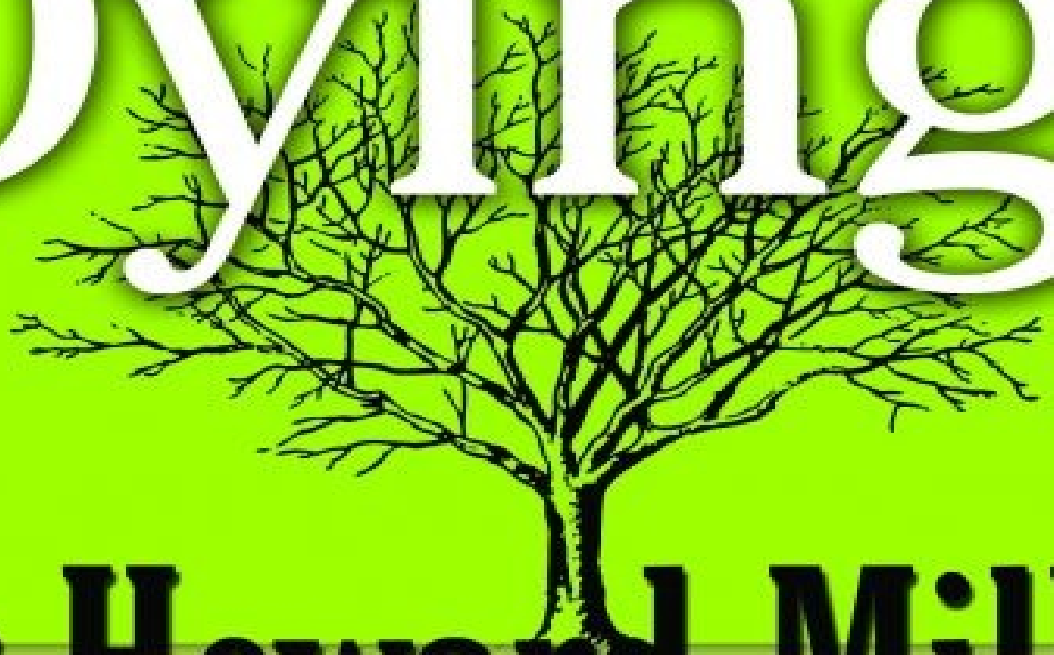
Losing Sacrificing Suffering and Dying



Dag Heward-Mills

Losing, Suffering, Sacrificing, Dying

By Dag Heward-Mills

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Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

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Chapter 1

The Four Spiritual Appointments

If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:26

To follow Jesus is not easy. Living for Jesus isn't easy. Do not believe anyone who presents a false version of Christianity to you. Christianity is all about following Jesus Christ and becoming Christ-like!

From the things Jesus said about becoming His disciple, it almost seemed as though He did not want anyone to follow Him. He warned different people who attempted to follow Him of the dangers of coming to Him.

Jesus Warns Us

He said, "If you come to me you must hate your parents, your family and yourself" (Luke 14:26).

He said to a rich man who wanted to follow Him: "You must sell whatever you have if you want to follow me" (Matthew 19:21).

He also said, "If you follow me you will not have anywhere to stay because I don't even have the home that foxes and birds have" (Luke 9:58).

He said, "You cannot say goodbye to your family if you really want to follow me" (Luke 9:61).

He said to someone whose parents had died, “You cannot be involved in the burial of your father if you really want to be my disciple” (Luke 9:59).

Jesus Does Not Lower the Standards for Anyone

Obviously, Jesus did not intend to make things easy for anyone. He did not lower the bar for anyone. He did not give anyone special treatment. He knew He was inviting us to the greatest privilege ever given to mankind. The privilege of being saved by the blood of Jesus, the privilege of knowing God and the privilege of going to Heaven!

These warnings by Jesus Christ have not deterred the millions who simply respond to His awesome love. Millions love Jesus Christ in spite of the difficult conditions that He has set for following Him.

Somehow, knowing the living God and His Son Jesus Christ is more than enough compensation for any difficulties we must experience.

Don’t listen to anyone who claims that following Jesus is all about getting blessed, rich and successful. That is not Christianity. Christianity is about losing, sacrificing, suffering and dying.

The hardships and difficulties to be encountered by all Christians can be categorised into four main groups: losing, sacrificing, suffering and dying.

These are four spiritual appointments that all Christians must expect in one form or another. No one who truly follows Jesus Christ will escape these four appointments.

Don’t take any notice of anyone who tells you otherwise! He is just scratching your itching ears. In one shape, form or another, perhaps with a different name, you will experience the cross of Jesus Christ if you are really His disciple.

Our four appointments are losing, sacrificing, suffering and dying. Are these appointments scriptural? Yes, the Scriptures below show us how we are destined to lose, to suffer, to sacrifice and to die because of our faith, our calling and our spiritual destinies.

This book is intended to show how real these appointments are. It is not as bad as you may think and it will turn out to be a blessing in the end. Notice how the Scriptures below clearly outline these appointments for all of us.

Your appointment with “loss and losing”

For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Matthew 16:25

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,”

Philippians 3:7-8

Because of Christ you will experience the appointment with “loss and losing”. This means a lot to anyone who cares to think about it.

Loss means you will come to be without certain things. There may be little or no prospect of recovering the things you will lose.

Loss means you will suffer the deprivation of certain things.

Loss means you will be unable to keep or maintain certain things in your life.

Loss means you will give up and forfeit the possession of certain things.

Your appointment with suffering

Because of Christ you will experience an appointment with “suffering”. This means a lot to anyone who cares to find out what suffering actually means. Don’t take any notice of people who do not include the concept of suffering in their walk of faith. All the great men of faith suffered because they believed in God.

Suffering means you will be subject to pain, distress, loss, injury or something unpleasant.

Suffering means you will experience adversity, affliction, hardship and misery in your life.

Suffering means you will go through misfortune, discomfort and difficulty.

Suffering means you will be tormented, be tortured and experience adversity

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in

me, and now hear *to be* in me.

Philippians 1:29-30

And we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith, so that no man may be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this.

For indeed when we were with you, we *kept* telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know.

For this reason, when I could endure *it* no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor should be in vain.

1 Thessalonians 3:2-5 (NASB)

Confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

Acts 14:22

Your appointment with sacrifice

Because of Christ you will experience the appointment with "sacrifice". This means a lot to anyone who cares to find out what sacrifice actually means. Please do not listen to Christians who don't preach about the sacrifice we have to make as Christians. Sacrificing is part of the religion that we belong to.

To sacrifice means to offer up your material possessions to God for worship.

To sacrifice means you will surrender something prized or desirable for the sake of something higher.

To sacrifice is to permit injury or disadvantage for the sake of something else.

To sacrifice is to dispose of your goods regardless of the fact that you make no profit.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your

reasonable service.

Romans 12:1

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name."

Hebrews 13:15

Your appointment with death

Because of Christ you will experience the appointment with "death". To say that someone will die means a lot. This is why Jesus told us to take up our crosses and follow Him.

To die means to cease to exist and to function.

To die means to lose strength and to lose force.

To die means to pass gradually or fade away gradually.

To die means to be stopped permanently.

And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Luke 9:23

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.

1 Corinthians 15:31

Section 1: Losing

Chapter 2

How to Suffer Loss for Christ

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for

whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

Philippians 3:8

You must accept to lose everything for Jesus Christ just as Paul did. Paul suffered by losing many things. When you do not lose you will not gain. The twelve disciples of Jesus had lost everything because they followed Jesus. They had left all! They had lost their professions, their families and their friends to follow Jesus. This was a great personal loss to them. You cannot follow Jesus unless you are ready to lose something.

Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, WE HAVE LEFT ALL, and have followed thee.

Mark 10:28

Your ministry is limited by what you keep. If you carry certain things while you run, you will not run fast enough. God is expecting us to leave things behind and follow Him. We may have to leave our sleep, our friendships, our televisions, our careers and our jobs to follow Jesus.

You Must Lose Your Money

Going into the ministry involves losing some money. You will lose financially when you step into the ministry. Many pastors do not realise that they will also have to give their money to the ministry. Every minister must invest personally into the ministry. Of course, you cannot do that if your money is not distinct from the church's money.

It is important that your personal possessions are distinct from the property of the church. If this distinction is not clear, you lose the blessing of giving. You have nothing to give because all you have is church property. And how can you give the church what belongs to it?

You Must Lose Your Comforts and Well-Being

Without sacrificing your leisure time to be with the Lord, there will be no real fruit. Many ministers have time for everything else but the Lord. There is time for TV, useless socializing, computers, business and sports but there is no time for personal fellowship with the Lord. *Your ministry is a reflection of your personal time with the Lord.*

There are many things in the ministry, which may take away your comforts. If you are not prepared to sacrifice the little things of life, you may never amount to much in the ministry.

Insisting on certain comforts on this earth can easily be the reason for your inability to move forward in ministry. You should *"set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth"* (Colossians 3:2). When your heart is set on things above, you will not be so fussy about things on this earth.

One night, I was standing by the Pacific Ocean in a foreign country. In front of me were several large expensive yachts belonging to millionaires. I turned to the Christians who were walking with me and said, "I would like to have my yacht in Heaven." One of them laughed at me and said, "Oh no, I want to have mine here." This little conversation reflects two schools of thought in Christendom today. Most Christians want to have their comforts here, while a few want them in Heaven.

I do not drive the car that I would really like to drive. In fact, I have never driven the car I would really like to drive. I do know cars are the nicest and the best but I do what I do for the sake of the ministry.

But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void.

1 Corinthians 9:15

I do not live in the best house or in the best area of my city. I do know where these "best areas" and "best houses" are. I do know that there are many better places than where I live. I am also aware that my church can afford to provide these things for me.

But I am content with what the Lord has given me. In fact, I think I am super blessed. I do not intend to join the struggle to impress people about what I have and where I live. I hope to have the best mansions in Heaven.

You Must Lose Your Family

Your family will make many sacrifices because of the ministry. You will have to give up time and pleasure with your family so that you can do the

work of God. In Luke 14, the young man refused to attend the dinner because he had “married a wife”.

And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.

Luke 14:20

Many people do not fulfil God’s will because they try to please their wives. The Bible teaches us to love our wives. But the Bible teaches us to love God first.

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

Luke 14:26

Jesus talks about hating your mother, your father, your wife, your children, your brethren, your sisters and even your own life in order to be a disciple. If you have to do that to qualify as a *disciple*, how much more would you have to do that as a *Christian leader*?

You Must Lose Your Safety and Security

Jesus sacrificed the safety of Heaven to dwell amongst a group of perverted, depraved and wicked people. We must follow His example if we are to bear fruit.

Walking with the Lord will lead you into many dangers, toils and snares. Every journey you make will put you at risk. If your self-preservation is more important than obeying God, you are not likely to sacrifice your safety and security.

Being in full-time ministry means you must sacrifice your security. It is much more secure to work for Barclays Bank than it is to work for a Pentecostal church led by a twenty-eight-year-old pastor.

I was once invited to Colombia to minister. I was uncertain as to whether I should go or not. I called a pastor in America to ask whether he knew if Colombia was a safe place to go to. He told me he would find out and call me back.

He called me a couple of days later and said, “Brother, it is a very dangerous place. I don’t think you should venture there.”

He continued, “I talked to a Catholic nun who told me to advice you not to step in Colombia. She told me of a Catholic bishop who had been shot in cold blood while serving mass.”

“Are you serious!” I exclaimed.

“Yes,” he replied. “It is very dangerous.”

Then, I had some further information. I was told about another pastor who had been shot while getting into his car after church. It became clear to me that pastors were being targeted in Colombia. I also remembered a renowned pastor who had almost died in a drive-by shooting incident in Bogotá.

Of course, I decided I would not set foot in Colombia.

However, as I flew down to another country in South America, I had a dream in which the Lord spoke to me. He rebuked me sharply and told me that He was ashamed of me because I was trying to preserve myself. He reminded me that if He removed His protection from me for just five minutes, I would perish instantly. When I woke up, I was frightened and decided to go to Colombia. I needed no further coaxing to take me to Colombia.

Dear friend, I cannot begin to describe the extent of the power of God that was present in those meetings in Colombia. I saw the greatest miracles in my life, including the raising of the dead.

If you are not prepared to lose your security, you will never gain the security of God.

I invited a man of God who lived in one of the richest countries in the world to preach in Ghana, West Africa. His first question was, “Is it safe?” “I would be able to come only if it is safe and there are guarantees for my health, safety and security”.

Wow, I thought to myself. “How difficult it is to work with people who love themselves and their lives on this earth more than anything else?” But this is typical of Christians who have grown used to the comforts of the modern safety-conscious version of Christianity! That was not Jesus’ version of Christianity.

Chapter 3

The Art of Losing

…whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Matthew 16:25

Anyone who takes up the cross will lose something. The phrase, “if any man” defines those who must take up the cross. Self-denial is one of the basic truths of the Gospel. I do not know of any stronger statement that our Lord made. In this Scripture, He defines those who *cannot* be His disciples. This act of taking up your cross clearly draws a line between those who qualify and those who do not.

Those who therefore cannot be Christians are those who are not prepared to deny themselves and lose something. Where are crosses usually taken?

Are crosses taken to shopping malls, restaurants, parties, or weddings? No sir! Crosses are carried to the place of execution and suffering. This Scripture has only one meaning: it means that we must follow the example of Jesus Christ and lay down our lives in obedience to Him. Are you obeying the Lord?

I got to know the Lord at about the age of fifteen. I have constantly had to take up my cross, deny myself and follow the Lord. Without doing this, my Christianity would always have been a phantom of what true Christianity is supposed to be. Dear friend, Christianity then and now is not easy.

Losing the Music

During my early years as a Christian, I learned to say “no” to things that ordinary people said “yes” to. One of the first things I had to deny myself of was **non-Christian music**. I used to love music by Lionel Richie, Michael Jackson, the Bee Gees and ABBA. The key verse that guided me in those days was 1 Corinthians 10:23: “All things are lawful but not all things are helpful.”

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

1 Corinthians 10:23

I really loved and still do love music, but there was no way I was going to continue my walk with Christ and listen to that kind of music. Although nice to the ear, it is not spiritually helpful. There are many Christians who don't do well because they are not prepared to lose certain worldly things.

Losing the Places You Would Usually Visit

There were places I used to go to that I had to stop going to if I was to continue with the Lord. Dear friend, you cannot go to the same old places. Except you deny yourself, you cannot be a Christian. I used to go gambling at the racecourse every Saturday. I was an avid horse lover and a regular patron of the racecourse. When I got saved, I had to lose the pleasure (and foolishness) of gambling.

Losing Your Friends

If you are not prepared to lose certain friends, you will never gain the friends and family God has for you. Even as I write this book, I realize how essential it is for Christians to lose certain friends in order to gain access to a whole new world of friends.

Indeed, if you do not lose the old group you may lose your salvation.

I had a set of friends before I got saved. When I got saved, I realized that these unbelieving friends would not be helpful to my Christian life. One by one, I lost all of them until the old stock was gone. I've basically lost all the friends I used to have.

Losing Your Job

There are times you have to give up certain jobs in order to serve the Lord.

I remember a brother whom I led to the Lord. I saw him saying the sinner's prayer. A few days later, I prayed for him to receive the Holy Spirit baptism. I personally laid hands on him, watched him receive the Holy Ghost baptism and saw him speak in tongues. I also counselled him about his lifestyle.

I told him, "You have to change your lifestyle. You have to say 'no' to the old things, the old people and the old places of your life." One day, I noticed that this brother had stopped coming to church regularly.

I asked him, “What is happening?”

He told me, “I have a new job at such and such hotel.”

He continued, “We work in the night and at weekends.”

Then I probed further, “What exactly do you do at this hotel?”

He mumbled some feeble answer, and I could tell immediately that it was not a decent job. Night after night, he worked amongst smoking, drinking and rollicking men and women of sin, as they danced their lives away to Hell.

This was no atmosphere for a good Christian. It was only a matter of time, before my friend completely backslid. The next time I saw him, he was deep in the world and high on drugs. If you are not prepared to lose certain jobs, you will never gain the treasures of Christ.

Losing Your Business

Christians today are not prepared to lose anything. Some ladies are not prepared to give up their unbeliever boyfriends for anything. They say “You can take away my house, you can take away my job, you can take away my car, but I am not prepared to lose my boy!

You see, except you deny yourself, you cannot be a disciple of Christ.

I remember a born-again, tongue talking church member, who inherited a thriving nightclub business from his father. I wondered to myself, “What in the world is a Christian going to do with such a nightclub?”

But Instead of closing down the nightclub and getting rid of that house of sin, he actually expanded the business.

Because he was not prepared to lose anything, he continued to run the nightclub. How much lower can we go because we are not prepared to lose anything for Christ sake?

One day a church member rented a space to run his restaurant. Somehow, the lease he signed included a dancing room in the building. I asked him “What are you going to do with this dance room?”

He said, “Oh, we will just play music in the evenings.” This “music in the evenings” degenerated into a nightclub environment with half-dressed girls singing and dancing every night.

I thought to myself, “How long will this Christian brother be able to stay in the faith?” Not for long! Indeed, the last time I heard of him, he was out of the church and deeply embroiled in the world.

He had fallen into every kind of dark sin that you can think of. I also heard that he had become a mental patient.

There are times you will have to lose your business so that you can follow Christ. Not all jobs are from the Lord. The blessing of the Lord makes rich and adds no sorrow.

Losing Your Films

The films I used to watch, I could watch them no more. That was not easy for me because I really enjoyed watching films. It is not everything we watch that pleases the Lord. I would go to different cinema houses in my city and have a good time watching all kinds of films.

One day, whilst watching a Chinese film at Orion Cinema hall in Ghana, the hero of the film suddenly developed a fever. As he lay shivering under his blanket, it was decided that the only thing that could cure his fever and keep him warm was a group of naked girls.

This film suddenly changed in its character. That was a turning point for me. I knew I had to lose my film-watching hobby!

These things may seem trivial to you, but it is the failure to deny yourself these very things that prevents us from walking with God.

As I have walked with the Lord, I have had to lose many things. Christianity is all about losing.

I also learnt how to deny myself of food so that I could fast.

Little by little, and step by step, you take up your cross, deny yourself and lose your life so that you can follow Jesus.

Chapter 4

The Two Ways of Losing

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

John 10:17-18

There are two ways to lose the things God wants you to give up. You can either give them up voluntarily or they can be taken away from you.

I promise you that giving something is very different from having it taken from you. One is a sacrifice and the other is not. Both end with a loss to you.

Jesus was clever; He knew it was a matter of time before the Pharisees would kill Him. He knew that it was just a matter of time before He would be eliminated. The build up of hatred was obvious to all. *Instead of waiting for this to happen, He gave Himself up to be crucified.*

The Big Difference

There is a big difference between giving up something and having it taken from you. In both cases, you end up losing. I have watched as people tried to preserve themselves and their families but ended up losing them. Many have also tried to prevent financial loss as they avoided going into full-time ministry. Many times, they lost what they were trying to keep.

I remember one lady who was trying to prevent the loss of her husband by keeping him away from the church. Anytime church members came to see her husband for some help, she would shoo them away.

Her nasty and unwelcoming behaviour was a clear indication to the visitors that they were not wanted. Gradually, she warded off? the church members until her vision of securing her husband to herself was accomplished.

However, after sometime, her husband began to backslide. He no longer attended prayer meetings and became uninterested in church. As he became less spiritual, he also began to lose interest in his wife. Soon, his eyes were twinkling and his mouth was watering. He considered other girls!

This lady realized that she was about to lose what she was protecting. Then she ran to church and asked the pastor to pray for her marriage. She knew the very thing she was preserving was slipping out of her hands.

Dear friend, be it known unto you that he who keeps his life will lose it and he who loses his life for Christ's sake will find it. These are the irrevocable words of our Saviour.

He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Matthew 10:39

There are people who think they are preserving their family lives by not getting too involved in church activities. They give themselves to secular pursuits thinking that they are safeguarding the future of their homes. Many of these people have ended up losing their children and their spouses as they followed money on a wild goose chase.

