

Course 120: Personal Spiritual Growth and Maturity

An apostolic teaching of the Global School of Ministry - UK

Introduction

For the first time in world history, all the signs are in place that Jesus is about to return! For the saint, there is no profit in engaging in wild speculations as to the exact date. We are also not called to respond in fear or apprehension. On the other hand, the return of the Lord it is going to be the consummation of our redemption! In a sense, all of us are Work-In-Progress in the hands of the Great Porter. We never are completely moulded until that day when He returns for His own who have been preserved by His grace Jude verse 24. Our core response to news of the soon return of Jesus is to be ready; be watchful and commit our whole being in complete submission to Him for the purpose of completing the work He began at His first coming. Since the Lord delights only in using pure vessels, the Holy Spirit is available to work out the fullness of Jesus in us as we willingly yield to His assignment in us Philippians 1:6; Philippians 2:12 – 15. Personal spiritual growth and maturity therefore is not an option but a critical need in our walk with the Lord.

Growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is available to all who will believe the report of scripture. At the New Birth, we start out as babes in Christ, needing the pure milk of the Word and to be pampered by our leaders. There comes a time when we need the meat of the Word to see the need to release ourselves to serve God unconditionally. Good as this state of service is, there happens to be an even better state. It is that of FRIENDSHIP with Jesus. Here is a state of deep intimacy with Him in which He reveals His heart to us and we revel in His Presence. In as much as this is a beautiful state to be in, there is even a yet more excellent state. That is the level or dimension of being in which we take our rightful position as sons of God! This state is where we take responsibility to execute the ordinance of our Father God because we are led by His Spirit 24/7 and have no other pursuit dear to us than to be His regents on earth, doing what Jesus would have done, were He physically present. He rules our hearts and from submitted hearts, He exerts His influence on the world around us. We will dwell on this threefold transition as we get into the heart of this practical course.

In our extensive study of Course 128, the Lord addressed a good number of the things we will cover in this course. The two courses are related because understanding of our human nature is the foundation of any meaningful spiritual growth and maturity.

This Course is intensely practical, designed to enable participants to achieve spiritual growth and maturity. The results are supposed to be self evident in the life of participants as they testify of behavioural changes, character development; attitudinal adjustments and private victories they win at the micro and macro levels.

In addition to the transitions of state, this course will also answer these vital questions:

1. What is Righteousness?
2. How is righteousness attained?
3. What is the difference between judicial and actual state of purity?
4. What is Holiness?
5. How is Holiness attained?
6. Can one progress in Holiness?
7. What are the roles of The Holy Spirit, The Word of God and Suffering in forging true holiness

Prologue: A Scriptural Survey

We will need to begin with a broad scriptural survey. The purpose is to see an overview of what the Word says of the two categories of saints – spiritual and carnal as a basis to analyse, as the Holy Spirit gives utterance, what we need to do to grow and mature in Christ. The Word makes it clear in various passages that there are two broad classifications of saints: natural (Carnal) and spiritual. The Lord calls on all who are His to abandon carnality and pursue spiritual growth! Jesus Himself laid the foundation by calling on saints to allow spiritual rather than carnal issues to preoccupy their hearts and minds:

Read all of Matthew 6:25-34 (King James Version)

²⁵Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what shall ye put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

³²(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

³³But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

³⁴Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

In the Book of Romans, there is a methodical presentation of the spiritual and Holy Spirit led life contrasted with the carnal/natural mind-led life. It must be noted that this passage is not referring to saints and unbelievers but two different kinds of believers. The spiritual saints are found in Romans 8: 1- 6, 9 – 17 while the carnal saint are described as in enmity with God (verses 5 – 8).

