask ourselves as we think about the work we are doing: "Did God call me to this work or am l doing it on my own initiative?" Any work which is merely of our own initiative cannot be God's work, and He is not likely to be committed to it. It may apparently bear much fruit, but is it of lasting value or mere wood, hay or stubble? When the Lord says, "Launch out," we can expect fruit that brings glory to His name. That must be our goal.

The second lesson is that abundant fruit is the result of “launching out into the deep.” It is quite uncomfortable and risky to be in the deep. Many prefer surface waters. In the spiritual realm, there are those who will preach where it is comfortable to preach, where accommodation and good food are available and the audience large and attractive. The easily accessible schools with friendly teachers are the ones often invaded by all kinds of teachers and preachers with many a doctrine. Such work is convenient work. It cannot produce what God considers as abundant fruit. To launch out into the deep will include going to difficult places where no comfort is guaranteed and large audiences are unlikely. In such places, the Lord may be glad to allow the disciple to experience some of His joy, in having, like Him, no place to lay his head. It is much easier to present Christ to nice agreeable and pleasant people. But there are some aggressive and difficult people. The Saviour died for these too, and He expects us to minister to them. Are we ready to take the risk of personal discomfort as we go to such people and places, not knowing what may befall us there? The Lord Jesus went to all types of people, and the true disciple has to follow in His steps.

Early in my father’s preaching career, he was sent to go and carry out pioneering evangelistic work in a part of Cameroon which was believed to be very dangerous and the people possibly cannibals. No one from our tribe had been to that place. When Dad came home and announced to his parents and others that he would be going to that part of the country, everyone at home burst into tears. Contrary to what had been expected, he found the people friendly and worked there for several years. The Church he planted there numbers thousands of members today.

> *“Truly, Truly, l say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John*

12:24).

THE LORD'S DENIAL

We live in an age plagued with numbers. Many often ask, "How many people have you led to Christ? How many were saved at those meetings?" The pressure for numbers is evident and many are tempted to exaggerate numbers so as to win esteem. We are not against many people being saved. On the contrary, we yearn for the salvation of millions. There is also a great quest for miracles for their own sake. But this puts pressure on people to create miracles. Therefore, miracles and numbers of converts can be deceptive. They can boost the ego of a person who may not truly belong to the Lord. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will l declare unto them,

> *"l never knew you; depart from me, you evil-doers." (Matthew 7:21-23).*

If we prophesy, preach, teach, evangelize, cast out demons and do all kinds of miracles; if we win hundreds or thousands to Him, we still stand the possibility of being told, "l never knew you. You did not do my Father's will."

Our greatest concern then is for the authentic marks of the cross in our lives and a search, discovery and accomplishment of the Lord's will. In the light of this, what is the Lord going to say about us and our work? Will He say, "l never knew you; depart from me, you evil-doers because you did not do my Father's will," or will He say, "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the

Kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world because you did my Father’s will”?

Chapter 4

THE WAY OF DISCIPLESHIP: SUFFERING

JESUS, THE SUPREME EXAMPLE

The Lord Jesus suffered. Before He was born the prophet Isaiah described Him as

> *"a man of sorrows" (Isaiah 53:3).*

Every step that Jesus took from the time He left the glory of heaven for earth, to the time He was exalted in heaven, was marked with suffering. He Himself said,

> *"The Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected." (Mark 9:33 A.V.).*

His suffering was both spiritual (inward) and physical (outward).

In the spiritual realm, He must have suffered the pain of leaving the glory of heaven and coming down into the human degradation of being born in a stable and living in obscurity for thirty years. He suffered the pain of seeing those who needed His message rejecting it; of great distress; of being denied by a close friend, and finally of having the Father abandon Him to die on the cross alone when He cried, saying,

> *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).*

In the physical realm, he suffered hunger as He fasted for forty days before He began His public ministry. He suffered as He went everywhere healing the sick and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. He suffered in prayer until His sweat became as drops of blood. He suffered as He was scourged and beaten. He suffered as He wore the crown of thorns; carried the heavy cross and, finally, He suffered as they drove the nails through His flesh and left him to die alone like a notorious criminal.

The suffering of Christ was necessary for the salvation of sinners. However, once He became man, He needed to be perfected; and suffering was one instrument which God chose to use. In this sense suffering was very beneficial to the Lord. The Bible says,

> *"For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering." (Hebrews 2:10).*
>
> *"Therefore he had to be made like His brethren in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of*

God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted." (Hebrews 2:17,18).