Give It before It Is Taken

A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

Proverbs 22:3

It takes wisdom to see ahead and to know that you are going to lose something. Foolishness often keeps us blinded from this reality.

I once ran a car rental business. At one point, I had a very good customer who was paying me good money. At times, he would rent my car for long periods and promise to pay later. This suited me fine until the payments stopped coming. After one or two months of waiting, I decided to go fetch my car. I eventually got the car but my customer would not pay up and kept telling me stories.

I made several trips to a suburb of Accra trying to get this man to pay me what he owed. One night, the Lord told me that I was never going to get my money. He asked me to give the money to the man as a gift. (The Lord was introducing me to an eternal principle).

I was going to lose something anyway so I might as well give it away first. But I thought I was wiser than the Lord. The man had been so insolent and I didn't feel like giving him anything. I decided to pursue this man until I got my money. My debtor was a smooth-talking liar, who could come up with a different story every day.

I never forgave this man and never obeyed the Lord to give away the money. Can you believe I never got my money back? Up until today, I have not received a dime. I have even forgotten how much I was owed. But God knew I would lose my money anyway. He wanted to bless me, so he asked me to take that step of giving it away but I failed to do so.

I lost my money but I could have given it away freely and reaped a harvest.

Give up your life today and God will use it. Lose your life for His sake, and you will find it. Perhaps the very things you are afraid of losing are about to be taken away from you anyway.

Section 2: Suffering

Chapter 5

Why God Wants You to Experience Suffering

Appointed Unto Suffering

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake

Philippians 1:29

That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

1 Thessalonians 3:3

Christianity is a religion that does not only involve believing but also suffering. I once attended the funeral of a pastor of a large church. His ministry had similar foundations to mine and the dead pastor had had strong beliefs in the doctrine of faith, prosperity and healing.

However, the unexpected and slow death of this pastor over a number of years had brought untold suffering to the family.

Different people gave speeches at the funeral, paying tribute to this great hero who had passed on. Finally, his wife spoke to the emotional crowd of thousands that were in attendance.

She said, “The death of my husband was not a defeat. It is easy for Christians to think that we were defeated because he did not get healed.”

She went on and made a profound statement that encapsulates a missing truth in our teachings.

She said, "*I believe our theology must include suffering*."

When she said this, I recognized the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking through all the pain and difficulty we had been through. God was saying: *Our concept of Christianity must include the concept of suffering*!

No amount of faith, healing and prosperity teachings can remove the truths about Christians suffering. The Bible is littered with Scriptures that point us clearly to the existence of a divine plan that includes suffering for Christians.

We may not like it and we may wish it were not so, but there is so much of it everywhere in the Bible that we cannot escape!

Paul said, "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22)

The apostle Paul spoke of many sufferings in his letters. He said he was troubled on every side. He went on to say that he was persecuted, perplexed and cast down on many occasions. What do you think these things mean? Are they some kind of enjoyment?

Paul described his life as being always delivered to death for Jesus' sake. What does it mean to be always delivered to death? Do you think it means he is receiving prosperity and healing? Honestly, I don't think so! Indeed it sounds terrifying for anyone to be always delivered to death!

The ministry of Jesus involved two very different aspects. Preaching, teaching and healing formed one clear phase of His ministry. The second phase of His ministry was to basically experience different kinds of suffering. He suffered rejection by the Israeli community, betrayal by Judas, desertion by His disciples, false accusations by the pastors, misrepresentation by the Pharisees, pain from the Roman soldiers, the psychological torment of impending death and the pains and horrors of crucifixion.

But why does following God include all these different kinds of suffering?

Why does someone who obeys God ever have to experience suffering?

Is it not the case that the obedient ones deserve to be exempted from some of these hard and difficult experiences?

Many times, bad people seem to have it easy but the good ones seem to suffer. Indeed, we have tried to eliminate the concept of suffering from our theology because it is a most uncomfortable and difficult-to-explain reality.

But it is time to bring back the concept of suffering into our theology. The teachings on faith, healing, prosperity and long life are the mainstay of a large part of the church. But it's time to include suffering in these faith teachings. If we fail to add suffering to the good news sections of our doctrines, we will always be incomplete and often feel defeated and confused in our Christian journey.

Reasons Why God Wants You to Experience Suffering

1. God wants you to experience suffering because it pleases Him.

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief:

Isaiah 53:10

Have you ever wondered why the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was described as *sweet smelling* to God? "… as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (Ephesians 5:2).

You would have thought that the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross would present a detestable, disgusting and repugnant scent to God. Yet He calls it a sweet-smelling savour.

Amazingly, it pleases God for you to experience some suffering. I thought of the verse, "*It pleased the Lord to bruise him"* and said to myself, "This must be a mistake. How could the Lord be pleased to bruise Jesus? How could God be happy when His Son is suffering? Which parent would be happy for his child to suffer?"

Yet I remembered when my children were going to boarding school. I knew they were going to encounter things they had never experienced before. I knew they were going to scrub, weed and work like never

before. They would have to get up early and work to a certain routine. I also knew they were going to suffer at the hands of wicked seniors.

And yet, I was pleased to send them to this boarding school. Why was I pleased to send them to this school even though they were going to experience some hardship and suffering?

You see, there were lessons I had tried to teach them when they were at home. Somehow, they did not seem to grasp or imbibe some of the things I was telling them. There were lessons of life I wanted them to learn. They had learnt as much as they could learn from my nagging parental instructions. It was time for the hardships of unprotected life to step in and teach them what we as parents couldn't.

2. God wants you to experience suffering because it makes you perfect.

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Hebrews 2:10

The word "perfect" means to make you complete. We are incomplete without suffering. A person who has had no problems in this life lacks something. He lacks the element that makes him complete and mature. Life on this earth includes suffering of all kinds. Once you have not experienced some kind of suffering there is a level of maturity that you simply lack.

3. God wants you to experience suffering because it will make you obedient.

Though he were a Son, yet **learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;**

Hebrews 5:8

The Bible teaches us that Jesus Christ became obedient through the things that He suffered. Jesus Christ was holy and without sin. Yet His obedience to God depended on him suffering certain things. You must also experience some suffering if you are to fully obey God.

Sometimes we think it is stubborn and bad people who need to suffer in order to make them obedient. But good people also need some suffering to prod them on into perfect obedience. When you experience hardships and suffering, ask yourself what the Lord is trying to get you to do. What does He want me to obey? What does He want me to do for Him?

Several people became obedient and served the Lord only because of certain hard experiences they went through. There are great men you know who only became ministers because they suffered certain experiences.

Maria Woodworth Etter

Maria Woodworth Etter, one of God's Lady-Generals was known for her supernatural ministry of signs and wonders. She had a vision of the harvest when she was thirteen years old and heard the voice of God tell her to "go the highways and hedges and gather the lost sheep".

Somehow, she did not heed the call.

Probably desiring to be like the average woman, she married a couple of years after she had had this vision. Eventually she had a large family with six beautiful children! Then tragedy struck and five of her six children died within a short space of time.

Maria herself became ill many times and often thought that she would die. Throughout the time of these different crises, she felt God calling her to preach to the lost.

Finally, she gave herself up to the Lord and became obedient to the call. She began ministering in her local area and began to see many conversions. This was the beginning of a great ministry that lay ahead of her. Maria suffered the loss of five children. What a terrible tragedy. Yet, it was this suffering that brought her to her ministry.

William Branham

William Branham, the famous prophet, also received a supernatural call to ministry. William Braham was a young boy when he started having visions and feeling the call of God on his life. When he was fourteen, he was involved in an accident in which he nearly lost both of his legs. As he lay there in a pool of blood, he saw a terrifying vision of Hell. He cried out

to God for mercy promising to be a good boy if he lived. He lived, but forgot about his promise and about God.

One day as he walked by a church, he felt ‘something’ telling him to go into the church but he refused to obey and continued on his way. Soon after, he heard a voice saying, “I called you, and you would not go.” He realized then that he had to approach the Lord since his life has been spared, but he did not know how.

One day he decided to tack a letter to a tree. He then went into a barn and prayed sincerely from his heart. When he opened his eyes he saw floating in front of him, a brilliant amber light, forming a perfect cross in the air. There, in that barn, he accepted the Lord Jesus Christ.

When God called him into nation-wide evangelism in 1934, he refused because his mother-in-law felt that he should not drag his new wife, Hope, around the country. He paid dearly for the mistake of not listening to the Lord by losing his wife, Hope, and daughter, Sharon Rose, to tuberculosis in the Flood of 1936.

After the death of his wife and daughter, he fell into a deep depression, feeling that God had abandoned him. He tried to commit suicide a few times but did not succeed.

Branham struggled over the next several years. One day he went to pray to seek God’s will for him and repented of his decision not to go into nation-wide evangelism. He went on to minister and obey the call of God, having one of the most spectacular prophetic ministries ever recorded in history.

As you can see from these examples, many people do not obey the voice of God until they go through much suffering.

4. God wants you to experience suffering because it will bring you closer to Christ.

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

Philippians 3:10

Suffering creates a fellowship of like-minded sufferers who have experienced the same things. There is a bond that forms between people

who have gone through certain experiences. In order therefore to be a part of certain fellowships you must suffer certain things.

You must suffer the seven years of medical school to be a part of the fellowship of doctors.

You must suffer the ridicule and rejection that people in full-time ministry experience in order to join a certain fellowship.

There is a closeness to God and to Christ that you have when you experience suffering. You will have a deeper understanding of who Jesus is and what He has done for you as you experience the sufferings of Christ.

5. God wants you to experience suffering because of the glory that will follow you.

Just as the day follows the night, the glory of God will come after the sufferings we experience. The glory of being a doctor comes after the sufferings of medical school. The glory of having a baby comes after the suffering of labour and childbirth. The glory of having a baby comes after the suffering and difficulties of adoption.

The good news is that the glory we will experience cannot be compared with the suffering we must go through. “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). There are too many Scriptures that support these great truths and these are just a few:

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory;

2 Corinthians 4:17

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

1 Peter 1:11

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

1 Peter 4:13

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Romans 8:17-18

6. God wants you to experience suffering so that you play your part in the completion of the sufferings of Christ.

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

Colossians 1:24 (NASB)

This is perhaps the most mysterious reason why we should suffer: to complete the sufferings of Christ. Does it mean that Jesus did not complete His work on earth? I think not. Jesus is the head and we are the body of Christ.

He told us to take up our crosses because the head had taken up the cross and the body of Christ must also take up its cross. If the head suffers and the body does not suffer then the sufferings of Christ are not complete.

7. God wants you to experience suffering so that you become humble.

Satan's nature is pride. Satan is the king and origin of pride. He is also the ruler and the overseer of all the children of pride.

… **he *is* a king over all the children of pride.**

Job 41:34

After the fall of man, Satan's nature of pride was somehow injected into mankind.

This satanic nature is the source of all the evils in man. Even after our salvation, we constantly struggle with this demonic influence that seeks to dominate our character and personality.

After the Lord has called us and we begin to serve Him, this very nature carries us away from His will. A little confidence, a little success and we

are changed into demonized, pride-filled brats who no longer listen to advice. We secretly mock at others we deem inferior.

This is the reason why the Lord leads us along a road that humbles us and causes us to trust in Him. Perhaps no Scripture is as clear as Deuteronomy 8:2 on this matter. Some so called faith people (I say this because I consider myself a faith person) would wish that this verse was not in the Bible. But it is and there is nothing you can do about it. God does lead us on journeys with the intention of humbling us.

Some of the things that are happening to you are just to humble you and make you cool, sober, mellow and gentle!

And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, TO HUMBLE THEE, *and* to prove thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

Deuteronomy 8:2

The apostle Paul also confirmed this truth. He said that he had been given a messenger of Satan to buffet him so that he would not be lifted up in pride because of his numerous revelations. He interpreted his difficulties, persecutions, reproaches and distresses to be gifts from God which induced the gift of humility in his life. “And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me--to keep me from exalting myself!” 2 Corinthians 12:7 (NASB)

Your Greatest Gift Is What Makes You Humble in This Life

If humility is the key to becoming the greatest in Heaven (Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Matthew 18:4) then whatever brings you humility must be the greatest gift from God to you.

The suffering that makes you humble is therefore God’s greatest gift to you.

If you have eyes to see you will count it all joy when you enter into various testings, trials and temptations (James 1:2).

What is it that has made you sad in this life and caused you to suffer?

It is the same thing that God has used to make you a humble person.

Is it your husband?

Is it the rejection you experienced?

Is it your wife?

Is it your marriage?

Is it your child? Is it the child you didn't have?

Is it the husband you didn't have? Is it your poverty? Is it your sickness? Is it the death of your spouse? Is it your accusers? Is it your weakness? Is it your inferiority? Is it the colour of your skin?

The natural man would call these things your greatest misfortunes. Indeed, to an unspiritual person, these things may look like the calamities and bad luck of your life.

However, if you can receive it, you would recognize that your hardships and your sufferings are the greatest gifts of God to you.

Not Everyone Becomes Humble through Suffering

Don't make a mistake though. It is not everybody who experiences suffering that becomes humble. Some actually become even more hardened and resistant to God. You must allow God to work things out in you.

8. God wants you to experience suffering because He wants to test you.

And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, TESTING YOU, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

Deuteronomy 8:2 (NASB)

Suffering is indeed a test. It brings out what is in you. When you rebuke someone or correct him his true nature is exposed.

The Angry Pastor

One day, a pastor did something wrong and was corrected for what he had done. He was then moved elsewhere to do another job. Because he

was moved, he developed a bad attitude, threatening to leave the church. He felt his issues had not been fairly handled.

I said to my wife, “This fellow is proving to everyone that he was indeed rebellious.” Before his correction it had been uncertain as to whether he was really rebellious, or just an innocent victim of circumstances.

His response to his difficulties revealed who he was.

This is how come marriage brings out your true character. Through marriage you will discover whether you are patient, kind, unreasonable, wicked, caring, unfeeling, hard, soft, flat or blank.

He Never Became Bitter

I attended the funeral of a great man of God. There were several comments passed by people who knew this man. There was, however, one comment that struck me. This comment was given by a seasoned minister.

He said, “Our brother has given us a good example in life. He showed us how to live and he has also shown us how to die. In life, he was cheerful, pleasant and full of faith. But in the years that run up to his death he was equally cheerful, pleasant and full of faith.”

Then he added, “He never became bitter in spite of his sickness and suffering.”

I think that was a powerful testimony of a man who successfully went through a test of suffering. He manifested faith and hope through his suffering.

Unfortunately, this is not what happens to everyone who goes through suffering. Some people become bitter because of the contradictory sufferings they experience after giving everything to God.

Don’t Become Bitter Because of Your Suffering

For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Hebrews 12:3

The Bible teaches about how Jesus Christ received the contradiction of sinners (Hebrews 12:3). What is the contradiction of sinners? It is experiencing something contrary to what you would expect.

After doing good deeds and serving the Lord you expect to receive a nice reward. After being a good husband, you expect to receive nice treatment from your wife. You do not expect to receive insults, accusations, bad food or bad sex. That would be a contradiction.

After being a good wife you expect to receive love, care and devotion from your husband. You do not expect to have an antagonistic, hateful uncaring and unfaithful husband. That would also be a contradiction.

Be careful when you receive the contradiction of sinners.

Receiving the contradiction of sinners is one of the sufferings we are to experience on this earth. Do not turn against God when you receive the contradiction of sinners. Jesus experienced the contradiction of sinners and showed us how to endure it.

Do not become bitter.

Do not say that you need to be happy in this life.

Do not say that you need a break.

Do not say that you need to get away from all this.

You can never get away from the will of God!

The Swedish Missionary

One day, a European couple went to Belgian Congo as missionaries with their two-year old son. They laboured there for many years with no fruit.

During their stay there, the only person who had responded to the ministry was a little Congolese boy who used to bring them food. Imagine that! Your only convert after years of ministry is a little boy.

Finally his wife died a week after giving birth to their daughter. In despair, he left the Congo with his son but dumped the week-old baby girl on another Swedish couple. Sadly, this couple also died. An American missionary couple then adopted their daughter.

The Swedish missionary, thinking he was such a failure, turned to alcohol and completely forsook the ministry upon his return to Sweden. Indeed, he had received the contradiction of sinners in Congo.

But his daughter grew up in America and married a man who became the principal of a Bible school. On a trip to Sweden with her husband they

stopped in London and whilst taking a walk stumbled on a congress being addressed by a Congolese missionary evangelist who was testifying of the great works of God in Zaire.

A conversation between her and the great evangelist revealed that *he* was the little native boy who had been her parents' only convert during their years in Belgian Congo. He had grown up to be a missionary evangelist to his own country. His ministry included one hundred and ten thousand Christians, thirty-two mission stations, several Bible schools and a one hundred and twenty-bed hospital.

The next day she travelled to Sweden to look for her father. She found him in a run-down building in an impoverished part of Stockholm. When they knocked on the door a woman let them in. Inside, liquor bottles lay everywhere. And lying on a cot in the corner was her father – the one time missionary. He was now seventy-three years old and suffering from diabetes. He also had a stroke and cataracts covered both of his eyes.

She fell to her father's side crying, "Dad I'm the one you left in Africa."

The old man turned and looked at her. Tears formed in his eyes. He answered, "I never meant to give you away. I just couldn't handle you both."

She answered, "That's okay Daddy, God took care of me."

Her father's face darkened at the mention of "God".

"God didn't take care of you," he raged.

"He ruined our whole family.

He led us to Africa and then betrayed us.

Nothing ever came of our time there.

It was a waste of our lives."

She then told him of the black preacher she had met in London and how the Congo had been evangelized through him.

"It's all true, Daddy," she said. "Everybody knows about that little boy convert."

Her father was amazed. The Holy Spirit fell on him and he broke down. He had received the contradiction of sinners and it had turned him away

from God. He had felt God was not real. He had felt that God had repaid him with evil after he had sacrificed his whole life for the Gospel.

Tears of sorrow and repentance flowed down his face and God restored him.

9. God wants you to experience suffering so that you can follow the example of Jesus Christ.

For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

1 Peter 2:21

Suffering will be part of our Christian lives because Jesus Christ set the example and asked us to follow Him. No matter how much faith we have we cannot have more faith than Jesus Christ.

Jesus had all the faith to raise the dead and to heal the sick and yet He set us an example of suffering.

Suffering is not a sign of weakness.

Suffering is not a sign of defeat.

Suffering is often a sign of God’s hand actively working in your life.

10. God wants you to experience suffering so that the power of sin will be broken in your life.

When you suffer in the flesh you stop sinning. Because the Church is averse to suffering it has not ceased from sinning.

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

1 Peter 4:1

He that has suffered in the flesh ceases from sin. Where there is no suffering you see the increase of sin. The church of God that emphasizes on prosperity, healing and success but has no component of suffering is setting itself up for a great deviation from the faith.

Suffering has the power to break the influence of sin on your life. When people love money they often love pleasure.

Money has power to prevent sufferings.

Money gives people the power to steer their lives away from anything that threatens to cause any kind of suffering. That is why money is the root of all evil.

Money has been able to change the course of the church. Money has steered it away from places that it is needed most.

Instead of the Holy Spirit leading the church to the mission fields, the church is being led by an unspoken policy of avoiding trouble, difficulties or hardships.

11. God wants you to experience suffering because it proves that you are a good Christian.

For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

1 Timothy 4:10

Suffering is actually a sign that you are a good Christian. Paul said he was labouring and suffering reproach just because he trusted in the living God. When people are following the will of the Lord, they always encounter difficulties and hardships.

You must give up the notion that suffering is a sign of defeat or failure.

There is a notion that if you suffer, you are a failure. There is a notion that if you suffer, God does not like you. There is a notion that people experience difficulties because they are out of the will of God. Such thinking will not help you to be a good Christian.

Paul said Christians who want to live in a godly way *will* suffer. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).

I want you to make up your mind to fight till the end of your life. Fight in every situation. Don’t give up! Don’t think that God is angry with you.

Those kinds of thoughts only weaken you. God is not angry with you! God is allowing you to encounter the sufferings and experiences that His generals and chosen ones go through.