Read all of Romans 8:1-17 (King James Version)

¹There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

⁵For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

⁶For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

⁷Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

⁸So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

¹¹But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

¹²Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

¹³For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

¹⁴For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

¹⁵For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

¹⁶The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

¹⁷And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

As we continue to examine scriptures relating to natural (carnal) and spiritual saints, we must realize that life is the outcome of what is invested. If spiritual wisdom – the Word of God delivered with the illumination and unction of the Holy Spirit is invested in people, they will invariably grow to become spiritual. On the other hand, when people go to “church” and are fed with natural wisdom, philosophies of men and fanciful stories which titillate ears or tickle the human imagination, carnality and worldliness will be the logical outcome in their lives! In 1 Corinthians 2, we see that there are two types of wisdom. One is spiritual wisdom which comes from the Holy Spirit when He guides us according to the mind of God (verses 6 – 13, 15,16. This is contrasted with natural wisdom in verse 14.

1 Corinthians 2:6-16 (King James Version)

⁶Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

⁷But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory:

⁸Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

⁹But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

¹⁰But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

¹¹For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.

¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

¹³Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

¹⁴But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

¹⁵But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

¹⁶For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but we have the mind of Christ.

A few scriptures are worth reflecting on as we delve into this intensely practical course. Each of the scriptures makes a case for saints to grow in grace and mature in Christ Jesus. Full

examination of what they say and mean is a good starting point for our journey into the heart of this course.

The first is what the Holy Spirit used Paul the Apostle to say in 1 Corinthians 3: 1 – 10. Here the Holy Spirit uses Paul the Apostle to outline some of the characteristics of spiritual immaturity or babyhood. We shall exposit on them as we progress in this study.

1 Corinthians 3:1-10 (King James Version)

¹And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

²I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.

³For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

⁴For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

⁵Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

⁶I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

⁷So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

⁸Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.

⁹For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

¹⁰According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

This profound truth is fully echoed in Ephesians 4:11-16. Here, God make it clear that the purpose of endowing the Body of Christ with the fivefold headship gifts – Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers is to use them to ensure that the saints receive the complete spiritual diet needful to grow up in Christ. When the saints are thus nourished, they mature to the point that they can see beyond the oratory and eloquence of men as well as charismatic manifestations to discern when flesh has taken over. This is so important in our generation so that saints will not be deceived into embracing false doctrines and unhealthy lifestyles of ministers sugar coated with sweet words.

Ephesians 4:11-16 (King James Version)

¹¹And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

¹²For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

¹³Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

¹⁴That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

¹⁶From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Evidence of babyhood in Christ

From these readings, we can pick these vital signs of babyhood in saints.

1. When a saint is pre-occupied by what to eat, drink, wear, what type of job held, cars, houses and the things of God and the Kingdom are secondary (Matthew 6:25 -34)
2. When personal agendas are the core motivations behind what a saint does in the Kingdom.
3. When a saint is ruled by the motions of the soul – emotions, attitudes; and focuses on what is seen, touched, heard, perceived, and tasted rather than what God says by His Spirit.
4. When saints prefer stories and philosophies of men concerning how to be rich and successful rather than the solid Word of God. 2 Timothy 4: 3,4.
5. When a saint therefore finds it difficult to exercise faith in the Word of God but constantly buffeted by doubt, fear, worry, insecurity, apprehension.
6. When a saint has no faith in his/her prayers and constantly needs to “receive” prayers from a servant of God or have hands laid without reservations.
7. Worse still, when a saint loses confidence in his/her ability to hear from God and constantly wants his/her life to rotate on what servants of God say in prophecy or other utterances. This breeds a situation where the saint loses liberty received in Jesus and opens the door to manipulation, control and charismatic witchcraft.
8. When a saint is constantly having itchy ears to hear what is pleasant to the soul rather than the solid food which will build him/her up. 2 Timothy 3:
9. The plan of God is to use various callings and gifting to impact our lives so that Christ is fully formed and we become complete and mature in Him. When a saint becomes emotionally attached to certain ministers of the gospel because of their Charismatic gifts to the point where this leads to potentially or actually divisive preference for people based on their gifts and callings, immaturity and carnality begin to frustrate the purpose of God. 1 Corinthians 3: 1- 8 “I am of Paul”, “I am of Apollos”, “I am of Cephas”
10. When there is presence of envy and strife in the heart, the unity of the Body is thus decimated.
11. When a saint is puffed up with humanistic wisdom or certain scriptures but lacks the love filled heart which manifests Christ to the saints. 1 Corinthians 8:1-3; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

The issue of spiritual maturity is time sensitive! The end times will be a time of epic spiritual warfare culminating in a mass falling away from the truth by those who have not matured in Christ. Jesus Himself affirms that many will miss His Coming including those who claim to be Prophets.