"Although he was a Son, he learnt obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him." (Hebrews 5:8-9).

"But he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:7-11).

Jesus' suffering was therefore necessary for His perfection as a man in His ministry amongst men and for men and, finally, it was indispensable for His glorification.

THE DISCIPLES' SUFFERING

Suffering was necessary to perfect the blessed Son of God in human form. It will minister even more to the disciple who is necessarily imperfect. Jesus knew that His disciples would suffer

"A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you." (John 15:20).

Was Jesus warning only the first disciples? He further said,

"You will be hated by all for my for my name's sake." (Matthew 10:22).

"They will lay their hands on you and persecute you." The apostle Paul, after many years in the school of suffering for Christ said,

"Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12).

Suffering is part and parcel of belonging to Him; for the apostle said,

"It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake." (Philippians 1:29).

Furthermore, suffering is an integral part of the human lot, and all the suffering of a Christian is suffering for Christ. Essentially, suffering can be grouped into four classes. These are:

SUFFERING FROM NATURAL CAUSES

Earthquakes, droughts, floods, accidents, bereavement and all such disasters befall the Christian as a member of a race under a curse. They do not become his lot for the sake of Christ and are therefore not suffering for the sake of the gospel. So when your father dies or loses money or a job, do not call this a cross. It is not. However, it is possible to use such circumstances for good and all Christians should do so.

SUFFERING FOR SIN COMMITTED

When a Christian sins, the Lord often punishes him and the State may also take action. A Christian who fails an examination because he did not study is not suffering for Christ, nor is a man who loses a job because of incompetence. Students who hold prayer meetings at times prohibited by

School regulations will be punished. Such should not mistakenly take this for Christian suffering; for it is not. Rather, such should repent for bringing the Lord's name to disrepute. The apostle Peter asks,

> *"What credit is it, if when you do wrong and are beaten for it you take it patiently?" (1 Peter 2:20).*

The answer is: "None."

When a disciple goes out of the narrow way, he will be disciplined; so that he may come back to the narrow way. In doing this, God may frustrate some plans that are outside His will; so that the disciple may learn to follow Him. All this causes suffering and is painful, but does not constitute bearing a cross. This is, however, not to be disregarded. The Bible says,

> *"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by him. For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." (Hebrews 12:5-6).*

In addition to chastening, there is suffering through the process of pruning. Pruning is for those who love Jesus, who are bearing fruit but who have imperfections that hinder more fruit from being produced. In talking about it, Jesus says,

> *"Every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes that it may bear more fruit." (John 15:2).*

Take an example of a young man who dearly loves the Lord and is labouring in His service with some success. This disciple may, however, be proud and full of himself. His pride needs to be pruned; so that his service

may not be hindered by it. He does not need to ask God to deal with this pride. God will do it unasked. He will move circumstances which will undermine that disciple's self importance in order to humble him. He might have to fail an examination even though he is very intelligent, some spiritual project in which he is involved might be frustrated, or someone who is less mature or less gifted than he is might be preferred to him in a spiritual ministry. This is very painful and humiliating, but it is meant to remove the weak spot. If the disciple sees his faults and yields to God's pruning hand, the desired results will be produced. However, if he continues to justify himself and exalt himself, then God will devise new methods; and the painful process will go on much longer.

SUFFERING BY VOLUNTARY CHOICE FOR CHRIST AND THE GOSPEL

This is the type of suffering to which Jesus invites all His disciples. It must be for Christ and it must be voluntary. There must always be the possibility of opting out. This is cross-bearing and people decide either to take it up or reject it. This suffering of disciples is at the centre of God's will. Other Christians whose motto is: "Safety first," have no part in this.

It can manifest itself inwardly and outwardly. The disciple suffers and groans when he hears the name of Jesus blasphemed. When Jesus is treated with contempt and called all kinds of evil or degrading names, the disciple will be pricked at heart as if pierced in the soul.

Only those who love Jesus deeply can suffer in this way. There will also be suffering as a disciple wrestles with temptation in the inner being. At times the devil will launch a serious attack, determined to get him to yield to sin. The determination not to yield will intensify the conflict, so much that at

some point the whole frame of the disciple will be shaken to near breaking point in the battle not to give in. This is probably the hardest suffering, and it only comes to those who are determined to see the Kingdom of God established in their hearts. Some years ago, l was convicted by the Lord to give away one of my two suits to someone l did not know. As l got the suit cleaned and packed ready to give it away, the whole of my being revolted against the action. It was painful, but God gave me grace to part with it. The disciple who is called to sacrifice all that he has for Jesus will suffer as all that he held dear is taken away. This is part of discipleship.