When Jacob met up with Pharaoh he made a profound statement. He said, “The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers” (Genesis 47:9, NIV).

Life on this earth has few and difficult years. You must accept this reality of suffering and brace yourself to go through it.

Do not live this life trying to be happy!

You must survive!

You must make it!

You don’t *have* to be happy on earth!

All you need is to make it to the end of your course having obeyed the Lord in all that He told you to do.

If you try to be “happy” you will make a mistake and jump out of God’s plan for your life!

12. God wants you to experience suffering because it goes along with your specific calling.

Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed:

2 Timothy 1:11

But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.

Acts 9:15-16

When people are immature they do not understand why certain ministers go through certain things. One day, a minister of the Gospel heard me preaching about the trials of the work of ministry.

He said to me, “It seems you have really been through hell in your ministry.”

I was surprised at his comment and said, “Really? Did you not have any of these experiences when you were building your church?”

He said, “No, I did not experience any such thing.”

I felt silly to say the least. Perhaps the people I had preached to also felt that I had had all these experiences because I lived in Africa.

But I later found out that that pastor had never *founded* a church. He had actually been made the senior pastor of a church that was already in existence.

The suffering and experiences that you go through to found a new church is different from the suffering and experiences you go through to grow an already existing church.

This pastor could not relate with what I had been through because he had not functioned as an apostle, giving birth to churches, but as a pastor growing a church.

There are certain things you will suffer just because you are functioning in certain callings. Paul said he was appointed an apostle and a teacher, and because of that he was suffering certain things.

Some people go through challenges in their marriages just because of their calling. If they were not functioning as pastors or apostles they may have had a happier and easier marriage. Do not despise them because of the suffering they seem to be experiencing in marriage.

The Spotted Tree

One day, whilst on the golf course I noticed a big tree that had lots of spots on it. After walking by it I turned back to look at this amazingly spotted tree. To my surprise there was not a single spot on the other side of the tree.

Then I realized that it was not really a spotted tree but a normal tree that had been brutally assaulted by a thousand different golf balls. It only had those marks on it because of its position in the fairway of the golf course. If it was not positioned where it was it would never have any of those scars.

There are scars that people have just because of their callings and giftings. Most of the time ministers do not suffer because they have

special weaknesses but rather because they have particular callings.

13. God wants you to experience suffering for the sake of righteousness.

But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy *are ye*: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

1 Peter 3:14

But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters.

Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

1 Peter 4:15-16

There are different reasons for suffering. Many people suffer because of their own mistakes. This is what causes all the confusion when it comes to *why* people suffer.

Am I suffering because of my mistakes or I am suffering because I am in the will of God? Did so-and-so die because of his mistakes or did he die because he was in the will of God?

Unfortunately, we will not be able to answer all these questions now. If we try to answer all these questions now we will make mistakes. You must search your heart and believe that you are operating in the will of God.

Once you are certain that you are in the will of God, you must battle to survive and endure your sufferings.

14. God wants you to experience suffering because Christians must suffer affliction rather than enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season.

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

Hebrews 11:24-25

Brother, Why Do You Want to Be Happy?

Many years ago, a pastor mistakenly married an attractive young lady who was unknowingly bad tempered, argumentative and ill-natured.

He suffered in his marriage for many years whilst this woman secretly tormented him.

He endured her cantankerous nature for many years never considering divorce. Perhaps, he secretly hoped that she would die but she never did. She seemed only to get stronger, healthier and fatter.

But one day, a new thought began to form in his mind; thoughts of leaving his wife and marrying someone else. The Scriptures on divorce were not strong enough to prevent him walking on his new road to divorce. I wondered what had brought about the change.

Sometime later, I made a discovery that seemed to explain the new drive towards divorce and remarriage. I found out that members of his family had been encouraging him to divorce, saying *that he needed to be happy.*

They urged him on, counselled him and impressed upon him that he could be happy, and that he needed to take steps so that he could have a new and happier phase of his life. “We want our dear brother to be happy,” they said.

Perhaps this “call to happiness” was the stimulus that urged the pastor to his eventual divorce and remarriage.

I believe that the desire to be happy is one of the most dangerous desires that have entered the Body of Christ.

That I can be happy on earth and that I should be happy on earth is a delusion that drives Christians into error.

It is the same kind of dangerous delusion that drives Christians to desire riches.

Why Should I Suffer?

That I should suffer, go through and stay on in darkness and difficulty is the mentality that keeps Christians on the narrow path. That is the mind that the older generation of Christians and ministers had.

The mindset of modern Christians is “I must be happy! I can be happy! I will do everything I need to do so that I am happy on earth! I will do that

even if it means breaking Scriptures that are crystal clear!”

Many great ministers endure tumultuous and truly difficult marriages in which they are tormented secretly by calm looking beautiful wives.

No one really knows that these pretty wives are also pretty pretenders and secret tormentors.

Many ministers are able to endure and even have semi-successful homes until the thought of being happy occurs to them.

Through this idea of “becoming happy” the enemy is able to destroy God’s honourable servants.

But Why Do You Want to Be Happy?

But why do you want to be happy on earth? This is the key question you must keep in your spirit. Don’t even try to be happy. Tell yourself it won’t be long.

Dear friend, you will not live very long anyway. Your pursuit of happiness will cause you to wander into many temptations and snares.

You will sink and plunge into the mire of confusion as you seek for happiness on this earth.

This Must Be Your Prayer

“Help me to survive, O Lord” should be your prayer.

“Keep me alive. Help me to stay to the end of the road without letting you down. Strengthen me so that I can endure the pain, confusion, torment, difficulty, suffering, reproach, unhappiness, contradictions and depression that engulf my life.”

Chapter 6

What You Will Accomplish through the Sufferings of Christ

After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst

John 19:28

In the ministry, most people view accomplishments as positive things they have done and achieved for the Lord. You will hear ministers of the Gospel say, “I have preached in ninety-six countries.”

“My church has eight hundred members.”

“I have built a building that seats three thousand people.”

“We have four services every Sunday.”

“I have established six Bible schools.”

“I am in demand as a conference speaker.”

“I had two thousand decisions for Christ in my crusade.”

“I have crusades in different countries.”

“I baptise five hundred people every Sunday.”

“We have six choirs in our church and we have recorded two albums.”

Indeed, these are great accomplishments. But they are only one aspect of the accomplishments that will be required from you.

There is another kind of accomplishment mentioned in the Bible. It is the *accomplishments of the cross* and the accomplishment of sufferings that are destined for servants of the Lord.

Jesus knew that He was accomplishing something by enduring and surviving the torment of contradictions, hatred, envy and wickedness unleashed against Him by sinful men. Read it for yourself:

Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.

Luke 18:31

The accomplishments of Jesus on the cross are, however, in a completely different category. They concern the things you have been through and the things you have survived. Herein is birthed the saying, “What have you been through and what have you survived?”

What is accomplished when someone goes through suffering? What is the benefit of someone enduring such hardships, pain and affliction?

That is a good question because the conventional view of an accomplishment is always of something positive that is achieved.

But according to the Bible, suffering on a cross is an accomplishment. On many occasions Jesus’ afflictions and experiences on the cross were described as accomplishments. Jesus Christ Himself said, “But I have a

baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!" (Luke 12:50, NASB).

Jesus went through great suffering and there is some significance in the degree to which we experience similar sufferings. "But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation." (1 Peter 4:13, NASB).

Derek Prince

I once read the book of an older world-renowned "man of God". He described how he was watching a young minister on television who had a large and thriving ministry.

As he watched this young man he thought to himself, "This young man is doing well.

He is achieving many things for the Lord.

But one day, he will come to the place where he will discover that it is not about the things he has achieved. He will discover that it is more about what he can yield to. It is about what you can allow to happen to you. He will discover that it is more about what you can go through." Indeed, this was an experienced man of God.

What Have You Been Through?

On another occasion I met an older man of God who was complaining about young ministers who felt they were bigger and better than he was. He said to me, "These young men think that success is about how many members you have or how many cars you have."

He continued, "It's about what you've been through." He pointed his fingers at me and said, "What have you been through? What have you survived?"

"Enduring things" is an accomplishment just as "achieving things" is an accomplishment. "Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst" (John 19:28).

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed

1 Peter 5:1, NASB.

The Grieving Missionary

A missionary who had preached to thousands of people all over the world was going through a super crisis in his personal life. He felt like giving up on God and the ministry and even ending his life.

A friend of his tried to console him saying, “God has allowed this for a purpose. God is in control. You must trust God.”

But he answered, “God has no part in this. What would God gain by putting me through this terrible crisis? God does not need to speak to me by destroying my family.

He continued, “I do not serve a God who can allow such terrible things to happen.”

A friend of his explained to him how the famous missionary Adoniram Judson had brought the gospel to India at great personal cost.

He explained to his grieving friend that Adoniram Judson had had the tragedy of burying two wives and four children even though he was serving God on the mission field.

This information did not seem to matter to the grieving missionary.

He became more vociferous as suggestions were made that God could have had a hand in the terrible crisis. This healing evangelist then dropped a bombshell that revealed his understanding of the spiritual accomplishment of suffering.

He said, “God had better not have anything to do with this problem. I would prefer to become a Muslim than to serve a God who would allow anything like this to happen to me. If God has anything to do with this I will become a Muslim!” This missionary insisted that if the God of Christianity would allow these troubles to happen to him then he would change his allegiance to God to another and change religions.

But the apostle Paul recognized that it is possible for God to allow Satan to attack a minister of the gospel. Read it for yourself.

Even though I have received wonderful revelations from God. But to keep me from getting puffed up, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from getting proud.”

2 Corinthians 12:7, NLT)

It is time to look unto Jesus, who is the beginning and the end of everything for us. He came to this earth and ministered powerfully to thousands of people. Many were saved and healed through His ministry.

His successful field ministry was combined with the successful enduring of the cross. We must minister the Word of God powerfully with miracles, signs and wonders and we must also endure, tolerate and experience whatever God has planned for us. “For just as *the sufferings of Christ* are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:5, NASB).

This will be our portion too as we follow the Lord ardently. Like the old and wise minister said, a time will come when it will not be about the positive things you achieve but about the things you can go through and the things you can allow to happen in your life.

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:2

The Sufferings of Christ

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,”

1 Peter 5:1, NASB.

The things you can accomplish through your suffering are the things that Jesus accomplished with His sufferings. That is why it is important to know what the sufferings of Christ were. When Jesus knew that He had accomplished the necessary sufferings, He gave up the ghost and finished His ministry.

I want you to study the special accomplishments that Jesus achieved on the cross. They are the sufferings that we must also endeavour to accomplish if God so wills.

Consider sufferings as accomplishments because that is what they are and that is what the Bible describes them as!

Jesus Christ endured the cross and so must we. What exactly did Jesus Christ endure? He endured the sufferings I have listed below. Each of the sufferings was an accomplishment.

…who for the joy that was set before him endured the crosS…,

Hebrews 12:2

Enduring temptation is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered."

Luke 4:1, 2,

"He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him."

Matthew 27:42,

Jesus Christ endured the suffering of temptation from the beginning of His ministry to the very end. In the wilderness, He was tempted to abort his ministry and prove that he was the Son of God. On the cross he was tempted again to come down and prove that he was the Son of God. It was exactly the same demon and exactly the same temptation that haunted Jesus throughout His ministry.

This is what explains the persistent temptations of ministers of the gospel. The temptation received at the beginning of your ministry is usually the same thing that comes again and again. If you analyse your life and ministry, you will find out that the same thing keeps coming up again and again although sometimes in different forms.

You must understand that you will suffer from temptation until you die.

If a pastor is tormented in his marriage this torment usually carries on to the very end.

It comes up again and again and the demon never stops trying to break up the marriage. Demons realize that persistence yields fruit and so they keep trying.

Often, the demonic pressure and the temptation is successful after many years. This could explain why some men of God get divorced twenty or thirty years after marriage. After twenty years of marriage you would have thought they would be tired of fighting each other.

The Temptation to Divorce

One day, an important minister of the gospel shocked the Christian world with an announcement of his divorce. He had been married for over thirty years and everything seemed rosy on the outside. Interestingly, I happened to meet someone who knew this divorcing pastor quite closely.

Full of hope, I asked the friend of this divorcing pastor whether their marriage couldn't be healed. He smiled wryly and shook his head.

"I don't think so."

Then he dropped a bombshell: "I am even surprised that they have stayed married so long."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"O they've had a tempestuous marriage relationship for the thirty years they've been together. It's surprising that they've lasted so long."

He said no more and I realised he did not want to talk about it.

I was amazed that this divorcing pastor had been dogged with the same temptations for so many years.

He had quietly suffered the temptation to divorce for many years.

Enduring pressure is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!

Luke 12:50 (NASB)

There was intense pressure on Jesus as He carried out His ministry. He spoke of a baptism of fire, temptation, stress and pressure that he felt as he approached Jerusalem. He knew he had to go through successfully without succumbing to the pressure of the demonic hordes that had gathered. He was mocked, tempted, rejected, despised and eventually murdered.

For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life:

2 Corinthians 1:8

Enduring betrayal is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

Matthew 26:21

Jesus Christ endured betrayal and so will you. Young ministers of the gospel make fun of older people when they are betrayed.

I once heard a young minister of the gospel pass a comment about an older minister who had been betrayed by his associates.

He said, “People are turning against that Bishop because of his bad leadership.” A few years later, this young minister of the gospel who thought he had good leadership skills experienced a worse betrayal by his associates.

What he did not realise was that betrayal is one of the things that will come to all disciples of Christ. If you have not yet experienced it you will experience it one day. It is just a matter of time.

When you go through betrayals and let downs do not think that something strange is happening to you because you are in error. You may be in error and you may even have sinned. But remember also that betrayal is one of the things you will have to endure as part of your Christian service.

Relating with people who have experienced betrayal is different from relating with inexperienced fellows. Experienced people have a more mellow and mature approach to ministry. I have watched as ministers of the gospel have made fun of my books on loyalty, only to turn around and fall in love with them after they experience betrayal.

Honestly, maturity in ministry goes more by what you have been through than by the number of sermons you have preached.

Enduring hours of prayer is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*.

Matthew 26:39

Praying for hours with no apparent response from Heaven is an experience you must endure if you are to have fruit in the ministry. There is suffering in praying for hours in a room where you can only hear your monotonous voice repeating the same words.

No wonder few people can pray for one hour. If you are not prepared to discipline yourself and stay indoors you will never accomplish the suffering of praying for hours. You must experience what it is like to pray continuously for one hour, three hours, six hours, ten hours and twelve hours.

Praying on your own for hours helps you to accomplish the same sufferings that Jesus accomplished.

Praying on your own for hours helps you to experience the suffering that Christ did in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Enduring sleepless nights is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

Matthew 26:40

There is another kind of suffering that you must endure in order to watch and pray. Staying awake is no easy art. I thought you wanted to be a miracle worker like Jesus Christ and have a worldwide ministry? Jesus prayed through the night that the will of God be done. His disciples slept whilst he endured sleeplessness.

Within a few hours of the suffering of sleeplessness, he had borne fruit and had become the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.

Within a few hours, the disciples who could not stay awake had become betrayers and deserters of God!

Enduring sorrow is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

Matthew 26:38

Sorrow is another kind of suffering that God allowed Jesus Christ to go through. His soul was exceedingly sorrowful!

Are you experiencing sorrow?

Has your loved one died?

Has your family been ripped apart?

Has your world changed overnight with the departure of a dear cherished one?

What Kind of God Are You?

A pastor whose wife had died suddenly in the midst of her years said to me, “I would not wish that experience for my worst enemy.” You see, his wife had been killed in a terrible car accident.

He described how he had just finished fasting for forty days.

“I grew so lean during the fast that my trousers were falling off my waist.”

Right at the end of the fast whilst I was praying for God to move, my wife was killed in a freak accident.

He told me how he looked up into the sky and prayed a prayer he had never prayed before.

He told me, “I looked up, prayed and said: ‘*What kind of God are you?* What kind of God are you? What kind of God are you?”

He knew that his wife could not have died without the divine permission of the Lord.

He was wondering what kind of God would listen to him praying and fasting for forty days and then kill his wife.

But somehow he pulled through this tragedy and was able to continue serving God in the ministry.

But that is not the case for everyone. Some people become bitter and never successfully accomplish the enduring of the suffering of sorrow.

It is important to believe that nothing can happen to you unless God allows it. The devil is not in control of your life; God is.

You must successfully endure the sorrow, the darkness, the pain and the hopelessness that you have fallen into.

You must not become bitter!

You must not threaten to become a Muslim because of your sorrows!

You must not threaten to leave the Lord or the ministry!

Enduring abandonment is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

Then began he to curse and to swear, *saying*, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.

Matthew 26:74

Being abandoned is another kind of suffering. You have to experience it to know what it is like to be abandoned by all and sundry. Jesus Christ was abandoned by His disciples. No one seemed to know Him anymore. Peter angrily rebuked anyone who tried to associate him with Christ.

“I don’t know Him and I don’t want to know Him! He is on his own now. If he insists on dying, it’s up to him!

We tried to advise him but he called us Satan. We tried to save him in the garden but he would have none of it. He actually rebuked us in front of the soldiers. You can’t really help a stubborn person when he wants to have his own way. Every man for himself!

You can’t help a stubborn person if he doesn’t want to be helped.”

When I decided to leave my medical practice and go into ministry, I felt all alone and abandoned by men. People thought I was crazy. My father said I could do what I wanted to. My parents-in-law thought I was crazy. My classmates passed comments, muttering under their breath about me, as they took off one by one, leaving Ghana forever.

Indeed, I felt all alone in the ministry and in life. I knew that God had to save me otherwise I would become the laughing stock of the town. God helped me and He did not abandon me even though men may have abandoned me. Enduring abandonment is an important spiritual

accomplishment. The suffering of the abandoned person is one of the sufferings of Christ.

Enduring the contradictions of sinners against you is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

Hebrews 12:3

One of the most difficult things to endure is the contradiction of sinners. The contradiction of sinners speaks of bad negative and opposite responses that you receive in response to your good deeds.

Perhaps, because some ministers are no longer prepared to suffer the contradiction of sinners, they do not stay in the difficult and demonic marriages they find themselves in.

Pastors are saying to themselves as they get ready to divorce and end the contradiction in their homes, "Why should I suffer at the hands of this witch when I come home? Did I not minister the Word of God with all my heart?"

"Why should I not have food to eat after fasting the whole day and preaching for hours?"

"Why should I not have good exciting sex after I have kept myself pure from all the other women I meet?"

"Why should I stay at home with this contentious, ill-natured and accusative woman when there are so many ladies in the congregation who admire me and believe so much in my ministry?"

Indeed, many ministers of the gospel receive the contradiction of sinners in the privacy of their homes.

But that is exactly what Christ endured. After preaching the most beautiful sermons on love, meekness and joy and after healing their blind, deaf and dumb patients, the masses of Jerusalem overwhelmingly voted to execute him.

Actually, it gets even worse than that. After driving out thieves from the temple, healing madmen and raising the dead, Jesus was put up for elections and his only opponent was an armed robber who was also a hired assassin and a known murderer. Barabbas won the elections overwhelmingly and was pardoned and released from prison whilst Jesus Christ was sent over to be slaughtered for his good works. Jesus asked them, “For which of these good works do you seek to kill me?”

It is time to tell yourself, “I am ready to endure the contradiction of sinners.” It is time to ask yourself, “Why do you want to be happy? Why don’t you rather decide to be like Jesus Christ?”

Tell yourself: “I don’t need to be happy in this life. I just need to be like Jesus Christ and endure the contradictions of sinners successfully.”

Enduring accusations is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing.

Mark 15:3

Jesus was accused of things he never did. He successfully endured false accusations with all their implications. Accusations are some of the strongest pressures that can come on a minister of the gospel. Accusations tend to direct and guide people into error. One day, a minister of the gospel said to me, “I cannot stand it when people talk about me and say bad things about me.”

This pastor had a growing church but had never experienced a certain level of accusations. I assured the pastor that accusations would be part of the things to expect.

One day, whilst visiting a missionary in a foreign country, I remarked to him, “One day, someone will accuse you of stealing money.”

