



NOW THAT
YOU ARE A
CHRISTIAN

OLUWATOYIN TAIWO

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Oluwatoyin Taiwo

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FOREWORD

If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?
Psalm 11:3

As this present church age draws its final breaths, we are witnesses to the fulfilment of different prophecies revealed in the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit. We are forewarned by Paul the Apostle about the departure of many from the faith as many give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. We are also warned in the Scriptures of the dangers of being tossed to and fro by diverse winds of doctrine amidst the proliferation of knowledge in the last days.

This work: **"Now That You Are a Christian"** carries a notable divine pulse. The texture of its content bears witness to the hands of the Lord upon the heart of the writer. The unmistakable simplicity of this work bears witness to the depth and the dealings of the Lord in the soul and spirit of its' author. The truth within its pages is laid out with scriptural precision. Its doctrinal clarity is a treasure for which I believe, the Holy Spirit will preserve this work and commend it to many generations.

The truths herein are set out as a lamp in these dark times for new and older believers in Christ. Many will find this book a divine companion and a token of the voice of the Holy Spirit in their earthly sojourn, which if prayerfully

heeded, will be a divine instrument to running well and finishing strong.

Oluwatoyin Taiwo is a true disciple and follower of our Lord Jesus Christ. He lives and serves in ways that makes Christ inescapable to all who come his way. I am delighted and filled with gratitude to the Lord knowing that he has been helped and will yet be helped by the Lord to serve His generation according to the will of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Keji Ajayi

The Incorruptible Seed Church

Lagos, Nigeria

May, 2021.

Opening Thoughts:

Why was this book written?

"...Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body."

(Eccles. 12:12b, NIV)

Several books have been written, and many more will be written, on various aspects of the Christian faith. The knowledge of our faith and of the God we serve is very expansive, and there is no end of substance to write about in relation to our faith. However, we cannot write simply because we have knowledge. A book must be written for a specific reason, to a specific audience, in order to address an issue or achieve a goal. So why was this book written? First, this book was written in response to a divine leading – one which came with a sense of urgency. Secondly, it was written as a simplified companion for the Christian journey – a summary of key themes crucial to a successful race in the faith. This book makes no pretense to be a treatise on the themes it discusses.

On February 21, 2021, I perceived the Lord was calling me to write a book that summarizes key themes of the

Christian faith and provides some insights into God's expectations for the believer in his/her journey. While such a book would seem to be most useful for a new convert, there are many older Christians who are missing a critical focus on certain elementary principles of the faith, and who would benefit from such a book, were they to read it. So, this book has set out to outline key principles which should define a believer's focus in daily life. As has been said earlier, it is not intended to be a course in Christian theology or a comprehensive discussion of Christian beliefs – it is but a reference handbook for daily Christian living.

This book also makes some basic assumptions – that you, the reader, have acknowledged that man outside of God is in a sinful state, and that the death of Christ atones for the sins of everyone who believes in Him. In other words, this book will only be helpful for you if you believe in the basic truths of the Christian faith. We believe that Jesus was conceived by Holy Incarnation of God's Spirit and born of a virgin, in order to be the sinless sacrificial Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. We believe His death on the cross satisfied God's just wrath on sin for all humanity. We also believe that He rose from the dead, achieving victory over sin and death and demonstrating that He is truly the Son of God. We affirm that everyone who

believes and confesses these things has eternal life, and is righteous before God.

The thoughts laid out in this book – including those already mentioned – draw on the Bible as final authority, and revere it as God’s written Word, given to guide all humanity into a personal relationship with their Creator as a loving Father. While a number of Scripture passages are quoted in this book for reference, there are many more thoughts drawn from the Holy Word of God without a direct reference. The reader is encouraged, not only to read the references in the Bible, but to develop a habit of reading and meditating on a portion of God’s Word every day. Developing a meaningful relationship with God as your Father requires a commitment to reading His Word – that is His means of making His mind known to us and guiding us in different areas of life.

This book was written conscientiously and prayerfully – it is best read with the same attitude of heart. There is little value in reading this book in order to acquire new knowledge for showing off or winning arguments. That would be a waste of time – it has no new knowledge, neither will it serve any purpose in proving the reader to be smart or knowledgeable. This book will only be profitable for those who read with an open

and humble heart, looking to understand God's expectations and His provisions for their Christian journey. It will be useful to impart grace, strengthen conviction or renew commitment to follow and obey the Lord. My prayer is that God will use this book to draw you into close relationship with Him, so you can prioritize spending time with Him daily in prayer.

This book is a contribution to the process of bringing God's people to know the Lord Jesus. Experiencing the eternal life that we receive by believing in Jesus Christ simply means getting to know the Lord better every day. And knowing Him results in being transformed in our thinking, speaking and decision making. I humbly ask that you draw your heart near to God as you read so that the Lord Himself can speak to your heart, instructing, correcting and rebuking you as is required. I pray that you will become more like Him as you read, that your heart will overflow with His love and that love will manifest in your relationship with your friends, neighbors and colleagues. I pray, that you will not only receive knowledge, you will be transformed by Love.

"...knowledge puffs up while love builds up." (1 Cor. 8:1b)

Chapter 1

The Greatest Commandment:

Walk in Love

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

(John 13:34-35, NIV)

At the heart of the Christian story is a key word: LOVE. Without love, there would be no Jesus, no cross, no faith, no grace, no mercy and no salvation. If the redemption story were a building, it would sit squarely on the foundation of love. The cornerstones would be love, and so would be the roofing pieces. It was love that brought Jesus to the earth. Love took Him to the cross, through the grave, and back into the heavens from where He came. All He did, He did for love. His summation of the law given to Israel was that it required us to walk in love – towards God and our neighbors. And so, in his final moments with his disciples, as he began to instruct them on how to live

after he was gone, one of his earliest commandments was that they love one another.

The primary duty of every believer in our Lord Jesus Christ is to walk in love. We must love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul and all our strength. Similarly, we must love one another the same way the Lord Jesus loved us. Love for God and love for others are two sides of the same coin. Neither one is possible without the other. We must therefore strive daily to pursue this high calling we have received.

There are three components in the words of Jesus quoted above that I would like us to explore briefly, in turn. First, walking in love is a commandment. Second, the standard of love is the way Jesus loved us. Lastly, walking in love (towards one another) is the true proof of our Christianity. But before we dig deeper, let us step back to understand what love is.

