



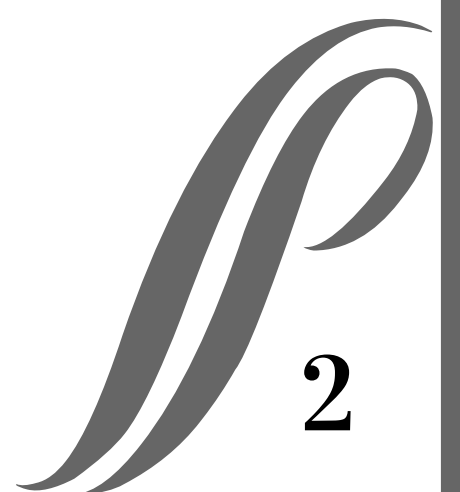
FAITH ON T'RIAL.

The Plight of the Disciple

Tim Daniels Jidechukwu

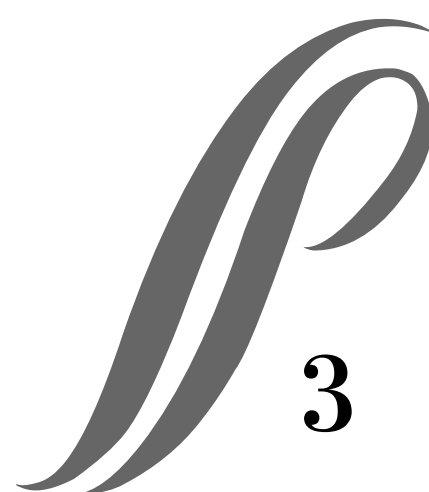


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DEDICATION





This brief piece is dedicated to every Believer in Christ Jesus who has held on strong to their faith in God even in the face of the many storms of life and the challenges that accompany them in such a time as this.

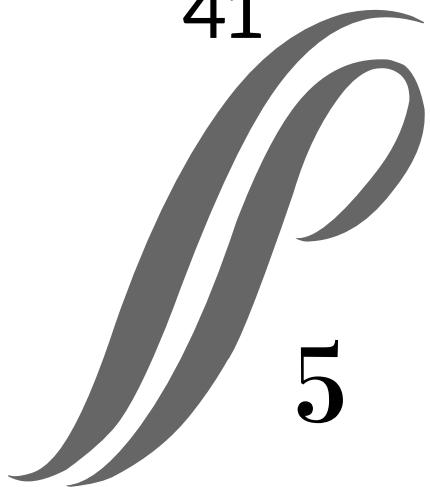
Also to as many who may be at the brink of losing their hope and faith in God with doubts as to if God is really as good as He said He is, and if His Word and promises are really worth the effort.





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PREFACE



Why do bad things happen to good people???

Is God really love and just???

Does this “Faith” thing really work???

Indeed, these are questions that probably no one has been able to provide satisfactory answers to; the first question being common both among the generality and the believers alike.

I also have had cause at one time or the other in my life’s journey to ask those same questions and I guess the same applies to you reading this.

You may also acknowledge the thoughts of many who believe their life actually began facing more challenges awhile after they decided to become followers of Christ; with some facing diverse forms of pains and criticisms all for the sake of their faith.

Sometimes the crisis takes us by surprise and many quickly become overwhelmed; especially when a major part of what we have been taught is that once in Christ, it would be one jolly cool ride all through life into eternity; with much emphasis being laid on the fact that with faith, you can keep ‘winning’ and you can keep ‘getting’, any time, and any day!

So for instance, before now I probably would not have believed that I being raised in a Christian home by godly parents, being known as the intelligent kid, and being as “spiritual” as I could at different stages in my life, and also





being as nice as I could to people; yet I had to seek for a good job for close to 7 years after my graduation, and had to go through quite a number of unpleasant experiences in life.

Do I tell first of one of those "wonderful" years, when it seemed like it was all one setback after another; recalling more vividly a particular case where burglars broke into our home in broad day light while we were all out worshiping in Church on a Sunday morning; just to return home to find that the whole house was literally ransacked and every available valuable taken away.