“Me? Stealing money? After all I gave up to come here?”

I assured him that he was on the way of the cross and it was just a matter of time before someone accused him of stealing.

Sometimes, when you are inexperienced, you just can’t believe how certain accusations will be levelled against you.

Enduring hatred is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

Then Pilate said unto them, why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, crucify him.

Mark 15:14

But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, they hated me without a cause.

John 15:25

It is difficult to live with people who hate you. This is one of the reasons why people divorce or separate; because they cannot bear to live in the same place with someone who obviously hates them. Jesus Christ endured the hatred of the Jews. They murdered him because they hated him.

One day, some men accosted me at a golf course. I was absolutely stunned as they railed at me and treated me with open hatred. Although I was entitled to play free of charge because I belonged to a sister club, they ganged up on me and made me pay fees to the club. I had to pay even though no one else in my category was ever made to do any such thing.

They seemed to just dislike my presence at the golf course.

On another occasion, a golf club to which my pastors and I belonged actually changed their rules so that we would not qualify for certain discounts any more. These newly created rules affected *only* ourselves and one or two other players! It was not difficult to feel the hatred and dislike for our presence.

But hatred is something you must endure if you are to be a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is an accomplishment to thrive successfully in spite of hatred all around.

Enduring envy is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.

Mark 15:10

Jesus Christ was crucified because of jealousy. O how jealous we are of each other! The demon of envy fills the hearts of many pastors. We look

enviously across our shoulders, wishing to hear bad news about someone who is doing better than us.

“He will soon fall, he will soon die, he will soon have bad news”, we say to ourselves because we are filled with the spirit of envy.

Do not be disheartened because you sense pretentious behaviour in the people around you.

Living with jealousy is part of our calling. Sometimes, people are nasty to you because they are jealous of you.

Enduring rejection by man is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

John 18:40

Hatred and envy often result in rejection. Before any one is accepted he first of all suffers rejection. Moses was rejected by the Israelites before he was eventually accepted. Jesus Christ was rejected by the Israelites and then accepted as Saviour by the whole world. The suffering of rejection must be experienced by all who want to be accepted.

You will never have great spiritual credentials if you have not been first rejected. You will be accepted after you suffer rejection.

Enduring the disappointing ways of men of authority is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

John 19:12-13

As you get higher in ministry you will relate with kings and other men of authority. The lack of truth and honesty in many of these men of authority

causes great suffering. Jesus Christ suffered because neither Pilate nor Herod would stand up for the principles of truth and verity.

Lying, scheming and political motives guided both Pilate, Herod and the High Priest until they had put to death the Son of the living God. Successfully coexisting and living under such authorities is part of the suffering of Christ.

Jesus Christ was successful in enduring the nonsense and hypocrisy of secular leaders. You will need the grace of God to endure this kind of suffering.

Working under men of authority who are not good leaders can also lead to much suffering. It is difficult to work under someone who is incompetent, lazy and slow. Sometimes, God wants you to suffer hardship under the hand of authority. Jesus Christ suffered under incompetent men of authority. He was never rude to any of them. He never insulted or threatened them. He meekly endured everything as though he was a common criminal.

Can you accomplish the suffering of living and working under incompetent and incapable leadership?

Enduring pain is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

So Pilate, anxious to please the crowd, released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to crucify him."

Mark 15:15 (NLT)

Enduring physical pain is one of the sufferings of Christ. He went through much pain for us. Someone may ask, "What is the use of all these different punishments? What does it accomplish? Indeed, great things are accomplished in the Spirit when you suffer for Jesus Christ. Paul, speaking of the effect of sorrow said:

"For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter."

2 Corinthians 7:11 (NASB)

The suffering of pain and sorrow brings out the fear of God in you. Suffering makes you zealous and causes you to cleanse your soul.

Enduring mockery is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing *their* knees worshipped him.

And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him."

Mark 15:19-20

Suffering the scorn of mockers is one of the sufferings of Christ! Mockery is a terrible thing to endure. But Jesus endured it for all of us. Do not expect to fulfil your ministry without being mocked.

I have been mocked for starting a church. What are they doing? What are they building? It will amount to nothing!

I have been mocked for starting branches. “It will never work,” they said in their hearts.

Men have mocked my preaching! Men have mocked my calling!

Miracle Days Are Here

I once started a TV programme and I called it “Miracle Days are Here”. A fellow minister had a good laugh when he heard of the name of my TV programme.

He said to me personally, “Why did you call your TV programme *Miracle Days Are Here*? Where did miracle days go? Miracle days have been here all along.”

“Ha ha ha! Maybe *you* have not had miracles in your ministry all this time.” There was a lot of mocking laughter from this minister.

“Ha ha ha, He never had miracles in his ministry. Miracle days have been here all along.”

“Ha ha ha.. He thinks miracles have just begun to happen. But they’ve been here all along. We’ve been having miracles for years.”

“Ha ha ha... You are a teacher and an administrator with no power for real ministry. Miracle days have always been here!”

I tell you, I felt silly about my TV programme.

Men have mocked at my branch churches. “You have only two or three people and you call it a church? They are not churches; they are cells,” they laughed.

People mocked at my books calling them nonsense. People mocked at my teachings calling them unnecessary.

But there is no need to be bitter against these people. God is using them to accomplish His will in your life. It is part of your destiny to be mocked at and also ridiculed. You are supposed to endure it as part of your great

accomplishments in the ministry. Suffering the scorn of mockers is one of the sufferings of Christ!

Enduring the psychological torment of impending death is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Hebrews 2:9

The knowledge that you are going to die is one of the most disturbing and psychologically unsettling thoughts. We all know that we will die one day. But to have knowledge of its certainty and to be given a time to expect it is indeed one of the most difficult types of suffering a person can be given.

No one knows what Jesus Christ went through as He walked towards Jerusalem. He said, “I have a terrible baptism of suffering ahead of me, and I am under a heavy burden until it is accomplished” (Luke 12:50).

Sometimes God allows people to die slowly and become conscious of their end so that they become humble and open to Him. Sometimes a slow death is His grace at work so that we don’t suffer loss in the final judgment.

In the book, *The Final Quest*, Rick Joyner makes reference to ministers who had been given slow deaths as a form of grace to humble them and bring them to repentance before they died. Impending death may be the kind of suffering you are called upon to endure. Jesus Christ experienced this for us.

Enduring weakness is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.

Matthew 27:32

Being seemingly weak is one of the sufferings of Christ. One day, our church suffered attacks from elements in the community. We became the laughing stock of churches that felt we were sissies, unable to stand up for our rights and unable to defend ourselves.

A pastor visited us asking whether we had been prayerful. He could not see how such things could happen to us if we were spiritually powerful.

He then told me of a pastor who had decreed that anyone who attacked them would pay with their lives.

That pastor had declared boldly, “One block for one life.”

This statement had been enough to stop all aggression against the church. I listened carefully to these exhortations.

But I only felt weaker and more inadequate. I had not been able to declare “one block for one life.” Many of my blocks had been broken and taken away and none of our enemies had died. Actually, our enemies were getting stronger, healthier and fatter. I felt I was a weak and helpless pastor.

But weakness is a part of the suffering God intends for you. Jesus Christ was weak as he carried the cross. That is why Simon of Cyrene was called to help Christ.

All is not lost because you seem weak and helpless. Jesus Christ was weak and helpless at the cross. It is one of the sufferings of Christ and it may be one of the sufferings you may have to accomplish.

Enduring helplessness is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

Matthew 27:42

We love to exercise authority and show ourselves capable of solving every problem. There is a place, however, where you are unable to do anything about anything anymore. It is the place of helplessness. You may have been used to save many situations, but there are situations that you can do nothing about.

One night, in the midst of a season of helplessness, I drove around my city playing mournful music. At my side was a widow whose husband had just died. I was trying to talk to her and encourage her. Within me was a strong desire to bring back her husband and hand him back to her. I felt uselessly helpless as I rambled on, quoting Scriptures and telling her stories about how her husband would be enjoying the glories of Heaven at that time.

Time and time again I wanted to do something practical that would change everything for her. But I had no ability to change anything.

I was simply helpless and incapable of changing what had happened.

God has appointed a place of helplessness so that we would experience what it is like to be unable to change anything. It is a place you must descend to and rise from again. The place of helplessness!

You must survive it! Suffering helplessness is one of the sufferings of Christ. May you be strong in the day of your helplessness.

Enduring insults is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ha! You who *are going to* destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!"

In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes, were mocking *Him* among themselves and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself.

Let *this* Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!" And those who were crucified with Him were casting the same insult at Him.

Mark 15:29-32, (NASB)

Enduring insults is one of the things Jesus Christ suffered for us. Get ready to suffer the same things if you want to follow Him. Have you been insulted for what you believed?

It is an accomplishment to receive insults on behalf of Christ. One day, a young man lifted his hand and hurled insults at me. For several minutes he lifted his hand and gave me a good dressing down. I gave glory to God that I had experienced insults and abuse for Christ's sake.

On another occasion someone insulted me for about thirty minutes. That night, I received a good dose of insults, abuses and curses.

I was simply amazed as this Christian friend insulted me for the stance I had taken for the Lord.

You may be counting the countries you have preached in. As you become more mature, you will also count the number of times you have been insulted for the sake of Christ. Enduring insults is one of the accomplishments you must achieve.

Enduring shame is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:2

The shame of the cross is part of the sufferings of Christ. God may allow you to go through shame as part of the accomplishments he desires from you. Despising shame is an art you must learn. Accepting shame is one of the sufferings you may have to experience in order to fulfil your ministry.

Are you ashamed of the gospel?

Are you ashamed of Christ?

Are you ashamed of praying in tongues? Do you feel silly when you pray in tongues?

Are you ashamed of the ministry? Do you think it is too small?

Are you ashamed of your church?

Are you ashamed of your circumstances?

Are you embarrassed by the work God has given you?

Do not forget: enduring shame and embarrassment is one of the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

Becoming vulnerable is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted *thereof*, he would not drink.

Matthew 27:34

Becoming vulnerable is one of the sufferings of Christ. Many people do not enter the ministry because they don't want to be vulnerable. They don't want their lives to depend on tithes and free-will offerings.

Being in the ministry opens you up to people who can hurt you. People you love can turn against you and hurt you. In the ministry, you become, vulnerable because you expose yourself to people you would never have met.

When you preach, people get to know all about you, whilst you know little about them. Good preaching always makes you vulnerable because you share details of your life from the pulpit.

Jesus Christ became vulnerable to the Jews, the Romans and the wicked human race. He did it because he loved us. He came from Heaven to earth and exposed himself for our sakes. Becoming vulnerable is part of the call to sacrifice. Becoming vulnerable is one of the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

Enduring degradation is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

Matthew 27:38

Degradation is one of the sufferings of Christ. Jesus Christ endured the suffering of being degraded. Jesus Christ was reduced to a mere thief. His associations with thieves made everyone think that Jesus Christ was also a thief.

To do the will of God you will have to accept a lowering of people's impression or estimation of who you are. If you are very concerned about what people think, you will constantly reject the suffering of Christ.

I was trained as a medical doctor. I had great respect for being a part of this noble profession. Becoming a pastor made me lose the honour of that noble profession. I had joined a group that had a very questionable reputation in the community. I was now a pastor and many people think of pastors as thieves who start churches just to take people's money.

One day, I attended a big funeral in my city. Whilst I was parking my car, some bystanders began to have a discussion about me.

One of them said to his friend "I think I will also start a church."

Why is that? His friend asked.

"So that I can also have a car like the one he is driving."

He continued, "Church business is very lucrative. If I become a pastor I will also have a car like this."

I was amazed at the thought patterns of the gossiping bystanders. Obviously, they were clueless about what it really involved to be a pastor or to have a church.

Suffering degradation is part of the sufferings of Christ. I would not have had people making such comments about me if I was a well-known heart surgeon in my city. But you cannot maintain your high society airs if you really want to follow Jesus Christ.

Enduring cheating and robbery is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also *his* coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

John 19:23

Being cheated is one of the sufferings of Christ. Enduring injustice, robbery and mistreatment is one of the sufferings Jesus experienced for our sake. Jesus Christ endured the suffering of being cheated and robbed. To be cheated and robbed is a type of suffering a Christian must

go through. It is part of the sufferings of Christ. You will not amount to much in the ministry if you are not prepared to be cheated or robbed.

An attitude of standing up for your rights will constantly keep you away from true fruitfulness. An attitude of not wanting to be cheated will prevent you from ever being useful in the ministry.

Enduring painful separation is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own *home*.

John 19:26-27

Through death, Jesus Christ was separated from His mother and from the people He loved. Separation from loved ones tears the heart apart. It is painful to send away people you love. Missionaries are not sent out because churches don't want to be separated from the nice people they know.

Without the pain of separation many new fruits never come into existence.

There are many ministries that are barren because they do not want to go through the pain of separation in order to bear fruits. Do not resist the suffering of separation. Through this kind of suffering you will accomplish the will of God.

Enduring desolation and loneliness is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? Which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Mark 15:34

The suffering of loneliness is one of the sufferings of Christ. People leave the call of God because they are lonely. I have known single people to

abandon their ministry and exchange it for a marriage because they can't take being alone anymore. Indeed, loneliness is a form of suffering.

Jesus was lonely on the cross. He looked across to see if His friends, the disciples, were also on crosses beside Him. But His disciples had run away and were nowhere to be found. They were having lunch in their various homes whilst He lay dying on the cross.

When Jesus looked to His right and to His left, he saw thieves. When He looked down, He saw wicked Roman soldiers casting lots for His clothes.

He was not used to this company. He was used to His disciples, His mother, Mary Magdalene and others.

The crucifixion had isolated him and separated him from everything and everyone he knew. Your call has a way of separating you and giving you a lonely existence in this world.

There are often very few people who understand what you are doing. Do not complain because you are lonely. It is part of the call of God on your life. The suffering of loneliness is one of the sufferings of Christ.

Enduring the moment of death is an accomplishment of the sufferings of Christ.

And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

Mark 15:37

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Philippians 2:8

The moment of death comes with pain. Sometimes the pain is short-lived and sometimes it lasts longer. Whether you die by the electric chair, by hanging or by lethal injection, the moment of death is a frightening one.

Many people have endured this moment because of their beliefs in Jesus Christ. They held on to their faith and allowed their lives to pass away because of their faith. It is an accomplishment that is rewarded greatly by the Lord. You will not die for him in vain.

A Foolish Death?

I once had a soldier friend who travelled all over the world on military duties. He told me how peacekeeping soldiers in some West African countries had begun to do business – operating taxis and trading in diamonds. He told me that these soldiers were not keen on getting caught in the crossfire that raged between the two warring factions.

“I thought they were professional soldiers,” I told him.

“Yes, they are but they don’t want to die a foolish death,” he answered.

“What is a foolish death,” I asked.

“A foolish death is death for a foolish cause!”

I mused over the phrase “a foolish death”.

I had also heard someone say, “All die be die!”. This statement meant that all deaths are the same. Death is death, in other words!

But there is such a thing as a foolish death. Therefore all deaths are not the same.

Dying because of your faith in Jesus Christ is not a foolish death. It is an honourable death with many great rewards. You will be rewarded for the suffering you experienced at the moment of death.

Section 3: Sacrificing

Chapter 7

How Sacrifice Releases Power

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the POWER OF GOD.

1 Corinthians 1:18

Every sacrifice releases some power! The preaching of the cross is the preaching of sacrifice. It is also the preaching of power. As Christians, we should preach boldly about the cross and what it means.

The Bible tells us in the verse we read, that the preaching of Christ is foolishness to those that are perishing but unto us, it is the power of God.

Every Sacrifice releases spiritual power! This explains why many demonic rituals involve some kind of sacrifice. Various animals and sometimes human beings are sacrificed in rituals, to release power.

Occultists make sacrifices. People seeking spiritual power are always asked to sacrifice something.

The king of Moab sacrificed his son when he saw that he was losing a battle with the Israelites:

And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not. THEN HE TOOK HIS ELDEST SON THAT SHOULD HAVE REIGNED IN HIS STEAD, AND OFFERED HIM FOR A BURNT OFFERING UPON THE WALL. And there was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land.

2 Kings 3:26-27

This sacrifice turned away the approaching armies. Power was released by sacrificing the king's son. This saved the king's life and the lives of his people. Sacrifice will always release power. Learn this principle - *sacrifice will always release power*.

The Israelites made God angry because they sacrificed their children to idols for power:

Yea, THEY SACRIFICED THEIR SONS AND THEIR DAUGHTERS UNTO DEVILS, And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.

Psalm 106:37-38

Many pastors and leaders of churches are powerless because they make no sacrifices for the Lord and have no intention to do so.

Some years ago, the Church in Switzerland was very powerful. They sent missionaries to Ghana, even though they could not speak Ghanaian languages. One of these missionaries called Johann Riis translated the Bible into Twi, one of the most widely spoken dialects in Ghana. He also translated 6000 Twi proverbs into English.

Today, there are still Swiss people who speak fluent Twi. They are descendants of the original missionaries.

If I were to send people to certain places for missionary work, there would be an outcry. That is why there is no power in our ministries. There is power only when there is sacrifice!

A lot of power is released, for instance, when you fast. This is because a sacrifice is made when you fast. Fasting is sacrificing your meals. When people give up something for the ministry, power is released.

The early church was so powerful. The more they were martyred, the stronger they became. However, when the Church was accepted officially in Rome, it lost its power. This acceptance removed the need for sacrifice and therefore weakened the Church.

The power of the Church is often increased where there is opposition and much need of sacrifice.

Three Types of Power Released through Sacrifice

a. The power to make people follow you

There is an aura around anyone who makes great sacrifices. He is respected and held in high esteem by people around him. People see this person doing things that *they* fear to touch. This inspires confidence and stirs up followers to do the same.

Let’s face it: How many of the democratically elected politicians are prepared to die for what they believe? Some of them do not even believe in their own speeches. They read speeches that are written for them and make promises that are not true. I sometimes marvel at how unreal some of these people are. They rarely speak extemporaneously. Tell me, am I lying?

b. The power to convince people

Have you ever wondered why some people are so unconvincing? No one wants to hear what they have to say. Have you asked yourself why some pastors have very few members (followers)? Many politicians claim to love their countries. They talk about their concern for their countries at political rallies and news conferences. Unfortunately, many people do not believe them.

Think about Jesus. He never wrote a book and never published an article. He never campaigned for votes or support. In fact, He constantly told people not to publicize the good things He had done for them.

He never travelled more than two hundred miles from His hometown. He never preached on TV or on radio. He did not build any institutions to His memory! His picture was never on a billboard and He never owned a car.

Yet, the whole world has gone after Him. Two thousand years have gone by and millions still believe in Him. Thousands are converted to Him daily and there are volunteers who are ready to die for Him today.

What is the reason for the long-lasting effect of His ministry? The answer is simple. The sacrifice! The sacrifice of His life on the cross was the most significant spiritual thing that Jesus did on earth. He preached, He taught and healed the sick. However, the eternal fruit was borne when He gave up His life on the cross.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus did not stay around longer than 33 years? When He was threatened why didn't He travel to Morocco, Algeria, Macedonia or Egypt? Why didn't He preach for a few more years? Were there no more good works that He could do on earth?

What we need to learn here, is that obedience and sacrifice will bear more eternal fruit than any other good works we do. This one sacrifice for humankind has released so much power into the earth.

This is why millions from all nations believe and follow Him. This is why Jesus focused on sacrificing Himself on the cross. The sacrifice on the cross was the key that would release the power of salvation. No amount of preaching or teaching could replace what would be accomplished on the cross.

c. The power to make people committed

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

Philippians 3:7-8

Many great men and women have left all to follow Jesus. Kathryn Kuhlman had to leave her husband. Not many women would be prepared to leave their husbands.

In one of Kathryn Khulman's biographies, the author talks about how he had asked Kathryn about her marriage. He said they were alone in a room together when he asked about this chapter of her life. In a rare moment, she began to speak about her former husband and what it had cost her to leave him.