The other aspect of suffering is outward. It may be just simple things like being given a nick-name, or being slighted, ignored, treated with contempt, avoided or provoked. At another level, it may mean that the disciple is refused a job or a place in a school because he will not bribe in one way or another, even though he may be well qualified for the school or job. The disciple's property may be destroyed because of his testimony for Christ; for the wicked cannot stand the testimony of the righteous. In Sierra-Leone, a Christian farmer's rice store was set on fire shortly after the harvest was over and he lost all that he had harvested, for no reason other than his bold stand for the gospel. Young people may be thrown out of homes because of their Christian witness. l know a young man whose father disowned him because he felt called to train for the unpopular job of being a pastor. He is now a pastor, but he suffered the separation from those he loved greatly. Disciples may be physically beaten or killed, like the Ugandan martyrs and all the others we know of.

> *"They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword." (Hebrews 11:37).*

The type of suffering will vary. The Lord will start the disciple on suffering in a small way, and as he endures, he will be brought to harder suffering. The apostle Paul is an example of a man who suffered for Christ and he gives us a glimpse of what he went through for our instruction. He says,

> *"Five times l have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times l have been beaten with rods; once l was stoned, three times l have been shipwrecked; a night and a day l have been adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure." (2 Corinthians 11:24-27).*

Such was his suffering for the Lord. He was a living sacrifice. He was finally killed for the gospel, but this final death was just the end of a long process of daily dying with Christ. Earlier on he had said,

> *"l do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only l may accomplish my course and the ministry which l received from the Lord Jesus." (Acts 20:24);*

and,

> *"l die daily." (1 Corinthians 15:31).*

The final death was not greater than the daily one.

The question every disciple must ask himself is: "Is my heart's attitude a settled one to endure suffering for His sake? Do l have a mind set on suffering for the gospel? Will l declare Christ as the only way to God, even

if it means death? Am l prepared to denounce the sins of all people even if this means death for me?" We must each think carefully about these questions and ask God to show us our real attitude. We must avoid a superficial and hasty "Yes", because time will test our sincerity. The time may come when there may be open persecution and loss of lives for Jesus' sake. Will we suffer for Him? What have we suffered for Him? Jesus asks us today, "What have you suffered for Me?"

It is possible to resign to suffering and say, "Well, l suppose l have no choice. What else can l do?" This, however, is not the attitude of Jesus. He accepted God's will with gladness. One day before He died, when He saw the certainty of the cross, He said,

> *"Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified." (John 13:31).*

The apostle Paul rejoiced in his suffering for Christ, and even yearned to suffer more with Him; for all he wanted was to know the power of Christ's resurrection, share Christ's suffering and become like Christ in His death (Philippians 3:10).

The early church also counted suffering for Christ as a blessed privilege.

> *"They left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name." (Acts 5:41).*

Do we count it a blessed privilege to follow in His steps as Scripture says?

> *For this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." (1 Peter 2:21).*

“Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.” (James 1:2-3).

“Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.” (Matthew 5:11).

“If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” (1 Peter 4:14).

The disciple who suffers with grumbling suffers in vain; for this was not the Master’s attitude. The reward is for those who, like Jesus, when reviled, do not revile in return. When they suffer they do not threaten and complain,

“but trust everything to him who judges wisely.” (1 Peter 2:23).

Like Job, the true disciple, even when he suffers in a deep way, he falls upon the ground and worships, saying,

“Blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job 1:21).

The disciple’s suffering is for a short time (1 Peter 1:6; 5:10). The heavenly King is perfecting the disciple through suffering for His coming kingdom like a skilful goldsmith. He will not allow the metal one second longer in the furnace than is required for its perfection. If your suffering has gone on for too long, it may be that you are a choicest metal that needs the best treatment from His hands. Your present suffering, though severe, is not comparable to the glory that is to come. Two suffering apostles put it this way,

“l consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.” (Romans 8:18).

“But rejoice in so far as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.” (I Peter 4:13).

Chapter 5

THE DISCIPLE'S REWARD

Discipleship is a very costly business, and in moments of severe trials, one may be tempted to ask, "Why go into all this trouble of suffering with Christ? Why not give up? Is there any reward?" Questions such as these are not new. The first disciples asked them. Peter asked the Lord Jesus,

> *"Lo, we have left everything and followed you. What then shall we have?" (Matthew 19:27).*

To this question Jesus replied,

> *"Truly, l say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundred-fold now in this time, houses and*

brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many that are first will be last, and the last first." (Mark 10:29-31).