As with many questions concerning life and faith, we do better to ask, "What does Love look like?" than to ask "What is Love?". We may find many words to describe love, but our understanding is enriched when we are able to paint a picture of what love looks like. Love is in our actions, our words, our choices and our thoughts. Love is in deciding to put others before

ourselves, in seeking their well-being at all times. Love is offering honest and truthful opinions even when it hurts. Love is setting our desires aside so others can have benefit. Love is hoping for and seeing the best of others. Love is praying for people to make progress even when they hurt you badly. Love is thinking less about yourself and more about others. Love is not human. Love is divine. Love is the nature of God. God is Love.

Having had a glimpse into what may be correctly described as Love, let us go back to our three-point agenda.

Number One: Love is a commandment. Jesus did not encourage or advise us to love. He commanded us. It is not a good thing to do; it is the right thing to do as children of God and followers of Jesus. No negotiation, no discussion – only obedience to this great command that characterizes our commitment to follow Jesus.

Number Two: The standard of Love is Jesus. Jesus loved us so much that He laid down His life for us. And although He is our Lord and Master, He reduced himself to a position of servitude, humbling himself to a criminal death just to save the ones He loved and still

loves till eternity. And so, to walk in love, we must be willing to sacrifice our own lives for the sake of others.

Sacrifice is synonymous with love. Letting go of personal preferences, ambitions, pleasures and comforts in order to faithfully serve others is a daily practice we must adapt to as believers. This requires complete submission to the Lord and complete dependence on the grace of God. No one is truly able to love as the Lord expects without depending on His help for that task.

This leads to our last point on the passage above:

Number Three: Walking in love is true proof of our Christianity. When we are able to look at people who hurt us and bless them sincerely, or live peacefully with people considered difficult by others, then we carry proof that Christ is indeed at work in our lives, that we are following his example, and that we are no ordinary human beings – we are shown to be partakers of the Divine Nature.

We live in a world that admires the concept of love, but is unwilling to make the sacrifice to walk in love. The proponents of “love and light” are also the proponents of “put yourself first”. This is a contradiction according to the Scriptures. Jesus actually asked us to consider

others better than ourselves, odd as that may sound. We are to focus on pleasing others, not pleasing ourselves. When we understand that love is not about positive emotions but about seeking the ultimate good of others, we will be willing to put ourselves aside – starting with our ego and our desires. We will not imagine that we are supposed to be honored, but will be willing to be spited, despised or ignored if that results in the betterment or well-being of others. Our ultimate goal will be to please God by serving others.

Our call to love actually starts from loving God. How do you love an invisible God? Our love for God primarily manifests as loyalty and faithfulness to Him. To love Him means to treasure Him above all else, to honor and trust Him, even when things don't seem to add up or life doesn't go the way we want or as we expect. It means staying true to Him, serving Him regardless of what happens. It means worshipping and praising Him as long as we have breath.

Love for God was the first and primary commandment in the law of Moses: a requirement that birthed the other laws. Loving God is the highest duty any man can commit to, and it demands continually getting to know God and his desires. The more time we spend

growing in relationship with God, the more we can truly love Him.

Jesus said, *"If you love me, obey my commandments"* (John 14:15). This sums up God's expectation of us. We cannot do anything for God that He cannot do for Himself. And all that we can do, it is He who gives us strength to do. So, our show of love for Him should be obeying His commands, pleasing Him as loving children do their parents. Put differently, obedience is proof of love. If we claim to love God, we must commit to obeying His commands. This is a great truth that bears repeating: we cannot separate obedience to God from love for Him. We may get goosebumps from listening to worship music, or shed tears while contemplating His glory, but except this translates to a deliberate commitment to obey His commands, we are not really walking in the truth of love.

Obedience to His commands begins from choosing to love others. Both in the Old and New Testament, we find that the command to love others is next to and connected with the command to love the Lord. While God does not promise that people will always positively respond to our love for them, He commands us to love them anyway. After all, God loved us when there was no guarantee that we would love Him back.

And so, in Jesus Christ, we find the ultimate example of love: Unconditional love. God calls us to show His love to others, bearing with their faults and believing the best of them, forgiving their shortcomings and praying for their growth. Christ even asks us to bless those who curse us, and pray for those who spitefully use us. No greater standard has or will ever be set for humanity!

With family and friends, love can be most enjoyable and most difficult. This is because family and friends (close ones especially) never go away. While colleagues occupy a space and time in your life, family and friends occupy a space in your heart. When we are on good terms with family, life is lovely. But when we have misunderstandings or disagreements at home, life is miserable. Hence the need to double down on the decision to love our family and friends, to commit to serving them faithfully whether or not we are on good terms. Jesus gives us grace to endure the pain and sacrifice that comes with choosing to walk in love. We need to draw on that grace heavily at all times. In the end, our Christianity is mostly formed and clearly manifested through relating with our close friends and family.

We can find ourselves in very difficult positions as Christians when we pursue careers or goals that demand we put ourselves first to make progress. We must remember that the system of this world is different from and contrary to that of the kingdom we belong to. In the kingdom of God, the way up is down. What that means in practice is that our focus is on faithful service, diligence, competence and excellence. Our goal should be to deliver value for our clients, customers and employers, not to exalt ourselves. If our work calls for the need to put others down to get ahead, then we must remind ourselves of who we really are. The Christian must maintain a clear line of sight to Jesus and His eternal kingdom at all times. Everything else is temporal.

The key to grow in love is to remember that God has not called us to like, but to love. There is a difference between the two. We are often tempted to walk by the flesh, treating those we like or prefer better than others. We may at different times find ourselves in same space with people who are opposed to us (openly or secretly) or who do not necessarily match our lifestyle preferences. The call is to love them, to treat them as Jesus would. We can pray for people, treat them well and honor them without being (best of) friends with them. We can also show them love even if

they do not treat us well. Our confidence is that our life outcomes are not in the hands of men, but in the hands of God. He always causes us to overcome through Christ.

The Bible calls us to be hospitable to strangers and people who are suffering or persecuted (Heb. 13:2). The central goal of this command is for us to identify with them in their various situations, empathizing and providing relief where we are able. God recognizes our limitations, but he wants us to go out of our way to support others in their trying moments. It is important to note that this demand is placed on us by God, not the people we seek to serve. We must avoid every form of emotional manipulation from people seeking our help. The One who will judge our hearts is the Lord Himself, not man. So, everything we do, we must do as unto God and with the grace He provides. By this we will obey the command to love our neighbors, helping as God provides capacity.

The central occupation of every Christian is to walk in love. Walking in love demands, first of all, that we set our "selves" aside. It demands a radical approach to life, an approach that humbles us, that strips us of everything we would like to boast of, and subjects us to people we feel are far beneath us. Love calls us to

forgive other people's transgressions, be patient with their weaknesses, and celebrate their abilities. It calls us to be forthright in challenging wrongdoing, to present truthful perspectives and be honest in all our dealings. Walking in love will cost us, emotionally and otherwise. But it pays far more than it costs. Love leads us to victory, and provides a shield in the day of trouble. Most importantly, as we receive grace to walk in love, we become more like Jesus every day.