Suddenly, the power of God entered the office. The writer described how he could hardly stand. He said the presence of God came into the room so powerfully that he had to leave. *A sacrifice always releases power*. Sometimes even talking about the sacrifice releases the power.

I once had an uncanny experience when the holy presence of God walked into my office. I was in conversation with two other pastors when the anointing walked into the room. The three of us suddenly knew that someone had walked in.

Everyone there could feel that He was standing by us. These things are real. I had never had an experience like that.

We have so much knowledge and so little sacrifice. There is power ready to break forth in our lives the moment we make the sacrifice. You will be surprised at how many people will become committed to your cause when you make the sacrifice.

Do People Take You Seriously?

I once asked some pastors, "You preach the same messages that I do, don't you?" Then I asked them, "Is the impact of your message felt?" They stared at me silently.

I continued, "Because you have not given up anything for what you believe, people do not take you seriously. You may say the same things that I do but if you do not pay the price, you will never make the impact you need to."

Many preachers are not taken seriously. Many of their statements are ignored. But everything changes when someone pays the price. Every situation changes in the moment that blood is shed.

There was a time when our church was attacked. The people in the community were hostile to us. My young men wanted to fight back and kill the invaders. They wanted us to arm ourselves and launch counter-attacks. But I knew that if someone was killed in the confrontation, the intensity and seriousness of the conflict would change forever. We did not want to shed blood. This is the reason why we did not fight back when our church was attacked. Macbeth said, “Blood will have blood!” Jesus said, “He that comes by the sword will go by the sword.”

You see, the gravity of every situation changes as soon as a sacrifice of someone’s life is made. Where there is no sacrifice, there will be no power. You may have many doctrines and ideas, but without sacrifice you will have no power in your ministry.

You should come to the Lord and ask Him if there is anything He wants from you. You must give yourself as a living sacrifice to Him. There can be no power without a sacrifice. Sacrifices release the power of God in your life.

When there is sacrifice, there is power. This is why suicide bombers are making such an impact in the world today. You would think that these terrorist acts would drive people away from their religion. On the contrary, it stirs up more commitment. Sacrifice attracts more followers.

God told me that He called me to start churches. He has asked me to send people to the corners of the world to start churches. The Lord told me that there are several people who will respond to this call. He told me not to worry about people’s lives but to sacrifice my best sons and daughters on the harvest fields. I tell you, many have responded and are doing great things for the Lord.

God is going to make you sacrifice. He may change your life and change everything about you. He is going to ask you to give up certain things, and as you do, you are going to see His power. When you speak, your words will be taken seriously because of the sacrifices you’ve made.

Chapter 8

The Enemies of Sacrifice

Since sacrifice releases so much power, the enemies of God have historically fought against the concept of sacrifice. When you make a

sacrifice to the Lord, it often looks as though you are doing something stupid. You go down in pain but you come up in victory.

Not surprisingly, the devil has succeeded in keeping believers as far from sacrificing as possible. The Anti-Christ, Pharaoh and Satan himself, all get involved to prevent you from having any such ideas. It is time for Christians to know that power lies just beyond the cross.

The Three Enemies of Sacrifice

And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them.

Daniel 8:9-10

The Prophet Daniel prophesied about a little horn, which rose to defile the temple. This refers to the reign of Antiochus Epiphanies. He made himself an enemy of the Jews. He profaned the temple, entered the sanctuary, and took away the golden altar. He stopped the daily sacrifice and set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar (an idol), and called Solomon's temple the temple of Jupiter Olympius. This man, a type of Anti-Christ, did not want God's people to sacrifice to their God.

1. The Antichrist is the first enemy of sacrifice.

And an host was given him AGAINST THE DAILY SACRIFICE by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced, and prospered.

Daniel 8:12

And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, AND SHALL TAKE AWAY THE DAILY SACRIFICE, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.

Daniel 11:31

Notice right here that, one of the things the Anti-Christ will do is to stop the daily sacrifice. He will stop people from sacrificing to God. Get this

clear! The enemies of God are against you obeying God and laying down your life for Him.

The Anti-Christ will prevail by peace. He will be cast in the mould of Hitler but will be even wiser. He will prosper not by war but by peace. He will win and succeed. He will come in the name of peace; talk about peace, and everybody will think that he is God. But the most significant thing he will do is to stop people from sacrificing to God.

And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and BY PEACE shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.

Daniel 8:24-25

When the spirit of Anti-Christ is at work, it stops you from sacrificing to God.

Anti-Christ is anti-God and anti-God is anti-sacrifice! One of the devil's goals is to stop you from sacrificing to God! The Anti-Christ spirit is against you going to church, giving your money, your time and your life to the work of God. That voice in your life is the voice of the Anti-Christ. The Bible says that the Anti-Christ will come and stop the people from sacrificing to God.

I want you to know that when God is calling on you to give up something or to do something for Him, *the spirit of the Anti-Christ* will tell you not to do it.

Desolation in Ministry

Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the TRANSGRESSION OF DESOLATION, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?

Daniel 8:13

The taking away of the sacrifice is described as the sin of desolation. Desolation means: *destitute, barren, empty, forgotten, dark, rejected and dejected*. The sin of desolation is what comes when sacrifice is taken away from the church.

We cannot build more churches if people are not prepared to sacrifice. People have made sacrifices for us to be Christians today. They made it possible for us to know the Lord. *Where there are no sacrificial people, the church is desolate.*

Our church looked very odd when we sent out missionaries to Africa. It looked as though we were destroying the lives of young promising couples. Parents fought against it with all their might. Yet, these same parents would not mind if the United Nations gave their children a job in a war zone.

Struggling in the Sun

One day, I was praying in the presence of God. I was also expecting an important phone call so I had my phone on. (I usually do not have my phone on when I am praying). Then the phone rang. It was one of my lay pastors.

Immediately after speaking to him, I had a vision. I saw the same person walking in a hot desert. He was sweating profusely and struggling in the heat of the shining sun. I knew immediately that he was distressed by his secular job. The Lord showed me that this lay pastor was not where he was supposed to be. So I called him and told him, “Pastor, you are in the wrong place. It is time to give it all up for Jesus. You are called to serve in the house of the Lord. You are a priest.”

He responded, “Bishop, it’s true, I struggle everyday at work. I know I am lost. I’m coming.” That was the end of his secular career. Today he is fruitful in full-time ministry.

It was not easy for me to talk to this lay pastor. I felt very intimidated because he had a good job that was giving him a lot of money. Both Satan and the Anti-Christ were against my talking to this young man about full-time ministry.

Your life will be desolate when you hold back the sacrifice that you must make for God!

May desolation and barrenness be removed from your church and ministry!

2. Judas Iscariot is the second enemy of sacrifice.

Remember that it was no other person than Judas Iscariot who criticized the woman with the alabaster box. This woman poured out her expensive perfume on Jesus. It was the most valuable thing she had. Women spend hours doing their hair. They know what their hair means to them. A woman's hair symbolizes her beauty. Mary sacrificed her beauty and her valuable things for Jesus.

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, JUDAS ISCARIOT, Simon's son, which should betray him, WHY WAS NOT THIS OINTMENT SOLD FOR THREE HUNDRED PENCE, AND GIVEN TO THE POOR?

John 12:3-5

It is true that this woman had been living in sin. However, she gave what was most precious to her - her hair, her perfume, her tears to Jesus. But Judas Iscariot, the honourable treasurer of the team (your treasurer is usually the most trusted person in the organization) didn't like it. Even though it wasn't *his* alabaster box, *his* life or *his* hair that were being sacrificed, he was against it.

The appearances of people who are Anti-Christ or anti-sacrifice, can be very deceptive. The *anti-sacrifice, anti-give-up-everything, anti-do-a-lot, anti-give-a-lot* spirit is the spirit of the Anti-Christ. These people often present themselves as being very decent, very logical, very organized, and dignified. *But it is still the spirit of the Anti-Christ.*

3. Satan is the third enemy of sacrifice.

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and SUFFER MANY THINGS of the elders and chief priests and scribes, AND BE KILLED, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. 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 16:21-23

When Jesus explained that He had to die on the cross, one of His pastors, Pastor Peter, took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him.

“Be it far from you.” Pastor Peter said.

“Never! As long as we are here, it will not happen.”

Jesus turned and addressed the person who was against His sacrifice and said, “Get thee behind me *Satan*.” Jesus spoke directly to Satan, as the person who was preventing His sacrifice.

We can all understand Peter’s love for Jesus. In the natural, the people who love you will often oppose your decision to take up your cross.

Peter did not know that the devil was using him. Our Lord Jesus exposed the devil for who he really was. We all know the story of how Peter rebuked Jesus for suggesting that He would die on the cross. Peter did this in the name of love, care, and concern for his Lord. What he did not know was that, this *love and concern* was actually the voice of Satan trying to prevent Jesus from sacrificing Himself.

I qualified as a medical doctor on the 10th of March, 1989. After working for a year, I decided to go into full-time ministry. Many caring relatives were against this idea. My father-in-law was so concerned that he offered to help me get a posting to another medical department. He felt I had lost interest in medicine because I had been posted to the Pathology (dead people’s) Department. My dear mother-in-law also was deeply concerned about my situation. She constantly spoke about it.

One day, I said to her, “Please-Teacher (she was a teacher, so all her children called her ‘Please-Teacher’), please do not talk about this anymore. I have decided to go this way and God will keep me.” From that time onwards, she never spoke about my decision to quit practising medicine.

You see, they were concerned about my welfare. Wouldn’t you be concerned if your daughter was married to some wild young man who did not want to work anymore? Of course, you would be concerned! My

mother-in- law loved me just like Peter loved Jesus. In the natural, this is a sign of great concern.

However, in the spirit, it is opposition to the sacrifice. The enemy knew that if I sacrificed this treasured and noble profession, power would be released for ministry. I was about to take up my cross and follow Jesus.

To take up your cross does not mean to build a wooden cross and walk up to Mount Calvary. It means following the example of Christ Jesus. It means sacrificing your life for Jesus. And truly, much power for ministry has been released since I took that step.

Ministry is far more honourable than medicine. In comparison to Christ, everything else is dung.

Jesus came into the world to save sinners. In the famous temptation of Christ in the wilderness, Satan showed Jesus the kingdoms of the world.

He said, “I’ve got a plan. I know your goal is to save the whole world. I have a plan that will avoid pain. This plan will give the same results. There will be no anguish, no torment, and no forfeiting of anything.” Satan continued, “Just bow down and worship me and all these kingdoms will be yours.”

But Jesus knew better. He said, “The sacrifice must come on! I have to suffer. I have to die! I have to pay the price!” Jesus was not fooled by Satan’s easy plan.

Please do not be fooled by Satan’s trouble-free plan. There are no shortcuts or easy-jets to the will of God.

Sometimes as pastors, we are nervy when we call on people to make sacrifices. That is the devil at work! I have learnt not to back down. I have learnt to boldly lead people into sacrificing for the Gospel.

Chapter 9

The Substitute for Sacrifice

And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, AND THEY SHALL PLACE THE ABOMINATION THAT MAKETH DESOLATE.

Daniel 11:31

History shows us that there were people who opposed the offering of sacrifices to God. Not only were they against God's sacrifice but they had a substitute. In place of sacrificing to God, the Anti-Christ will put an "abomination that maketh desolate".

This has happened before. Antiochus made the Jews sacrifice pigs in the temple. These pigs were the substitutes for the real sacrifice.

King Antiochus built an idol altar upon God's altar and slew swine upon it. He offered sacrifices which were not according to the law or to Jewish religious practices. Antiochus compelled the Jews to forsake the real worship and sacrifice pigs everyday.

This incorrigible behaviour of King Antiochus shows us how people substitute the real sacrifice with other things. Everybody *is* sacrificing something. Everybody *will* sacrifice something. But the question is what will be sacrificed, and to whom will this sacrifice be made?

The Israelites were constantly worshipping images and sacrificing to idols. They sacrificed their sons and daughters to other gods and made them pass through fire.

But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, AND MADE HIS SON TO PASS THROUGH THE FIRE, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel.

2 Kings 16:3

YEA, THEY SACRIFICED THEIR SONS AND THEIR DAUGHTERS UNTO DEVILS, And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.

Psalm 106:37-38

Today, people are not prepared for their sons and daughters to be in ministry. But these same people would love their children to work in risky environments for money.

In 1 Corinthians 10:20, the Bible declares that the sacrifices the unbelievers make are made to devils.

But I say, that the things WHICH THE GENTILES SACRIFICE, THEY SACRIFICE TO DEVILS, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

1 Corinthians 10:20

Amon was two and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem. But he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as did Manasseh his father: FOR AMON SACRIFICED UNTO ALL THE CARVED IMAGES which Manasseh his father had made, and served them; And humbled not himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more. And his servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house.

***2* Chronicles 33:21-24**

Do not deceive yourself. Sacrifices are made all the time. If you do not do it for one cause, you will do it for another. Sacrifices are made constantly. The Gentiles do make sacrifices but to the devil.

The Sacrifice of Doctors

Medical doctors sacrifice very much for their profession. Medical school lasts seven years and postgraduate medical school lasts another five years.

I recently asked a doctor about how many years he had studied medicine. Amazingly, he had been in medical school for more than twenty years. Is it not amazing! If someone had said he was going to sacrifice two years of his life in a theological school, people would say that he was wasting his time.

If you are in university for twenty years, it means you have a student's income for that long. No one seems to mind a low income for twenty years for the sake of medicine. But a low income for the sake of ministry is not acceptable to most people. Many people would not like to work in a church because they fear they would have a low income.

Near Death Experiences for Christ

I risked my life for medicine, now I risk my life for Christ. I used to sacrifice my "pig in the temple" but now I sacrifice my life to the Lord. My

life has been at risk because of the ministry. There was a time my life was threatened for the ministry. I almost died in a car wreck while on a missionary journey to the north of Ghana. A pastor even said to me, “I wonder why you bother to start churches in such places.” I have almost died in near plane crashes. More than once, I almost died while fasting. It may seem I am involved in a very high risk job.

But what about the risks that doctors take all the time? I remember one night; I was working in the accident centre of Korle Bu Teaching Hospital in Accra, Ghana. I was suturing an accident victim when the needle slipped and accidentally pierced my gloves and finger. My patient’s blood and my blood were well and truly mixed together that night. I tell you, I heard the voice of God clearly, “You can die of HIV in disobedience, as you continue to do your own thing.”

Doctors are at risk all the time. I know doctors who have contracted the Hepatitis B virus from their work. I could go on to tell you many more risks that doctors take. But no one seems to mind if they die for the cause of medicine. There is a deep disrespect for God and the ministry. It is not seen as something worth dying for.

Dear friend, I would rather die on the mission field serving Jesus than die in the hospital looking after patients.

But I say, THAT THE THINGS WHICH THE GENTILES SACRIFICE, THEY SACRIFICE TO DEVILS…

I Corinthians 10:20

Seven Sacrifices of Unbelievers

1. The Sacrifice of Immigrants

Many people travel to distant lands and live as second-class citizens in foreign countries. This sacrifice is okay as long as the purpose is to get money. If this were to be done for the sake of missionary work, eyebrows would be raised.

It seems to be acceptable to many. But not for the ministry! I know people who walked across the Sahara Desert to get to Switzerland.

One man told us, “There were three of us who walked through the Sahara Desert. Two of us died and I survived.” Is it not amazing that

people, who can walk across the Sahara Desert, cannot come to church?

The Stowaway

Once, in Amsterdam, I was counselling a brother to come to church.

He told me, “I tried four times to come to Europe from Ghana. Four times I stowed away on a ship. Once the captain threw us overboard into shark-infested waters and we swam to the shore.”

He said, “When I got to the shore, I found out that I was in Liberia. I went back to Ghana and stowed away again. I did this four times until I finally succeeded in coming to Holland.”

He smiled proudly and declared, “I am a Dutch citizen today.”

Then I asked, “Why don’t you come to church regularly?”

He laughed and mumbled some lame excuse about his work. Surprisingly, this man would not make any effort to be in church but he was prepared to die to be in Holland. This young man risked his life four times to become a Dutch citizen but he wouldn’t bother to become a citizen of Heaven.

But I say, THAT THE THINGS WHICH THE GENTILES SACRIFICE, THEY SACRIFICE TO DEVILS…

1 Corinthians 10:20

I know of people who have sacrificed their lives in a bid to live in Europe. I know of people who hid inside petrol tankers for a drive across the Sahara desert. Many of them died from the intolerable heat within the petrol tanker. Oh what sacrifices people make for the things they want. Yet people are prepared to do nothing for Jesus.

2. The Sacrifice of Pilots

Pilots and other airline crew make great sacrifices for money. In this era of terrorism it is amazing that these people continue to do the work they do. They come up with all kinds of statistics to show that flying is safe.

No one can discount the fear that exists today in airline travel. Nevertheless, there are wives who happily see their pilot-husbands off to the plane and don’t think twice about it. These same wives would not allow their husbands to work in the ministry.

What you must see is that the sacrifice to God has been replaced by a “pig in the temple”. When you are going on a journey for the Kingdom, you will be asked, “Do you have to go, is it necessary?” Yet, this same sacrifice is done regularly and effortlessly by thousands in the airline industry.

But I say, THAT THE THINGS WHICH THE GENTILES SACRIFICE, THEY SACRIFICE TO DEVILS…

1 Corinthians 10:20

3. The Sacrifice of Bankers and Accountants

These people spend many hours at work. Some of them come home after nine p.m. every night. They hardly see their families*. But this is okay if it is for the bank*.

One day, one of my pastors had his mother-in-law visiting. She began to complain about the time that he came home. He reacted, “Mummy, please don’t complain about my work. It is because I am in the ministry that you even speak this way.”

He reminded his mother-in-law, “What about your son who works at the bank? You know he comes home much later than I do. Yet, you have no complaints about that because you think his work is important enough for him to stay that long.”

Unfortunately, the ministry is seen as a second-rate job not worth sacrificing for. “Sacrifice to the devil but don’t sacrifice to God!” This is the unspoken message of our friends and relatives.

But I say, THAT THE THINGS WHICH THE GENTILES SACRIFICE, THEY SACRIFICE TO DEVILS…

I Corinthians 10:20

4. The Sacrifice of Businessmen

Businessmen risk their lives all the time for the sake of money. They travel up and down constantly trying to make deals. Many businessmen come under such pressure and strain that they develop high blood pressure, ulcers and other stress-related diseases. That is the price they pay for acquiring great wealth.

Many businessmen lose their families in the quest for more money. They are hardly at home with their children. They take on the risk of travel and endorse it all in the name of money.

Do you think top executives do not risk their lives? They do, and sometimes pay a high price for it. People are sacrificing all the time. They will sacrifice their God, their church and their families. They will do anything for more money.

They will change their lives, they will live anywhere, and they will travel to obscure places and make all kinds of sacrifices in order to make some more money or achieve their life's goals.

When ministers of the Gospel give themselves to the ministry it is always seen as unnecessary. What is more fleeting than the making of money and the building of houses on this earth?

We in the ministry have given ourselves to the highest and most worthy calling.

Take a country like Angola. They have had a civil war for more than twenty years. Yet, you will find the British, Americans, and Europeans living there and drilling oil!

In the midst of the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a Congolese diamond mine was listed on the London Stock Exchange. This means that active business was being conducted in the midst of war. It's amazing what people will do even in the midst of war!

All kinds of British, Dutch and American people are prepared to go to these war-torn African countries and risk their lives if it is for money. They are prepared to go where there is fighting and danger. They are prepared to die for oil, for gold and for diamonds.

Nigeria, well known for its dangerous cities and high crime rate is home to many white people who will sacrifice anything for money. In search of more money, British Airways flies to Nigeria several times a week.

Yet, were I to ask someone to start a church in certain African countries, the person's family would develop hysteria. There would be all kinds of reasons making me out to be an unreasonable and heartless leader.

This is the point: People are sacrificing, but they are sacrificing to the devil! The sacrifices are being made, but they are being made to the

devil. The legitimate sacrifice to God has been replaced by the sacrifice of a pig in the temple.

5. The Sacrifice for the Dead

Many can give much more for the work of God but they won't. This money would rather be spent on a house, a car or even a funeral.

