

What Fits A Man For Leadership

...Illustrations from the life of JOSEPH

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As a practical illustration of the cup and the baptism that fits a man for spiritual leadership, and for placement in the divine scheme of things in God's programme, we shall examine the path that brought Joseph from being a mere dreamer unto becoming a prime minister in Egypt.

Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob, through Rachel, his favorite wife. He was a long awaited child of Jacob's old age. He became the apple of his eyes, moreso as Joseph lost his mother when he was barely two years of age, at the birth of Benjamin, his only brother. He was reared up by his step-mother (possibly Bilhah). Jacob made for him a coat of diverse colours and protected him much from the wickedness and cruelty of his half brothers who were several years older than him. He was pampered with care and affection. He was shielded from any hard work, though he was feeding the flock with his brothers. Jacob was concerned about his safety, lest any untimely death should claim this little gem of his, that was the comfort of his heart after the death of his darling Rachel, for whom he spent twenty one years of his precious life to secure in marriage.

On the family side, Jacob's exceptional love for his son, Joseph, was not hidden. It created envy and violent hatred for Joseph in the hearts of his older brothers. Their father, Jacob, preferred him to them all and treated him like the only true son, while others were like bastards and mistakes. This situation carved a hard path for Joseph so he could not freely play with his brothers. His only friends were his father and his little brother, Benjamin.

Jacob, his father, was Joseph's only close confidant. He reported to him, the evil that several of his brothers did on the field. It was either havoc to other people's farms, which they ravaged with their cattle, or the women they molested while out there and such likes. (Read Gen. 37:1-4).



Growing up in a polygamous house, without his mother, was a big challenge for Joseph. He had no bosom to cry unto. He only could cry to a father, who was actually the father of all. Joseph could have developed a resistant heart against his brothers and refused to stretch a helping hand to them... but it seemed Joseph had an encounter with God that changed his life and values. The Bible says:

“Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers: and they hated him even more.” Gen.37:5.

At age seventeen, Joseph began to have dreams, not about girls and worldly things but about God.

Though he grew in an environment of constant rift and conflict. His dreams revealed a heart pursuing after God and His purpose. Reuben was a loose man, who could sleep with his father's wife; Simeon and Levi were so cruel and wicked that they could lead a revolt and cause man-slaughter; Dinah was such a loose girl that went out as a harlot. But Joseph feared the LORD and rather prayed daily to know God's will for his life.

For Joseph to keep having such meaningful dreams; progressive dreams and unforgettable dreams, he must have set his heart at knowing the LORD more and more personally and intimately. It is true that God only reveals His secret to ~~themekard low ly in hat~~ **“If you seek me diligently, you shall find me” (Jer. 29:13)** is a clear principle of how God deals with men in all generations. Joseph's dreams proved that he had a personal altar, where he communed with God regularly.

Joseph, being very close to Jacob at this, time may have heard Jacob recount the testimonies of his encounters with God and how he wasted several of his own years. Jacob may have told him of his first encounter at Bethel (where he dreamed and saw a ladder set up from earth to

heaven). He must have told him of the “**man that wrestled with him all through the night till the break of day**”, which resulted in his permanent dislocation. Jacob must have told him how the Peniel encounter changed his name and his character. He must have told Joseph how he cheated his brother, Esau, and how God delivered him from Esau’s hands, not as a strong, energetic man this time, but as a broken man, leaning upon a staff. Joseph must have learnt his first lesson of walking with God from Jacob, who by then had become such a tender man, worshipping God leaning upon a staff. He leaned on God for all his support now. Joseph learnt the act of praying from Jacob. He began to cherish God and every word that was dropped in his heart. In this present age, we would call these, ‘series of dreams’. He was innocent about it. He shared these dreams with his brothers who were much older than him and who could guide him into its meaning. He did not expect them to react as violently as they did.

“Now Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers, and they hated him even more. So he said to them, Please hear this dream which I have dreamed; “They were binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.” Gen. 37:5-7.

The way Joseph told his brothers revealed a humble heart. He did not draw any inference, or any implication. He sought for counsel and interpretation from men who by their experience ought to know what God was saying to him. They seemingly interpreted the dreams but with much hatred in their hearts for him. His brothers saw in those dreams a destiny for Joseph, which they were not comfortable with. They saw what God was saying about their brother and only decided to destroy him with the divine purpose.

“**Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?**” was their response. They did not seek the face of God for the purpose of God over their brother’s life; neither did they ask God “**why will our sheaves bow down to our brother’s sheaf?**” They simply saw the negative effect of their brother’s dream and were incensed to scuttle it and destroy the divine purpose and provision for their future deliverance. Even Jacob, his father was baffled at the consistent and progressive emphasis of Joseph’s dreams.



The hostility of his brothers did not stop Joseph from dreaming yet another dream. He sought God’s face more and more. And God continued to expand the scope of the vision. It was not to be in the matter of the sheaves on the field. It was not just his brothers bowing to the ground for him, “**the sun, the moon and the eleven stars bowed down to me.**”

Joseph was growing in communion. The vision was becoming clearer to him by the day. God was enlarging his heart to see the divine possibilities ahead of him in God’s programme for the nations. The sun, the moon and even the eleven stars would pay obeisance to him in the future. At seventeen, Joseph was being drawn by God into the continuation of the vision He had given to Abraham, his great grand father. Though Joseph would not provide the sensation lineage, he had a role to play in preserving the royal seed. His ministry in Egypt would preserve the young nation, till the iniquity of Moab was full; and it would prepare a friendly Egypt as the place to hide the young Messiah-king, “**Till all who seek his life have been taken out of the land**”. (Please read *Matt.2: 13-15*).

To Joseph, the sun, the moon and the eleven stars did not just refer to his immediate family. Subduing his immediate family was not of any interest in Joseph’s heart. He was not ambitious to rule over his brethren. “**Ruling**”, “**Reigning**” “**Dominion**” however, were all his brothers could see in his dreams. Joseph only saw the preserving of life. It was a divine covering for shepherding and for provision. Sun, moon and the stars from different nations under heaven would bow to Joseph’s wisdom and administration. His words would make men of many years of experience to submit and take cue from his wisdom, if they must survive the days of famine. All of these were in God’s plan for Joseph. And they were all meant to fulfill the greater purpose of God for the nations in Christ Jesus. He did not find fellowship with his brothers. He only received a rebuke from his beloved father, but he did not abandon the heavenly vision.

Having laid bare the background of Joseph and his dreams, what we must now focus upon is how he translated from being a mere dreamer to the leader he saw afar off in his dreams. He dreamed as if it was a stone- throw away.

He dreamed as if it would immediately happen the next day, when he would be on the field with his brethren. The “**eleven stars**” could only mean his eleven brothers, who were in no way stars at the time, was what his immediate mind could comprehend.

This is how it is with every man, to whom God has given a vision to fulfill in life. It usually begins in their father’s parlor (so to say). And it would appear as if it is a “**victory over the little house hold**”. Men may even quarrel with you, because all they see is the immediate environment. Some quickly give name to their vision before its meaning and dimensions become clear to them. Others build quick structures to contain it and so limit its fulfillment.

Do you know it never occurred to Joseph that there was “**an Egypt component**” in it all? He did not see the valleys in between the mountaintops he saw in his vision. Yet, every mountain top vision includes the valley, which is generally invisible. In your dreams, you are always brought to a mount like “**Pisgah**” to behold the land from afar off. It is easier to see from a mount only the top of another mountain. You can only see a range of hilltops, not knowing there could be gullies and valleys of several kilometers of depth and width in between. You may probably not see the process of climbing the steep hills. Even the thorny bush on the path to the mountaintop appears like ‘**carpet grasses**’ when viewed from afar off. It looks like beautiful scenery, good only for photograph from a distance. The closer you come to the vision, the more the reality of its inaccessibility by ordinary means dawns on your life. You will see beautiful water falls whitish and sparkling like silver afar off, not knowing they are the gullies without bridges you must need cross, if you will arrive at the fulfillment of the vision God has shown you.

Joseph, not knowing what his dreams entailed must have said “**O Lord, let Thy will be done; I am willing to be a vessel in your hand, at all cost. Do not mind my brothers; go ahead with your purpose for my life.**” He gave God the unconditional right to mould him for the leadership role he must play in his generation. He had to keep the fantasy of the dreams away but stored safely in his heart; to face the process

(rather the processing of his own character) of becoming a vessel in God’s hands for the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant.

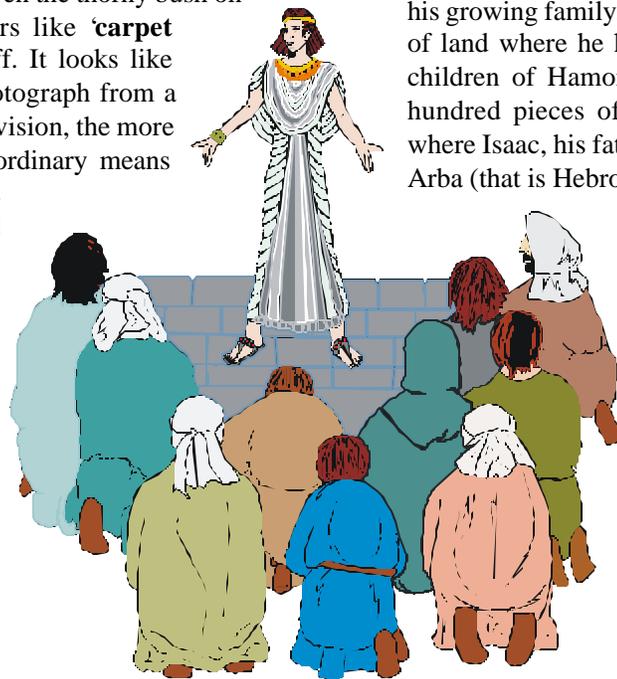
“Then his brothers went to feed their father’s flock in Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them. So he said to him Here I am. Then he said to him, please go and see if it is well with the flocks, and bring back word to me. So he sent him out of the valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem.”