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

(Eph. 5:1-2, NIV)

Chapter 2

Live the Life: A Holy Calling

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

(1 Pet. 1:14-16, NIV)

When we make the decision to follow Jesus, and we receive the life of God into our hearts through faith in Him, we automatically receive a call to live a life of holiness. To be holy is not only an expectation for us as believers, it is a goal for which we are saved. The Lord delivers us from the consequences of our sins and destroys the power of sin over our lives so that we are able to live a righteous and holy life. On the one hand, He justifies us and declares us righteous because of our faith in Him. On the other hand, He calls us to live a life that manifests our new nature.

In other words, He asks us to live as who we are – children of a righteous and holy God. It is important to recognize that this is a significant component of our call, and we will see shortly why the command to be

holy was necessary. Before we proceed, let us review quickly what holiness really means.

The word “holy” alludes to an attribute of God, which refers to His separation from everything and His existence in a different space all by Himself. God is holy in that He is separated – good, just and kind in a way that is not identifiable with man. He is separate from the ordinariness of human life, and operates on a higher plane. This is why there was a need for ancient Israel to have a temple or tent built to certain specifications before He could dwell among them. In Jesus, however, God revealed his willingness to live among humans, making them whole (or clean) by His interaction with them, yet remaining uncontaminated by their impurities. Though He (Jesus) became one of us, yet He did not live like any before Him.

What does this mean for us? How can we be holy? Holiness for us means being consecrated – being separated in thought, word and deed, from the carelessness and ordinariness that characterizes human lives. In our discussion about holiness, it is very important to understand how God has already made us “holy”. Because the blood of Jesus has been shed for our sins, we who believe in Him have been totally absolved of all our sins. Through His cross, He also put

to death our sinful nature and destroyed the power of sin over our lives. Then by giving His Spirit to dwell in us, God has set us apart as those who belong to Him and live for His purpose. The very fact that we possess the Holy Spirit of God indicates that we have been cleansed and made holy – separated for God’s use.

Holiness begins with recognizing that we are the temple of the living God, and that we cannot engage in or be involved with anything that dishonors or offends our heavenly Father, who now dwells with us by His Spirit. Being holy means guarding our hearts jealously to avoid impure or sinful thoughts because our hearts belong to God. It means being deliberate about our choice of words and course of actions, not living carelessly as some do but choosing to honor God in all we do. Holiness does not necessarily limit who we interact with; it focuses on the intents of our hearts and the desires we nurture. What thoughts do we permit (tolerate) or nurture? What do we seek to achieve in all we think, say or do? To be holy means to be dedicated to pleasing only God all our lives.

Jesus addressed the question of holiness when He said *“What goes into someone’s mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them... the things that come out of a person’s mouth*

come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander” (Matt. 15:11, 18-19). He taught that real defilement or impurity begins with our thoughts and manifests as words and actions. We must pay attention therefore to, what goes on in our hearts. As the book of Proverbs 4:23 says: *“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”* If we will live holy, then we must be very rigorous about guarding the gates of our hearts.

Like the command we received to walk in love, holiness is also a commandment. Even though we have received a new nature through faith in Christ, we are still commanded to be holy. Why? Because we live in a body that remains unchanged after salvation, and we have a soul that carries forward our past thoughts, emotions and desires. Not only do we carry the memory of our un-renewed life, we also have the suggestions of our old nature recurring and present with us even though our spirits have been made new. So, we have a duty to actively reject suggestions that are not consistent with our new nature. We also have a duty to renew our minds by meditating on God’s Word – this is how we form new thought patterns and

become transformed in our thoughts, words and actions.

At this point, it is important to highlight the importance of choosing to obey God. Reading the Bible without a conscious decision to obey or practice it, is setting ourselves up for self-deception. As Christians, merely listening to (or reading) God's Word is not enough – we must be committed to doing. God's Word is a mirror that shows us who we truly are. We have a duty to make adjustments to our lives as we look into this mirror that is the perfect law of freedom. If we merely look and walk away, then we would be self-deceiving, and are not committed to truly following Jesus. But if we continue to meditate on God's Word, not forgetting what we read each time, but putting it into practice, then the Bible says we will be blessed in what we do (*James 1:22-25*).

The Holy Spirit of God is at work in us to help us live holy. But we must cooperate with Him by drawing on the help He provides as we make the right choices. He helps us to identify the right actions to take and empowers us to follow through on those actions. If we do not choose the right actions, the power available through the Spirit is of no value to us. For example, if we are faced with the choice to forgive someone who

cheated us or harbor bitterness against them, the grace of God is available to help us only as we decide to forgive. He presents both options to us, and nudges us towards forgiveness. But if because of the pain we feel or because we are accustomed to holding grudges, we refuse to forgive, then God's power is of no use to us in that moment.

I consider it necessary to restate that the basis for a life of holiness is receiving a new life through faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, a person cannot be expected to live holy except they have first been cleansed from their sins and regenerated in their spirits through faith in the resurrected Christ. This is the foundation of all expectations for holiness. The power to live holy is rooted in the transformation that a person experiences when they receive Christ into their hearts. The other side of this truth is that holiness is the only lifestyle that makes sense for one who has been saved. To live a careless, indulgent, worldly or sinful lifestyle is an aberration for a Christian. God's call to us is to set ourselves apart from the world, and set a higher standard as God's representatives on earth.

The Christian calling is not rooted in permissiveness, that is, "How much does God allow me to do?" Rather, it is rooted in consecration, that is, "Does this bring

glory to God or build up other people?” Paul echoes this message twice while writing to the Christians in Corinth (I Cor. 6:12, 10:23). We must not take advantage of Christian liberty to please our old human nature – our focus must always be on pleasing the Lord, and that is how holiness becomes our lifestyle. One choice after another, we must commit to setting ourselves apart from anything that could defile or contaminate – whether it seems mild or extreme. The occasional lewd joke or fleeting prideful thought is what the devil often uses to lure us away from being consecrated to the Lord. We must resist him firmly.

The choice to live in holiness must permeate our whole being and manifest in our lifestyle – it must be deeply rooted in our thinking, our mindset, and our decision-making process. We cannot choose what aspects of our lives will be subject to the scrutiny of the Holy Spirit, who actively leads us into a life of holiness. Holiness must apply in deciding what clothes we wear, who becomes our friends, what jokes we can make, what words we can use, what places we can go and so on. Because we live in a world full of things that can “contaminate” our hearts, it is important to “clean” our hearts daily by meditating in the Word of God, which cleanses us by replacing the thoughts and mindsets we

acquire in this world with the thoughts and mindsets of God, which we then apply to our lives.