I would not forget in a hurry the kind of prayers we prayed that day, as my parents and my siblings were extremely agitated, and I was much more, especially because the laptops that I was using for business to survive and support the family was also stolen among many other valuables.

Unfortunately the things never got returned, but of course, life moved on and better things surely came.

Or do I tell about the series of delays and health challenges I had faced including episodes of depression, with one that almost cost me my life, and hope was almost lost on me.

I would not also forget in a hurry how I lost my best friend to cancer a few years ago. An event that hit me quite hard, not just because he was my friend, but because he is still probably the nicest human being I have ever known till date. He was indeed the kind that sticks closer than a brother. And as we would often say: he did not deserve to die. But well, life happened and life moved on.

The only hope and comfort being that he slept in Christ.





And of course as typical Africans; at some point I also nursed the "generational curse" thoughts and equally sought solutions in a number of prayer houses like many still do today. However I am not disputing the fact of the reality of the curses of life nor suggesting that prayer houses are no help.

These instances I have outlined and a few more experiences I have had to deal with at different points in my personal life and in my journey of faith is the basic motivation for this writing.

And I also believe that you reading this have also been through maybe even worse things in life.

However, I do not intend to be a bearer of bad news by this piece, nor to be a teacher of doom, but I am hoping to be able to shed some light on this critical subject as one who by the grace of God can relate to the pains of this race; and also to prove by the testimonies that faith in God indeed works!

The Bible tells us in *1st Corinthians 10:13 (NLT)*:

"But remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it."

Yes! God is indeed alive, God is always good, and God will always see His own through; even though there may be many questions that seem unanswered and many doubts that seem un-cleared.

On this matter I would be expounding further in the subsequent chapters, and I hope someone finds some answers herein.



CHAPTER ONE

THE PROMISE



Numbers 23:19 (NIV)

"God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?"

The above verse of Scripture for many would bring mixed thoughts and mixed feelings; because as humans of course we can easily number the things which God had promised us or things we have been told that God has promised His children, which we probably are not seeing their physical manifestation, and we are getting weary out of anxiety and worries.

So even though we go to Church every Sunday and receive encouragement from the Preacher with many shouts of "I receive!" and "Amen...". But for many, the emotions only lasts as long as we are within the four walls of the Church building; because the harsh realities of life gently creeps in as soon as we step out.

But then if we are to doubt everything else, it would not be the integrity of God's Word; not only because we are Believers and we have the Book as our life manual, but also because we are aware of countless instances and testimonies to the fact that the above scripture surely holds true, irrespective of the different levels of results obtained by different people.

So for many of us, we do not doubt God's existence nor do we doubt the reality of God's promises. We believe it so we keep saying it notwithstanding the look of the situation before our eyes, and that indeed is part of what real faith entails.



ABRAHAM: THE FATHER OF FAITH

Genesis 15

So taking our bearing from the one man who exemplified faith so much so that he is called the father of faith.

Like we know, God had made a promise to Abraham that he would have a son and that his seeds would be like the number of stars in the sky.

This being at a point in his life where Abraham was childless, because his wife was barren. But as we all know also, God eventually brought His promise to pass giving Abraham a son and thereafter testing his confidence in Him by asking him to sacrifice the same son he waited for for 25 years to have, of which Abraham passed the test.

Without delving into the details of the life of Abraham; His story is surely at the fore front among many others as regards the faithfulness and integrity of God, in bringing His promises to pass.

And today, many agree that the believers are also partakers of the blessings of Abraham through the righteousness they have obtained by their faith in Jesus Christ.

James 2:23 (NIV)

"...And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend."

And the later part of the above scripture may bring to mind a thought, that if being a friend of God entails going through such trial like Abraham went through, then God may probably be friendless in our generation;





As it seems like the "waiting on God" threshold reduces further as newer generations come by, with the easy and fast life being the new order.

However, thank God for Jesus Christ because of Whom God looks upon His children with mercy and favour in spite of our weaknesses and frailty.

1Peter 3:18 (AMP)

"...For Christ [the Messiah Himself] died for sins once for all, the Righteous for the unrighteous (the Just for the unjust, the Innocent for the guilty), that He might bring us to God..."