Again the Lord Jesus said,

"Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven." (Matthew. 5:11,12).

From these passages it is obvious that the disciple's reward is twofold. First of all, he is rewarded in this life and, secondly, he will be rewarded in the other life.

REWARD IN THIS LIFE

The reward of the disciple in this life is both spiritual and material.

MATERIAL REWARD

A disciple is not always on the giving end. He often does receive in return. For two years, l carried out an itinerant ministry of the gospel. l can honestly say that l had "homes" all over the country. In each place l went, l was well cared for by believers, and sometimes unbelievers were unusually hospitable. My home was duplicated in many places. The older Christians were fathers and mothers to me and young Christian boys and girls were very dear brothers and sisters to me, much dearer to me than my own relatives who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ. l believe that l had more doors opened to receive me and more hospitality than many very important people of the world who are not disciples of Christ.

In one of the schools, the Domestic Science building was given over to the Scripture Union group for the week-end. l shared a bedroom with the chairman. The Christian girls on the committee came in each day to prepare food and all of us feasted together. It was wonderful. At another place, though the teacher l was going to stay with ran away hours before l arrived for fear of the gospel, l was well cared for also.

l believe all disciples receive hospitality. Many receive free car lifts or ride in cars that are not theirs. Financial help has been received by all of the Master's disciples, so that although all have known want at one time or another, all have also known how to abound. The young man who was mentioned earlier as having been rejected by his father for wanting to train for the ministry, was taken up by some Christians. They cared for him and paid for his training. He is now a minister of the gospel, lacking nothing in the Lord.

SPIRITUAL REWARD

The Lord promised the disciples peace,

> *"Peace l leave with you; my peace l give to you; not as the world gives do l give unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid," (John 14:27),*

were His words of comfort to them. The world is like a boiling pot. Only the disciple can have peace; and this is because it is manufactured from heaven and administered to him by the Lord Jesus. Difficulties are many and they will always be there. The disciple will be

> *"afflicted in every way, but not crushed, perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed."*

(2 Corinthians 4:8,9).

In the disciple's darkest moment when all the host of hell rises against him in an attack on his ministry, health, or business; when he is facing public trial and even execution for the faith, God will stand by him. The apostle Paul testified to this in the following words,

> *"At my first defence no one took my part; all deserted me. But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength.... The Lord will rescue me from every evil and save me for his heavenly kingdom." (2 Timothy 4:16-18).*

The disciple also has access to the true God - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who dwell in Him. He can communicate straightaway with the Father and tell Him all his needs. He can ask God for any right thing and be sure to receive it; for

> *"This is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him." (1 John 5:14-15).*

In addition to this the disciple knows for certain that however terrible the past had been, the Lord has blotted it out and forgiven him entirely; for He says,

> *"l will remember their sins and their misdeeds no more." (Hebrews 10:17);*

and,

> *“He will again have compassion upon us, he will tread our iniquities under foot. Thou wilt cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.” (Micah 7:19).*

These are real rewards here and now.

To crown all these rewards in this life, God gives the faithful disciple the certainty that he will not perish but have eternal life. Jesus said,

> *“My sheep hear my voice, and l know them and they follow me; and l give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. l and the Father are one.” (John 10:27-30).*

No one can snatch the obedient disciple out of the Saviour’s hands. No one, not even the devil, can succeed. Many will try; the devil will try but they cannot succeed.

The disciple’s eternal life is guaranteed. In fact, it has begun, for the Bible says,

> *“This is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life. l write to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.” (1 John 5:11-13).*

This is certain because

> *“He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:6).*

So the disciple's Master and Lord comes and lives in him, then walks by the disciple's side, showing him where the pitfalls are and how to avoid them; and at the end of life, opens the very presence of God and allows the disciple in.

No wonder disciples can be so confident in the face of death. One of them said,

> *"For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain," (Philippians 1:21),*

and before he was executed for the gospel he said,

> *"l am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. l have fought the good fight, l have finished the race, l have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing." (2 Timothy 4:6-8).*

Stephen the first Christian martyr, just before he was stoned for Jesus, said,

> *"Behold, l see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God." (Acts 7:56).*

Yes, the heaven opened, and the Son of man received him. The heavens open each time a faithful disciple dies, from the smallest to the greatest; and the Son of man, the Lord Jesus, receives him. How blessed to know this and have this certainty now; so that in the face of trials, temptations and even death we are sure that we have eternal life!