Walking in holiness requires that we are proactive. It is not at the point of temptation that we make the choice to be holy; that choice should long predate our temptations. We prepare to live holy when we strengthen our spirits and renew our minds by meditating on God's Word and devoting ourselves to prayer every day. Even with our strongest commitment, we will be naturally unable to resist our adversary the Devil when he comes knocking (and he will surely come). But if we regularly draw on the strength the Spirit provides, we will find that we are always able to firmly resist the Enemy. We will be able to discern the right places to go, the right time to go, and the right people to company with. God's word will be a lamp guiding our hearts in the path of life.

A word on things that contaminate: Living a life of holiness demand that we be wary of the seeds that are sown in our heart. Seeds are sown through thoughts or patterns that we **see** or **hear**, sometimes consciously, often unconsciously.

These may be words, songs, pictures, videos or examples that we see or hear about. Each one forms

an image in our hearts and shapes our mindset. The enemy seeks to influence our thinking by sowing seeds that are contrary to God's word through these various means. Our job is to guard our hearts from these influences. We must watch the thoughts that come into our hearts. We must resist the enemy by staying grounded in the foundational principles of God's Word; nothing contrary to it must be permitted to flourish in our thoughts.

We live in a world where "sexual liberation" is a huge subject. People have "liberated" themselves from God's commandment of confining sex to the marriage institution, and have found themselves in all kinds of bondages, bearing in their bodies the repercussions of their sinful living. "...and received in themselves the due penalty for their error." (*Rom. 1:27b*). There is no end to the limits of lust; those who indulge in sexual sin keep thirsting for the next experience, until their sin consumes them completely.

Pursue purity, in your thoughts, in your words, and in your actions. Steer clear of those who trivialize sexual sin or indulge in it. Run away at the mere suggestion of sexual immorality, for it is a fire that destroys those who give themselves over to it.

Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

(2 Tim. 2:22, NIV)

Chapter 3

Run your Race:

A Lifestyle of Faith

For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

(Rom. 1:17, NIV)

The just shall live by (his) faith. These divinely inspired words were spoken by prophet Habakkuk in the Old Testament (Hab. 2:4) and echoed thrice in the New Testament (Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11, Heb. 10:38). They remind us that in every generation, the standard for justification before God has always been faith. Everyone who was approved by God was someone who lived by faith.

The "Hall of Faith" in Hebrews 11 reels out several names as an example to us in our own journey, that we will only prosper in our journey if we believe in the invisible God who rewards those who diligently seek Him. From becoming born again to being reunited with Christ in heaven, everything we do as Christians is

only right if it is done by faith. For whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23).

Faith is described in the Bible as a “substance”, a persuasion or conviction that things we hope for will come to pass, and that things we cannot see do exist (Heb. 11:1). Faith is an invisible possession which influences our actions and behaviors. True Christian faith is hinged on the Word of God. In other words, that persuasion or conviction comes from reading/hearing and believing the Word of God.

We become Christians when we hear and believe the message of the gospel: the truth that God sent Jesus to die and raised Him up so we can be reconciled with Himself. When we accept that Jesus’ death and resurrection was for us, then we are convinced that we have new life in our hearts even though we don’t look any different physically. That conviction is our faith.

When a person becomes conscious of their sins and repents, the next thing God expects them to do is turn towards Him in faith (Acts 20:21). No matter how strong our determination never to sin again, we cannot withstand the temptation to sin except we are transformed by God’s Spirit. That transformation cannot happen except we put our faith in Jesus Christ.

So, we must turn away from our sins, and turn to face the Lord Jesus, keeping our gaze on Him all of our days. As we focus on Him (through reading God's Word and prayer), we become persuaded of more things concerning Him and His coming kingdom. In other words, our faith grows. We are able to apply our faith to different affairs of life, and experience the life God designed for us by trusting in Him.

Although we mentioned this earlier, it is worth repeating: faith only comes through hearing of God's Word. Faith is not just a desire for the miraculous built on our imagination. Rather, it is a persuasion we acquire as we meditate on God's Word. His words reveal His reality, and as we become more acquainted with God's word, we become more persuaded about His reality until we completely believe things that we cannot see.

Choosing to live by faith is anchoring our lives on the unseen reality of God, knowing that all the things we can see were made from things unseen. Faith causes us to speak boldly about things we hope for and give thanks for things we have not received. It causes us to wait patiently for things God has promised us, knowing they will come as He promised.

A quick note on faith: it is not a means to manipulate God into giving us all we want. This is why we made the point about faith being based on God's Word, not our word or desires or wishes. Even when we desire things that God has explicitly promised us, we must be certain that we are not merely asking for selfish reasons (Jam. 4:3). Faith is the means to receive God's gracious provisions for our lives, and it works according to the principle of love (Gal. 5:6). When we trust God to provide our needs, we share with others even when we barely have enough, knowing that He will always meet our needs. While we wait for God to meet our needs, we worship and praise Him, living to please Him no matter what we lack, because walking in faith is all about living to please God (Heb. 11:6a).

One action that accompanies our faith is the confession of our mouth. Our words have to agree with our persuasion in order for there to be manifestation. Jesus and the apostles severally taught about the importance of speaking according to what we believe. As spiritual beings, we know that words precede manifestation. So, we align our speech with what we believe, not what we can see. This is especially true when we hope and pray for a particular thing. Complaining or murmuring is proof that we do not yet believe what we hope for will come. When we

believe in our hearts, our words will be marked with praise and thanksgiving to God. When we declare God's Word with our mouth and call the things we hope for into existence, we are aligned with God and are walking by faith.

The beautiful thing about faith is this: even though it is unseen, yet it manifests as actions and produces tangible results, which can be seen. For example, a man may have faith that it will rain, having received a promise of rain from God. We do not see what he believes, but we may see him hold an umbrella or plant his seeds or dig irrigation trenches in anticipation of the rain.

Ultimately, we will see the rain for which he prepared. Both his actions and the result of his faith eventually manifest, even though his faith itself is not visible. A life of faith means that we will often take actions that may not make sense to others because it is driven by things we believe (to which some might be unable to relate). But God always honors His Word and our faith in that Word.

Faith will lead to actions. If a woman has faith that God rewards those who give to the poor, she will not ignore hungry and needy people around her. She will reach

out and meet needs, not because of benefits she will get from them or honor she will get from others, but because of her persuasion that this is what God expects her to do.

As we study God's Word, His instructions and His promises to us, our hearts must always be inclined to ask what things the Lord expects us to do at every point. They may be direct instructions or promises from God's Word to act on. They may also be specific instructions from God's Holy Spirit (and they will never contradict God's Word). Our obedience to God's word is always proof that we are walking by faith.