People attend funerals every weekend in different towns and villages but they can't come to church.

I know of someone who spent thousands of pounds to buy a shroud. It is not common to see people giving a thousand pounds offering, but people will give it for the dead.

6. The Sacrifice of Journalists

Reporters and journalists make sacrifices all the time and risk their lives in war zones. Many journalists were killed when America invaded Iraq.

I watched a beautiful one-eyed lady on TV. One eye was covered with a black patch. She was a journalist who had lost her eye while covering a conflict for one of the news networks. As I stared at this one-eyed woman, I marvelled at what people are prepared to do for their jobs. These journalists are honoured for their bravery in covering wars.

Men will honour scientists, doctors, beauty queens, boxers and athletes but they will not honour preachers. God has however promised that when we set our love on Him, He will honour us. I am looking for the honour of God.

Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, AND HONOR HIM.

Psalm 91:14-15

Seek the honour of God and not the honour of men!

7. The sacrifice of medical doctors

There are many doctors who give up their lives in the line of duty. I know of institutions that are named after doctors because they died while experimenting on cures for dangerous viruses.

Do not tell me that doctors do not sacrifice. In 1928 Noguchi, a Japanese bacteriologist, travelled to Africa to confirm his theories about yellow fever. The purpose of this field work was to test the hypothesis that yellow fever was caused by spirochaete bacteria instead of a virus.

While working in Accra, Gold Coast, he died of this same yellow fever on May 21st 1928. His last words were, “I don’t understand.”

Today, the Noguchi Institute in Accra is named after this Japanese bacteriologist who gave his life for his research.

Indeed, everyone is sacrificing something for what he believes!

Chapter 10

Sacrifice is the Key to Fruitfulness

And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat FALL into the ground and DIE, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much FRUIT.

John 12:23-24

This is the missing ingredient. This master key will take the average Christian from barrenness to fruitfulness. Sacrifice is the key that will transform a reverend minister from an official with a title to a truly fruitful minister.

A Readiness to Die

The missing ingredient in some good churches is this—a readiness to die. Many of our churches are going to be small until we have people ready to sacrifice. There comes a time when what is needed is sacrifice. Many Christians can do more but they don’t. It’s because they don’t want to sacrifice or give up anything.

Not a Lack of Knowledge

Many people do not lack information or knowledge. They know a lot! If you have read my books, you will know a lot of what I know. However, knowledge is not enough! You may not have the fruits that I have even if you have the knowledge that I have. For you to have what I have, you

must pay the price. There is a price for everyone to pay. The price of glory is the same for everyone!

This Scripture says that unless a corn of wheat disappears into the ground and dies, it will be alone.

The “corn of wheat” symbolizes the man of God.

To be “alone” means “to be fruitless”. It means to be without members or followers. The dying process in the man of God will eventually bring out much fruit.

Jesus would not have borne the fruit He did if He had not died on the cross. He would have been alone in Heaven with His Father. He could not have saved us if He had not died and gone to Hell for us. To win followers for Himself and His Father, He had to fall into the ground and die. The corn of wheat has to fall into the ground and die. When the seed falls into the ground, it disintegrates and decomposes.

This is what we call “dying”. The seed actually goes through a process before it comes out as fruit.

There are many sincere leaders who know many things. They have heard much and think they are high up in God. Knowledge unfortunately breeds pride.

…knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

1 Corinthians 8:1b

The Kingdom is more than a school of history and doctrines. It is more than acquiring numerous certificates of Bible knowledge. Knowledge without this process will yield nothing. Have you noticed that some of the most learned and scholarly Bible expositors are very ineffective at real ministry?

In fact, sometimes, the more scholarly they become the more faithless and godless they are.

A single seed will become a big tree with many fruits if it falls into the ground and dies. There are three processes for the corn of wheat to go through when it falls into the ground.

1. The Falling of the seed

2. The Dying of the seed

3. The Bearing Fruit of the seed

1. The Falling of the Seed

The falling into the ground speaks of a period in a man of God's life in which he is unknown and hidden from the view of the general public. It also speaks of a period of rejection and negative responses to himself.

Concerning John the Baptist, the Bible declares that he was hidden in the wilderness until the time of his showing unto Israel. Every pastor must realize that God has a time when He hides you. Do not be in a hurry to be exposed. Premature exposure leads to destruction.

Jesus Christ was hidden for thirty years before He was exposed to public ministry. His appearance in the ministry surprised those who didn't know that a seed had been in the ground for thirty years.

Moses experienced this falling into the ground. He was utterly rejected by his brethren when he first tried to minister to them. He ended up in the wilderness for forty years. After years of rejection and isolation, he was ready to minister.

Joseph had this same experience of falling into the ground. His visions and dreams were utterly rejected. Then he himself was utterly rejected and dispensed with. He found himself first working as a slave and then as a prisoner in Egypt. After several years of separation from his brethren he was finally ready for a great ministry.

These are just a few examples of this pattern of falling into the ground. I tell you, no true minister is truly accepted until he has been first rejected.

I Don't Sow Amongst Thorns

I have experienced this falling into the ground myself. When I started out in ministry, I was utterly and totally rejected by the ministers of the day. One minister that we had a good relationship with, refused to minister to our group any more. When I asked why he wouldn't preach to our group any more, he said, "I don't sow amongst thorns."

He and other pastors claimed I was not called by God and had no business starting a church. They felt I was a medical student who should concentrate on his schooling. They told my assistant not to associate with me because it was dangerous to work with someone who was not called by God.

Which Bible School Did You Attend?

I told another senior minister with whom I had a good relationship, that I had started a church. I simply received a rebuke! Then I was queried as to which Bible school I had attended. Unfortunately, I had not been to Bible school. In discouragement, I went away with my “tail between my legs”.

This pastor then decided to hold a campaign right where our church was meeting. He held a big programme and showed a very powerful video of his national and international programmes. It was one of the best presentations of that ministry I had ever seen.

Our ministry looked like a group of jokers, dwarfs and midgets together in one place. A powerful invitation to join this great ministry was made that night. After they had left, I asked myself, “Who would want to be with us when there are such powerful and established ministries in the city?”

Are You Mocking Me?

I also remember another incident where I met one of these great pastors of our city. It was at a wedding being held on the university campus.

This pastor and his associate had spoken out against my ministry from their pulpit. They had spoken against people like myself whom they felt were not “called”. In their eyes, I could never be a pastor!

I went up to him to say hello and he said, “Oh, hello Dag,”

Then he paused, looked at me and said, “Pastor!”

As I stood before him, I felt in my heart that he was mockingly referring to me as a pastor.

I almost asked him, “Sir why are you mocking me? Why do you call me ‘pastor’ when you don’t believe that I am a pastor?”

I don’t know how I managed to keep those words from coming out of my mouth. The only thing I felt in that era of my life was rejection.

I went through a period of utter rejection and continued the ministry work in virtual separation from most of the ministers I had known prior to this period.

However, as a result of this separation, God taught me many things.

Don’t be worried because you are not accepted or wanted. Don’t bother if no one invites you. Your day of showing forth will come.

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

Luke 1:80

2. The Dying of the Seed

When the seed falls to the ground, it disintegrates and decomposes. It utterly changes in its character and appearance. Allow the dying process to occur. Except the seed dies, it abides alone. Unless these qualities that God is going to bring forth in you are allowed to develop, you will never fulfil your ministry. Two things develop when you fall into the ground and die.

A Personal Relationship with God

When men reject you, your relationship with people is minimized. During this period of alienation, you have your best chance to develop a relationship with God. This is the principle that works on people in prison. Their relationship with the outside world is cut off. Many prisoners reflect on the Lord and develop a relationship with God. This is a time when important spiritual traits will be birthed in you. Developing a personal relationship with God is one of the most important things that you will learn when people reject you. Every true minister derives his strength from the Lord directly.

Many will come in that day and say, “I cast out demons in your name and I did great works in your name.” But the Lord will say, “I never *knew* you.”

“I never knew you,” means that I never had a relationship with you. Rejection is sometimes the only way to this all-important relationship.

Developing Humility

Rejection is a humbling experience. The rejection by man is intended to make you develop humility and humility is the highest mantle a minister can wear. The more humble a minister is, the higher his standing before the Lord.

One common deception is that the larger your church is, the higher your standing before the Lord. That is not the case. Jesus made it clear that

the greatest pastor will be the most humble and childlike amongst us.

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18:1-4

John the Baptist Was Humble

John the Baptist's humility was evident. He made it clear that he was not worthy to unlace the shoes of Jesus. He deferred to the Lord and stated that Jesus must increase and he must decrease. How many pastors today want others to increase while they decrease?

He must increase, but I must decrease.

John 3:30

Jesus Humbled Himself

The humility of Jesus was evident. He humbled Himself and became obedient even to the death of the cross.

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Philippians 2:8

Moses Was Humbled

Moses lost all confidence in himself. The Bible calls him the meekest man on earth. Wouldn't you be meek after forty years in the wilderness as one of the ten most wanted men in Egypt? When you read about the call of Moses, you see how Moses had zero confidence in himself. He was a great man but his opinion of himself was genuinely very low because he had suffered rejection. Notice the low esteem that Moses had of himself.

The Ten Complaints of Moses

1. And Moses said unto God...**Who am I**? Exodus. 3:11

2. And Moses said unto God…**what shall I say unto them**? Exodus 3:13

3. And Moses answered…**they will not believe me** Exodus. 4:1

4. And Moses said…**I am not eloquent...I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.** Exodus 4:10

5. And he said, **O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send**. Exodus 4:13

6. And Moses said, **Lord…why is it that thou hast sent me**? Exodus 5:22

7. And Moses spake **the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me** Exodus 6:12

8. And Moses said **I am of uncircumcised lips** Exodus 6:30

9. And Moses cried unto the LORD **they be almost ready to stone me**. Exodus 17:4

10. And Moses said unto the LORD, **Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant**? Numbers 11:11

Joseph Was Humbled

Joseph, after being a prisoner for some years did not think of vengeance when he saw his brothers. He could see through it all, that God had meant it for good.

Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God…

Genesis 45:5,8

Joseph had so matured in the things of God that he felt his brothers had done nothing wrong. In fact, he felt his brothers were used of God.

After going through all that I have been through, I have come to love and appreciate the people who once rejected me. I feel that God used them to train me in the ministry. I bear none of them a grudge and I value their ministries greatly. Even the bitterest of experiences have worked out for my good.

3. The Bearing Fruit of the Seed

Bearing fruit is a very spiritual thing. Most men of God think that if you have a large church, you have borne much fruit and are pleasing to the Lord.

However, you will notice that Jesus was pleasing to His Father even before He preached His first sermon. He pleased God long before He was publicly known. You can please God even when you are not famous.

And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Matthew 3:17

You don't have to have a church for the Heavenly Father to say: "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." You don't even have to be a pastor. You don't have to write a book. You don't have to preach a sermon to hear the words, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased."

You don't need to be famous to hear the words, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." Jesus was not famous when this happened. This Scripture shows us that pleasing God is not based on our works per se. Any fruits we bear are actually gifts that are given by the Lord.

Have you wondered at the immense fruit that Christ Jesus bore? Two thousand years have gone by and He has more fruit than He has ever had before. What did He do that brought about so much fruit? He did six things:

1. Preaching. 2. Teaching 3. Healing 4. Humility 5. Obedience 6. Sacrifice on the cross.

Significant among these things was His sacrifice on the cross that opened the door for our salvation. By far, the greatest thing that Christ did for us was to die on the cross for our sins. Jesus bore much fruit after His sacrifice.

Chapter 11

Sacrifice Brings You to the Anointing

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off ARE MADE NIGH BY THE BLOOD (sacrifice) of Christ.

Ephesians 2:13

Understanding the Road the Anointing

It took me many years to understand the wonderful symbolism of the tabernacle.

Years ago, I heard a man of God preaching about steps to the anointing. I listened to this message over and over again but I could not understand what he was talking about.

He was teaching about the tabernacle of Moses, the laver, the altar of sacrifice, the door to the Holy Place, the tent, the pegs, the poles, the white linen, the badgers' skin, the table of incense, the table of shewbread, the candlesticks and the Holy of Holies.

Honestly, I listened with all my heart trying hard to see how it was all connected to the anointing.

With time however, I found out that the Holy of Holies was considered to be the seat of God's power, God's anointing and God's presence. Taking steps to the Holy of Holies was therefore the same as taking steps to God's presence and God's power.

A study of the tabernacle of Moses reveals that there was always a sacrifice to be made at the door of the tabernacle before the priest could progress to the Holy of Holies. A sacrifice had to be made right at the entrance of the tabernacle.

This position of the altar of sacrifice (at the door) signified that there was the need to first offer a sacrifice if you wanted to go deeper into the things of God.

The Holy of Holies, the place of anointing and power, was the innermost room in the tabernacle. Without walking through the place of sacrifice, you could not come to this place of power and anointing.

… **thou shalt kill the bullock before the lord, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.**

Exodus 29:11

How close do you want to be to the innermost place of power and anointing? How desperately do you want this anointing? I do not know of

any great man of God who climbed to heights in ministry without paying a high price of sacrifice.

Many people know the Scriptures and the doctrines, but many are not prepared to pay the price of ministry. Therefore, they remain powerless and empty-handed in the face of a lost and dying world.

This is why we need to bring the concept of sacrifice back to the house of the Lord. As we make sacrifices, we get nearer and nearer to the inner place of power and anointing. We are brought near to the anointing by the blood. It is the blood and the sacrifice that enables us to come near to the anointing!

Without the sacrifice, without the pain and without the shedding of blood we cannot approach the Holy Place where the presence and power of God is.

Old Testament Sacrifices

In the Bible times, you could not even think of worshipping God without making a sacrifice. You simply had not worshipped God until a sacrifice was made.

Poor people sacrificed little birds like pigeons and turtledoves. They could not afford to bring sheep, goats and cows. You were required to sacrifice whatever you had. *But there had to be some sacrifice*! Can we say we worship God, if we present no sacrifice?

You may say, “Christ has sacrificed for us. No further sacrifices are needed.” No one is asking you to die on the cross again! Nevertheless, Jesus told us *to take up our crosses and follow Him*, didn’t He? This means that even though Christ has made the ultimate sacrifice, we are still to follow His example of self-sacrifice.

There are lessons to be learnt from the Old Testament system of sacrifices. The Old Testament is a treasure house of teaching for New Testament Christians.

Why Old Testament Sacrifices Are Relevant

Anyone who doubts that the Old Testament is very relevant today should just read on. The following are a number of reasons why Old Testament Scriptures can be used to teach us on important subjects like “sacrifice”.

Christ Himself expounded the things in the Old Testament Scriptures concerning Himself in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets.

Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

Luke 24:26-27, 44-45

The things that were written aforetime in the Old Testament Scriptures were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

Romans 15:4

Jesus Himself came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets.

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Matthew 5:17-18

Jesus said that the Law and the Prophets prophesied.

For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

Matthew 11:13

The Old Testament prophets spoke of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. It was revealed to them that their utterances did not just concern their own generation but another.

Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what,

or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

1 Peter 1:10-12

The things, which happened in Old Testament history in Israel, were for types and examples and these things are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come.

Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

1 Corinthians 10:6,11

The writer of the book of Hebrews said, “In the volume of the book it is written of Me”, that is, of Christ.

Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

Hebrews 10:7

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

Psalm 40:6-8

The Scripture speaks of, “first the natural and afterwards that which is spiritual”, and this is a principle which may well be applied in this study.

Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.

1 Corinthians 15:46-47

All these points I have enumerated show us that the Old Testament can and must be used as sound teaching material. We cannot afford to ignore the revelation that we receive from Old Testament sacrifices.

Chapter 12

Sacrifice Eliminates Pharaoh

Pharaoh is a biblical “type” of Satan. Satan keeps the people of God in bondage and refuses to let them go. Pharaoh struggled with the children of Israel until they finally got out of Egypt and were on their way to the Promised Land. Even then he did not give up. He was bent on recapturing the Israelites.

Satan will do almost anything to keep you in bondage. He chased the people of God until the Lord eliminated the Egyptians Himself.

How will Pharaoh finally be eliminated from your life? What will break satanic strongholds in your life? All you have to do is to follow the example of the Israelites and you will be free forever.

This chapter talks about the elimination of Satan and his demonic chains from your life and ministry.

Walking through the Red Sea

“Walking through the Red Sea” speaks of walking into certain death. It signifies walking away from safety into a realm where you can only trust God. In the New Testament, walking through the Red Sea stands for the dying process.

Sometimes, walking by faith seems destructive. Walking through the Red Sea is a powerful tool that God uses to eliminate enemies. Walking through the Red Sea is an action in which you rely on God’s grace.

When you walk through the Red Sea, you do not depend on money, friends, family, or natural forms of assistance.

Pharaoh Could Not Go Through the Red Sea

Satan can chase you and harass you. But there are certain places he cannot go to.

The devil is not all-knowing and all-powerful. To escape from Pharaoh and his agents you need to go where he cannot follow. When you

sacrifice to the Lord, you go through the Red Sea.

When you walk through the Red Sea, you sacrifice your future and place yourself in the hands of God. I am sure you know that it is not a normal thing to walk upon the seabed with a wall of water to your right and a wall of water to your left. What if you get stuck in the middle? What if the water came tumbling down?

Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, THAT HE SHALL FOLLOW AFTER THEM; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so.

Exodus 14:2-4

Pharaoh's (Satan's) aim is to keep you from Christ. Pharaoh failed in his attempt to keep the people from knowing their God. However, Pharaoh does not give up easily. He says, "Chase him, and track him down. Prevent him from going too far."

The devil aims at keeping you away from the ministry. Have you wondered why you have undergone such a struggle since you decided to serve the Lord? It is because Pharaoh is chasing hard on your heels.

The Baptism of Death

Paul teaches us that going through the sea was a baptism for the children of Israel. It was a symbolic baptism. They entered into the depths of the sea and came out again.

Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, AND ALL PASSED THROUGH THE SEA; AND WERE ALL BAPTIZED UNTO MOSES IN THE CLOUD AND IN THE SEA;

1 Corinthians 10:1-2

You can compare this to what the Bible says elsewhere:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him BY

BAPTISM INTO DEATH: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:3-4

By baptism, we are symbolically buried with Jesus. Baptism is therefore a symbol of sacrifice and death. When you walk through the Red Sea you eliminate Pharaoh and his agents. When you die to yourself, your desires, your needs and your wants, you eliminate Pharaoh and all other enemies.

This is how the children of Israel got rid of their enemies: by sacrificing their lives in the Red Sea. God began to fight for the Israelites only when they entered into the Red Sea.

When we're not afraid to sacrifice ourselves and walk into the Red Sea; when we allow ourselves to die in Christ, our enemies perish behind us!

If the Israelites had stayed out because of fear, Pharaoh would have recaptured them. They would have been killed in the desert. Many people die of the things they fear. The things that many of us are afraid of eventually happen. Death in the Red Sea is better than being killed in the desert.

Discussion by the Red Sea

I have observed people who have shied away from full-time ministry. Mostly, people stay away from the ministry because of the fear of poverty and ridicule. They fear that they will perish in the Red Sea. I have watched these same people stand at the shore of the Red Sea and discuss how they intend to eventually, one day, go through this sea.

They say things like, "Oh, that is my ultimate goal. As for full-time ministry, I know that I will by all means do it."

They carry on, "By all means, I will get to that point. I know in my heart that is what I want to do one day."

They explain, "We all get to that point at different times."

Then I have watched Pharaoh descend upon these people. Suddenly, their lives become one long battle as they try to ward off Pharaoh and the world's system. Soon these people who were just about to go through the

Red Sea don't even have time to go to church. They are fully entangled with Satan and the world's system.

Are you stuck on the shores of the Red Sea?

I Can't Believe He Is Going Through

When you give your precious life to God, you walk through the Red Sea. When you give your future to God, you walk through the Red Sea.

The enemy stands at the shores of the sea and says, "I can't believe he's going in!! I can't believe he's giving up his life. I tried to frighten him about the dangers of the Red Sea ministry." The devil knows that he can't follow you through your sacrifice.