All these rewards come to the disciples “with persecution.” Those who run away from persecution, who dilute the gospel in order to be safe, also run away from these rewards. But those who follow Him more closely and suffer more for Him and with Him, have more of these rewards in this life. They come to the disciple in proportion to his love and service for the Master.

REWARD IN THE OTHER LIFE

The disciple’s reward, though real and abundant in this life, does not end here. What he has in this life is but the initial instalment, a foretaste of great things to come. A day is coming when God shall wind up the present world by the triumphant return of Jesus Christ. On that day,

> *“The dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:17).*

All disciples will suddenly be transformed and given their heavenly bodies. Their bodies will be transformed into glorious and wonderful bodies like His.

The Bible says,

> *“We are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2).*

We see Him now dimly but then we shall see Him face to face. How wonderful it will be to see Jesus as He is! Are you looking forward with an

inner hunger, a burning passion to see Him as He is? Your heart's desire will be granted to you on that day. You will not only see Him. You will be like Him. It will be one of the greatest joys and excitements of heaven - that each faithful disciple will be different, and yet all will be like Him.

From that day on, disciples will see His face and:

> *"His name shall be on their fore-heads. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light." (Revelation 22:4-5).*

The disciple will not only see Jesus. He will see God and be ministered to by God; for the Bible says,

> *"He will dwell with them. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:3-4).*

Are you sorrowful with pain as a result of your faithfulness to him? Be comforted because God Himself will wipe your tears away and soothe your sorrow too. How blessed that there will be no devil to tempt and annoy; sin will be an absolute impossibility. All things that perplex you because you see in part shall suddenly become clear on that day.

The disciple shall share Christ's glory, a glory which surpasses human words to declare. It will be the blessed experience of all disciples. He will sit on the throne of God with Christ for the Bible says,

> *"It is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are Children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow*

heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." (Romans 8:16-17).

Just imagine how wonderful it will be to sit on the throne of God with Christ!

Everyone in heaven will be full of great happiness, but the degree of enjoyment and the capacity for receiving all that is in store will vary in proportion to the degree of faithfulness to and suffering for Christ of each disciple. What will take place at the judgment seat of Christ will reveal our capacity for heavenly enjoyment.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

There will be final judgment for all mankind for,

"It is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment." (Hebrews 9:27).

The judgment of the unsaved, those who have not personally received Christ into their lives by faith, will be a judgment of condemnation, where the Lord Jesus will say to them,

"Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matthew 25:41).

No disciple of Christ will be told these words for,

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1).

Disciples must all appear before the Judgment seat of Christ, so that each receive good or evil,

> *"according to what he has done in the body" (2 Corinthians 5:10).*

The disciple's judgment will not decide whether or not he is to perish; for that has been settled by faith in Christ. It will, however, evaluate the quality and quantity of the disciple's life and service. The issue will be what the disciple was and what he did for the Lord after he was saved.

Jesus Christ will be the Judge and will use fire to test each man's life and work. The Bible says,

> *"Each man's work will be made manifest; for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and fire will test what sort of work each one had done. If the work which any man has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burnt up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire." (1 Corinthians 3:13-15).*

Many people serve the Lord Jesus and suffer for many reasons. Some serve so as to be seen by others and be praised. They have got their reward here. Others serve for material benefits. Others serve out of party spirit, to promote their particular group, sect, denomination or doctrine. Others serve Jesus for His own sake and nothing more. It does not matter what is seen as results now. Let anyone preach and win thousands to Christ, let anyone offer millions for the work of the gospel, let him offer everything possible on this side of heaven for the work of the Lord: if all these are done out of party spirit or for self advertisement, they will be consumed by fire as wood, hay and stubble. Also, anything that was done just with human

power, human personality, human technique, without entire dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit, will be consumed. The same goes for anything that was not done out of love for God and man.

So the quality and amount of the disciple's work, together with the motive that inspired him on, and the power he used, will be tested. Maybe we can stop for a moment and ask ourselves, "Why am l serving the Lord? What power am l using? Is my work being done solely for God's glory? Is it out of love for Him and my fellow man?" The motive is far more important than the deed, and evaluation day will prove it to be so.