The application of our faith to daily living is as diverse as the many dimensions of our lives, and we must strive to apply our faith in every area of life. Because faith is founded upon God's word, applying faith to life requires that we study to understand God's instructions and promises concerning us in every area. It also requires a consistent devotional life, wherein we commit all our ways into God's hands and seek his guidance on the right way to go.

When we have his promises or instructions and act on them, then we have assurance that he will back us up. This is what walking in faith looks like – applying God's

Word in every area of our life, and having the assurance that all things will work together for our God, because we acting in line with His Word.

However, because of the weakness of our human nature, we may find it easier to walk in faith in some areas of our lives than others. For example, we may find it easier to trust God for safety than for daily food. We tend to default to trusting God for areas where we think we have little or no ability compared to areas for which we feel more capable.

And while God does expect us to work and earn a living, we are no more capable to provide for ourselves than we are to protect ourselves. All our help still comes from him, either in teaching us to make profit, or giving us breath and good health to pursue our endeavors. So, we must learn to apply the faith walk in all we do. We must commit all our ways into God's hand and believe His promises concerning us so we can experience the full measure of all He has to give us.

The condition of our faith at every time concerning different areas of life may vary, and that depends strongly on where our focus lies. When we focus on our problems, challenges or needs, our faith may become **little**, or we may have **no faith** at all. This is because

faith is only fed by focusing on God, His ability and His promises. Consequently, we experience **great** faith when we have a clear revelation of God's ability to deliver us in the midst of very turbulent or troubling situations. Faith comes when God's Word enters into our hearts, and that Word births a new reality in us, emboldening us to believe things we have not seen.

Faith can also be **strong** or **weak**, an indication of its capacity to endure tests and trials. While weak faith gives up on God after some time, strong faith holds on to God for a long time.

The strength of our faith is an indication of how long we are able to wait on God. While some answers from God come very quickly, others delay in accordance with the timing of God. So, we must always be prepared to patiently wait for God, trusting that He will come through, and cause everything to work for our good (Rom. 8:28).

While we wait, it is important to demonstrate our faith by giving thanks to God for the things we expect but have not received. This is the pattern we learn from Father Abraham (Rom. 4:20), who continued to give glory to God while expecting the promised son, Isaac. The Scriptures also teach us to follow the example of

those who inherit God's promises through **faith** and **patience** (Heb. 6:12). These two virtues work together to bring us into the fulfillment of God's promises.

Patience is the hallmark of true faith. In Hebrews 11:24-27, we read about Moses' rejection of Egypt, with its riches and treasures, choosing rather to identify with God's people, though afflicted and enslaved at the time. We read in verse 27 that Moses "*...persevered because he saw him who is invisible.*" Moses' faith was built on a clear vision of the invisible, and he made an unusual choice to suffer with God's people because of his faith. He also persevered, enduring afflictions with God's people and becoming an outcast in Egypt while waiting on the promise of redemption from slavery and entry to the Promised Land. We see him as an example of faith, not just waiting, but actively believing and working with God to bring the people out of Egypt and into the Land of Promise.

The Christian journey is one long race from start to finish. In this race, more like a marathon than a sprint, we must walk by faith, learning perseverance and developing character in the process. We do not live by what we see; we live by our faith. We are not justified by the works of our hands; we are justified by our faith.

We must not pattern our lives after the things we see, hear and experience in this world. Rather, our lives must be patterned after the Word of God, which reveals the realities of the invisible realm. For *"...eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."* (1 Cor. 2:9). The only way we will experience the full plan of God for our lives is to choose to always love by faith.

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him

(Heb. 11:6, NIV)

Chapter 4

A Call to Purpose:

Service to the Lord

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms

(1 Pet. 4:10, NIV)

When we accept God's offer of salvation through faith in Christ, we are born into a new life. According to Apostle Paul, God the Father "*delivered us from the power of darkness*", and "*translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*" (Col. 1:13). Another great change that happens is an awakening of the purpose for which God called us and saved us by His grace.

God's purpose is the reason for which we are born. But purpose lies dormant and does not find full expression until we receive life from God's Spirit through faith in Jesus. New birth in Christ is the beginning of a life of purpose in God's kingdom. We were saved in order to fulfill divine purpose (2 Tim 1:9). God's grace was

extended to us through Jesus Christ so that we can carry out that divine intent for which we born.

Fulfilling purpose is all about serving others. God gives us different gifts and graces so that we are able to serve others effectively. As we exercise our God-given gifts, we are able to contribute to the lives of others in unique ways and faithfully serve while bringing pleasure to God. It is important to recognize that serving God and serving others are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they are often one and the same thing. When we give ourselves over to completely pleasing God alone, we will find him leading us to put others ahead of ourselves, and humbly serve them. Whether serving within the church or outside, our goal as believers is drawing people into a loving relationship with God as their Father, and helping them mature in it. This is the ultimate goal of all Christian service.

Everyone is called to serve in one way or another. We all have at least one gift or ability by which we can render service to others. Our service may focus on those within the church or those outside it. It may bring us popularity or keep us in obscurity. It may relate to our career/profession or be totally different from it. But there is always something to contribute to others through our actions and words, something we

are uniquely enabled for by the Lord. Our service may also empower or create enablers for others to thrive in their own service. There are all kinds of services and graces within the body of believers. What we must not do as believers is to be idle. Like Apostle Paul, we must put the grace of God in our lives to work as we run our races. We must not receive the grace of God in vain (2 *Cor. 6:1*).

Depending on our background and mindset, we may exalt some kinds of service above others. But what God measures is not the appearance and flamboyance of our service, but our commitment to the task assigned to us. What God looks for is faithfulness. In separate passages, the Lord Jesus, Apostle Paul and Apostle Peter all pictured believers as stewards/servants assigned specific tasks by their Master (*Matt. 24:45, 1 Cor. 4:1-2, 1 Pet. 4:10*). Servants are expected to be faithful to their tasks. We all must possess this attitude as believers – that of a servant who will give account of his stewardship in due time. Men may honor some people more than others because of their gift, but it is the honor of God we seek. It is He who judges thoughts and motives and sees all hidden things. Friends, stay faithful in service.

This leads us to an important point: faithful service is often hampered by the error of comparison. In Christian life and service, there is no basis for comparing any two persons in their service to God. While there is provision to learn from one another, there is no basis for weighing one person's service against another's. The Bible instructs us to spur one another to good works, but warns that it is unwise to compare ourselves to with others in measuring how well we are doing (*Heb. 10:24, 2Cor 10:12*). Comparing ourselves with others often provides a false sense of confidence or dismay in what we are doing – it either breeds human confidence or discouragement, neither of which is beneficial for our service to God. The call to serve God is unique for each individual, in scope, timing and pattern.