Gen.37: 12-14.

Here in this short narrative, we find the beginning of God’s training and preparation of Joseph. It does not appear divine. It seems an ordinary thing, but this is how God works severally. He uses ordinary situations of life to weave out the divine purposes in our lives.

To Jacob, Joseph was just to go and “**bring me word**” again. It was not a journey that would keep Joseph over the night. Shechem was the place where he first settled before he moved his tent to the outskirts, to give room for his growing family. He actually bought the parcel of land where he had pitched his tent from the children of Hamor, Shechem’s father, for one hundred pieces of money. He later moved to where Isaac, his father, was at Mamre or Kirjath Arba (that is Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt.

To Joseph, it was just a short journey from Hebron (the family base) to Shechem their farmland. He did not know it was the beginning of his journey to the mountain he had seen in his dreams. If he knew it was a long journey, he would have packed boxes and traveling kits. There would have been elaborate preparations: donkeys and camels to bear his goods and a retinue of servants to serve him and keep him comfortable. There would have been a special send-



Joseph the a m zehndoom h eleven
stars uddnh p h i n s m e d i a t e
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forth party at home and he would have **‘launched’** his **“Dreams ministry”** in the company of men in Hebron. Egypt would not have been the place of choice, knowing how his great grand father almost lost his life and his wife there. Even if it was, it would have been to quickly go down there, make some money and get on the way unto establishing **“the ministry”** as many of our men today think of just dashing to America to quickly get some dollars to come and start their ministries in Africa in a grand way, and so got hooked and derailed with temporary pleasures. The most crucial thing that Joseph did, which placed him at God’s disposal to be taken to the **‘Quarry of Egypt’** was to say **“Here I am”**. Though it appeared he said it to Jacob, but in essence it was to the Big Hand, behind Jacob’s hand; it was to the Big Voice in Jacob’s voice. **“Come let me send you to seek the welfare of thy brothers”**, was the word. It was as ordinary (as it sounds) but that was the prophetic commissioning of Joseph’s life. It was the last command from Hebron. As he went and wandered in the fields it became the watch- word on his lips. To every question; **“What are you seeking out there? Where are you going? Why are you here?”** that came his way either from outside or inside of him, the ready answer on his lips was **“To seek and search out the welfare of my people”**.

To become great in God’s hands, it is not greatness you must seek. It is service, and the service of the brethren, even if they be presently hostile and unco-operative. The commission Joseph responded to was not a search for the **“Rule, the reign and the Dominion”** which his dreams portrayed. It was a search for the welfare, the upkeep, the preservation of his brothers. He carried some toasted bread, fresh drink, some soup from him for them to be refreshed on the open field. It is important to note here, what would look like a coincidence... but it is a divine recurrent principle for all who became great in God’s hands.

The journey that brought Saul, the son of Kish, to the anointing as the first king of Israel was not a search for greatness. It was not a desire to see Samuel for special prayers to be made a king. It was a search for his father’s donkeys that were lost. It was not even the search for his own personal asses. He was going from one field to another, with dry, parched bread and no fresh water in their jar and no money in his own purse, searching for his father’s donkeys. This was the way God led Saul to come into a divine purpose for which heaven was preparing him.

David did not seek greatness, or a show of the fresh anointing on his head, when he went to the battle field, where Goliath had been harassing the people of God. He was sent by his father (out of Bethlehem) to seek the

welfare of his brothers and to take some victuals to them on the battlefield. It was that journey that brought him to the limelight. It was that journey that started him off on the path and process of becoming the king of Israel after Saul. It was that journey that took him to the quarry of his own training. It took him to caves, fields, Philistia, Jebus and all that constituted his preparation, before he came back to Hebron, where he was crowned king after many years. David carried the anointing of a king on his head, but he would not become one till he had slept in caves, acted insane, escaped javelins, was tested in the matter of forgiveness, in the matter of spoils of wars, and in the matter of obedience.

Each one only responded to their earthly fathers **“Here I am, send me”**. This is the second matter I must point out here. If it was God, who stood and said, **“come let Me send you”**, it might have been easier; but it was men they first obeyed. The step unto becoming great in God’s hands may begin for most of us by yielding only to the instruction of fathers (physical parents) or fathers in the faith: leaders and disciplers that God has placed over our lives.

Several young men of our day desire to be great. Yet, they quickly pull themselves away from the “sending of men”. They would serve no man. They have never been under any hand. They sprang up just like banana tree and began to go in pursuit of what they perceive is God’s call on their lives. They die with their first fruits. They are bundles of succulent stem, that got rotten unto the earth, once the first fruits was harvested by men. They can never become pillars in God’s house. Their fruits cannot be preserved for a long season. They are the immediate consumables, otherwise they are wasted.

Beloved, it takes time to prepare “durables” but “disposables” only need a crash programme of preparation. “Vegetable” and “bananas” grow so quickly off the ground with no deep roots under. They spread so fast around, but they have no capacity to grow tall without bending to the winds. They are not used for landmarks. I wonder what you hope to become. Many rose so quickly and so soon have become forgotten. They built works and ministries that appeared imposing at the time, but today are packed aside. Rottenness within their own lives actually destroyed them.

As we study this journey of Joseph, it is imperative for you to listen to God! It is important for you to check if you have said **“Here I am”** to God, through your disciplers and the hands God has appointed to mould you into the shape and size He has ordained for your life.

The first pre-requisite is to say, “**Here I am**”. It is to present your life as an available material for the Potter to work upon. It is to become free and freed from all other entanglements, so God can freely deal with you as He sees it meet. Can you once again say with the Hymn writer...?

*“Behold me, Saviour at Thy feet
Deal with me as Thou seest meet;
Thy work begin, Thy work complete,
And take me as I am”*

When you say, “**Here I am**”, you are willingly yielding your neck to the yoke. He says “**Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me;**” it means you are giving Him a free hand to cut and join whatever He sees fit in your life. He is free to choose the mode of training. He is free to choose the venue and the processing plant. He has the choice of the Black smith and the hammers to use. He chose Midian as the quarry for Moses and Jethro as the Blacksmith. The cave of Adullam with the Philistine country was the training ground for David’s further making. Paul must come under the hand of Barnabas along with the “Desert of Arabia College of suffering” that his natural energy might be broken.

To me, this “**here I am**” is the basic thing I need to contribute to the making of my life. After that, I am no more bothered by what I become. I know whom I believe. He is able to keep and make good whatsoever I have placed in His hands. It was the most difficult thing for me to do at that time. I was prone to say “**Here I am**” by mouth but in actual practice to act “**I am coming, sir. Wait till I have finished all I am doing first**”. This was the delay in my growth with God. It is the interruption to what God would have made of me beyond where I am today.

When you say “**Here I am**”, it is like the ‘**consent form**’ every patient fills for the surgeon before he/she is wheeled to the Theatre for a surgical operation. To confirm that ‘**consent form**’, he signs again and yields to the ‘**Anaesthesia**’ – which puts him to a deep stupor. He becomes so released to the doctor, that he could be turned anyhow, anywhere, while the doctor cuts, sutures and examines all he wants. Men give this unconditional surrender to human surgeons, but to God we would struggle. We seem to suspect Him. We feel He is not capable of handling our lives well enough. We are afraid that He may damage our lives.

Friend, have you said, “**Yes, Here I am** “to God? Are you willing to bow your knees now and just hand over to Him, so He can begin His good work in you? The beginning is what matters. Leave the ‘ending’ with Him. All

those He had processed before, are the enduring vessels we read and speak about today.

I must say to you, saying “**Here I am**”, for me, is the point of entry into my rest. It is so sweet to rest in His Almighty hands. Leave the result with Him. I am a living proof. He has not wasted my life. He will not waste yours either. Joseph said, “**here I am**” and so the processing started from that moment. It took over thirteen years before the aroma of what God was making of him began to ooze out.

“So he sent him out of the valley of Hebron. And he went to Shechem... and there he was, wandering in the field...” Gen. 37:14b-15a.

Simple, but very significant! Hebron meant a lot of things to Joseph. Hebron was where he had grown and lived for the first fifteen years of his life. It was the familiar country home for him. The graves of his patriarchs were standing there. The ancient altars stood there. The altars of Abraham, of Isaac and even of Jacob, which were foundation to his own spirituality and communion with the invisible God, were all what made Hebron significant to Joseph.

In Hebron, Joseph had his own personal room. He actually lived in the special apartment built in honour of Rachel. As Isaac dwelt in his mother’s tent (after the death of Sarah), so was it the custom for Joseph to dwell in Rachel’s tent. Hebron was where his wardrobe of tunics of diverse colours stood. Hebron was a valley, surrounded by hills, a beautiful location both for comfort and for security. (Note that Hebron later became part of Jerusalem). “**As mountains surround Jerusalem...**” (*Psalms 125:1-2*). It was a place of constant water supply. It was also secluded from the inter mixture of the Canaanites then. It was an exclusive resort for Jacob and his children.

For Joseph, Hebron was not just a place. It was a relationship. Hebron meant ‘**a bosom**’ of love for him. It was the bosom of Jacob. Whatever his brothers did to him on the field, Joseph rushed home to this Hebron bosom of his father. It was the bosom of care and acceptance. Hebron was also a place of divine communion for Joseph. There, he dreamed his great dream. He had a spot in Hebron where he met with God regularly. It was the sanctuary he first knew in life.

Hebron was also the bosom of affection for his only full brother Ben, whom he fondly called “Ben-Ben”. He cuddled that boy as the only object of his love. He could not

pour his love on the senior brothers who could not speak peaceably to him because of envy and jealousy. Every man needs some one to love and some one who loves him. To be a balanced man, you must receive love and give love.

To be sent out of the valley of Hebron and to wander about in the open fields, under the scorching heat of the sun, was a harsh beginning for Joseph. It did not dawn on him at first that Hebron was out and gone for him at least for many years to come. He must have thought, he would be gone for only few hours. He did not pack up his Hebron property. He took nothing out of Hebron except the God whom he had now learnt not to localize in Hebron. He kept company with God even on this journey and turned often to Him in his heart at every junction, for direction.