Matthew 7:13-14 (King James Version)

¹³Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

¹⁴Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Matthew 7:21-23 (King James Version)

²¹Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Paul the Apostle spoke severally of the end times also. In the scriptures below the Holy Spirit used him to affirm, in graphic language, how spiritual babyhood will morph into extreme carnality in the end times:

2 Timothy 3:1-9 (King James Version)

¹This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

²For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

³Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

⁴Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

⁵Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

⁶For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

⁷Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

⁸Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

⁹But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as their's also was.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 (King James Version)

³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

⁴And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

The Mystery of Judicial and experiential holiness

When Jesus died at the Cross of Calvary, the sins of the whole world rested on Him. As many as believed in that propitiatory sacrifice by faith in their heart and confess acceptance of His Lordship with their lips are saved. At salvation, a miracle of epic proportions takes place! God looks at such people as holy unto Him and set apart for His use. A careful reading of the Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians and indeed most of the New Testament reveal that while God regards us as saints according to our judicial standing in Jesus, we are still warned against certain lifestyles and sins which will cause a break in fellowship with God. If a break of fellowship with God is sustained over a period of time, the separation that ensues will lead ultimately to a backslidden state and possible apostasy. See how Hebrews 6: 1 - 8 and Hebrews 10: 26 – 36 put it.

The remedy God has appointed for all His saints is to avoid stagnation where they are or backsliding from where they were. That solution is simply to be on a never ending quest for growth in Christ. By pressing into the fullness of Jesus and laying hold of all the graces He purchased for us at the Cross of Calvary, we are constantly nourished with the Word of God

which the Holy Spirit uses to build up our spiritual muscles and tissue. The ensuring growth in grace makes us complete in He who is the head of all principality and power.

In other words, while God sees us through the eyes of what Jesus did for us, He also says to us to allow the Holy Spirit to form Jesus in us and to imitate Jesus. Jesus Himself declared:

Matthew 5:6 (King James Version)

⁶Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Matthew 5:8 (King James Version)

⁸Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

The idea is that we can grow to the point where we are not buffeted by every wind of doctrine by different men of God but rather come to a point where we can freely receive what God gives to us through different vessels in the Body and release what He puts in us. This is how Ephesians 4:11 – 16 describes what happens when saints are fed the balanced diet arising from the complete headship gifts of Jesus – Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers.

The summary is this: in the mind of God, we are holy unto Him. Yet, God desires that we move beyond appropriation of His righteousness by faith to begin to walk in actual state of holiness evidenced by a mind renewed by the Holy Spirit and heart transformed by the grace of God. We then begin to think, speak and act like Jesus because the Kingdom of God has taken root in us! The Kingdom of God is no longer a matter of platitude but experiential reality!

It is erroneous to take some scriptures out of context, especially the Pauline epistles and assume that once someone is saved, he or she or she has automatically secured an infallible ticket to eternity. The entire New Testament was written to provide guidance to saints on how to relate with God and man in the time of their pilgrimage on planet earth. Here is a treatise on how saints should deal with their soul driven life so that their spirit man can spring forth to manifest the life of Christ. Let us read Ephesians 4: 17 – 32:

¹⁷This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

¹⁸Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

¹⁹Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

²⁰But ye have not so learned Christ;

²¹If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

²²That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

²³And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

²⁴And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

²⁵Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

²⁶Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

²⁷Neither give place to the devil.