2Corinthians 1:20 (AMP)

"...For as many as are the promises of God, they all find their Yes [answer] in Him [Christ]. For this reason we also utter the Amen (so be it) to God through Him [in His Person and by His agency] to the glory of God."

COUNTING THE PROMISES

Indeed, God has made many promises of great things to us, both of things related to this present life and that of the life to come. From good health, to prosperity, to children, to long life, to peace of mind, to joy, to fulfillment, and many more promises we can find written in the Bible.

Some of these promises I will be outlining below. And of a truth, God has kept His Word and fulfilled them in the lives of many.



ON GOD'S ABILITY

Psalm 24:1-2 (NIV)

"The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters."

Jeremiah 32:27 (NIV)

"I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?"

Luke 18:27 (NIV)

"Jesus replied, 'What is impossible with men is possible with God.'"

ON PROVISION & PROSPERITY

Deuteronomy 8:18 (NIV)

"...But remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth..."

Psalm 34:10 (NIV)

"The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing."

Romans 8:32 (NIV)

"He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all--how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?"

Matthew 6:31-32 (NIV)

"...So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them."





2Corinthians 8:9 (NIV)

"...For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich."

Philippians 4:19 (NIV)

"...And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

ON HEALTH & HEALING

Isaiah 53:5 (NIV)

"...But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed."

Jeremiah 30:17 (NIV)

"...But I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,' declares the LORD..."

Psalms 103:2-3 (NIV)

"Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits-- Who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases..."

3John 1:2 (NKJV)

"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers."

ON WISDOM & DIRECTION

James 1:5 (NIV)

"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."



Proverbs 3:5 (NKJV)

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths."

Psalms 32:8 (NKJV)

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye."

John 16:13 (NKJV)

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth..."

ON MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

Genesis 2:18 (NIV)

"The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'"

Proverbs 18:22 (NIV)

"He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favour from the LORD."

Mark 10:6,9 (NIV)

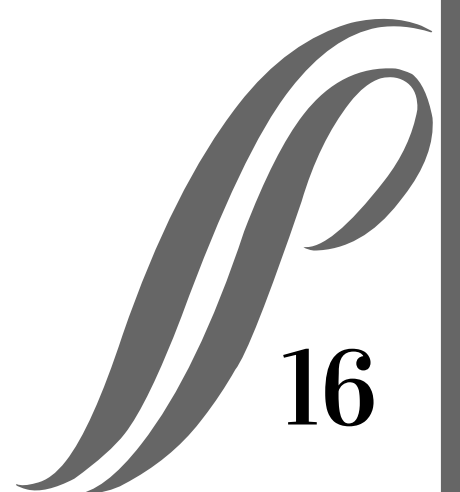
"...But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Psalms 127:3 (NIV)

"Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward."

Psalms 113:9 (NIV)

"He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children. Praise the LORD."





ON PEACE & PROTECTION

Psalm 119:165 (NIV)

"Great peace have they who love Your law, and nothing can make them stumble."

Proverbs 18:10 (NIV)

"The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe."

Psalm 91:4-5 (NKJV)

"...He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, Nor of the arrow that flies by day..."

Psalm 138:7 (NKJV)

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You will stretch out Your hand Against the wrath of my enemies, And Your right hand will save me."

Psalm 23:4 (NKJV)

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

John 14:27 (NKJV)

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."



ON FULFILLMENT & LONG LIFE

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV)

"...For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Psalms 91:15-16 (NIV)

"He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him My salvation."

Psalms 118:17 (NIV)

"I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done."

Romans 8:28 (NKJV)

"...And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

THE INFERENCE

From all of the above Scriptures which are only but a tiny collection out of the many promises available in the Bible; there is indeed no doubt that these promises are great and good, from a God who is also great and good. And no doubt these promises are true and should be the experience of as many who call upon the name of the Lord in truth through Jesus Christ.

However, we would not deny the fact that some or even most of these promises have not become reality in our lives, and we are holding on to the confession of our faith, with the hopes that someday soon we too would testify of the goodness of the Lord like others do.





But, asides the popular factor of God's time and divine appointment or “the Devil”, could there really be more to the pains and frustrations many are often faced with while waiting on God for their faith to produce the desired results?