Hebron was pleasant, but it was not the quarry of the next training for Joseph. Hebron had served its own usefulness in the upbringing of Joseph. Hebron initiated his walk with God. It initiated his dreams and vision. It initiated his home training, which Jacob could provide. But Hebron was limited in the expanse of God's preparation for this man, Joseph. The wilderness test could not be administered in this cherished Hebron. The test of servanthood would never be made possible in Hebron, where Joseph was a pampered child. He would not pass the test of faithfulness in the things that belonged to another man while he was only maintaining his mother's tent, which actually was his heritage. Hebron couldn't engage his spiritual growth of the gift of God in his life. He could not grow in interpretation of dreams while in Hebron where there was no opportunity to meet with other dreamers. As at this point, Hebron was no more the right place to be. God needed to move him to the next place of divine formation. He could not perfect his leadership quality at Hebron, where his brothers misunderstood every assignment he was given by their father, as a deliberate attempt to make him rule and reign and have dominion over them. He needed a place where he could grow in service (which is the only means of spiritual leadership) as a slave, not as a son and heir in the house. As son and heir, there were servants and slaves in the house to run the errands and carry out the dirty jobs.

Now, what do we glean from this? Each man begins with a Hebron! It is very significant to have a place to leave behind. It is a place of initiation, and it is good only for such a purpose. To tarry too long at your Hebron is to become a dwarf. It is to die at your initials! **Your 'initials'**: no one is known at the gates with his initials. Your 'initials' are for your boyhood friends. Those who call you by your first initials are mostly your family members. If you do not seek to be known outside your family, then you may cling

tenaciously to your Hebron. To leave Hebron is the initial sacrifice for each one of us. Hebron is our self life built and decorated. It is our tunics of diverse colors made for us by our fathers. It is the filial relationship that must give way for a deeper relationship with God and with men, based on higher values of spiritual growth. For Abraham, he had to get out of his Haran-

"Get out of your country,

From your family

And from your father's house to a land that I will show you". Gen. 12:1.

And for every disciple, Jesus speaks of this Hebron in this manner:

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple".

Luke 14:26.

For Joseph, Hebron was where this first condition of discipleship was located. He was helped by God to meet the first condition. He left home with nothing else. He left all his clothes; all his brothers and sisters; all his animals and pets; all his worldly goods. He left for the first time his father, Jacob, who mourned him as though dead to him, with no hope of seeing him again. No communication by any mail or phone. He was dead as far as Jacob was concerned.

Joseph had no means of contacting any of his people. If any letter were to come, it had to pass through Reuben, Simeon and co. You know what they would do? They would tear the letter and burn it, lest their father would hear that Joseph was alive and their lie be discovered. He had no one to seek his bail or visit him all the thirteen years he was imprisoned. The only thing he took out of Hebron was the cloth he wore and the sandals on his feet. He went with no change of raiment and even the one he wore was removed from his neck and smeared with blood to show his father as the possible reason for his death. **"A lion devoured him"**, they told Jacob.

Again, this Hebron is the first place to leave in the pursuit of God's call and plan for your life. **"Let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me"**, is the condition of Christ to all men He would make apostles and ministers of the New Testament. Have you left self behind with all its appurtenances? Have you stepped out of the familiar ground of self-esteem? Do you see yourself responding to God's hand removing from you all of your cherished Hebron, unto

a base field, where the only treasure you have left is Christ and Christ alone? Have you been disrobed of the tunics of diverse colors made for you from Hebron, so that you can be clothed with the garment of service- of a slave and of a prisoner? He who has not been disrobed of self cover, and put upon the cloth of a slave (bond-servant), cannot be clothed upon with the clothes of glory and honour. Jesus, our Master Himself, left His own Hebron; He emptied Himself of all glory and took upon Himself the nature of a servant.

“He has no form nor comeliness. And when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were our face from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him”.

“... So His visage was marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men”.

Isa 53:2-3, Isa52: 14, Phil2: 6-7.

Saul of Tarsus, who later became Paul, also had to leave his own Hebron, in order to enter into God’s moulding process. All that were gain to him, he counted loss for Christ.

“Yet, indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” Phil 3:7-8.

Peter said, **“Lord, we have left all and have followed thee”**... *Mark 10:28.*

The issue of leaving our Hebron is universal and common to all. It is the beginning of any serious step towards becoming what God wants you to become. Please, do note here and in all the cases we have alluded to: Hebron is not necessarily sinful. Actually, it is not the issue of sin. Though the sinful self must be discarded even just to become a Christian; the Hebron here is more of your positive self-life. It may even be the endowment of God to you or the heritage from your fathers. It may be that which was acquired even through concrete prayer. What they left behind was not just their sins. They left their Hebron- their security, self –esteem; accumulated properties; honour and dignity.

God takes a man out of his Hebron in order to expand and enlarge him. Hebron dies for each man God desires to use, so that a life of fruitfulness may break forth. Hebron is limited in providing a basis for what God intends to make of your life. If you have responded to the first matter **“Here I am”**, then get ready to be sent out of your Hebron, in pursuit of the divine purpose of God. Joseph left

Hebron for good; temporarily a pain, but forever a gain. Presently, it looked like a step out of what seemed real to the realm of uncertainty, but in the long run it was a step into Rest and eternal reality.

Joseph had stepped out of mere dreaming unto the reality of God’s call. Let me say frankly here that until you leave your Hebron in obedience, all your visions of becoming a vessel in God’s hand will remain a mere dream. Many are just telling their dreams around; they print bogus posters, call themselves appellations in keeping with the dream they had; speak great confession of faith, but remain in their Hebron. They are still dreamers!

Though his brothers were ignorant of this divine processing that began as soon as Joseph said **“Here I am”**, they were the first instruments employed by God to push forward His purpose in Joseph’s life. They said to one another, **“Look, this dreamer is coming”**. ... They were mistaken. He was no more a dreamer. He had started his journey to the throne. Sun, moon and stars of several nations would soon come to this seemingly spineless man, to pay homage and receive their sustenance. God had already begun a good work in Joseph.

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.” John 12:24.

“... And let him take up his cross” (Luke 9:23). “Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, ‘some wild beast has devoured him’. We shall see what will become of his dreams”. Gen. 37:20.

The next crucial place God brings every man He plans to use for great things is the place of Baptism unto death. The first place Jesus reported to, having emptied Himself of all and made Himself of no reputation is the Jordan, to be buried in Baptism unto death, under the hand of John, the Baptist. Jethro had to baptize Moses unto his own death from the old life in Egypt. For Joseph, the appointed hands were his brothers. They only saw his death as the death of his dreams, they did not see the possibility of resurrection. They saw death as the dead-end for Joseph; they did not understand the wisdom of God. The High Priests and the Sanhedrin council in Jerusalem saw the death of Christ on the cross as the end of His life and ministry; they did not understand God’s great wisdom of sowing unto death that

life may break forth in many other lives. Jesus embraced the death and endured the cross, saying

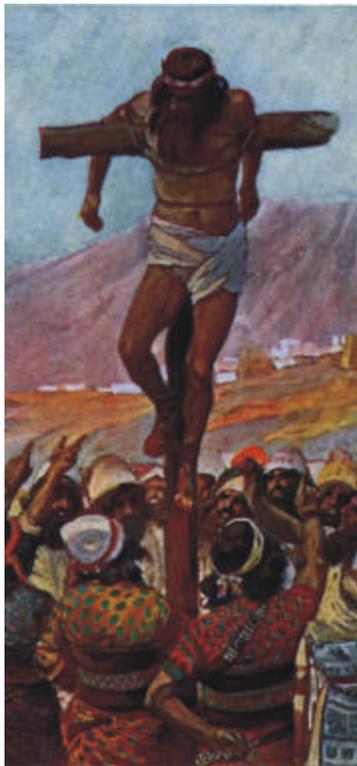
“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me... ... Signifying by what death He would die.” John 12:32-33.

Jesus showed Peter the manner of death by which Peter would glorify God, if he must become all that God called him from the lakeside of Genesaret to accomplish in his own generation.

The men who always construct the cross for the dying of God’s servant do not always see the glory beyond the cross. Their mobilization is actually in this ignorance of the mystery of death in bringing forth fruit unto God. If the Princes had known, they would not have crucified the King of glory (1Cor2:8) and if Joseph’s brothers had known that they were only sending him ahead of them and that their action would actually help him to become the **‘Ruler, the king and the Dominion-holder’** they feared, they would not have contemplated his death at all.

Note here that those God employ to send a man to the place of death are usually his next of kin. The devil may seem to be interested and be pressing the remote control; but the physical hands that are used to execute the **“death”** and the **“dying”** of a man in God’s purpose are generally those of his brethren. Moses was chased to the place of his dying, not by the soldiers of Pharaoh, but by a fellow Hebrew, who shouted **“who made you a leader over us?”** It was the men from the synagogue that placed Jesus at the disposal of Pilate and it was Joseph’s brothers that put him in the pit of death and then in the hand of the Midianites for continual **‘dying’**.

Joseph was faced with this crucial death- the gradual death of the cross, so to say, by the same brothers he had come out to seek their welfare. It was a rude shock to him. It was a serious contradiction. How could he place this in the light of all his dreams of being used of God? Where was God in all of this? Why was God silent as they stripped him naked of his only cloth and dropped him into a dry pit waiting to slay him and cover him with the dry sand of Dothan...? Question upon question raced all through his mind. He did not understand why this was happening to



**To become the leader
he dreamt of, Joseph
had to go through
death; even the gradual
death of the cross...**

him. He may have recalled the Peniel encounter his father told him... as the gateway unto becoming a prince in God’s hands, but this was rather different. Death is worse than dislocation of limbs, he thought. Joseph at this moment only pleaded with God to let him see His face if that was the end of all his dreams.