²⁸Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

²⁹Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

³⁰And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

³¹Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

³²And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you”

Philippians 2: 12-15 proceeds to tell us another inconvenient truth: saints have a responsibility to work out their salvation with fear and trembling and places some degree of responsibility to maintain what has been graciously received:

¹²Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

¹³For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

¹⁴Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

¹⁵That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

The Charge to Grow

It is necessary to see through various vessels in the New Testament, including Jesus that we are charged not to remain static in our spiritual lives. Personal spiritual growth and maturity is a core lifestyle of Kingdom citizens:

Matthew 5:6 (King James Version) ⁶Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

The principle was well illustrated by Jesus in His epic treatise that is John 15. Here, Jesus insists that He is the True Vine and we are branches attached to Him with the Father as the Gardener who comes regularly to see if we (the branches) are healthy and productive or stunted and wasting space and resources fed into us. The imagery of growth is very vivid here:

John 15: 1- 8(KJV)

¹I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

²Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

³Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

⁵I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

⁶If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

⁷If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

⁸Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

One of His closest disciples who stumbled many times but was determined to be all that God wanted Him to be eventually made it. Peter was later used by God to provide deep insight into how we should live to please the Master. Here is one of the great insights:

2 Peter 3:14-18 (King James Version)

¹⁴Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

¹⁵And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

¹⁶As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

¹⁷Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

¹⁸But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.

In Hebrews 5: 12 – 14, a powerful case for spiritual growth is laid out before us. The Word makes it emphatic that those who fail to grow are in effect making themselves a liability to both God and other citizens of His Kingdom:

Hebrews 5:12-14 (King James Version)

¹²For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

¹³For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

¹⁴But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil

As you read this intensely practical study note, please allow the Holy Spirit to search you out. Are you still a babe needing just milk of word of “encouragement” even when you are out of order with God and man? Do you get offended when the solid meat and bone of the living Word of God is exposted?

Specific things we are to grow in

2 Peter 1:5-11 (King James Version)

⁵And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

⁶And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

⁷And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

⁸For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

¹⁰Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

¹¹For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Growth Objectives: The desired spiritual outcome

It is our character which God desires to see transformed through the pilgrimage of life. God wants to see us become living epistles that testify to the reality of the finished work of the Cross: a life of victory over sin! This is not to be a head stuffed with religious tomes and

jargons; it is not to be the multitude of religious activity we undertake which pleases God. He is a fruit inspector, as John 15: 1-8 amply illustrate. God has no use of religious attempts to please Him through sacrifices and multiplied activity. He desires fruit! Fruit comes out on the branch naturally as a result of the nature of the tree to which it is attached! In effect, when we are fully attached to Jesus, in and out of season and give Him the right of way to express Himself through us as yielded vessels, it is only a matter of time that who He is and His response to situations begin to show up in and through us. The song writer captured it vividly with this line “Let others see Jesus in you”.

Following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in AD 70, a new kind of Temple sprung up: the heart of saints! In each heart, the Holy Spirit took up active residency representing Jesus and completing from inside out, the awesome transition from the kingdom of darkness and conveyance into the Kingdom of God which began on the day of Salvation (Colossians 1:12,13)

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (King James Version)

¹⁹What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

²⁰For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Colossians 1:12-13 (King James Version)

¹²Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:

¹³Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

As we said in the previous section, Jesus primarily prefers to show up in and through us through the quality of fruit of the Spirit we bear- not by how much we know of the Kingdom, how much charismatic gifts we manifest or how much money we bring for its advancement – but by how much of His character we manifest as a lifestyle. The Kingdom life is not what we do when we gather inside a religiously designed building of brick and mortar on certain days or hours. The fruit of the Spirit is the Holy Spirit in action, manifesting Himself in us and expressing His grace as an outcome of what is going on inside of us:

Galatians 5:22-23 (King James Version)

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

²³Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

If we make it the strong focus of our daily lives to yield to the inner working of the Holy Spirit to express these aspects of Jesus through us, God will make full use of us to illuminate the dark world around us and apply us as Salt to preserve and flavour our environments. That conforms to the Word of Jesus:

Matthew 5:13-16 (King James Version)

¹³Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

¹⁴Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

¹⁵Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Fighting one another or quarrelling over our personal understandings of what the Bible says on specific texts is therefore unprofitable! We do better if we simply live out the Kingdom as possessors not tear ourselves up as professors! Ultimately, a day is coming when the final results will be in:

Matthew 7:21-23 (King James Version)

²¹Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

The emphasis of Jesus is character rather than effusions of mere words or even manifestations of charisma:

Matthew 7:15-20 (King James Version)

¹⁵Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

¹⁶Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

¹⁷Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

¹⁸A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

¹⁹Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

²⁰Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

When we give the Holy Spirit ample space and room to develop the nature of Jesus in us and cause Him to be fully formed in us, we are able to exhibit the attitude, character and lifestyle which decorates our witness as citizens of a superior Kingdom to that of the world around us! It is for this reason that Jesus commissioned His disciples and indeed all of us to go forth and be His witnesses, not just preachers and teachers!