This we would be looking into in the following chapters!



CHAPTER TWO

THE PAIN



James 1:2 (NIV)

"...Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds..."

And did I just hear someone say "Did you say what?"

Well, probably the verse above is not one we get to hear often from the pulpit; however, it is God's Word and it is written to as many who are believers.

So on to the more interesting part of this matter.

Typically someone "sells" the Jesus idea to you with many promises of the "good things" to follow; and joyfully by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Saviour, and the journey begins.

And as expected, initially everything seems to be going good and you are full of life from the energy and enthusiasm of this new life you have found in Christ. But then over a period of time, some other realities begin to set in that may distort what you initially thought the journey was all about.

So you suddenly start facing all manner of challenges in different areas of life and it seem like all hell was let loose on you. Sometimes going as far as facing mockery, isolation and rejection from the world out there or even your own family members. And the few people who you may have thought are on your side, take advantage of your kindness and meekness to treat you unfairly.

Worse still God would then expect you to keep silent and do nothing, just like Christ because the battle is the Lord's. But while you wait for Him to fight for you or avenge your enemies, you even find the enemy progressing before your very eyes.





Then you pray for a particular heart desire and somehow it seems God has put your call on the 'waiting' list or even on permanent 'hold', for much longer than you expected.

Then you begin to engage all the Scriptural principles you know for receiving answers to prayer; from praying in tongues, to praying the Word of God, to fasting, to receiving the laying on of hands, to going for "deliverance", to even sowing seeds and doing as many good works as possible to call forth the miracle, since faith without works is dead.

But yet, it keeps seeming like you are still on the same spot, with no much progress made.

Then the Enemy comes with thoughts from your past, torturing your mind with guilt, anxiety and fear from the wrongs you had done in the past; and suggesting to you that it could be the root of your problems.

But then you fight the Enemy off with the truths you know from God's Word that your sins have been forgiven and you are now a new person in Christ.

And just in-case; You go ahead to confess all the sins you can remember, as they say; both those committed knowingly and unknowingly.

But yet, the situation remains the same, and you are rather getting weaker in faith rather than growing stronger.

The Enemy comes back this time with the big one: "Don't you think this is from your family lineage? You may be under a generational curse responsible for all your miseries?"



And as usual, you take the Enemy up with the Sword of the Spirit (the Word of God) and declare to his hearing that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, and that Jesus was already made a curse for you by being crucified on the cross; so you cannot be living under a curse.

And also just in-case; You go ahead to cast and bind all curses of life, and attend as many "breaking generational curses" services as you can.

But yet, the matter of concern remains there staring you in the face, and gradually making it seem like you have no faith after-all.

Now! I do not mean to sound sarcastic with all that; But indeed at some point in my life, those were my experiences, and I am sure it may not be so different from what you or someone you know has been through or is going through.

And it is at such points in the journey that the faith goes on trial!

So you are left with two options: Either to discard the faith thing and look for what works for others out there; or to hold on to your faith and deal with whatever the consequences turn out to be.

In other words, either to resolve to die there waiting on God's time or to go out there and fast-forward the time yourself.



Then, to add more misery to your misery; you begin to hear stories around you of the "bad things" that has happened to people you look up to, and people you thought to be "spiritual giants".

Then you are tempted to say: "So what hope do I have? If this kind of thing could happen to this 'big' man of God?"

So, from stories of scandals or deceptions in the Church; to stories of the divorce or even death of a man of God. And as the day goes by, the stories keep increasing in number, with different flavours to the ensuing events.

While the 'ordinary' believer's hope is almost being snuffed out of his heart.

And the big question remains!

Could God be wrong? Or Did faith go wrong?

THE BONE OF CONTENTION FAITH!

The one word that has been defined and typified in different ways by different people. Though we may find the most popular definition of faith from the below Scriptures:

Hebrews 11:1-2 (NLT)

"What is faith? It is the confident assurance that what we hope for is going to happen. It is the evidence of things we cannot yet see. God gave His approval to people in days of old because of their faith."



Now I certainly do not have all the answers to our many questions; but one thing I am quite certain about is that many seem to have an imbalanced understanding of what faith and being a follower of Christ entails.