He probably bowed his head in prayer to the LORD saying **“O Lord! You are still my God, even in this situation. I do not understand any more. I surrender my will, my ambition and my dream unto You even in this pit of death. If this is the way it will all end, LORD I thank You. I prefer to be in your presence than anywhere else. I have been stripped of all my earthly goods, including my last cloth. But I am comforted, no one can strip me of my relationship with You; into Your able hands do I commit my soul and my future.”** With this, Joseph bowed unto death. He died literally in his heart to everything. He saw no glory in this world again; he rested in the hope of resurrection. This was the first death. Joseph died even to his dreams. He died to Jacob. He died to ‘Ben-Ben’. He died to himself. If God ever brings him out of that dry pit, it would

no longer be his own life. It would no longer be to serve his own purpose. No man on earth would claim anything again...

Even his brothers sat down to a meal having concluded that Joseph was as good as dead. They no longer feared his dreams. They thought they had finished with the dreams and with the dreamer. They had agreed on how to break the news of his death to their aged father. They had already got the scape goat, whose blood, splashed on Joseph’s coat would serve as the token of his death to their father. The mourning arrangement was already concluded. They celebrated the job accomplished over a meal. Even in their hearts, the number is now eleven. **“We will see what will become of his dreams”**, they all might have chorused as they cracked the bones of the roasted meat.

Listen, my dear brother or sister; every death must be accompanied with a resurrection. If God submits you to the “Death”, it is certain that you will surely rise again, out of that pit.

“And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their Camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt. So Judah said to his brothers, ‘What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh.’ And his brothers listened.

Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.”

Gen 37: 25-28.

This was divine. It was God at work! The death actually had occurred. What Judah saw was not resurrection. He only saw the profit they would further make, by selling the corpse; Joseph was now looked upon as a dead but living and walking corpse. **“What does it profit us if we kill him physically and bury his body under the pit; we have already killed him, mentally, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. We have devalued and dehumanized him already. He has become a mere “good” now! He is just a mere “cadaver” but with a little difference, in that he is still breathing. He is a living-dead man now. His hopes and his dreams are dead as far as we know. Rather than bury him under the soil and just fertilize the soil of Dothan, let us give him away as mere junk to these Midianites for a token**

fee.” He was so valueless to them that they took a ridiculous amount of twenty shekels of silver to be shared among the ten of them.

“So the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit...”

What a figure! The power that pushed him down into the pit of death was nothing compared with the energy they exerted to pull him up and to lift him out of the pit. This was the first experience of the power of resurrection by Joseph. His silent prayer had been answered now. He was now being carried up and lifted up by the same brothers who thought they had downtrodden him to the sand in the pit. He has been lifted out of that pit and placed on a camel. He would no longer trek back to Hebron. He would ride a camel now to wherever God has determined to place His slave. Joseph was as good as dead. This was the same sense that came over Isaac after he was miraculously loosed from the altar of burnt offering where he was tied. For Isaac, the ransom was the ram caught in a thicket by its horns; but for Joseph, twenty shekels of silver, with the ram they slaughtered, was his own ransom. His brothers least understood the miracle of resurrection that had taken place. Joseph for once had been lifted up out of the dungeon by their hands. They also by their hands set him up on the caravan of the Midianite traders.

Though physically naked, Joseph had gained a higher treasure. He became free from the tyranny of mundane things of this world. He was valued for twenty shekels of silver, but now he had become an invaluable treasure in God’s hands. He became free from the claim of his brothers as well. They have shared the price of his ransom; they



have eaten the meat so to say. He was free now to be anything and go anywhere for God.. They concluded they had no Joseph again. They organized the mourning. They watched their father weep out his eyes. They rose up to comfort him and to persuade him to forget Joseph.

Above all of these, Joseph had gained God. He felt lifted out of the pit of sin into the very arm of his God. He felt lifted out of rivalry and jealousy into a wider place. Though he would remain a slave of God (and of whosoever he was sold unto), he cherished the opportunity to start life on this other side and to see what God was going to do.

It was a resurrection of a kind. The Ishmaelite sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard. (*Gen 37:36*). He had been positioned by God in the right place of training. He would eat the officers' meat if that was his desire. He would handle businesses of a different class. Even as a slave, he ate more dainties that fell from the king's table than the brothers who envied him. Every death brings a better hope. Every time a seed is cast into the ground, and it dies, it does not come out the same way it was sown. It must come forth with a more glorious body and much more than the quantity planted. Let me emphasize here again that each death you experience attracts a measure of resurrection life. It attracts a measure of uplifting. Joseph was better clothed even physically than all the

clothes his brothers took away from him. Rachel's tent was just a mere tent; he now managed a whole mansion for Potiphar.

This new lift was meant to be the next platform of training in the purpose of God for Joseph. There was yet another death coming but not until some lessons had been drilled into the fabrics of his soul. It is not a one-time death that God's servant must experience in their preparation for spiritual leadership. The deaths come in stages with some measure of resurrection bonuses in between. Some have experienced a measure of resurrection and have settled on that flat plain. They have refused the further death; they seem to relish their present plateaus of grace. They have stopped and stagnated in the purpose of God, as they have refused the next death that would have lifted them higher and taken them into the higher plateau in God's calling upon their lives. They seem great in the eyes of those who have not left their Hebron at all; yet they are still dwarfs in the eyes of God, who laments daily over their lives saying, "**Why did you stop at that?**" They are like king Joash, who struck the arrow three times and stopped. Elisha was wroth with him, for stopping the victory God was bringing into Israel half – way. Would you not ask the Lord to keep bringing the deaths until He has taken you to the zenith of His call for your life?

To be continued....



THE JONAH IN YOUR SHIP

By

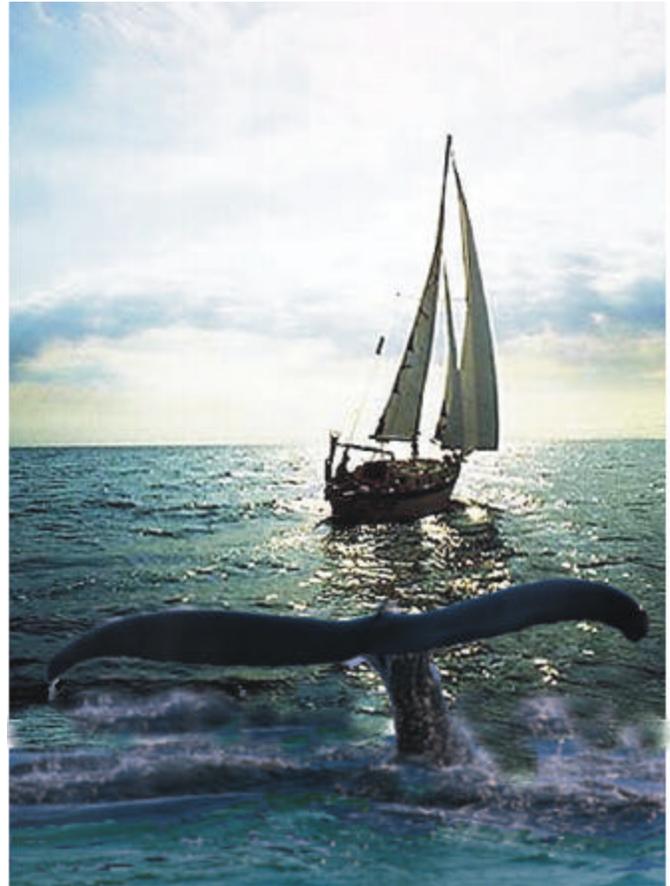
“Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the Mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep”.

Jonah 1: 1-5.

“The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time saying, arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach the preaching that I bid thee.” *Jonah 3: 1-2.*

God’s commission is upon every one of us if we are truly born again. This commission comes with its calling and posting. The Lord Himself determines what and where each one of us would labour. Thus, He has posted us to several parts of the world. But by human analysis, some areas of postings or locations are considered better than others. We refer to some areas as greener pastures. This then creates a tendency in us to either accept or refuse either our call with the place of call or to accept our call but reject the place of call.

In the case of Jonah, he did not only say no to the message but he fled from the presence of the Lord and was not ready for any dialogue. Instead of the road to Nineveh, Jonah took the road to Tarshish, a direction directly opposite to Nineveh. Jonah was running away from God. Is there any assignment, posting, a commission or demand of God upon your life that you do not want to obey? Are you also on your way in the opposite direction? May the story of Jonah be a warning to you.



When God could not persuade Jonah to obey His instruction any more; God made it a matter of force. Remember that in the days of Jonah, he was not the only prophet; yet, I do not know why God insisted that it must be Jonah, even after Jonah had shown clearly that he was not willing to go to Nineveh. The Lord then decided that He would resist, withstand and oppose Jonah.

“But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken!”. *Jonah 1:4.*

On Jonah’s way, he joined himself to a group of mariners who were on their normal routine. These people unfortunately had to incur a lot of loss because Jonah joined himself to their ship. If only they knew they would not have allowed him into their ship. Is there a man in your ship who is running away from the call of God on his life? Beware; you might incur the wrath of God.

I warn you, Christian friends, who have persisted in backsliding, despite God’s repeated appeals to you to return to the old approved faith, to the Apostles’ doctrines, that if

you do not change and amend your ways, God will soon visit you, not as a lamb, but as a lion of the tribe of Judah, as a consuming fire. Initially God sent His word but when Jonah would not obey, God sent a boisterous wind against him. God has more than a thousand and one ways of resisting a man. He may start by sharing with you in quiet times some Bible passages that may convey warnings. If you fail to take heed He may take the second step by sending his children to prophesy warnings to you. If you still neglect this, God may still go ahead to arrange situations and circumstances to come your way. When all these are coming your way do not treat them lightly.

I hope that you remember king Asa in 2 *Chronicles 14, 15, and 16.* (Please study these three chapters of king Asa's life before you continue the reading of this article).