We cannot always know the motive behind the work of others, although we ought to know the motive behind our work, and may often judge them wrongly. Jesus however, knows the motive of every man, and fire will bring out the motive on that Day. No wonder He says, "The first shall be last." Some may pose for great men and even do "great" things, but their motives may be wrong and God's fire will show them for what they are worth. Others may pose for great figures in public, but if their private lives are full of sin, fire will show each one for what he is worth. On that Day, God will judge the secrets of men's hearts (Romans 2:16), and all that was done in darkness will be brought to light.

Not all of the Lord's disciples bother to serve Him. Some look for every opportunity to run away from spiritual involvement. For some, there is hardly a thing to be tested by fire. They have simply not done any work. The amount of work done will matter on that day as well as the quality.

> *"The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." (2 Corinthians 9:6).*

Those who exert themselves and labour sacrificially either in public or in private, will be rewarded in proportion to their faithfulness.

The nature of the spiritual service is not the important thing. Faithfulness is what will count. A faithful intercessor and a faithful preacher will both receive rewards that are proportional to their labour.

The story is told of a rich woman and her house-girl. Both of them were saved. The landlady gave large sums of money to the Lord's work, but what she gave constituted only a small fraction of her enormous wealth. Her house-girl sacrificially gave of her small income to the Lord's work, living only on the barest necessities. They both died and went to heaven by the saving grace of God. The apostle Peter was asked by the Lord Jesus to take them to their heavenly home. As they walked through the pearly streets of heaven, they came to a large mansion, beautifully built with every imaginable luxury. When the apostle told the house-girl, "Here is your heavenly home," the house-girl jumped up in ecstasy. The apostle and the landlady continued until they came to a small house. It was very well built and luxurious, but inferior to the first one. The apostle told the landlady, "Here is your heavenly home." She looked at him and said, "Saint Peter, you have made a mistake. l am the landlady and she is the house-girl. The other house must be mine and this one hers." The apostle replied, "l have not made a mistake. The houses are allocated by the Lord, and we build here with what you send from the world; besides, we do not have house-girls and landladies here."

"We build here with what you send from the world," is a telling statement about the basis of the rewards in heaven. All disciples will be perfectly happy in heaven. No one will have even the slightest degree of misery

there, but the happiness will always reflect, to some degree, how much the disciple has loved his Master in this life. All disciples will wear crowns and praise Him eternally, but the crowns will always reflect something of what happened in this life, and the praises of the most faithful ones will be the sweetest. When many people go to an airport to welcome someone coming from a long journey, when he arrives, everyone there is happy and perfectly satisfied; but the degree of happiness varies from person to person, depending upon how close each one is to the one who has arrived, and to what extent they have desired him and missed him.

When Jesus arrives, those who have desired Him and missed Him the most, will have a deeper satisfaction at seeing Him than those who desired Him less, although all will be satisfied. Each disciple can serve Him faithfully and long for him with his whole being. No disciple needs another's position or gifts to be faithful. The disciple who is faithful with his gifts, however, "small" or "great", and in the task entrusted to him however "small" or "great", will receive his "Well done!" and be told,

> *"Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matthew 25:34).*

So let each disciple labour on and leave the matter of reward to the righteous Judge. Let the disciple serve Him at any cost, not counting his life dear unto himself. Let him suffer for Him and endure suffering for Him until the end; for he knows for certain that "our labour is not in vain", and great is our reward in heaven.

AMEN.



VERY IMPORTANT!!!

If you have not yet received Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, I encourage you to receive Him. Here are some steps to help you,

ADMIT that you are a sinner by nature and by practice and that on your own you are without hope. Tell God you have personally sinned against Him in your thoughts, words and deeds. Confess your sins to Him, one after another in a sincere prayer. Do not leave out any sins that you can remember. Truly turn from your sinful ways and abandon them. If you stole, steal no more. If you have been committing adultery or fornication, stop it. God will not forgive you if you have no desire to stop sinning in all

areas of your life, but if you are sincere, He will give you the power to stop sinning.

BELIEVE that Jesus Christ, who is God's Son, is the only Way, the only Truth and the only Life. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). The Bible says, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:5-6). "And there is salvation in no one else (apart from Jesus), for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God..." (John 1:12). BUT,

CONSIDER the cost of following Him. Jesus said that all who follow Him must deny themselves, and this includes selfish financial, social and other interests. He also wants His followers to take up their crosses and follow Him. Are you prepared to abandon your own interests daily for those of Christ? Are you prepared to be led in a new direction by Him? Are you prepared to suffer for Him and die for Him if need be? Jesus will have nothing to do with half-hearted people. His demands are total. He will only receive and forgive those who are prepared to follow Him AT ANY COST. Think about it and count the cost. If you are prepared to follow Him, come what may, then there is something to do.