And this has given rise to many rather "unrealistic expectations". And like the Scripture below indicates, many then get trapped in fear, anxiety, depression and even suicidal thoughts, basically because that which they have hoped so much for has refused to manifest.

Proverbs 13:12 (NLT)

"Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when dreams come true, there is life and joy."

THE PEOPLE OF FAITH

Hebrews 11

The above Chapter of scriptures we may refer to as the faith hall of fame, because it encapsulates in summary a number of great men and women of Old whose faith in God produced for them great results.

So, in the verses you will find mentioned people like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Daniel, Rahab, and others whose faith in God worked for them and brought them to positions of honour where we still speak of them even till today.



Now! No doubt we all believers are also people of faith, and we do not expect anything lesser than what the people of Old got by their faith; especially as we are New Testament believers living under a new and better covenant, as the below verse states:

Hebrews 11:39-40 (NKJV)

"...And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us."

So, asides the fact that the reality today is that the results many have gotten from their faith doesn't seem to measure up to the level of the people of Old; talk more of superseding them; the bigger concern is why we seem to have an even smaller waiting power when it comes to God's promises.

And like I had mentioned, I do not have all the answers, but I do believe that a major cause of this is due to how this subject of faith and the Gospel is being presented by its teachers or the manner in which it is being received by the listeners.

Whichever way, we do agree that the issue is certainly not from God's end.



THE BALANCE

So, talking about the matter of balance like I had mentioned; please consider the below thoughts taken from Hebrews 11 our anchor scripture:

Do you realize that the first person listed was Abel?
Do you know the story of Abel?
Do you know that Abel died for doing the right thing?
Do you know Abel was killed by his own blood-brother?

Do you also realize that Moses was listed in that hall of fame?
Do you know the story of Moses?
Do you know that Moses did not enter the Promise Land even though He lead the children of Israel out of Egypt?
Do you know that God never told Moses he was not going to enter the Promise Land from the on-set?

Do you also realize that Samson also made the famous list?
Do you know the story of Samson?
Do you know that Samson never believed his strength could fail him?
Do you know that Samson lost his eyes in his journey?
Do you know that Samson died with his enemies?

Do you also know the story of Daniel, Shedrack, Meshack, and Abednego?
Do you know they were also referenced in that great list?
Do you know they were not completely sure that the lions or the fires would not hurt them?
Do you know they probably considered themselves dead before going into the lion's den or the fires?
Do you know if God did not save them, they would have died, and still they would be in this list?



And the question is:

Why would these people be listed in the faith hall of fame???

Food for thought!

Because often when the matter of faith is being discussed, we hear more about David who killed Goliath by faith and became king by faith; Or Abraham who got a son after waiting for 25 years by faith; Or Joseph who interpreted dreams by faith and became a prince by faith; Or Gideon who became a mighty warrior by faith even though he came from a very poor background; Or of course Rahab, who was a prostitute but helped the spies of Israel by faith and God spared her life.

But then we often skip the below verses that summarizes the thoughts I had shared:

Hebrews 11:36-39 (NKJV)

"...Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise..."

Again! Am I insinuating that God's promises to you will not come to pass? Definitely not!

But I am only trying to get us to re-adjust our definition of faith!



Faith is not just holding on and trusting God until you receive your desire; Faith is actually holding on and trusting God even unto death!

Faith is looking at the situation face to face and saying to it, like the 3 Hebrew Boys: "Even if my God does not come to my rescue, I will not bow!" (Daniel 3: 16-18)

Faith is not only saying like Job: "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come."; Faith is also saying like Job: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." (Job 13:15)

And I say this confidently because not until I got to that point in my journey, my story did not take a new turn. Though I am not not necessarily saying that every believer will go thorough the same trials in the same way, knowing that God deals with people in different ways based on His predetermined plan for their lives.

However, what I am certain of, is that without faith, it is impossible to please God; and the kind of faith that pleases God could not be the kind of faith that costs nothing!

This may shake us up a bit I guess, because like I had noted in the beginning; what we had been use to about faith is "winning" and "getting" by faith. We rarely think or talk about "losing" or "dying", also by faith.