The king's situation was very similar to the story of Jonah. He too started well. He saw the support of the Lord during several of his early battles; he had built a testimony with God. Later God saw that the king's heart was deviating from the path of righteousness and Prophet Hanani was sent to warn him. When the prophet Hanani went to warn him, he used his position to imprison the prophet. When God saw that this man could no longer heed warnings from a man, God decided to visit him in another way.

At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, because thou hast relied on the king of Assyria and not on the Lord thy God... for the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through out the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars... And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: YET IN HIS DISEASE, HE SOUGHT NOT TO THE LORD, BUT TO THE PHYSICIANS. Asa slept with his fathers and died in the one and fortieth year of his reign 2Chronicles 16:7, 9, 12, 13.

What a terrible summary of a life!!

You were picked from the miry clay, and you saw the help of God, He has lifted and given you a high position in the government, in the society or even in the body of Christ. Now you feel that you do not need God any longer. Even, God offered you help by allowing a prophet to warn you of

the dangers of your current way of life; you spitefully handled the God-sent help. King Asa imprisoned the prophet of the Lord. He rejected God's help to his life. *2Chronicles 16:10.*

How many times have you also rejected God's gracious help when He sent one of His dear servants to you? How many men of God (not just title holders but genuine disciples of Christ) have you also imprisoned in your heart? You say quietly in your heart, **"I don't want to see him; I don't want to hear him!"**

When king Asa got to this point – not just the point of his disobedience, but also the point of rejecting God's help, God had to think of another way of handling this case. God first of all removed kind words towards Asa. He began to speak harshly to him. It was no longer goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of life... but that **"henceforth, you shall have wars"**. (Note the plural, **wars**).

After this pronouncement, the first war was the war of a disease that defied all medical management within and abroad. This disease deliberately lasted three years to give king Asa the chance to repent and return to God. He remained adamant, and he finally died in his disobedience.

Jonah wanted to die like that but God seemed to postpone His own. God's refusal to allow Jonah die in the ship was also a way of God resisting him. Jonah would have wanted to die

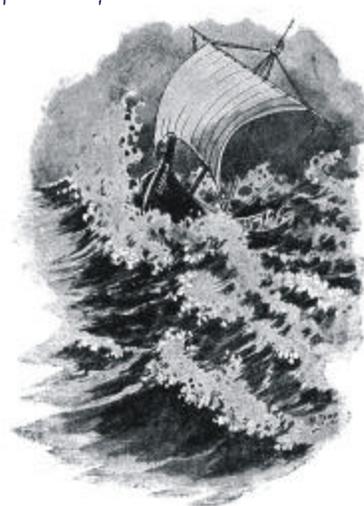
without doing what God wanted him to do; God resisted his desire to so do. He had to live against his will. Every single effort Jonah made was met with resistance.

God also arranged a one-bedroom flat for Jonah – the big fish, which served both as an accommodation and a means of transport for Jonah. It seems to me as if God instructed the fish sternly – **'don't squeeze him to death; don't heat him up; kindly transport him after a three day's retreat if he would change'**- and quite unlike king Asa, who was adamant even after three years of a bedridden illness, Jonah changed and repented after three days. How long will yours last? How long will you continue to flout godly counsel?

"The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai saying, arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me". *Jonah 1:1-2.*

And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second

W h lea n f i b e s e c o m i n a g
J o n a d i s e a s e n g e r o a d l e s l
t h e o c e a n t e n w e i g h t i h m ...



time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee".
Jonah 3:1-2.

You will discover in this matter that God was beginning to repeat Himself before Jonah. God had to say one thing more than once, and it was not a commendation, it was because Jonah could not take instruction the first time. I do not know whether you are like Jonah, that God had to serve repeated warnings to you because you could not take the first one. You have been warned severally about a relationship, business, courtship, building of that house, spending that salary, and several other things, but you continued. When any life is becoming a Jonah, once used of God, but now walking in disobedience beware of such a life. When Jonah came to this point in his life, he was branded a **"dangerous man"**. God's invisible mark on Jonah's forehead was **"don't associate with him, remove him out of your boat, break fellowship with him, take him out of your midst"**.

My dear friend, is there any matter that the Lord has tried to stop you and has sounded the same warning over and over again and you will not change? Are you beginning to walk in persistent disobedience? Are you becoming dangerous? I can hear God quietly warning your acquaintances to run away from you. If they had ears, they would have complied long ago; they would have stopped putting you on their church/fellowship preaching roster and sending you invitations long ago.

When the mariners suddenly saw that the voyage was very rough even after applying all their technical know-how, and all their professional expertise, they decided to search the ship to know why the voyage was not smooth. In their search they discovered Jonah lying down at the bottom of the ship. When you are walking in disobedience, you may not like light. You prefer hidden corners rather than exposures. Sometimes you may hide so well that no human eyes may even discover you. You could neatly cover a fraud by maybe setting ablaze buildings that have records of the fraud. Once

the records are lost you are free according to human investigations. But is that the end of the matter? Is there nothing more to it?

My friend, have you searched your team recently to be sure there is no Jonah among your men? Do you remember the story of Achan? He flouted the Lord's command, perhaps in a very little way and nobody would have known it (were it not that God intervened).

"... For Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel." (Not just Achan). *Joshua 7:1.*

Note that it was the sin of one man called Achan that attracted the anger of the Lord over the whole nation of Israel. So when God sighted Jonah, the run-away prophet, God's anger was kindled against him and whoever aided him in any way (by offering a ship, providing transport fare, light refreshment in the ship, and whoever shared in the seat, the hidden seat in the ship). Thus every one needs to be very careful and critical with any child of God who may be going through some difficult times in their lives. The Bible teaches about suffering for all Christians, but there is also what the Bible calls or refers to as suffering due to one's sin. Thus, some may be suffering because of their disobedience, they could not take correct counsel and so they may face the

boisterous wind of their lives sponsored and fanned from heaven under the supervision of the devil.

If the mariners had interviewed Jonah earlier they would have saved themselves the trouble of having to share in his punishment. Sometimes we are too quick to believe peoples' testimonies; no wonder we receive shocks too often. It was only after the trouble had started, after the crew had incurred a lot of losses, and much confusion and psychological pains had engulfed every body, that they began to conduct interviews and finally discovered Jonah. Every body was going through the pains because God was against one man. May God help each one of us out there reading this article, that your life will not become the reason for the raging wind in your family, ministry and even in your secular job. May your life not be the reason for untimely deaths in your family.



This also happened at the time of Ahab. You remember that for the sake of Ahab, God commanded Jehu to destroy every one that 'pisseth' against the wall in the ~~family of Ahab~~ *2Kings 9:8*.

Note Jonah's answer to the people:

"Then said they unto him, tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us; what is thine occupation? And whence cometh thou? What is thy country? And of what people art thou?"

And he said unto them, I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land." *Jonah 1:8-9.*

Dear friend, is there any sign of backsliding in the language of Jonah? The language is still correct. Backsliding still leaves you with the correct Christian language. Correct language is not necessarily the mark of a correct living. All **419ers** (four one niners) that are backsliders have always used the correct Christian language to deceive us.

The Mariners made a terrible discovery very late: in the midst of the sea, after much losses and confusion.

"Then said they unto him, what shall we do unto thee that the sea may be calm unto us...? And he said unto them, take me up and cast me forth into the sea, so shall the sea be calm unto you. For I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." *Jonah1: 11-12.*

Even when Jonah was allowed another chance, he still chose death. Sometimes when a '**Jonah**' has not suffered enough, he will not see, think well, or come to his senses. After the prodigal son had gone through the hard times of

life, he came back to his senses and remembered home.

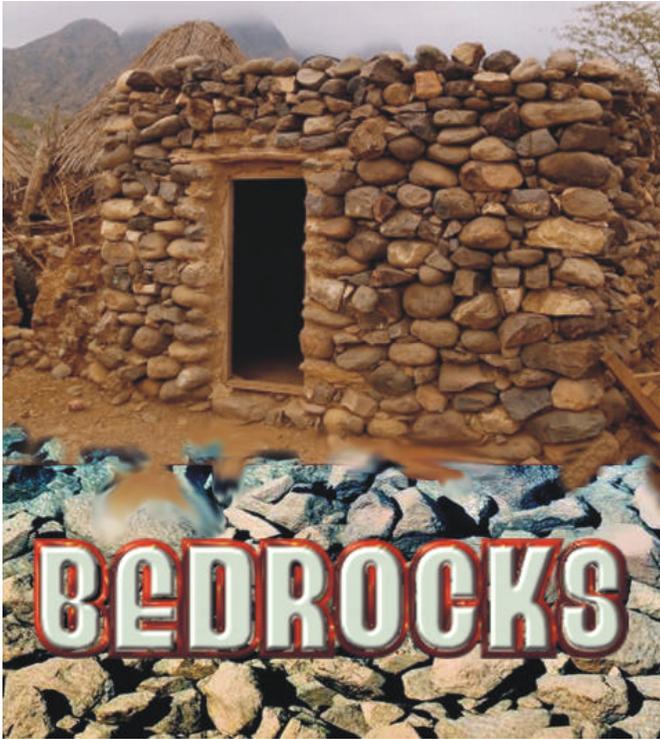
Jonah seemed to have said to the mariners, "**I am grateful for all your efforts, love and concern for my life, but I hereby choose death**". The religious fear of being responsible for the death of a man, even a prophet, caught them. So they rather tried and rowed faster so that they could get to the shore before God's judgment would finally finish them. Who told and deceived you that you can be faster than God? When God goes out to pursue a man, if the man is wise let him just stop and beg. This should be the only reasonable thing to do.

Their rowing harder provoked God such that He also gave more grace to the boisterous wind. All these were because of one Jonah in the ship. Every effort to help Jonah escape the hand of God failed. Already Jonah had told them the right thing to do "**cast me into the sea. I am the only antidote for this raging**".