Acts 1:8 (King James Version)

⁸But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Examples: Jesus and Paul

God hardly asks us to do something that has not been done before. Jesus Himself modelled growth for us and showed us examples to follow. While in the flesh, Jesus grew!

Luke 2:40, 51, 52 (King James Version)

⁴⁰And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

⁵¹And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.

⁵²And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

Jesus fulfilled His estate as a man! He leant obedience through what He suffered and in so doing, took away the power of the flesh to pose a risk to spirituality!

Hebrews 2:9-18 (King James Version)

⁹But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

¹⁰For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

¹¹For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

¹²Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

¹³And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

¹⁴Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

¹⁵And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

¹⁶For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

¹⁷Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

¹⁸For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Paul the Apostle was a man sold out to the Kingdom of God and pursuit of its righteousness. Even at the latter part of His life, here is what he told the saints in the city of Philippi:

Philippians 3:1-16 (King James Version)

¹Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.

²Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

³For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

⁴Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

⁵Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

⁶Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

⁷But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

⁸Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

⁹And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

¹⁰That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

¹¹If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

¹²Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

¹³Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

¹⁴I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

¹⁶Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

Why it is necessary to grow and mature: danger ensures when we do not!

Saints, the Holy Scriptures were preserved for us at great cost – including the blood of those went ahead of us. Inside the Word God has set out clear instructions on how He wants citizens of His Kingdom to live. As we consider why it is so necessary for every saint to grow in grace, the best approach will be for us to allow the Word to address us directly. Paul the apostle said in the book of Philippians 3:1 and 4:8 that it is safe to repeat spiritual truths. None of us should ever come to the point where we take the bible like an academic book to browse through and leave behind! All scriptures should be studied diligently, meditated on again and again until they are used by the Holy Spirit to renew our minds, transform our hearts, attitudes and change our perspectives! There is profit in repeatedly going through the relevant scriptures until we experientially understand them. Let these scriptures therefore answer the question – Why must we grow while we provide short running commentaries:

John 15: 1, 2, 6 (KJV)

¹I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

²Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

⁶If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

Hebrews 5:12-14 (King James Version)

¹²For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

¹³For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

¹⁴But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil

Hebrews 6:1-8 (King James Version)

¹Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

²Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

³And this will we do, if God permit.

⁴For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

⁵And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

⁶If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

⁷For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:

⁸But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

In the Book of Hebrews, the Lord also warns, in clear language that saints who do not grow will relapse into backsliding and possibly apostasy. The language of scripture is clear and unambiguous that the end of such lives is perdition.

Hebrews 10:26-39 (King James Version)

²⁶For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

²⁷But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

²⁸He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

²⁹Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

³⁰For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

³²But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

³³Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

³⁵Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

³⁸Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

³⁹But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

2 Peter 1:5-11 (King James Version)

⁵And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

⁶And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

⁷And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

⁸For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

¹⁰Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

¹¹For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

When we sum up these scriptures, the Holy Spirit mentions these dangers of lack of growth:

1. Stunted spiritual growth often leads a saint to encumber the entire body as a dead branch does to a tree. – John 15: 1,2,6
2. There is a real danger of such people being cut off by God and reserved for damnation. John 15: 2
3. Backsliding and apostasy may follow when someone stops growing. Hebrews 10:26-29
4. Immaturity in life and ministry. Spiritual blindness and empty pride may ensure when someone stops growing and revels in past glories. Hebrews 5: 12 – 14.
5. Growth is the mechanism God has ordained to enable us embrace the afflictions which will surely come on this side of eternity. Those who grow are able to respond spiritually to the challenges they face. Hebrews 10:32,35.
6. Growth is the only guarantee that a saint will make his/her calling and election sure and thus press into the future state of the Kingdom. - 2 Peter 1:8-11.
- 7.