And I can imagine someone saying: "What are you talking about? Those were all in the Old Covenant. We are in the New Testament. Christ has paid it all, we are free to enjoy."

Well then! Let's head on to the Master Himself!





IN THE MASTER'S WORDS

Taking off with the below words of Jesus Christ which is rarely quoted this days among the Believers, but which remains the truth regardless!

John 16:33 (NLT)

"...I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

As rare as it may sound to many; no where in the Bible did Jesus promise any of His followers a smooth ride in their journey on Earth.

In fact, He spoke often to His Disciples about the cost that following the ways of the Kingdom would entail for them; which surely is still applicable to us to this day.

Not also forgetting about the perilous times of the last days which Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24.

And more of His words:

Luke 14:26-27 (NLT)

"If you want to be my follower you must love me more than your own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, more than your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And you cannot be my disciple if you do not carry your own cross and follow me."

Now! Such Scriptures as the above are hardly quoted, and much of the reason is probably because we may think such would scare people away from following Christ.

But then we discover that this is also an inevitable truth that eventually surfaces at some point in the believer's journey of faith.





Then those who are only aware of the "Declare it! Receive it!" gospel suddenly find it hard to cope with their seasons of trial.

More so, this may be due to us forgetting that we did not bring anyone into the faith by our own power; so why do we feel we can keep them going in the faith by telling them only the part of the gospel that is pleasing to their ears?

There is surely no doubt about the great blessings we have in Christ, and the possibility of us seeing their physical manifestation; but then the call to be a follower of Christ entails much more than just the "good things" of life.

THE NEW FAITH HALL OF FAME

Philippians 1:21 (NKJV)

"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

The above Scripture is the watch-word for everyone who made it into the faith hall of fame in the New Testament. And indeed should be the watch-word for every believer as they go through life on Earth.

As we probably know, the above statement was made by Paul, the Apostle, who was once persecuting the Early Believers, until Jesus took hold of him and used him mightily for the Gospel.

We may not need to go into all the details of what Paul and all other Apostles and Disciples went through for the sake of the Gospel; but what I find quite amazing is why we often think that such trials cannot befall us; even though we do hear of a few stories of Christians being attacked and even killed because of their faith.



So we rarely hear from the Pulpits about the sacrifices of those martyred for the Gospel sake, and Biblical stories such as that of Stephen who was stoned to death for his faith, in the presence of the same Paul (before his conversion), who wrote a major part of the New Testament.

But of course, we know not every believer would face the same level of trials as God knows and allows only the level of trials He has given us the ability to overcome to come our way.

However, the indisputable fact is that every true believer must go through some trial at some point in their walk of faith, and the world-system will always be unfavourable and even hostile sometimes to the believer.

But the good news is that, we would not have to go through it all alone; because the One who called us will never leave us, just as He promised.

Many have indeed enlisted into the new faith hall of fame and their testimonies are acclaimed both on Earth and in Heaven. And the only thing that differentiates the normal believer from the true Disciple is the amount of inconvenience they are willing to bear and the amount of sacrifice they are willing to make, for the sake of Christ and the Gospel.

So! Am I saying that your pains will continue?

Definitely not!

My own pains of those years surely ended some day; and brighter and better days came through; So I am quite certain that yours will too.

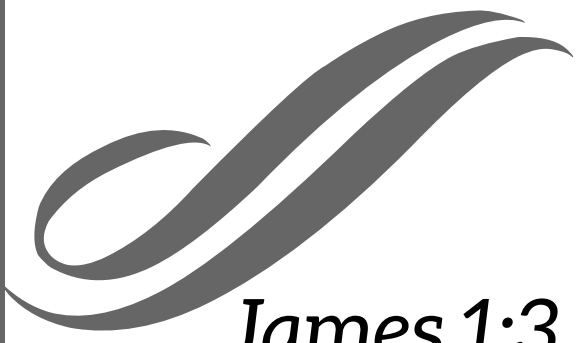
However, I would not trade the lessons of those pains for anything; because indeed there was a purpose which was greater than the pain.





CHAPTER THREE

THE PURPOSE



James 1:3 (NLT)

"...For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything..."

And did I hear someone say; "So I have to go through all this just to learn how to be patient?"