We will do ourselves a lot of good if we can hear God and discern His heart rather than cast our gaze at a Jonah in our midst. Do not shed tears of ignorance over him thereby partaking in the result of his disobedience. This calamity was not meant to be general and yet anybody that tried to help and prevent a Jonah from going through his Nineveh, that person shall be included in Jonah's punishment.

Once a man is running contrary to the will of God, do not give him a lift; for the terror of the Lord will sweep both of you. If you will not cast him out, he will cast you out. If you do not uproot him from your life today, he will uproot you out of the kingdom of God tomorrow. Cast out the Jonah in your ship!





By Sade Akanni

An incubator is an apparatus in which small weak babies are cared for, especially those born earlier than normal. There are also incubating devices in which eggs can hatch by artificial warmth. Both of these, are however, artificial incubators. In God's own creation, birds sit and brood over their eggs to incubate them for some time till they hatch while human beings and other mammals incubate their young in the womb for a period of time before they are born. Whether artificial or natural, incubation is an important process in physical reproduction though the duration varies in different animals. Every fertilized chicken egg needs to stay under incubation for a minimum of twenty-one days to become a viable chick. In human beings, it takes averagely nine months for a fertilized ovum to be incubated in the mother's womb in order to become a matured foetus ready to be born into the world. The womb is such a good incubator that no artificial incubator can be compared with it. The Almighty God made it in such a way that it is very conducive for the proper development of the embryo. Fortunately the

womb is located in the woman by divine providence. This is not a coincidence at all but a special arrangement by the Lord. When it comes to the issue of incubating and carrying the foetus till the time of delivery the man has to helplessly depend on the woman for that job. It is such a great privilege that God has given the woman. All the experience that a woman goes through in her body during pregnancy and delivery is a divine privilege irrespective of individual differences between one woman and the other.

Give thanks to the Lord for making you a woman: God's own human incubator. Not only is a womb needed before any child can be born into the world, but even children that would become great vessels in God's hands must pass through the womb of one woman or the other before being born. The children of Israel suffered a great deal as slaves under their Egyptian masters. They cried and cried to the Lord for deliverance but the answer to their cry did not come until God found a womb in Jocebed to bring forth Moses. Not only that, she was also the mother of Aaron and Miriam who, together with Moses, led the children of Israel out of Egypt the land of bondage (*Mic 6:4*). For her it was such a great privilege to have used her womb to serve the Lord. She became an incubator for God's divine purpose (the deliverance of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt) to be fulfilled. Today, many are in bondage under the elements of the world; slaves to the traditions of men and to the basic principles of the world. Many are slaves of sin, heavily laden under the yoke of bondage. If you dedicate your womb to the Lord to bring forth a child like Moses, for the deliverance of such people, God will be pleased with you.

Hannah yielded her womb to the Lord to bring forth a son (Samuel) at a time when a prophet was seriously needed in Israel. God was not pleased with Eli the priest and his sons for they were sons of Belial (*1Sam 2:12,22*) who polluted the offerings of the Lord in Shiloh and did abominable things.

“Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the Lord.

Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for men abhorred the offering of the Lord.

Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.” 1Sam.2: 12, 17,22.

These were the evils done by Eli's sons. Eli's eyes were already growing dim and the lamp of God was almost going out in the tabernacle of the Lord. The word of the Lord was very scarce in those days (*1Sam.3:1-3*). There was a great need for a replacement priest in the temple at that time.

That was also the time Hannah had a great need for a son. God needed a prophet and Hannah needed a son. What a divine coincidence! Hannah, knowing the kind of evil being done by the priests (Eli's children) allowed her need to also meet God's desire. And then it happened. She had a son in Samuel, and God had a prophet in Samuel. She yielded her womb to the Lord to incubate and bring forth an answer to the problem in the temple.

Are you a woman seeking to have a child? Can you open your eyes to see the great need for vessels that God can use in the church not only in Nigeria but also abroad? There is a great dearth of replacement sons in God's service, vessels to replace the outgoing ones and bring revival to the Body of Christ. God was willing to wait for Samuel to be born and to grow old enough to know the Lord and to be able to handle the affairs of the people and the temple. Maybe He is waiting for a yielded womb like that of Hannah in this our time too. Mary yielded her virgin womb to bring forth Christ the Saviour of the world. Will you yield your womb to the Lord for that purpose? He will not refuse you if you do it with all your heart. There is a great need in the world and in the church today for such instruments. You will be remembered for what you have done.

Unfortunately there are many children from Christian homes who neither love the Lord nor walk in His ways. There is need to pray. We must not allow the devil to hijack our wombs to suit his own purpose. The divine privilege must not be turned to a disadvantage. Satan also needs vessels to use, and he needs wombs to bring them forth. There is an urgent need to cry to God for the salvation of such children born from your womb and the womb of those around you. Give Him no rest until their salvation goes forth as a lamp that burns, and their righteousness as brightness. The Lord will have compassion and answer you.

However, just as physical incubators are necessary for physical reproduction, so also it is in the spiritual. In order to bear fruit spiritually, spiritual incubators are needed. For anything spiritual to be born into the world, it has to pass through spiritual incubation. The process and duration of incubation may be long or short, but it is real and there is a great incubator that performs that job.



When Hannah yielded her womb to the Lord to incubate and bring forth an answer to the problems of the church and the land, she had a prophet for a son.

The heart is a complex incubator of spiritual things. It is capable of incubating either good or evil things. It adapts itself to whatever seed is planted in it to incubate it ~~tomaturity~~. In *Prov.4:23* the Bible says ***“Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (KJV).***

“Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts.” (GNB).

Just as a baby's physical body is formed, shaped and developed in the physical womb, so also it is in the spiritual. A person's life is shaped by the thoughts in his or her heart. What people encounter in your life in form of behaviour, speech and action, is a product of your heart. It is an out-working of what has been conceived in your heart. The period of conception of such an idea may be long or short, but surely, our actions are preceded by thoughts of the heart. For example, before you decide on what career to pursue in life, you must have thought about it and conceived the idea in your heart over a long or short period of time. I met a man some years ago who said he did not want to be rich or to be great in life. He was satisfied to be the poor wretched mason that he was. When asked why, he said that it was only rich, popular and great people that witches run after for destruction. They never run after poor people. That was why he would not work hard enough to make ends meet or to become anything tangible in life. His life has been shaped by his thoughts. Those thoughts were conceived in his heart before it became his physical lifestyle. The heart works like a womb to conceive thoughts and ideas that result in physical action.

“For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life— is not of the Father but is of the world.” 1Jn.2:16.

“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’ for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” Jas.1: 13-15.
“Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do

in Jerusalem...” Neh 2:12.

“And supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him,” Jn.13: 2.

The heart (sometimes called the spirit or the mind in some parts of the Bible) has different sources of information. It is capable of receiving information from the physical realm as well as the spiritual. Through the eyes, the ears, nose, tongue, skin, information is fed into the heart which then processes it (using thoughts) and interprets it. Whatever interpretation the heart gives to a piece of information is what determines the resulting behavioural action of the person.

In the same way that God passes on information spiritually into the heart of man (*Neh.2: 12*) is also the same that the devil does (*Jn.13: 2*). The book of *Jas 1:13-15* clearly illustrates the process that goes on in the heart before a physical action results. It is likened to the process of conception and delivery. Whenever a piece of information gets into the heart (whether physical or spiritual), a kind of conception takes place. Thoughts are gathered around it to nourish it and develop it and form an idea with it. Sooner or later, there is a giving birth. An action results, whether sinful or godly.

If your heart will give birth to godly action or character, you need to pay attention to the gateways. You must keep your heart with all diligence. A woman who has no control over her spirit (or heart) is like a city broken down, without walls (*Prov.25:28*). If you allow your heart to become like the type by the wayside as described in *Matt 13:4*, it will forever be barren. Such a heart is open to all kinds of information from whatever source. It will be unfruitful in the things of God. You must deliberately determine which information to allow into your heart and which one not to allow. Keep guard over your heart very carefully.

Before the will of God will be done on earth as it is being done in heaven, incubators are needed to conceive it and bring it forth on the earth. God looks for a yielded heart into which He will introduce that burden, a heart that will faithfully act as a channel and an incubator for that will of God; a heart that will travail over it until it is born and done on earth.

A burden could arise in the heart through the news that we hear and the happenings that we see around us. The great work that Nehemiah did in re-building the wall of Jerusalem came from a conception in his heart. He was one

of the Jews taken captive to Babylon where he became the cupbearer to the king. One day, Hanani, one of his brothers, came with other men from Judah to visit him. As he enquired about the Jews who had escaped the captivity, and about Jerusalem, he was told a sad story.

“And they said to me, ‘The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.’ So it was, when I heard these that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.” Neh.1: 3-4.

When Nehemiah heard about the situation of the people, something happened. A seed was cast into his heart through those words that he heard. A conception took place in his heart. He sat down, wept and mourned for many days, carrying and nursing that “pregnancy”. The conception lasted many days before it resulted into a definite action. He kept thinking about the sad situation of his people and his city (Jerusalem). Each time he thought to a point, tears rolled down his cheeks and he mourned. The “pregnancy” grew on. As he fasted and prayed over the matter, the conception developed more and more until an idea was formed in his heart. Through those thoughts, God put an idea in his heart. The idea was that if he was permitted by the king, he would go and rebuild the wall and improve the condition of his people. At the beginning, it was just a formless, shapeless conception. But as he sat down and thought with concern about the situation, weeping and mourning, fasting and praying, it formed and developed into an idea. By the time that idea was formed in his heart, it was ready to be born in form of an action. The matter was so matured in his heart that it began to show even on his face. One day as he stood before the king to give wine to him, the king noticed the sadness on his face and acknowledged that it was nothing but sorrow of heart or heaviness of heart. He was heavy with that conception, ready to deliver. It did not take him time to bring out what was in his heart to the king’s hearing. The king gave him permission to go and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and immediately the process of delivery started. The labour that normally precedes delivery started and he actually delivered at last. The wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt in fifty-two days (*Neh.6:15*).