INVITE Jesus to come into your heart and life. He says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door (to his heart and life), I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me " (Revelation 3:20). Why don't you pray a prayer like the following one or one of your own construction as the Holy Spirit leads?

“Lord Jesus, I am a wretched, lost sinner who has sinned in thought, word and deed. Forgive all my sins and cleanse me. Receive me, Saviour and transform me into a child of God. Come into my heart now and give me eternal life right now. I will follow you at all costs, trusting the Holy Spirit to give me all the power I need.”

When you pray this prayer sincerely, Jesus answers at once and justifies you before God and makes you His child.

Please write to me (ztfbooks@cmfionline.org) and I will pray for you and help you as you go on with Jesus Christ.



THANK YOU FOR READING THIS BOOK

If you have any question and/or need help, do not hesitate to contact us through **ztfbooks@cmfionline.org**. If the book has blessed you, then we would also be grateful if you leave a positive review at your favorite retailer.

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We invite you to connect with more from the author through social media (**cmfionline**) and/or ministry website (**ztfministry.org**), where we offer both on-ground and remote training courses (all year round) from basic to university level at the **University of Prayer and Fasting (WUPF)** and the **School of Knowing and Serving God (SKSG)**. You are highly welcome to enrol at your soonest convenience. A **FREE online Bible Course** is also available.

Finally, we would like to recommend to you another suitable title - The Making Of Disciples:

> ***The Making of Disciples is an attempt to respond to the call of the Lord in Mat 28:19-20 to make disciples who will, in turn, make disciples, who will make disciples, etc. In the early Church, only disciples were known. Those who belonged to the Lord Jesus were called "Disciples"***
>
> ***WHO IS A DISCIPLE?***
>
> ***The Lord Jesus intended that everyone who is led to Him, and who therefore knows Him personally and is dynamically related to Him, should enroll in the school of a Disciple Maker who will make him into a Disciple, which means somebody committed not only to be like Christ but also to bring others to be like Christ.***
>
> ***This call of the Lord Jesus has not been taken seriously by the Church, and what is practiced today is a counterfeit of what the Lord intended. It is obvious that the evangelisation of the world and the condition of each believer would have been totally different if disciples were made, and if the process had continued.***

This book is then the fruit of a burden. It is born out of the desire to see the Church of the Lord return to the task of making disciples who will, in turn, make disciples.

In this profound manual, Professor Fomum addresses topics like:

- *The conditions to become and remain a disciple*
- *Transforming a young convert into a mature disciple*
- *Transforming a mature disciple into a disciple maker*
- *Gender issues in disciple-making*
- *Etc.*

The Lord Jesus made disciples. He has commanded to go and make disciples who will, in turn, make disciples.

This book will help you to obey this command.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zacharias Tanee FOMUM

1945-2009

Founding Leader,

Christian Missionary Fellowship international

(**C.M.F.I**)

Professor Zacharias Tanee Fomum was born in the flesh on 20th June 1945 and became born again on 13th June 1956. On 1st October 1966, He consecrated his life to the Lord Jesus and to His service, and was filled with

the Holy Spirit on 24th October 1970. He was taken to be with the Lord on 14th March, 2009.

Pr Fomum was admitted to a first class in the Bachelor of Science degree, graduating as a prize winning student from Fourah Bay College in the University of Sierra Leone in October 1969. At the age of 28, he was awarded a Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry by the University of Makerere, Kampala in Uganda. In October 2005, he was awarded a Doctor of Science (D.Sc) by the University of Durham, Great Britain. This higher doctorate was in recognition of his distinct contributions to scientific knowledge through research. As a Professor of Organic Chemistry in the University of Yaoundé 1, Cameroon, Professor Fomum supervised or co-supervised more than 100 Master's Degree and Doctoral Degree theses and co-authored over 160 scientific articles in leading international journals. He considered Jesus Christ the Lord of Science ("For by Him all things were created..." – Colossians 1:16), and scientific research an act of obedience to God's command to "subdue the earth" (Genesis 1:28). He therefore made the Lord Jesus the Director of his research laboratory while he took the place of deputy director, and attributed his outstanding success as a scientist to Jesus' revelational leadership.