Another error many fall into is judging theirs or other people's service. No human should pronounce a judgment on anyone's service – it is God who judges. Judging, often an outcome of comparing people with each other, is unwise. Let us consider two passages. First, Paul says, *"Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall..."* (*Rom. 14:4*). Then he says, *"I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does*

not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me." (1 Cor. 4:3-4). So, while it is wise to examine ourselves by God's Word and make adjustments in our service as required, it is unwise to give a verdict on how well we are doing. Our business is not to judge; it is to serve.

While our service to God and others often draws on our natural gifts and talents, we must recognize that service is primarily spiritual. What does this mean? It means that we cannot depend only on our natural ability or skills to produce the results that God desires. Paul mentioned that he serves God with his spirit (*Rom. 1:9*). This means that our service firstly draws on our relationship with God. As we learn more about Him and become transformed by our interaction with Him, the way we relate with and render service to other people is also impacted. And where we are inadequate, God supplements our ability with His grace and makes us capable of reaching people we ordinarily cannot reach. In fact, God's grace thrives in the presence of our weaknesses if we submit ourselves to Him.

It is God who gives us grace to serve. Even where we are naturally talented or skillful, it is because of God's grace at work in us. God's grace enables us to develop capacity, and supplements our ability in service where

we are lacking. All of this points to why we need to continually depend on Him as we learn to serve. We must not be discouraged and pull back from serving where we think ourselves incapable – God works with willing vessels even in their weaknesses. No life limitation can hold us back. In fact, our limitations present a great opportunity to bring glory to God as others see what He can do through us in spite of our shortcomings. Let us embrace God’s grace and an attitude of service as we run the race God has called us to in Christ. Serving is what we born to do.

The fact that service is spiritual also means that the “how” is as important as the “what”. A grumpy attitude makes our service unacceptable to God. A generous heart, on the other hand, gives a welcome gift. Apostle Paul wrote that God loves a “cheerful giver”. However, we read in Genesis that God rejected Cain and his sacrifice.

When a man is rejected by God, his gifts, service and sacrifice are also rejected. Hence, service must be carried out with a heart of love. Whether sharing the gospel with an unbeliever or encouraging someone who is mourning, our actions must be driven by love. Whether you lead worship or operate media equipment, your heart must be motivated by love for

God and His people. Attitude is critical in rendering our service to God (*see Romans 12:8*).

In serving God, we must maintain a selfless attitude. We are often tempted to focus on ourselves and/or what we bring to the table. But God invites us to think of ourselves merely as channels through whom His grace can be poured out to others. We can only give because we have received (*1 Cor. 4:7*). Service must begin with a complete denial of self. This means we do not serve to gain anything for ourselves, not gain or recognition, not praise or adulation. We are only faithfully discharging God's grace poured out lavishly on us through Christ as a response to His great mercy and love. Our service ought to be an overflow of our thankfulness to God for all He has done for us, not a means to impress others or prove our superiority or importance over them.

Our service to God draws on everything we have: our personality, life, abilities and all our experiences, including joys and sorrows, successes and failures. God, in His great wisdom, often designs our service and purpose to be at the intersection of our abilities and His grace, our personalities and experiences. What do I mean? What God has called us to do, or the ways in which He has called us to serve, usually draws on the

grace we have received in the course of our life. Effectively, we become ministers of His grace, passing on to others, the grace we have received from the Lord. If we are able to speak in such a way that reveals God's wisdom clearly to people, then God is glorified. However, if we are not gifted in speech, but manifest His power by signs and wonders, again, He is glorified.

The various areas of our lives where we have received grace to be transformed become testimonies to others about God's power and grace. If we easily got angry in the past, but have now received grace to be gentle or meek, this new nature testifies to God's power at work in our lives, and opens doors by which we can minister to others. If we experienced sorrow or failure, but have now received comfort and courage to advance in life, we become living proofs of God's grace, which can draw others to the Lord. Nothing in our lives is useless or irrelevant in the course of our service to God. All we need to remember is that the goal of our service is God's glory and others' edification, not our own praise or glory. Our service draws on everything we are and all we have.

This leads us to an important point: Service to God requires sacrifice. In fact, there is no acceptable service without sacrifice. The most important sacrifice is our

body, presented as a "*living sacrifice*" to God (Rom. 12:1). This implies using every part of our body only for activities that bring glory to God. Whether eyes, hands or legs, whatever we do with our bodies must be acceptable to God because we have been devoted to him. Other sacrifices include our time, money, strength and other personal desires, possessions and pursuits we give up to please God and bless others. Every moment we spend or energy we exert in serving God can be used for something else. Sacrifice implies that we offer these up to God instead of exerting them on our personal desires.

The more we serve, the more we have to sacrifice, and the greater our reward before God as well. The beauty of service is that we are transformed in the process and greater sacrifices become easier for us to make because we are being changed in the course of our service. Our service to God builds up other people, and God also causes us to be built up through the service and sacrifice of other people. This is how the church of Christ is built up, as all believers do their own part, imparting the grace of God to one another as each one has received. God is glorified as His people, now fully focused on and submitted to Him, receive grace in different dimensions and build each other up by

sharing what they have received with each other. In this manner, the body of Christ will become mature.

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

(Romans 12:4-6a, NIV)

Chapter 5

Stay the Course:

Hope in the Coming Kingdom

Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming.

(1 Peter 1:13, NIV)

Before we dig into the subject of Christian hope, permit me to offer some thoughts on what hope means to us as believers. Generally, “hope” refers to a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen. There is often no guarantee or basis – it is often treated just as a wish. In the Christian context however, “hope” often speaks to things that God has promised us but for which we are uncertain of the timing or manner of its manifestation. The Christian hope is not without a guarantee – it is backed by God’s promises. We only hope because we do not yet have those things and cannot see or experience them firsthand. As Romans 8:25 succinctly puts it: “*But if we*

hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently" (NIV). Christian hope helps to build patience in our hearts.

Twice in the Scriptures (*Eph. 1:13-14, 2 Cor. 1:22*), the Holy Spirit is characterized as a "deposit" that guarantees our inheritance in Christ and other things that are to come. In other words, when we believe in Christ and put our hope in him, God gives us His Spirit, not as a final blessing of salvation, but as the first installment or a deposit payment to reassure us that He will complete the work he has started in us. The Holy Spirit is also described a seal of ownership that God placed on us. That is, the Holy Spirit in us is proof that we belong to God, and Christ at His return will only be redeeming those who have the Spirit in them. It is the Holy Spirit in us that will make us eligible to claim an inheritance with Christ when He comes to reign at the end of this age.