Ingredients for spiritual growth

In various parts of scripture, we are told the ingredients for spiritual growth. We will allow the Holy Spirit to speak through scripture and then we will summarize. As Philippians 3:1 and Philippians 4:8 said, there is great profit in repeating truth. We will therefore refer to some previous passages in order to bring forth the counsel of God in bold relief.

John 3

³Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

⁴Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

⁵Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

⁷Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

⁸The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

¹⁴And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

¹⁵That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Acts 3:19-21 (King James Version)

¹⁹Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

²⁰And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

²¹Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Romans 10:5-11 (King James Version)

⁵For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.

⁶But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)

⁷Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)

⁸But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

⁹That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

¹⁰For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

¹¹For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

POINT 1. THE NEW BIRTH: These scripture speak of the reality that the New Birth is the entrance to the Kingdom of God. To that degree also, the New Birth experience is the beginning of spiritual growth. You cannot grow what is not present! You cannot grow that which is not part of the Kingdom!

John 15

¹I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

²Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

³Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

⁵I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

⁶If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

⁷If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

⁸Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Point 2: Abide in Christ. No matter the strength of the waves; no matter the billows of the storm or the fierceness of the fire which you pass through, the demand of God and His Word is this: Abide in Christ. He has already guaranteed the fact that He will never leave us or forsake us! Hebrews 13:5,6; Isaiah 43:1,2

Point 3: Pruning by God. John 15:2. From time to time, God allows certain situations and circumstances to come which bring forth what is inside our souls. God uses His appointed disciplinary process to cut of those attitudes, emotions, lifestyles and pursuits which do not represent him and therefore forge a greater degree of Christ in us. In effect, spiritual discipline is not an evil but an actual manifestation of the love of God for us as Hebrews 12:5 – 11 reveal:

Hebrews 12: 5-11 (King James Version)

⁵And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

⁶For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

⁷If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

⁸But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

⁹Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

¹⁰For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

¹¹Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

In 1 Peter 2: 1 – 3 gives us an understanding of some other ingredients needed for spiritual growth:

1 Peter 2:1-3 (King James Version)

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

²As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby:

³If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

Point 4: A saint can only grow to the degree that he or she first violently seeks sanctification of the soul which takes away negative motions of the soul! These motions include malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, evil speaking.

Point 5: The Word of God is a core instrument of spiritual maturity. For young saints, the Word of God has the same effect as milk on infants – enables them to grow well and develop (1 Peter 2: 2). For older saints, the same word has the cleansing effect of water as John 15:3

says. The water of the word cleanses the mind, taking away worldly mindsets so that the mind of Christ is manifested.

John 15:9,10,12 - 14 (King James Version)

⁹As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

¹⁰If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

¹²This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

¹³Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

¹⁴Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

John 8:32-36 (King James Version)

³²And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

³⁶If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

John 12:44-50 (King James Version)

⁴⁴Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.

⁴⁵And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.

⁴⁶I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

⁴⁷And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

⁴⁸He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

⁴⁹For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

⁵⁰And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

Point 5: Obedience. Growth comes easy when we obey every word of God we learn. God does not want us to stuff our minds with the logos of the Word. Rather, He wants us to receive the rhema of the Word and set our hearts to obey. As the Lord sees our hearts, He supplies grace with which we are able to obey. Knowing and obeying the Truth has an extraordinary liberating effect on saints. Hearing the Word and not obeying it becomes judgement!