This clearly illustrates how the heart works like a womb. It is from the heart that issues of life proceed. Life actions are preceded by thoughts. For anyone to achieve anything in life whether physically or spiritually, in business or academics, the heart must be properly engaged. Every issue of life attracts the thoughts of the heart. It is after

incubating it properly for a period of time that something tangible can be born. Before Nehemiah could succeed in that project and bring restoration, he was not thoughtless about it. He made himself available and brooded over the matter in God's presence before he could bring forth the rebuilding of the wall. Kingdom works, which eventually become great, are normally preceded by deep burdens borne in someone's heart over a period of time. Such burdens arise in different ways depending on the working of the Lord.

Another way a burden could arise in a heart is for the Lord to directly share the burden of His heart with His child, trusting that he will be responsible enough to bear it. This happened to Abraham one day when the Lord visited him.

***“And the Lord said ‘Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him,...’
Gen. 18:17-19.***

The Lord saw something in Abraham according to the plan that He had in mind to make him a great nation. Also, God said, ‘for I have known him...’ There was nothing that Abraham hid from the Lord. He had humbly followed the Lord over the years and had earned that testimony in God's presence. The burden of the Lord over the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was therefore shared with Abraham. As soon as Abraham heard it, it became a burden, a conception in his heart and he started interceding for the people before the Lord. It was his intercession that eventually led to the deliverance of Lot from Sodom (*Gen. 19:29*).

“Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.” Amos 3:7.

Should God find you thoughtful and responsible enough over spiritual matters, He will begin to reveal His secrets to you. As you keep your heart holy for Him, He will speak to you the burdens of His Heart. Your heart will become the incubator for holy seeds.

The burden of the Lord could also enter our hearts through God's word as we study it.

“In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel understood by the books the number of years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolation of Jerusalem. Then I set my face towards the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.” Dan.9: 2-3.

The burden about the deliverance of the Jews from captivity in Babylon came to Daniel as he studied the word of God. When he read the book of Jeremiah, an understanding came to his heart that it was time for them to

be released. He thought deeply about it and nursed that burden with prayers, fasting and sackcloth and ashes until the heavens sent an answer. His heart became the womb to nurse the burden and bring forth an answer for the deliverance of his people.

There are captivities and troubles that could have ended if the Lord had found spiritual wombs (hearts) that could bear the burdens in prayer before Him. Family problems, issues about our children, problems in the church today and in the society will find solutions only as we make our hearts available to receive and conceive holy seeds and bring forth godly actions. You must not be loose with your heart. No human being has two hearts. Don't allow your heart to go astray. You cannot conceive something godly and something evil in your heart at the same time. In essence, when you allow every kind of information to enter your heart, or you allow your heart to freely think about any issue that comes in contact with it, you will be barren as far as the work of God is concerned.

“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” Matt.15: 19.

Imagine that! These are ‘babies’ that could be born from some people's hearts. Things like evil thoughts, bitterness, anger, are conceived in the heart. Before somebody commits murder, adultery, fornication or theft, the conception has first of all taken place in the heart. When you see someone bearing false witness or blasphemes, she has first of all been pregnant with it in her heart and gone through travail in her heart. What an abuse of the heart!

If properly utilized, the heart is capable of becoming the dwelling place of the Most High God: it could conceive and bring forth holy seed. It is capable of making a woman become an instrument of honour in God's hands, fit for holy use. Yet, the same heart could become a den of lions and an habitation for devils, useful in bringing forth things that are corrupt and evil. May this not be your situation! You cannot be pregnant with bitterness and hope to bear the burdens of the Lord in your heart. You will not even be able to pray. Are you fond of bearing grudge against your husband? Do you harbour bitterness in your heart against people? Do you formulate and tell lies?

“Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring can yield both salt water and fresh.” Jas 3:11-13.

It is not possible for an ungodly heart to bring forth things that are godly. The natural heart cannot bring forth things that are spiritual. Such sinful conceptions above are products

of the natural human heart. If that is the condition of your heart, you have an urgent need to cry to God for a change of heart (*Ezek. 36:26*).

It is sad to discover that for many women, such evil conceptions are normal. They could bear grudge and keep malice even in sophisticated ways. Some have their hearts full of worry and encumbered with the cares and affairs of this life. How would you be able to receive and conceive godly seed with all these in your heart? No wonder the level of divine usefulness of many women is almost zero in most cases. This ought not to be so.

God has great plans for every woman. The experience of physical pregnancy, labour and delivery is an important equipping for us to learn how to be spiritually productive. If a woman learns to keep her heart pure and holy for the Lord, she could do great exploits in the place of prayer. Such a woman is capable of receiving burdens from the Holy Spirit in her heart. She could be used of God to travail in prayer like a woman in labour, until a 'holy thing' is born in the earth. That is God's heart cry for every woman.

“When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth Hagoyim. ...and for twenty years he harshly oppressed the children of Israel.

Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time.” Judges 4: 1-4.

“In the days of Shamgar, son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travelers walked through byways. The inhabitants of the villages ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel...My heart is toward the governors of Israel...” Judges 5:6-9.

Deborah was a woman who knew how to control her heart and use it to bring forth deliverance for her people. During the time of Deborah, the children of Israel backslid from following God. Her people did evil in the sight of the Lord so much that God delivered them into the hands of their enemy. Yet in the midst of that corrupt society, Deborah stood out for righteousness. Her heart was for the Lord. She was a prophetess. She was married, yet she did not allow worry or the cares of this life to encumber her heart. She had no time and no room in her heart for bitterness, quarrels and the like. She was dedicated to the Lord.

Seeing all that was happening around her, she became burdened in her heart. She arose, a mother in Israel. As a mother does concerning her wayward children, she travailed in the place of prayer for the people and for the rulers. She said, **“My heart is toward the governors of Israel...”** Her heart cried for them before God. She interceded for them so much until deliverance was brought forth. One day the Lord sent her a word that would bring them deliverance from the hands of their oppressors. As she pursued that instruction with Barak, God delivered Sisera into their hands in battle and gave them victory. Because of that woman's travail, the land of Israel **had rest for forty years**. What a great victory it will be for your home or community to have rest from sin, sickness and the devil for forty years as a result of your travail in prayers and in action!

How is your walk with God? Could the Lord find you a woman whose heart is sanctified for His use? Is your heart conducive for a holy seed to be cast in? Are you even sensitive enough to be able to receive the Lord's burdens whenever He pleases to bring such? Are you available for such a holy duty?

Our society today is not too different from what obtained in Deborah's time. There are issues to weep to God about, all around us. How is your heart? What have you brought forth into this world from your heart? Instead of bringing forth something holy, something that will bring deliverance to someone, do you bring forth what will make the world more ungodly? There are some women who keep adding daily to the worldliness in the church today. Are you the one bringing the newest worldly fashion of dressing and hairdo into your church? Do you take part in perpetuating it in the name of trying to look beautiful as a king's kid? You don't know that a book of remembrance is being opened on your behalf in heaven. You will be remembered for what you have done. That direction you are going is wrong. There are godly things, godly character that God is looking for some one who will bring it forth in your church or locality. What God has prepared for us and to do through us, eyes have not seen it, ears have not heard it; it has not even entered into any heart. He desires to have human specimens of His divine nature in this world and He is looking for someone who will conceive and bring forth that godly lifestyle. God is looking for a person who will bring forth deliverance to the people and show them the way into life.

However, a heart cannot be an instrument of worldliness and an instrument of godliness at the same time. One will have to go for the other. If you discover that your heart has been the seat of bringing forth wrong behaviour and sinful acts, you need God to save you from that situation,

lest you face the hot judgment of God on the last day when the books of record will be opened. The Lord promises to change your situation if you are willing and you open up to Him.

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”
Eze.36: 26.

“Behold I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” Rev.3: 20.

It is the stony hearts that have wrong conceptions and bring forth evil actions. As fibroids hinder, disturb and abort pregnancies, so it is with stony hearts. Such a heart cannot be improved upon or corrected at all. The answer is to have it removed and a new heart placed in you. As you recognize that kind of heart in you and you confess it and open it up to the Lord, He will come in and remove that stony heart. He will give you a new heart, a heart that has the potentials of conceiving godly seed and bringing forth godly acts.

Thereafter, you must keep your heart under lock and key. Keep it with all diligence. You must not allow any strange thought to find space therein any longer. Genuine repentance demands that you forsake your old way of life and thinking. Renew your thoughts and mind with the word of God. You must prove that you have turned from your wicked ways by bringing forth good fruit.

If there is anyone that has offended you, forgive, even as Christ has forgiven us. Bring forth fruit to show that you have forgiven that person. Cease from anger; it only causes harm. Ps.37: 8. If you have offended anyone, go and beg for pardon. Follow peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Expose all bitterness in your heart to the one against whom you have been bitter. Bitterness grows in the dark. So expose it. Don't allow shame to make you carry it over from the old heart into the new. Bitterness in the heart results in barrenness of life. Keep your heart from every evil thought. They form wrong conceptions (pregnancies) in the heart and give rise to evil actions. If you do not think about such things, you will not die, will you? Actually you will enter into real life. There are good things that the Lord says we should think about. Anything outside that must be thrown overboard.

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things.” Phil.4: 8

“The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self controlled so that you can pray.”

1Pet.4: 7 (NIV).

Clear your mind of all rubbish. Immoral thoughts, evil thoughts, proud thoughts, covetous thoughts, angry thoughts and blasphemous thoughts will hinder you from praying. They block the heart from being able to travail before God in the place of prayer in order to bring forth holy action. The end of all things is near. You can be both a physical and spiritual incubator, the kind that God is looking for.

Editorial

The qualification for leadership is located in life. The person so-called into this position must in his own life possess intrinsic components that God crystallizes into him by a painstaking process. Consequently, no man is a leader by birth. Thus Living Seed continues to visit the 'quarry site' where those so-called are cut to fit. Joseph is one of such.