This then, is the Christian consolation: there is a coming kingdom. *"If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied"* (1 Cor. 15:19). Our hope in Christ is not bound to this sinful world; this life is merely a preparatory phase to our eternal union with the Lord. The trials of this life, the receiving of God's word, the exercise of our spiritual

senses and the working of the Holy Spirit – these all serve to preserve us until God’s kingdom and prepare us for our new life with Him. The Scripture makes it clear that Christ is preparing His Bride so He can present her to Himself without stain or wrinkle (*Eph. 5:26-27*). We also desirously look forward to the Lord’s coming, which will mark the beginning of His coming kingdom and the ‘age to come’, as we call on him to “Come!” (*Rev. 22:17*).

Throughout the New Testament, the Christian race is severally pictured as a journey of transformation leading to our ultimate perfection at the coming of Jesus Christ. It is this perfection of our faith that we now place our focus on. The early Christians eagerly and constantly looked forward to the coming of Christ with hope because it represented the fulfillment of all that they believed and desired. In the book of Philippians, this hope is aptly captured thus: *“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body”* (*Phil. 3:20-21*). This is the hope of resurrection and/or transformation of our bodies.

It is common knowledge among Christians that we expect Jesus Christ to appear in order to gather all believers to Himself. We expect him to appear in the skies, following the trumpet of an archangel. For those who have died prior to the coming of the Lord, the Bible teaches that these people will rise first, taking on a new body similar to one the Lord Jesus took after His resurrection from the dead. Believers who are alive at the time of the Lord's coming will also have their bodies transformed to become like his, a body both immortal and imperishable (*1 Cor. 15:52, 1 Thess. 4:16-17*). The hope that we will receive a new body is severally expressed by Apostle Paul, a hope that inspires commitment to following the Lord as we look forward to taking on our glorified bodies.

"For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling" (2 Cor. 5:1-2).

We will recall that the Lord's body after resurrection was not limited – He could enter a gathering of the disciples without opening the door (*John 20:19*), and He could also eat bread and fish with them by the Sea of Galilee (*John 21:10-15*). We also will receive a new

body that is not subject to sin or sickness and cannot be tired, wearied or bound in space. Paul speaks of our body both as a clothing and a tent that covers or houses our spirits. We must carry this mindset, recognizing that our real person is the spirit, and our bodies will be changed at the coming of Christ.

In the resurrection of the dead, we have a living hope: that when our friends, family and loved ones who are believers die, they are merely resting in the bosom of the Lord, to awake again on the Lord's Day. We are confident that we have not lost them forever, but will be united with them again when the Lord Jesus appears to gather his saints to himself. This hope is a great consolation in the midst of sorrow when we lose beloved ones. This hope is also why we passionately intercede for and share the truth of the gospel to everyone, knowing that this life is a passing phase before the next in which we will make a permanent abode with the Lord or without Him. Our desire is to spend eternity with the Lord, and to share that future with as many loved ones as possible.

Another major experience we look forward to in the coming kingdom is the revelation of Christ, and the experience of meeting him face to face. Apostle John says *"when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we*

shall see him as He is" (1 John 3:2). We will experience the full glory of Christ at His appearance, and then we will be transformed to become as He is. Everyone who has seen Christ in a vision, including Bible authors, have been overwhelmed by the experience, and came away transformed. The Lord is wondrous to look upon, and his presence inspires awe. Seeing him is an experience we will never want to come to an end. All past troubles will be forgotten, and we will be in permanent fellowship with Him. As Paul puts it, "...*And so we will be with the Lord forever.*" (1 Thess. 4:17b).

In addition, Apostle Peter reveals there is a "*grace to be brought to us when Jesus Christ is revealed at his coming*" (1 Pet 1:13), which he encourages us to set our hope upon. The Bible clearly reveals that out of Christ's fullness have we received "*grace for grace*" (John 1:16). And so, the coming of the Lord will reveal a new dimension of His grace to be made manifest in His saints. There will be new songs of worship and an endless manifestation of His power as we rule with the Lord while he decrees judgment on the nations of the earth for their wickedness. We will also judge angels (1 Cor. 6:3). At that time, our salvation will be made perfect as we experience eternal life in every sense of the word – perfect knowledge of, and union with the Father and the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:3).

There is an interesting reference in the book of Hebrews chapter 6 to the “powers of the age to come”. The Bible states here that some have “tasted” of these powers. As mentioned earlier, the gift of the Holy Spirit is a precursor to the full inheritance we will receive in Christ. And so, the “powers of the age to come” is a reference to the full of experience of being united with Christ in spirit, soul and body – having a spiritual body, experiencing perfect health, possessing un-abating strength and perfect understanding of the Godhead, possessing the Spirit without measure and so on. As the Scripture says, “...*What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived, the things God has prepared for those who love Him, these are the things God has revealed to us by His Spirit*” (1 Cor. 2:9-10).

Our hope in the coming kingdom also extends to the dimensions of knowledge that will exist at that time. In 1 Cor. 13:12, we read that our knowledge will be complete and perfect at the coming of Christ. At that time, when tongues and prophecies are no longer needed because we have been made perfect, our knowledge of Christ and of all things will also be perfect. There will be no questions because we will know fully, just as we are fully known. The things which confuse us today will be made clear as we stand

in the presence of the Lord and gaze continuously at his face. The secrets of all men will be made open as God will judge all things through the Lord Jesus Christ and reward each person according to their works, whether good or evil. Even those who crucified and despised Christ will all see him glorified.

Herein lies a great contradiction of the coming kingdom – it is greatly anticipated by God’s people (the saints) who will find relief and salvation from all their troubles, but greatly feared by the enemies of God who will suffer divine wrath and punishment for their evil deeds and disobedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We who love the Lord eagerly await His coming, expecting a reward and looking for the glory of the Lord and his victory over the nations. But those who live in sin and reject the mercies of the Lord have nothing to look forward to but everlasting punishment and judgement from the Lord whose gracious love they rejected. (2 Thess. 1:5-10). The appearance of Christ will be the culmination of our Christian joy. No wonder Paul says “...*Christ Jesus (is) our hope*” (1 Tim. 1:1).

We have said a lot about the coming kingdom. But what does it all mean for us today? What does the knowledge that God’s coming kingdom will wipe away

all tears and bring an end to all sorrow do for us today? It inspires endurance in our hearts, gives us an eternal view of things and helps endure the trials that beset us in this world. We persevere, knowing that God is bringing all things to a perfect conclusion. Hope in God's coming kingdom also produces joy in our hearts as we picture the beauty and perfection of God's new heaven and earth, devoid of conflict, pain, sickness and sadness. We can rejoice in God's salvation plan and the privilege to be a part of it, knowing the price has been paid and the stage has been set for us to reign eternally with our Lord and Master.

"Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others"

(2 Cor. 5:11a).

Staying the course in the Christian race demands that we have a continuously renewed fear of and honor for the Lord. We have no doubt that He will carry out his judgment on this sinful world. Neither will He be impartial to anyone in His judgment. So, we work hard to persuade others to accept Christ's offer so they can escape God's wrath and receive eternal salvation. We also run our own race with a singular focus on Jesus, who pioneered and perfected our faith. No matter

what struggles, trials or temptations we have to endure, our journey will be prosperous if we keep our eyes focused on Jesus, who endured the cross and came out victorious on the throne (Heb. 12:1-3).

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire."

(Hebrew 12:28-29, NIV)

Closing Thoughts

You are not alone

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us

(Heb. 12:1, NIV)

I want to tie up the thoughts we have discussed in this book with a final reassurance: You are not alone! On at least three dimensions, we are not alone as we run the Christian race. From a heavenly perspective, we are surrounded by “a great cloud of witnesses”, so many saints who have walked in faith, triumphed and gone on to find rest with Christ. From an earthly perspective, we are also surrounded by a great body of believers all over the world, human beings like us who believe in the Lord Jesus and are committed to walking with and serving him all their lives. From a spiritual perspective, we also have the Holy Spirit who lives in us and guides as we strive to please the Lord. This knowledge should give us great comfort and consolation as we live from day to day.

Let's talk briefly about our "great cloud of witnesses". In Hebrews 12, we encounter the so-called "Hall of Faith", which provides us with several examples of people who have done great works or endured great affliction by faith. They are set forth for us as examples, people whose stories we can lean in and glean from in our own journey. Their victories affirm that we can overcome, because we walk by faith in the same God. Their weaknesses and struggles remind us of our need to depend on God throughout our journey. Having completed their own races, they now sit in the grandstands, cheering us on as we run our own race, and reminding us of the need to persevere and complete the race marked out for us on this side of eternity. Beyond is another reality we eagerly look forward to.

Just as present with us is the earthly family of believers, consisting of a diverse number of people across the world, whose lives and stories we can connect with as we live in this age. We may struggle to relate with ancient believers because they faced different challenges. But even in our day, before our very eyes, people are living out the life that Christ intended in different situations across the world, some in more difficult situations than us, and others in the very same set of circumstances we find ourselves in.

We can encourage and learn from each other, regularly spending time in fellowship with a local body of believers as the Bible teaches (*Heb. 10:24-25*) so we can sharpen and strengthen one another. We must never fall into the trap of going it alone. We need other believers in our journey.

Finally, we have the Holy Spirit of God living within us. He is the manifestation of God within us, and the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to be with us always until the end of the age (*Matt 28:20*). He it is, who produces the divine influence in us, causing us to manifest God-like character through his teaching, instruction and guidance. This is why we call godly traits "fruits of the Spirit". It is the same Spirit who empowers us for spiritual service and produces divine manifestations through our lives. He enables us specially in different ways so that we can serve effectively, blessing others and pleasing God. Again, many divine giftings are termed "gifts of the Spirit". This same Spirit brings us consolation in distress and great hope when we are troubled – reminding us that all things work together for our good.

So, whether you look up, look around or look within, God has surrounded us with great company in the race He has called to – not leaving us to fend for ourselves

but sending help in many forms. Although no one except the Lord Jesus lived a perfect life worthy of emulation, we will find lots of instruction and encouragement from looking at the saints of old and other believers – past and present.

Ultimately, we will find great strength from the Spirit within us to replicate the pattern that Jesus sets as an example. Even when we fall short, the Holy Spirit will renew us and remind us of who we are, and whose we are. He will remind us of the Atoning Sacrifice, the Blood of the Covenant, and the Victory of the Cross, encouraging us to pick up our race and run to please God.

Friends, I now commend you to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ at work in you, reminding you that you are eternally loved by the Father and consecrated by His Spirit who dwells in you. God has brought us out of darkness into the kingdom of His Dear Son; paying for our lives with the precious blood of His Beloved Son so that we can be His and dwell with Him forever. Let us be intentional about living for the Lord Jesus, just as He was intentional when He gave His life on the cross to save us from our sins. Let us draw upon the wealth of heavenly resources deposited in us by the Spirit, not ignoring God's grace but putting it to work by

choosing to walk in love, living holy and through faith serving others with our hopes fully set on the kingdom that is to come. I wish you Godspeed!

Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

(Acts 20:32, NIV)

About the Book

What does it mean to be a Christian? How should a Christian live? How should my faith impact my life on a daily basis? Is there a different expectation of me as a believer in the 21st century? In a world like ours, full of increasing perspectives and opinions, there is a need for answers that depend, not on human intellect, but on Scriptural guidance. In a forthright and clear manner, this book sets out a few foundational principles that clearly describe God's expectation for His children as captured in His Word.

While this book speaks briefly about how to become a Christian, its main focus is on how to live as a Christian. It examines some of the fundamental, yet critical pillars of the Christian life - love, holiness, faith, service and hope - in that order, journeying from the present to the future of every believer. Written in clear and crisp language, this book re-echoes timeless biblical truths in a way that leaves the reader without confusion on what the Lord through his Word expects of the believer. The truths shared are by no means 'new', yet they will challenge you and refocus your heart in seeking to walk according to God's pattern and expectations in every facet of life.

Now that you are a Christian is designed as a travel companion and reference manual for any Christian who sincerely wants to apply their faith in daily life and grow to become more like Jesus in all they do. More importantly, the words contained in its pages are presented in the light of modern day realities the believer is confronted with. This book highlights how to live ready for Christ and calls its readers to action in the five areas of the Christian faith it addresses.

About the Author



Oluwatoyin Taiwo is a practicing Christian with a desire to impact the body of Christ through the instrumentality of the pen. A first-class graduate of Chemical Engineering from the University of Lagos, he is a seasoned professional with nearly a decade of practice under his belt.

Committed to the teaching of sound biblical truths with simplicity and accuracy, Toyin currently serves in his local church as a Sunday School teacher. As an undergraduate student, he also served as President of UNILAG Joint Christian Fellowship (UJCF) and Lagos Varsity Christian Union (LVCU).

Toyin is passionate about excellence, values integrity, and treasures humility. Toyin loves to watch football, enjoys traveling, and blogs at toyintaiwo.com. Married to Joy Taiwo, together with their sons Lemuel and Samuel, they make their home in the coastal city of Lagos in Nigeria.

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