Satan remembers how he perished when he tried to follow Moses.

He laments: "I can't believe it! I've had this experience before! I remember what happened to me at the Red Sea and I do not want to go into the sea again." The devil will lose his control over you when you give up everything for God.

It is true. He will lose his control. The devil does not lose his control because of the message you heard. He does not go away after we anoint you with oil, and pray for you.

Until you go through the Red Sea, the world still has control over you. As long as you stand there and refuse to enter, Pharaoh has access to you! As long as you refuse to die and give up what you're supposed to give up, the world's system will dominate you.

Pharaoh, Dirty Daniel and Freaky Freda

A beautiful young lady called Freaky Freda gave her life to Jesus Christ and was gloriously born again. She had had several boyfriends in the past. Slappy Jay, Ricky Zee, Kweku Killer, Big Bobo were all part of the squadron. Zee!*

Her current and steady lover whom she was planning to marry was none other than the swanky toe-tapping, cool-rapping Dirty Daniel, a favourite with the ladies.

However, she had attended a breakfast meeting and given her life to Christ. To say the least, Pharaoh was very angry at the loss of one of his slaves.

Pharaoh thought this young lady would return to Egypt. But her commitment to the things of God grew. At an emergency session, Pharaoh decided to get her back at all costs or to kill her.

Pharaoh hatched up a plan to kill Freaky Freda with HIV. Pharaoh knew that Freaky Freda could not resist Dirty Daniel.

One night, Satan ensured that Dirty Daniel was fully loaded with HIV from his other girlfriend, Slippery Susie.

Pharaoh smiled confidently as he charged Dirty Daniel to infect and destroy Freaky Freda for her unfaithfulness to him.

Dirty Daniel called Freaky Freda, “Hi baby, I miss you baby.”

He continued, “Where have you been? I’ve been calling your number all weekend.

“Oh, I was at a camp meeting,” she answered.

“Camp meeting,” he retorted. “What on earth is that?”

“It is a meeting for Christian leaders in my new church,” she informed him.

“Oh, I see. Anyway, I miss you. Do you miss me? Can I come to your place tonight?”

“Yes, I’ve wanted to see you myself. There is something I need to tell you,” she answered. “I’ll be home early.”

Pharaoh and his legions began rejoicing in advance. “The plan is working; we will end this rebellion.”

But that night, Dirty Daniel had the shock of his life.

Freaky Freda said, “No! I am sorry I cannot continue this relationship with you.”

“Don’t you love me?” he asked. “Don’t you want to marry me?”

She told him tearfully, “It’s not been easy for me, I’ve been crying all day. But I have decided to sacrifice this relationship so that I can serve the Lord.”

In the moment that Freaky Freda sacrificed her relationship with Dirty Daniel, she walked through the Red Sea and went out of the reach of Pharaoh.

Pharaoh and legions stood by the shore in shock. They said, “We can’t believe she’s going in!! We can’t believe she’s doing it! We are losing control over Freaky Freda.”

The devil knows that he can’t follow you through your sacrifice. As you sacrifice your profession for the Lord, Satan loses his influence over your life.

Chapter 13

Sacrifice Gives You a Place in the Ministry

...and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-Meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet IN THY ROOM.

1 Kings 19:16

God has called many of us. However, you have to pay the price in order to take your place in the ministry. Your place in the ministry is also called your “room” of ministry. Everybody has a room or position that he occupies in ministry.

This room of ministry defines your standing before God. It also identifies and classifies you among God’s numerous servants.

You need to pay the price to occupy your room of ministry. Your gift and sacrifice is what will make room for you.

A man’s gift MAKETH ROOM FOR HIM, and bringeth him before great men.

Proverbs 18:16

One day, when you get to Heaven, you will either have a room waiting or not. This will depend on your obedience to the Lord. The gift you give creates a space, and makes room for you.

I occupy a particular spiritual position in my country. At the spiritual gates of the country and among the spiritual elders, I occupy a particular chair. It may not be a very great position but it is a position anyway. That is the room God has given me.

Perhaps, God has given you a place in the ministry. God has prepared a place for you among the ministers.

Do you want that place?

Do you like that place?

Will you take your place or will someone else have to take it?

You Can Be Replaced

Even while in your room of ministry, you can be replaced by someone else. Elisha was given Elijah's room of ministry. He complained about the ministry. He felt he had sacrificed so much for the Lord. He erroneously thought that he was the only one doing something for the Lord. God told him, "There are seven thousand pastors and churches you don't know about."

Many years ago, I had a strange vision. In the vision, I saw a man sitting on a chair. I did not know who the man was. Suddenly, a hand appeared and this hand-picked the man by his collar and lifted him out of his chair. The hand then lifted me by my collar and placed me in that chair. The Lord revealed to me that I was replacing someone. He said to me that I was to occupy a chair that someone else had occupied before.

There are many reasons why God may replace you. You can be replaced if you do not sacrifice to take your room. There is a place among the Christian heroes for you.

I've known people who failed to stand in the room that God gave them. It wasn't long before somebody else took up that room. If you fail to take the step when you should, others will be brought in to replace you.

Are You Worthy of the Room?

Jesus was placed in a position of honour. He is the only one who sits at the right hand of God the Father. He was the one who was allowed to open and to read the book. He was found worthy to do these things because He is the "lamb that was slain". "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals because thou art the lamb that was slain."

And I wept much, because NO MAN WAS FOUND WORTHY to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. …And they sung a new song, saying, THOU ART WORTHY TO TAKE THE BOOK, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

Revelation 5:4, 9

The Famous Evangelist

When you listen to an evangelist preaching, you may think that you could preach better than he does. You could probably preach circles around him. However, that does not qualify you to stand in his room of ministry. You may actually know more than he does and have a better character than he does. But God gives him the room of ministry.

There are many questions and speculations about successful ministers. Many wonder why such people are so successful. Why does anyone listen to this person? Why does anyone come for his crusades?

This person is occupying a room of ministry given to him by the Lord.

One day, as I observed a famous evangelist preach at a crusade, I thought to myself, “I could probably preach this message better.” I marvelled that so many thousands had gathered to hear such a message. When it was time to pray for miracles, there were hardly any healings. Yet the crowds kept coming, night after night.

As I mused over this, I knew that if this were my crusade, no one would attend to hear my “good preaching”. The Lord spoke to me and said, “I have given this man of God a room.

He occupies a position that he did not create for himself. He has paid a price to be in that room. It is not by his preaching, organization or even healings, but by the room that I have placed him in.”

What Have You Been Through?

I once formed an association of pastors.

One senior minister asked me, “What do you think you’re doing? Do you know what it means to form an association of churches and pastors?”

Then he asked me a question: “What have you been through, what have you suffered, what have you survived?”

What he was asking was, “Have you paid the price to be the leader of an association of churches and pastors?”

He continued, “I have contended with the prince of this nation. What have *you* been through, what have *you* suffered, what have *you* survived?”

Later on, I discussed with this pastor about how the government was persecuting me.

He already knew about how the government of the day had broken our walls and attacked us in the night.

But I told him, “That is not all. After breaking our walls, they sent the Internal Revenue Service to hound us. All my pastors came under investigation. Then they turned their attention on me personally.”

I had to fill various forms and I was interrogated at their offices. They questioned me extensively and wanted to know about my car, home, money etc. I sent my Chief Accountant but they refused to see him. They insisted that I came myself; they wanted to see me. Someone who had won an award for being the best tax expert for that year interrogated me.

As I narrated my woes to this senior minister, he laughed and shook my hand. Surprised, I asked him why he was giving me a “pat on the back”.

He answered, “Congratulations. I have filled that form five times. I have been through that process five different times.”

He went on to commend me, saying that I was maturing and paying the price to be in the high place of ministry.

So you see, before you can occupy certain positions, you have to pay a price. When you pay the price, you enter the room that God has prepared for you.

Elisha Paid the Price for Elijah’s Room

Elisha paid the price to take Elijah’s room. When Elijah came to Elisha, he just threw his mantle on him. Elisha was surprised. He knew Elijah was calling him. Elijah himself was so sad about it. He knew that Elisha was going to make a great sacrifice.

“What have I done to you? What have I done?” Elijah asked.

Elisha told his business partners that he was quitting. He took his oxen and ended his business in one stroke. He divided up his business and walked away from it. He told himself, “It is over, I can’t go back.” He was going to follow Elijah. Elisha paid the price to stand in Elijah’s room.

Joshua paid the price to take over from Moses. Peter, James and John paid the price to be apostles.

How many are going to live and sacrifice for Jesus? How many are going to stand in their rooms and pay the price?

Get in there. God has a room for you. God had a room for me and I believe that He has one for you. I believe that there are more rooms to occupy and I intend to be there. You must determine to be in the room that God has for you.

Chapter 14

Sacrifice Brings the Glory into Your Ministry

Moses Brings the Glory through Sacrifice

And the breasts and the right shoulder Aaron waved for a wave offering before the LORD; as Moses commanded. And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them, and came down from offering of the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people. And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.

Leviticus 9:21-24

As you can see in this account, when the Israelites offered sacrifice, the glory of God came down. Do you want to see the glory of God in your life? Then do not shy away from the sacrifice that God has placed before you. A minister who has the glory of God on his life has paid the price.

Solomon Brings the Glory through Sacrifice

…then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God.

2 Chronicles 5:13-14

In this account, Solomon sacrificed thousands of bullocks. Solomon made many sacrifices to the Lord. Suddenly, the glory filled the temple and no one could stand to minister. God was apparently moved by the sacrifice. God is still moved by your sacrifice.

The Price of Glory Is the Same

I have noticed that there is no successful minister who does not have a story of suffering and difficulties.

Recently, a visiting minister, whose ministry I knew little about, came to speak in our church. As he shared his life testimony, I marvelled at how this principle is played out in everyone's life.

He had been through many things.

He had gone hungry on many occasions; he had encouraged his wife on several occasions.

He had been without money and food many times. This man was a very successful minister in his country but the story of sacrifice was the same. The story is the same everywhere. There is a sacrifice that brings the glory of God!

David Brings the Glory through Sacrifice

And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David with gladness. And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings.

2 Samuel 6:12-13

This story shows us how King David made innumerable sacrifices as he brought in the ark of God. The ark of God represents the anointing. The ark represents the glory of God. After every six steps, they would sacrifice oxen and fatling. Can you imagine how many sacrifices they must have made from Obed-edom's house to the City of David?

This journey of David symbolizes how the sacrifice brings in the glory.

It is time to believe in His glory. Expect glory as you serve the Lord. Expect glory on earth and in Heaven.

Give yourself to Him. The glory of God is worth your sacrifice!

Section 4: Dying

Chapter 15

The Cross – The Symbol of Death

The Old Rugged Cross

On a hill far away, stood an old rugged cross

The emblem of suffering and shame,

And I love that old cross where the dearest and best, for a world of lost sinners was slain

Chorus:

So I'll cherish the old rugged cross, Till my trophies at last I'll lay down

I will cling to the old rugged cross, and exchange it some day for a crown.

Oh that old rugged cross, So despised by the world

Holds a wondrous attraction to me, for the dear Lamb of God left His glory above to bear it to dark Calvary

In that old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine a wondrous beauty I see

For t'was on that old cross Jesus suffered and died,

To pardon and sanctify me

To the old rugged cross, I will ever be true

It's shame and reproach gladly bear, Then He'll call me some day

To my home far away, Where His glory forever

I'll share.

George Bennard

The cross of Jesus Christ is the symbol of Christianity and it stands for many truths. Every time you see the cross, you must be reminded of what it symbolizes.

The symbol of Christianity is not an umbrella, an elephant, a fruit or a bird. The symbol of Christianity is the cross of Jesus Christ. This symbol has important meanings that must be understood by all Christians.

The cross is the true symbol of Christianity. I keep a cross in my room because it is the symbol of Christ, the symbol of Christianity and the

symbol of the Church!

I remember meeting one of the politicians in my country. He was one of the most senior ministers of the government and was attending a wedding in our church.

After the ceremony he came to my office to meet me. As he sat down, I noticed that he was wearing the emblem of his political party on his lapel. I was amazed at this politician's boldness. He was wearing his party symbol even at a wedding!

Even though his political party had become unpopular, he boldly sported their symbol. His party had led the country into difficult times but he was not ashamed of it.

If unbelievers are not ashamed of their empty and temporary jobs, we cannot be ashamed of the cross of Jesus Christ.

It is our symbol; it is the symbol of obedience and sacrifice! Below are a few of the meanings of this wonderful symbol.

The cross is the symbol of DEATH you must experience.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Hebrews 2:9

And he said to *them* all, if any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.

Luke 9:23

The cross of Jesus Christ is a symbol of many things but most of all it is a symbol of death. A person found carrying a cross was on his way to his death. When Jesus told us to carry our cross he was telling us to go to a place where we would die and lose our lives.

Christianity is all about dying so that we may live a new life through Jesus Christ. Preachers of success, good living and prosperity are forced to ignore these "dark and brutal" parts of the Scripture.

And yet, there are so many references to losing, suffering, sacrificing and dying in the Bible. The death we speak about when we speak of the cross is not the physical termination our lives.

It is the disappearance of yourself, your dreams, your visions, your plans, your future, and the emergence of God's plans, dreams and vision for your existence on Earth.

Indeed it is a painful experience to lose everything and to give up everything for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul spoke of his life declaring that he had suffered the loss of all things

Why You Must Die

You must "die" for Jesus because the old life you were going to live is not worth living. There is a new life that God has in store for you. Everyone who is used by the Lord undergoes a dying process in which his old life disappears and a brand new one appears.

One day, my mother sat in church and commented that she could not recognize her own son who was preaching. "Is that my boy, my son?"

Most Christians live out their lives on earth never dying to themselves and therefore never becoming what God wanted them to be.

You must die for Jesus so that you can experience a life of living by faith. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Living by faith is the most exciting adventures you can have on earth. It's a life of trusting God. It's a life of trusting God for everything in the present, the past and the future. The Apostle Paul described how he had died to everything in the past. He was completely cut off from his past. You will also be completely cut off from the past things in your life when you follow Jesus.

The cross is the symbol of the price Christians must pay.

There is a price for becoming a Christian. It is the greatest deliverance for a human being to become a Christian. It was not free, neither was it easy for Christ to purchase our salvation with his blood. Every time you see

the cross you must remember the *price* that was paid for our salvation. Jesus paid the price and *you* will also have to pay a price to follow Him.

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

1 Corinthians 6:20

The cross is the symbol of the love of God you must emulate.

Through the cross of Jesus Christ we discern the love of God and recognize His compassion for the lost. The cross is the symbol of God's love for mankind.

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

1 John 3:16

The cross is the symbol of OBEDIENCE.

Through the cross, we see how Jesus Christ was obedient even onto death. The cross of Jesus Christ is therefore the greatest symbol of obedience.

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Philippians 2:8

The cross is the symbol of the sacrifice.

The cross of Jesus is the symbol of the sacrifice all of us must make to serve the Lord.

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour."

Ephesians 5:2

The cross is the symbol of humility.

In the cross, Jesus Christ humbled himself to the uttermost. He made himself of no reputation and allowed himself to be shamed, disgraced and belittled by sinful men. Indeed the cross is a symbol of humility.

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Philippians 2:8

The cross of Jesus Christ is a symbol of the BLOOD of Jesus Christ.

The cross of Jesus Christ was the instrument that was used to take the life of the Son of God. The wooden cross broke the body of Jesus Christ and shed His blood. When we ask people to come to the cross we are asking them to come to the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.

Colossians 1:20

Chapter 16

Why You Must Preach the Cross

The cross of Jesus Christ is the greatest secret of power in the ministry. The power of the cross is far-reaching. The power of the cross is diverse in its application and effects.

You must preach the cross of Jesus Christ because it will bring back the power of God.

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18

Some years ago, I read a book by a well-recognized prophet in which he described an encounter with the Apostle Paul in a vision. I was stunned by the account of his reported interaction with Paul. In this interaction, Paul said to him, *"Except for in a few places in the world, we can hardly recognize the ministry or the message that is being preached today."*

He continued, "*When we served, being in the ministry was the greatest sacrifice that one could make and this was reflected in the message of the greatest sacrifice that was made - the cross."*

Some months later, I was walking on a golf course in England with a pastor friend of mine. As we walked and talked, the Lord spoke to me.

He said to me, "Preach about sacrifice."

I said, "Lord, I do not know anything about sacrifice. I have never preached about it." Nevertheless, I had to obey Him.

I believe in the prophet's vision of the Apostle Paul. I also agree that the message and the ministry of the church today are quite different from that of the early church. The concept of sacrificing anything to God is foreign to most Christians today.

The focus of Christianity today is money, prosperity, establishment, safety and self-preservation. The goals of most Christians are to get more money, houses, cars, and security. Even pastors measure their success by the amount of money they have, and by the size of the offerings in their churches.

Preaching the Cross vs. Preaching Successful Living

The message of the church has become a teaching about how to have a better life on earth. The message of prosperity has become the message of the church.

Church members are postured as receivers - *"Yes Lord, I receive!"* This is the catchphrase of the church! But it is time for us to present ourselves before the Lord as people who have something to give. The church must be seen as a group of people who sacrifice for the Kingdom and not as a group of people who only receive blessings.

You will notice that whenever the church has a miracle service, the attendance is different from when there is a teaching service. Any meeting that calls for some kind of work like witnessing or prayer is poorly attended. The crowds however gather when they expect to receive miracles. But the church is supposed to be a place where we "take up our crosses and follow Him".

Money has never been a measure of God's approval of our lives and never will be. The Bible clearly teaches that in the last days, some will suppose that gain is godliness.

Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that GAIN IS GODLINESS: from such withdraw thyself.

1 Timothy 6:5

"Sacrifice" means "giving up something". It is a central theme of the Bible. Many of us first heard of the word *sacrifice* from the Bible. We read about Abraham's sacrifice, Isaac's sacrifice and Jacob's sacrifice. Throughout the Old Testament, we see the Israelites making sacrifices to God continually. You could not think of a prophet of God in the Bible without thinking about sacrifices. You could not think of Elijah, without thinking of his experience with the four hundred prophets of Baal.

Yet, today, *sacrifice* is one of the most hushed topics. Today, the theme of our preaching is prosperity, miracles and blessings. The church has totally abandoned the original message of sacrifice. The church has become a phantom of the original church; fearful and powerless. Other

religions constantly demonstrate to us the essence and practice of sacrifice.

The message of sacrifice is very relevant for all of us today. The teaching of sacrifice must return to the church otherwise we will continue to be a phantom of the real church!

Your Heart Follows Your Sacrifice

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE WILL YOUR HEART BE ALSO.

Matthew 6:20-21

Your heart will be where your treasure is. When I became a pastor, the Lord asked me to put a lot of my own money into the ministry. The Lord made me make many sacrificial donations to help the fledgling church. You see, when you put your money in the church, your heart follows suit.

Let your heart be with God! When your heart is with God, you will be ready to sacrifice; you will be ready to die for what you believe! Not because you have some special calling, but because you believe what you say you believe!

Anything for Christ

But Christ has shown me that what I once thought was valuable is worthless. Nothing is as wonderful as knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have given up everything else and count it all as rubbish. All I want is Christ.

Philippians 3:7-8 (Contemporary English Version)

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

Philippians 3:7-8

Paul made many sacrifices for his faith and was glad about it. There is nothing like living for God without paying the price. Jesus said that unless

a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abideth alone. The seed must always die if it is to bear fruit. Some people want to be pastors without paying the price. Be honest with yourself and accept the reality of sacrifice.

In the Foxe's Book of Martyrs, there are several accounts of how people were killed for their faith. They died in droves. Some were eaten by lions.

I would not like to be eaten by a lion. I have been bitten by a lion before and it was not an easy experience. I've seen a lion having lunch before and I certainly wouldn't like to be its supper.

Some of the early Christians were hanged on crosses. Some thought they were not worthy to be crucified in the same way as their master Jesus. So they asked to be crucified upside down.

Take up Your Cross Daily

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God CONTINUALLY, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

Hebrews 13:15

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies A LIVING SACRIFICE, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service.