Well! That is a major part of it, but there is more actually.

Have you observed that different people have different thresholds for bearing pain, even in the natural world? And have you observed that often times if you are undergoing a physical pain in your body or doing something that is energy-demanding; the more you focus on the pain itself, the more you feel the pain?

This goes to tell that sometimes the object of our focus or the perspective from which we view the task, determines how much pain we are going to feel. This is not so far from the fact also in the spiritual perspective.

If we wake each morning and all we are consumed with all day long are the thoughts of what is not working in our lives, then there is no way our spirits would not get weary and exhausted; which has the capability to lead even to physical ailments.

Like the below Scripture puts it:

Proverbs 17:22 (NIV)

"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones."





However, on the matter of patience in faith; we would not dispute the fact that often times the endurance it demands is not the kind we could work up by our own strength naturally; because indeed, the world out there is too broken to offer us any help in our faith journey.

We can equally affirm this from the trends in our current times; where 'If it is not sharp and fast, then it is not worth the time!'.

PURPOSE IN THE PAIN

So! One of the aims of the process is not only to teach us patience, but also to build godly character in us; such that we are able to withstand the things which an antagonistic world like ours throws at us.

Keep in mind that patience is one of the fruit of the Spirit as outlined in Galatians 5:22-23.

And it is worthy of note to say that the endurance of faith can only be produced in us by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us.

When we fail to acknowledge and seek the help of the Holy Spirit, we are left with our own self-efforts which cannot keep us going long enough.

The kind of patience that is accompanied by a kind of peace which the natural man would never understand; can only be by a divine ability. The kind of peace that enabled Jesus to be in deep asleep in the midst of a great storm. The kind of peace that enabled the Early Disciples who were once fearful and timid, to become bold and consistent even in the midst of all kinds of trials and persecutions.

That kind of patience and peace could only find its source from that Great Helper called the Holy Spirit!





If not!

How do you explain about Paul and Silas who were singing praises to God with the chains binding their hands, and with no full assurance that any Angel was going to come to save them?

Or how do you explain that Paul the Apostle, after enduring series of beatings and shipwrecks, still had the time to be writing letters to the Churches to encourage them from his prison cell?

Or how do you explain why the same Disciples who went back to their fishing business when Jesus their Master was taken away; suddenly left everything and even sacrificed their own lives all for the sake of the same Man they once rejected?

Indeed, the Holy Spirit is a non-negotiable asset for any believer who is to survive in a world such as ours.

Now! For us, our trials may never get to such levels, but we all do need that fruit of the Spirit more than ever in our present days; and probably we would then discover that the cross could actually feel lighter than we thought.

TESTIMONY IN THE TEST

Luke 22:32 (NKJV)

"...But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."

The above words were spoken by Jesus to Peter, when He saw what was ahead of Peter, at a point when Peter did not fully understand the task ahead also.





And I do believe that that prayer is also His prayer for us in all the trials we face.

And like He said; a part of the purpose is to enable us to strengthen others who may be on the brink of giving up on their journey of faith; and show them by our own testimony that victory is sure in Christ.

So in my own case:

During one of those trying years, specifically in the year 2012 when I had a unique spiritual encounter; I had reached a point where my confidence in God drowned all my confidence in my own abilities, and my confidence in all the people I thought could help me.

I had also switched my focus from all the issues of life to seeking to know God more and serving Him with the abilities He gave me.

Then shortly after, things began to take a new look. And as someone would say: Just when you had reached that point where you are fine with yourself and with God, whether the blessings come or not. Then suddenly the blessings begin to show up. And it doesn't even feel so much like a big deal anymore.

Not because you longer needed them or because you are not grateful for them, but because you had found something more! Something worth dying for!

So, suddenly the jobs I had been dying for began showing up, to a point that I was turning down some interview invites; to a point that I was negotiating my own pay; to a point that I got a job that paid over double what the previous one paid, all without any human help.





Then soon enough, I got married and even blessed with a son; And the testimony was not just about that, but the fact that I did not spend a single dime of my own money for the wedding event. Something unusual that still delays young men from getting married, especially in my part of the world.

These, and many other testimonies in between, which I would not be able to explain in details here; will humble me forever, at the greatness and mysterious ways of God.