Bedrocks surveys the concept and gestation process of spiritual burden in 'Needed incubators'.

Godly Exhortation takes a look at the need to always be sensitive to the Holy Spirit leading. Many have made costly mistakes as they take 'Jonahs' in their ship.

Physiological hunger is part of 'all things that work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His good purpose....' What could God achieve from famine?

Every outward expression is as a result of an inward impression. What is your inward impression?

Missions update visits a critical issue of the great commission. Must we keep sitting down as we run conferences on the Great Commission without the actual going? If there is a 'going' who are the people going?

ALL THESE AND MUCH MORE ARE BROUGHT YOUR WAY IN THIS EDITION. Keep praying that we continue to remain relevant to you and to the Church.

God bless you.

Ene Aideyan

What is in your heart?

By Joseph Ademola Ajala

“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things... Matt 12:35. For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks... Luke. 6:43-45 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Matt.7:15-16.



This exhortation is not particularly on good or evil men, it is also not on good or bad trees, neither is it on false prophets. It is on an issue common among men- even Christians- but so mysteriously hidden that it is almost impossible to diagnose unless it is outwardly manifested or expressed. It is called the inward impression. From the above passages, the Lord Jesus taught on that issue, using men, trees and false prophets as illustrations of the outward expressions of inward impressions. Good men with good

inward treasures bring forth good things outwardly and evil men with evil inward treasures bring forth evil things. Similarly, good trees with good inward juice bear good fruits outwardly, whereas, bad trees with bad inward juice bear bad fruits outwardly.

Our concern in this exhortation is what should be the outward expression of the church seeing it is the Body of Christ. What do we want the world to see? And as members of the Body what should be our outward expressions? What should be our attitude? How should we act or be acting? What should be the content of our utterances- whether we are preaching, teaching, praying, counseling or even just talking? Should it not be unto edification, exhortation and comfort? Should it be to build up or to pull down? These are some of the questions we will trust the Holy Spirit to help us answer. The truth of the matter is, our outward expression will definitely

depend on our inward impression, that is, the content of our hearts. A correct inward impression will result in a correct outward expression. And the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart. Let us therefore, peep into the Old Testament incidence that vividly pictures the present state and situation of the New Testament Church.

During the time of Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubabel, the Israelites in Babylon returned to Jerusalem in three batches. Nehemiah, who was a contemporary of Ezra, led the third and the last batch. His concern for the welfare of Jerusalem and her inhabitants prompted him to take the bold action of rebuilding the shattered wall. And in spite of opposition from without and abuse from within, the task was completed in record time. However, the task of reviving and reforming the people of God within the rebuilt wall demanded years of Nehemiah’s godly life and leadership.

The first thing that reveals Nehemiah’s godly life and leadership quality was the content of his heart - his inward impression. In spite of his comfortable place of abode, his heart’s disposition was towards his people’s welfare. He was living in Susa, the citadel. He was not only in the capital city but in the fortified palace- a comfortable place by all standards. He was in a place of protection with a secured job and probably a fat salary with fringe benefits. There was no lack

of accommodation, food, water, or clothing: for he had to appear before the queen and king well dressed. He had no transport problem, or any obvious lack, in fact he had never been sad. But none of these things occupied his heart. What occupied his heart was the welfare of the people of God- the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity and had gone back to Jerusalem. He, therefore, inquired about their welfare and he was told the news:

“The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down and the gates are burned with fire.” Neh.1: 3. NKJV.

What a pity! The people had moved from captivity to distress and reproach. At one time the enemy had captured and secured them... they were within the enemy’s four walls... securely captured and fenced in – captivity in bondage. There was restriction that led to stress; they were secured but had no rest of mind, no peace, and no true security. But now that they had been released and had returned to their own land, they were home but in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem was broken down. Even with just a crack in the wall, serpents will bite (*Ecc. 10:8*), but here it was not just a crack in the wall but a total collapse, a total breakdown. And as if to make matters worse, the gates were also set on fire and burnt down. If it was only the wall of Jerusalem that were broken down but the gates were intact, the heaps of the rubbish of the wall would still have served as a form of fence for defense and the gates could have still been opened, closed and locked as the case may be and as the need arose. But now even the gates were burnt down. As such there was nothing to prevent violence and wanton destruction even

within the borders. The walls that should have given them salvation and the gates that should have put praises in their mouths were all gone (*Isaiah 60:18*). What a terrible situation in spite of freedom from captivity.

What about the Church today? In spite of our so-called freedom from lack, freedom from this and freedom from that, are we not still in distress bringing reproach on ourselves, on the Church and even on the nation? Are we free from poverty? Are we free from violence? Are we free from armed robbery? Are we free from backbiting? What are we free from? Is the Church free from reproach? Are there no more Christians who are drug pushers, who bring reproach not only on the Church but also on our nation?

What should be our proper response to this reproach? What should be our proper outward expression? This will depend on our inward impression. This will depend on what our hearts are full of. Let us peep into Nehemiah’s heart vis – a - vis the situation of his brethren on ground at that time.

“So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.” Neh. 1: 4.

Nehemiah only heard news about his people and that was enough to stir up the contents of his heart within the context of his brethren’s situation. Even though he was not there with them physically to see what they were seeing, to feel what they were feeling and to experience what they were experiencing, yet he saw and imagined the situation in his heart. He experienced and felt in his heart what his brethren were feeling and experiencing. He then sat down. He settled down with God on behalf of his brethren. He held the hand of God in prayer – expressing his inward impression in the presence of

God. **“How can I continue to live in fortified places when my brethren are suffering; how can I be eating three square meals with snacks in between when my brethren cannot have access to even crumbs; how can I be changing clothing like a chameleon when my brethren are wearing rags? How can my pot of soup be filled with choicest meat when my brethren cannot even afford “Oku Eko”? How can I rejoice in a flashy fully air-conditioned car when my brethren trek on the streets under the scorching sun? How can I be living in a posh apartment when my brethren live under over-head bridges? How can I ... how can I ...?”** Nehemiah seemed to be saying this would be criminal and irresponsibility on his part. So he wept and mourned many days. He mourned.

This is the Holy Spirit’s injunction: ***“Lament, mourn and weep, let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.” Jas.4: 9-10.***

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Matt. 5: 4

A sorrowful heart indeed! It is this type of inward sorrowful heart condition on behalf of God’s children that normally attracts God’s attention. No wonder, this man Nehemiah just prayed a very short but comprehensive prayer with a rich preamble showing his penitent, repentant heart. (*Neh.1: 11*). The content of his prayer was within the context of his heart. It is only this type of prayer with rich content and coming from within a good heart context that can have the type of results/response from God as we saw with the situation of Nehemiah. Note this also:

“Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, I will make you an

eternal excellence, A joy of many generations, You shall drink the milk of the Gentiles and milk the breast of kings; you shall know that I, the Lord, am your Saviour and your Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob. Instead of bronze I will bring gold, instead of iron I will bring silver, instead of wood, bronze, and instead of stones, iron. I will also make your officers peace, and your magistrates righteousness, violence shall no longer be heard in your land, neither wasting, devastation nor destruction within your borders. but you shall call your walls salvation, and your gates praise... and your days of mourning shall be ended...

Isaiah 60:15-20.

Even the king perceived the inward impression from Nehemiah's outward facial expression. **"Therefore the king said to me, why is your face sad, since you are not sick?"** (*Neh. 2:2*). Why this **"therefore"** since Nehemiah had not said any thing to the king? The king saw sadness on his face and knew there was **"something"** inside that was making him sad. There was something inside there, inwardly before he went into the presence of the king. This **"something"** was not there before, so the king's question had never been asked. But surprisingly the king answered his own question:

"This is nothing but sorrow of heart". *Neh.2: 2.*

Dear Christian brothers and sisters, do you have sorrow of heart? With all that is happening in the Church, in fellowships, in families, in our universities, and in our country, do you have sorrow of heart? Are you so concerned about the situation of the Church of Christ as to have sorrow of heart? Do you have a burden for the Church? What is in your heart

concerning the Church? Do you have an inward godly impression? How do you outwardly express such an inward impression? Remember, the Bible says

"A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance but by sorrow of heart, the spirit is broken."

Prov. 15:13.



"...A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

Psalms 51:17.

Do you have sorrow of heart? Are you a man or a woman of sorrowful spirit?

Hannah, a woman of sorrowful spirit, had sorrow of heart and she poured out her soul before the Lord. The same thing happened to Nehemiah. He had sorrow of heart and he poured out his soul before the Lord: he sat down and wept and mourned many days, fasting and praying before the God of heaven. He gave reasons why he was sad, the reasons were not personal but patriotic – the city of Jerusalem (in our own case, the Church) the place of his fathers' tombs lay in waste and the gates were burned

with fire. No wonder, the king speedily answered him and said to him **"for what does thou make request?"** (*Neh2: 4*). What do you request and what do you want? The king appeared to be saying... **"Because of your concern about your city's condition, because of your inward impression that so troubled you to the extent of showing even outwardly on your face as if you were sick, I am giving you an open cheque. Ask for whatsoever you want and such will be yours."** Can you imagine God giving you such an open cheque to ask for anything you want? What will you ask for? For what will you make request? What will you seek from God? Will you seek first solely for the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Will you seek the good of Jerusalem? Will you seek for the good of the Church? Will you be personal or patriotic? Will you not ask for clothes, cars, and for houses? Will some not even ask for the head of their enemies? Will you be personal or patriotic? The choice is yours.

Hear what Nehemiah asked for:

"...If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."

Neh. 2: 5.

He seemed to be saying; **"Send me to go and outwardly express my inward heart impression. I need to back up my inward impression with outward expressions.** What is in your heart vis-a-vis the situation of the brethren and the situation of the Church of God in the land? What has God dropped in your heart? And how will you outwardly express this thing that God has inwardly impressed on your heart? What is in your heart? May God Himself help you to positively express your inward impressions to the edification of the Body of Christ. Amen.