Romans 12:1

In the days of the temple, sacrifices were made to the Lord everyday. It was part of their service and worship to God. It was a daily thing they did for the Lord. There is nothing like a one-time sacrifice that you make for life.

God asks you to present your body as a *living sacrifice*! This type of sacrifice is an undying sacrifice, something that goes on and on. *It is unending*!

One martyr said, "Eighty and four years have I served the Lord. Why should I deny my Lord at this time? What evil has He done to me?" Someone with faith will never deny the Lord!

Chapter 17

Why You Must Take Up Your Cross

Which cross are we talking about? *Your* cross or *His* cross? Well, we are talking about both. We are talking about the cross of Jesus Christ and the effect that it has.

We are studying the effect that the cross of Jesus Christ has had on the world. We are deducing therefore that *your cross* will also have a great effect on the world.

The cross is a symbol of something that both Jesus and His followers partake of. Jesus told his followers to take up *their* crosses.

This extends the experience of the cross from Christ alone to His followers. Because the experience of the cross is extended to Jesus' followers the powers that the cross releases are also extended to the followers who take up their crosses. In this chapter, you will learn about your cross and the powers that it can release in your life.

1. You must take up your cross because the cross has the power to put away sins.

For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared TO PUT AWAY SIN BY THE SACRIFICE of himself.

Hebrews 9:24-26

When someone makes great sacrifices, his flaws seem to fade away.

When Christians make great sacrifices for the Lord's work, people tend to ignore their weaknesses.

Everyone knows you are an imperfect being. But when you make sacrifices for the Lord, these sacrifices stand out and minimise your imperfections. The great sacrifices tend to set aside your obvious weaknesses.

The cross of Jesus Christ took away the sins of the whole world. Similarly, your great sacrifices for the Lord will cause your sins and weaknesses to become insignificant in comparison to what you have done for the Lord.

2. Taking up your cross has the power to make you die to sin and live to righteousness.

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

1 Peter 2:24

The cross of Jesus Christ made many people die to sin and live to righteousness. In the same way one person who makes sacrifices, inspires many people to die to sin and to live to righteousness.

Often, one person inspires many others to do something for the Lord. Mother Theresa inspired many people to live for righteousness. By taking up her cross and dying to herself she lived a life of faith in God. The life she would have lived as an ordinary woman was different from the life she lived as a nun. She died to herself and lived by faith.

3. A cross releases power that is able to make people not live for themselves.

And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

2 Corinthians 5:15

Although *your* cross is not the same as the cross of Jesus Christ, it will have the same effect as the cross of Christ. The cross of Jesus Christ makes people *not* live for themselves. *Your* cross also makes people *not* live for themselves!

Most people live for themselves doing what they please and what makes them happy. Most of us do not think of giving up anything for the Lord. But Jesus Christ died for us and released the power that inspired people *not* to live for themselves but for a higher purpose.

This is one of the clearest effects that the cross of Jesus Christ has had, thereby creating an army of zealous followers.

If you do take up your cross you will also release power that can make people live for a higher reason. I never expected other medical doctors to give up their professions to follow Jesus. I have been surprised by the effect that setting aside my medical practice has had on other medical doctors.

Today, I can count more than ten other medical doctors who similarly gave up their lives as medical doctors and chose to be ministers of the gospel

Your cross will surely inspire people not to live for themselves but for a higher purpose. Perhaps you may preach the same sermons as someone else always wondering why it doesn't seem to have the same effect of inspiring them to change their lives.

Dear friend, a good message with a good power point presentation is no substitute for taking up *your* cross. It is the absence of the power of the cross that makes your sermons and ministry ineffective.

4. A cross releases the power that enables people to crucify the world to themselves.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Galatians 6:14

Today, people that belong in the world are found mingling freely in the house of the Lord. Unbelievers feel at home in the church because the church makes no demands for sacrifice or for change.

The desires of the world and the goals of worldly people have become the desires and goals of the church.

Pastors desire to be rich executives like managers of worldly companies. Women desire to dress and look like the models they see on television. The prevalence rates of immorality, fornication and HIV in the world are the same as in the church. Why is this?

Why is the world opposed to the church?

Why are the aims, goals, aspirations dreams of the average Christian the same as the goals and aspirations of demonized unbelievers in the world? Why have we become so worldly?

Because the cross has been thrown out of the church and has been replaced with flowers, decorations and projectors.

The cross of Jesus Christ released the power through which separation from the world could take place. Through the teaching of sacrifice and

death to the world and its pleasures, Christians will once again rise up with the power to be separate from the world, its desires, its attractions and its ideals.

Through the power of a cross, a Christian will not mind being the odd one out in a crowd of unbelievers.

Through the power of a cross, a young boy or girl will not mind being a virgin when everyone around him has had numerous sexual experiences.

Through the powers of a cross a young man will not mind giving up a life of wealth and success to pursue the humble career of a minister of the gospel.

Through the powers of a cross a lady will not mind wearing unfashionable things if that is what it takes to be decently dressed.

Jesus Christ gave Himself on the cross to save us from this present evil world.

Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

Galatians 1:40.

It is because the cross is absent from the church that the world and the Church look so similar. That is why we can hardly tell the difference between Christians and worldly non-Christians.

5. Taking up your cross will enable you to enter into a new life of faith and ministry.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

There is a new life waiting for anyone who is ready to take up his cross. You will never experience this life until you take up *your* cross.

There is a new American life and an American dream waiting for anyone who is able to catch a flight to the United States. You will never have this American life or dream until you get on that plane.

Similarly, you will never experience what God has for you until you take up your cross and die for Him.

Paul said he was crucified with Christ and we all have to be crucified with Christ. It is not only Christ who must be crucified on a cross. We must all be crucified on a cross. When you are crucified with Christ you will not become what you would have been in the natural. You will become something else. Paul described it as “the *life* I now live”.

Some people had childhood dreams to be doctors or lawyers. But when God called them and chose them, they refused to give up these childhood dreams. They insisted on being doctors and lawyers instead of allowing those dreams to be crucified on the cross. Obviously, the Lord allows many people to do what they want because He does not force anyone to obey Him!

If they had crucified their lives in the natural and given their lives to Him, they would have become something else and lived a completely different life.

I cannot say it would have been a life of riches and earthly rewards but it would certainly have been a life of faith and adventure. It would have been a life of faith and trusting God! These doctors and lawyers would have been able to say with Paul “the lives we now live, we live by the faith of the Son of God”.

Indeed, there is no resemblance between the life I now live and the life I would have lived. That life is gone forever. I would have lived the life of a doctor and had the friends and colleagues of a doctor.

Today, I live the life of a pastor and a servant of the Lord. What a life I would have missed if I had refused to be crucified with Christ.

O what a life I would have missed if I had refused to take up my cross!

6. A cross creates an unusual group of people.

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

Titus 2:14

Through the cross of Jesus Christ an unusual group of people, zealous of good works have been released into the world. The whole world

recognizes the presence of this unusual people, zealous of good works. All over the world, Christians go about preaching, teaching, healing and showing compassion to the poor, blind, naked, sick and hungry. Through Jesus' sacrifice, this unusual group of zealous people have been released into the earth.

When you also take up your cross you will create an unusual group of people zealous for good works. One person who lays down his life inspires others to do the same. Indeed, it has a domino effect and everybody wants to be the next.

In the era when missionaries were sent from Europe to Africa, there were young men and women ready to leave their lives in Europe and come to die from malaria in West Africa. Although several of them perished they kept coming. Wave after wave of missionaries landed on the shores of dark Africa to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ. The cost didn't matter anymore. Death or no death they were ready. They wanted to come.

In response to a ship captain who tried to turn back a missionary to the cannibals of Fiji Islands, the missionary said, "We died before we came here".

Stories like these, of missionaries exploring the jungles of Africa, finding natives and preaching to savages, only inspired more people to throw in their lives.

But when the era of sacrifice ended, and the phase of prosperity, safety and successful living was born, there were no more leaders who inspired missionaries to lay down their lives. There were no more people to inspire others to become peculiar people zealous of good works.

The missionary movement died when the concept of young Christians going to the furthermost parts of the earth to sacrifice their lives for the cause of the gospel became absurd, far-fetched and out of the question! Peculiarity and zeal are products of the cross of Jesus Christ. Once the cross is chucked out of the church, zeal dries up.

Where is our zeal? Where is the unusual group of people who are ready to do anything for God?

7. A cross defines the true standards of Christian service.

And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

Matthew 10:38

Jesus Christ never lowered the standards for anyone who wanted to follow Him. The standard was the same – give up everything and follow Me. When the young rich man came to Jesus He did not lower the standards for him. He gave him exactly the same conditions. He said to him, “You must give up everything and follow me.

Do you remember that these are the same conditions He gave to Peter, James and John by the sea when He said to them, Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

They had to leave their fishing boats and their fishing professions to follow Him. The rich young ruler equally had to leave behind his valuables. This is the standard everyone must meet for following Jesus Christ. The cross sets a standard for service in the kingdom of God. The cross of Jesus Christ was the price and cost of His ministry. Your cross will be the price and cost of your ministry. There is no change in standard for you.

The price for a real ministry is the cross and not a degree. Some people have great degrees but they are unable to have a great ministry! The price for having a real powerful ministry is not money; it is the cross, *your* cross! Some people have a lot of money but they are unable to have a great ministry!

The price for having a real ministry is not a good family pedigree. Some people come from families that are well known for ministry. The fact that your father was famous in the ministry does not mean *you* will have a great ministry. The price that your father paid will be the price that you will also pay. The price for a real ministry is always the cross. The cross is the standard set for all ministries and all service to God.

8. You must take up your cross because it destroys the power of death.

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and

deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Hebrews 2:14-15

Through the cross of Jesus Christ, death was defeated. Jesus relentlessly pursued His appointment with Calvary. He was fearless in the face of death. He showed Satan that he was not intimidated by soldiers, pain or any hardship that could be inflicted on him. He said to himself, it is just a matter of time and I will breathe my last. Soon, I will no longer suffer this torture. I will be in glory with my Father. His bravery dissolved the defences of the enemy and eliminated the fear of death forever!

People who shy away from sacrifice are controlled by the fear of death. People who shy away from the death of the cross live their lives constantly trying to protect themselves and create safe environments for themselves.

Such people must live in countries where there are no dangers. They must always eat the right food and drink the right kind of water to avoid any shortening of their lives.

They dare not step on the mission or harvest fields because of the dangers of bad drinking water. Their entire ministry is redirected and refashioned by the fear of death.

Today, large parts of the church stay away from God’s perfect will. They build shells around themselves and protect themselves from dangerous ventures into the “wild” and “dangerous” harvest fields of the world.

Is it safe, they will ask, when you invite them to come preach to the hungry souls? Today, the absence of the cross and the domination of the church by the fear of death have given rise to a multitude of health programmes on Christian television.

All kinds of capsules and vitamins are sold to the safety and health-conscious Christian world that want to live forever on this earth and are no more conscious of Heaven, eternity and judgment.

The fear of death has also spawned a host of television broadcasts to the world. Many churches have an ever-increasing number of channels that they air their programmes on.

Could it be that these programmes have become a convenient substitute for any one going to the mission or harvest fields? You can reach more people through TV, they say. We reach one hundred and sixty million people with this broadcast, they say.

Meanwhile, the masses of poor, hungry and desperate souls who have neither electricity nor television, eagerly await the arrival of the missionaries and evangelists.

But potential missionaries and evangelists are now very conscious of their health, their lives and their personal safety. And they will not come! How sad it is when the greatest examples of Christianity today have set aside the cross of Jesus Christ and given us a weakened and powerless version of the great faith.

It is time to take up the cross again and show a renewed fearlessness of death. The cross of Jesus Christ demonstrated His fearlessness of death and His willingness to obey God and fulfil His calling. Your cross will demonstrate your fearlessness of death and show how willing you are to fulfil God's call.

9. A cross takes away the curse that is due rebellious people.

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

Galatians 3:13

Through the cross of Jesus Christ, the curse that is due the rebellious human race is broken. God has broken through to us with His power and His love. This love from God came to us through the big sacrifice that Jesus made for us.

When you take up your cross and lay down your life, there are rebellious and accursed groups of people who will receive the love of God and the power of God. Never underestimate the power of the sacrifice of your life.

I spoke to a tearful young man who was grateful that I had sent a missionary to him on a remote island in Africa. He described how he would have been lost, worshipping idols and following the demonised and crazed traditions of his island. I listened to him and was grateful for the

young men who had volunteered to go as missionaries to this poor African island.

You must never underestimate the power of your cross that is able to break a curse and release rebellious people from the curses that they live under.

10. A cross demonstrates great love.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:7-8

In our legal courts everyone expects the murderer to plead “not guilty”. No one is ever guilty and no one ever did the crime. I am told that the first thing you must get used to when you work in a prison is the fact that every single prisoner claims innocence and has a long story of how he did not commit the crimes he was convicted of.

“I love you”, they say, but no one believes it any more. The hardened cynical human race does not believe any more in love and peace.

A legal register is signed at every wedding because no one believes the promises the couple make to each other. Often, it is all a meaningless show.

Politicians wave their hands and say, “We love you and God bless you.” But everyone knows it is not true.

“You don’t love us; you just want our votes,” they say in their hearts.

You can’t blame them.

If you have lived long enough you will know that men rarely tell the truth.

Why Jesus Died on the Cross

That is why Jesus Christ did not just tell us that He loved us. He died on a cross for us. Lots of people claim to have love for others. But Jesus Christ commended His love to us in that while we were yet sinners, He died on a cross for us.

This is the difference between Jesus Christ and other people who claim to love us. It is this love and sacrifice that has won the hearts of millions

of people around the world. Two thousand years have gone by, but the story of the love of Jesus continues to win the hearts of millions.

Indeed, God commended His love to us through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Perhaps your ministry is weak and unconvincing. Few people respond to your preaching and your superbly prepared sermons. Jesus Christ did not win us to himself through perfect doctrines. *He won our hearts through His love that was shown on a cross.*

Dear friend, a cross has great power to demonstrate great love. Don't shy away from the sacrifice that comes through fasting, praying, visiting and counselling people. The love you demonstrate to your followers will win their hearts more than a thousand doctrinally correct sermons.

11. A cross gives off a sweet-smelling offering which is pleasing to God.

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Ephesians 5:2

The sacrifice that Jesus made for us became a sweet-smelling offering to the Lord. Every boss' heart is warmed towards an employee who makes great sacrifices to please his master. It is easy to see those who have gone the extra mile. Through the cross, Jesus Christ impressed His heavenly Father.

The beautiful sermons of Jesus such as those about "the prodigal son" and "the man on the road to Jericho" did not evoke such responses from the heavenly Father. *It was the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross that was described as a sweet-smelling offering.*

Dear Christian brother, your sacrifice for Jesus Christ will never go unnoticed. It will invoke a powerful response from your heavenly Father.

What you need is the cross!

The cross makes the difference between a powerless ministry and a powerful ministry.

A cross makes a difference between a ministry that is sweet smelling to God and one that is foul smelling!

12. A cross reconciles people to God.

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Romans 5:10

Through the cross of Jesus Christ many people were brought near to God. People were reconciled to God because of the cross. They were not reconciled to the Lord because of the good sermons of Jesus Christ.

It is our duty to bring people to God.

The whole world lies in wickedness and most men live their lives far away from God.

Unless we also take up our crosses and become evangelists and missionaries people will not hear the gospel as they should. Today, many souls are perishing and going to Hell. Thousands of people go to Hell every minute. But they will not go to Hell because Jesus did not take up His cross. People are going to Hell now because *we* are not taking up *our* crosses.

Christ has done His part. Read it for yourself. “For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh” (1 Peter 3:18, NASB).

It is our turn to do something. When we take up our crosses, many will be saved. Many will be healed! The cross of Jesus Christ works with our crosses to bring salvation and reconciliation to the world.

13. A cross brings true life.

For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,

Rom 6:5 (NASU)

It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:

2 Timothy 2:11

Contrary to all expectations, the cross of Jesus Christ that seems to promise death actually brings life. After the cross brought death to Jesus Christ He entered into the resurrected life which is the real and permanent life that we all seek.

The only way to this life is through death. The darkest door leads to the brightest glory. Do not be afraid of the dark door that is presented to you. Just as Jesus entered the new resurrected life through the cross, you will also enter a new phase of life in your ministry when you pay the price God wants you to.

14. Taking up your cross can give you a worldwide ministry.

And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

John 11:51-52

And **other sheep** I have, which are **not of this fold**: **them also I must bring**, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

John 10:16

Jesus Christ has a worldwide everlasting impactful ministry that still changes lives by the millions, years after He walked this earth. No one has ever equalled this kind of influence. *The secret to Jesus' worldwide ministry was His death on a cross!*

Occasionally, God raises up people like John Wesley who seem to have a worldwide impact long after their death. Most people have community or regional ministries. Few people have national ministries and fewer still have worldwide ministries. It is all well and good to desire the worldwide ministries that great men have.

But these things are not given to people on a silver platter. They have paid a price for any kind of worldwide influence they may have.

Today, you can have a worldwide ministry. This ministry will cost the same price that Jesus Christ paid for His calling.

God wants to raise up many people with worldwide influence, worldwide churches and worldwide movements. The secret to this worldwide ministry is the cross!

A cross can give rise to a worldwide ministry!

Believe in the power of a cross!

15. A cross can deliver many from punishment.

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Hebrews 9:28

Through the cross of Jesus Christ, multitudes are delivered from the punishment they deserve. The blood of Jesus that was shed on Calvary is the key to the salvation and the mercy shown to the whole world.

Today, our crosses are lying on the ground, waiting to be taken up. When we do so, this great mercy and love shown by the Father will extend to the whole world.

If we fail to take up our crosses, salvation will be limited to the cities and the comfort zones of the world.

16. A cross will bring glory and honour.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Hebrews 2:9

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ... Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

Philippians 2:7, 9

These beautiful Scriptures show how glory and honour came to Jesus Christ for the *same* reason. He took up His cross!

Jesus Christ was crowned with glory and honour as you will be crowned with glory and honour if you take up *your* cross.

Jesus Christ was not crowned with glory and honour because He travelled from the north to the south of Israel.

He was not crowned with glory and honour because He preached in so many synagogues.

He was not crowned with glory and honour because He crossed the Sea of Galilee to preach.

He was crowned with glory and honour because of *the suffering of death.*

The lamb that was worthy to receive honour is *the lamb that was slain.* The lamb that was grazing peacefully in the fields did not get any such glory and honour.

It is *the lamb that was slain* that received glory and honour.

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Revelation 5:12).

Jesus Christ humbled Himself and became of no reputation, dying humbly and quietly on a cross. Because of this, God highly exalted Him.

Have you ever wondered why God is not highly exalting you?

It is important for you to humble yourself, become of no reputation and take up your cross. I see you being exalted in ministry as you take up *your* cross.

17. A cross enables you to receive power, riches, strength, wisdom, honour, glory and blessing.

Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

Revelation 5:12

Here comes the big surprise! Through the cross of humiliation, pain, suffering, loss and death comes the exact opposite of what we all expect: Power, riches, glory, strength, honour and blessing.

Is it not amazing that he who loses his life will gain it and he who keeps his life will lose it?

Do not be surprised if you become rich and powerful after giving up everything for the Lord.

I once stood in a foreign country with a surprised missionary who had given up everything to come to the mission field.

He said to me privately, “I have become wealthier than when I was an active businessman.”

“Really?” I asked.

“Yes”, he continued. “Can you believe that my wealth has increased in this poverty-stricken part of the world?

I thought I would lose everything but it’s turned out differently.”

Initially, he had rejected the idea of becoming a missionary and actually run away from the opportunity. Eventually though, he surrendered everything to the Lord and abandoned himself to the mission field.

Amazingly, this Scripture had been fulfilled in his life: by dying to himself, he had received power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour and glory!

Instead of spending your life searching after riches, glory and power, seek to take up the cross of Jesus Christ. Seeking after money in this life will only lead you to numerous temptations, snares, foolish and harmful desires and error.

Choose the way of the Master.

The way of the Master is the way of the cross.

It is time for you to take up *your* cross!

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