And I am definitely not trying to insinuate that 'I have arrived!'; No way!

In fact the journey is only but beginning, and I've had some down times and failed a few times too, as my humanity shows up every once in a while.

But so far so well, I can confidently tell someone, that faith indeed works!

I am not also saying that I left everything to God to do; as we know, our walk with God is that of partnership, where we have our part and God has His own part. So even in those years, I was not waiting and wasting; rather I utilized the opportunity to develop myself in various capacities as I had resources and time for. Also serving and helping others as much as I could.

Because indeed, faith without works is dead. Though at that point, I had learned not to depend on the works.

On the health challenges; God also healed me and saw me through those episodes of anxiety and depression in amazing ways.





These and more, are part of the reasons why I wrote this piece.

Because indeed God strengthened my heart in some of the toughest times of my life, and He is still my Helper with the new challenges coming my way.

And I am using this medium to reach out to encourage someone, to stay on and hang on in the faith, because God will never fail and He will always have His way. Knowing that His will, which is always good and perfect, will come to pass in our lives.

Hebrews 6:10 (NIV)

"God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them."

THIS IS NOT HOME

John 15:18-19 (NIV)

"...If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."

So, as I approach the ending part of this piece, the above Scripture from the words of Jesus is to remind us of the truths therein. That the believers are the called out ones chosen by the grace and privilege of God, to reveal God's nature and life to a dying world.

But not to become as one with the world.



Therefore, even as we journey in our faith, we should never get too comfortable with the "things of this life" and the "blessings" of God, that we forget that indeed, this is not home!

That our existence on Earth is only but a passage into something greater in Eternity. And that we are only at a brief stop point in the big picture of God's Eternal plan for us. Of which He expects us to utilize the opportunity of our time on Earth to bring Him all the praise and glory He deserves; by the manner in which we conduct our lives daily.

Nothing, and absolutely nothing else brings Jesus more joy as He watches from Heaven, than knowing that we have not lost our focus on Him Who is the author and finisher of our faith. And that we have not let go of His great commission, pursuing only our own ambitions.

Indeed! There is an account to give, and there is a reward to receive.

There is also a Heaven to seek and a Hell to skip, at the end of this great journey.

And I pray and hope that we do not give up in the middle of it all.

James 1:12 (NIV)

"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him."



THE GREAT CALL



John 6:37 (NIV)

"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never drive away."

And I am using this opportunity to ask someone reading this to please re-commit their lives to the Master, Jesus Christ, Whose arms are always open to receive as many as come to Him in truth.

I may not be able to promise you an all-sweet journey with Him, but I can promise you that you would have no regrets whatsoever if you take this decision from your heart, with a determination to faithfully follow His footsteps all the way.

And to those who may have never made such a commitment; what a great opportunity you have today to do so right now without delays!

Please say this simple prayer from your mouth and believe it in your heart; To make Jesus Christ the Saviour and Shepherd over your life:

"Heavenly Father, I thank you for giving me life. I thank you for giving Your Son Jesus to die for my sins. I thank you for paying the price for me to be reconciled back to You.

I believe in You and I believe in Your Word.

And today, I give you my life and my heart, and I ask You Jesus Christ to come be the Lord and Shepherd of my life.

I commit to follow You all the days of my life.

And I ask Your Holy Spirit to help me in this decision today.

*Thank you because I know You have heard me,
for in Jesus name I pray. Amen!"*





And you have just become Born Again!

Yes! Its that simple and you do not need to feel like it. You only need to believe it and go ahead to tell others about your new decision. And also find a group of believers to help you as you grow further in your faith.

And I am confident that soon enough, you will begin to see the difference in your life.

Please do feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions regarding this writing or regarding your walk with God. I would be more than willing to help.

Thank you so very much for staying through with me to the end of this piece.

Faith indeed works!

And yours will surely work for your good!

Act 20:32 (NLT)

"...And now I entrust you to God and the word of His grace—His message that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those He has set apart for Himself."

Jesus is LORD!

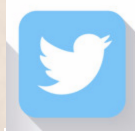


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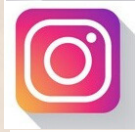
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