In more than 40 years of Christian ministry, Pr Fomum travelled extensively, preaching the Gospel, planting churches and training spiritual leaders. He made more than:

1. 700 missionary journeys within Cameroon, which ranged from one day to three weeks in duration.

2. 500 missionary journeys to more than 70 different nations in all the six continents. These ranged from two days to six weeks in duration.

By the time of his going to be with the Lord in 2009, he had preached in over 1000 localities in Cameroon, sent over 200 national missionaries into many localities in Cameroon and planted over 1300 churches in the various administrative provinces of Cameroon. At his base in Yaoundé, he planted and built a mega-church with his co-workers which grew to a steady membership of about 12,000. Pr Fomum was the founding team-leader of Christian Missionary Fellowship International (CMFI); an evangelism, soul-winning, disciple making, Church-planting and missionary-sending movement with more than 200 international missionaries and thousands of churches in 65 nations spread across Africa, Europe, the Americas, Asia and Oceania. In the course of their ministry, Pr Fomum and his team witnessed more than 10,000 recorded healing miracles performed by God in answer to prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. These miracles include instant healings of headaches, cancers, HIV/AIDS, blindness, deafness, dumbness, paralysis, madness, and new teeth and organs received.

Pr Fomum read the entire Bible more than 60 times, read more than 1350 books on the Christian faith and authored over 150 books to advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ. 5 million copies of these books are in circulation in 12 languages as well as 16 million gospel tracts in 17 languages.

Pr Fomum was a man who sought God. He spent between 15 minutes and six hours daily alone with God in what he called Daily Dynamic Encounters with God (DDEWG). During these DDEWG he read God’s Word, meditated on it, listened to God’s voice, heard God speak to him, recorded what God was saying to him and prayed it through. He thus had over 18,000 DDEWG. He also had over 60 periods of withdrawing to seek God alone for periods that ranged from 3 to 21 days (which he termed Retreats for Spiritual Progress). The time he spent seeking God slowly transformed

him into a man who hungered, thirsted and panted after God. His unceasing heart cry was: “Oh, that I would have more of God!”

Pr Fomum was a man of prayer and a leading teacher on prayer in many churches and conferences around the world. He considered prayer to be the most important work that can be done for God and for man. He was a man of faith who believed that God answers prayer. He kept a record of his prayer requests and had over 50, 000 recorded answers to prayer in his prayer books. He carried out over 100 Prayer Walks of between five and forty-seven kilometres in towns and cities around the world. He and his team carried out over 57 Prayer Crusades (periods of forty days and nights during which at least eight hours are invested into prayer each day). They also carried out over 80 Prayer Sieges (times of near non-stop praying that ranges from 24 hours to 120 hours). He authored the Prayer Power Series, a 13-volume set of books on various aspects of prayer; Supplication, Fasting, Intercession and Spiritual Warfare. He started prayer chains, prayer rooms, prayer houses, national and continental prayer movements in Cameroon and other nations. He worked with leaders of local churches in India to disciple and train more than 2 million believers.

Pr Fomum also considered fasting as one of the weapons of Christian Spiritual Warfare. He carried out over 250 fasts ranging from three days to forty days, drinking only water or water supplemented with soluble vitamins. Called by the Lord to a distinct ministry of intercession, he pioneered fasting and prayer movements and led in battles against principalities and powers obstructing the progress of the Gospel and God’s global purposes. He was enabled to carry out 3 supra – long fasts of between 52 and 70 days in his final years.

Pr Fomum chose a lifestyle of simplicity and “self- imposed poverty” in order to invest more funds into the critical work of evangelism, soul winning, church-planting and the building up of believers. Knowing the importance of money and its role in the battle to reach those without Christ with the glorious Gospel, he and his wife grew to investing 92.5% of their earned income from all sources (salaries, allowances, royalties and cash gifts) into the Gospel. They invested with the hope that, as they grew in the knowledge and the love of the Lord, and the perishing souls of people, they would one day invest 99% of their income into the Gospel.

He was married to Prisca Zei Fomum and they had seven children who are all involved in the work of the Gospel, some serving as missionaries. Prisca is a national and international minister, specializing in the winning and discipling of children to Jesus Christ. She also communicates and imparts the vision of ministry to children with a view to raising and building up ministers to them.

The Professor owed all that he was and all that God had done through him, to the unmerited favour and blessing of God and to his worldwide army of friends and co-workers. He considered himself nothing without them and the blessing of God; and would have amounted to nothing but for them. All praise and glory to Jesus Christ!



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