John 15:9,10,12 - 14 (King James Version)

⁹As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

¹⁰If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

¹²This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

¹³Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

¹⁴Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Here is how Apostle Jewel Robinson of Illinois puts it: “the process of growth and maturity is definitely evidenced by our obedience to the standard of the Word by faith. Many fail to realize the maturity that manifest through obedience of spiritual laws that govern the Kingdom which determine whether we are living by the Spirit of God or the spirit of man. Its true determinant will be measured in alignment with the Word of God. God has truly defeated every work of Satan and given us authority over it. We will be praying for the members of IMF as instructed”

Point 6: Communion with God in Prayer. A saint will grow better if he or she learns early the joy of making fellowship and prayer time with God a fulcrum on which the whole day and life rotate. The saint who dwells in the presence of God will invariably grow because Christ is formed in the place of intimacy with Him. We should back this up with a life of watching our heart, mindsets and our surroundings so that we can walk in circumspection. Though He is the Son of God, Jesus lived a life wholly dependent on the Father! He did nothing without first knowing the will of the Father. For that reason, He practised and taught extensively on prayer.

Luke 11: 1-13

¹And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.

²And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.

³Give us day by day our daily bread.

⁴And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

⁵And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves;

⁶For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him?

⁷And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

⁸I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.

⁹And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

¹⁰For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

¹¹If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?

¹²Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

¹³If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Jesus taught clearly that there are some kinds of challenges saints will face which require that fasting be added to prayer. He also made it clear that while He is in heaven, saints will need to fast:

Matthew 17: 14 - 21

¹⁴And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,

¹⁵Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.

¹⁶And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.

¹⁷Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.

¹⁸And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.

¹⁹Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

²⁰And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

²¹Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Mark 2:18-20 (King James Version)

¹⁸And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

¹⁹And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

²⁰But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

The journey to Calvary was soaked in prayer. As His soul was troubled, Jesus recourse to prayer and there He was strengthened. As soon as the Father reiterated His will, Jesus rose up and embraced the Cross with joy:

Matthew 26:36-46 (King James Version)

³⁶Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

³⁷And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.

³⁸Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

³⁹And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

⁴⁰And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

⁴¹Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

⁴²He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

⁴³And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.

⁴⁴And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

⁴⁵Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

⁴⁶Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

Point 7: Submission to the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is given as a gift to indwell us and guide us into all truth. He is to lead us into the perfect will of God which, when we know and do, we discover the joy of growth in Him. With His guidance, we enjoy the privilege of walking with God.

Point 8: Adversity: 2 Corinthians 12:7-9. As the Potter, God knows when best to put us in the fire so that we may turn out better. The best of gold often comes out after the metal has passed through the furnace where impurities are identified, isolated and drained off. There are times when God uses afflictions to impress the character of Jesus in us. What He does at such times is to allow us to come to the point where we look away from other people, realize our insufficiency and thus look up to Him alone. At such times, we discover that only Him is truly qualified to be our near kinsman! Consider this picture of Paul wrestling with God for His intervention and deliverance from trouble until God spoke:

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 (King James Version)

⁷And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

⁸For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

⁹And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

The 4 Transitions appointed all men 2 Peter 3:18; Gal. 3:26 – 29; Romans 8: 12 – 17

Spiritual Maturity: A Practical Road Map

As we come to the conclusion of this practical, life application course, it is necessary to re-visit a deep spiritual concept that was first broached at the beginning and expand same for our deeper understanding. It is about the law of process and spiritual maturity in sainthood.

For the first time in world history, all the signs are in place that Jesus is about to return! For the saint, there is no profit in engaging in wild speculations as to the exact date. We are also not called to respond in fear or apprehension. On the other hand, the return of the Lord it is going to be the consummation of our redemption! Colossians 3:1 – 4; 1 John 2:28; 1 John 3: 1-3; In a sense, all of us are Work-In-Progress in the hands of the Great Potter. We never are completely moulded until that day when He returns for His own who have been preserved by His grace Jude verse 24. Our core response to news of the soon return of Jesus is to

- Be ready;
- Be watchful and
- Act by committing our whole being in complete submission to Him for the purpose of completing the work He began at His first coming. This was the essence of the words of Jesus in Luke 19:10-27.

Since the Lord delights only in using pure vessels, the Holy Spirit is available to work out the fullness of Jesus in us as we willingly yield to His assignment in us Philippians 1:6;

Philippians 2:12 – 15. Personal spiritual growth and maturity therefore is not an option but a critical need in our walk with the Lord.

Growth in Grace and the 4 – stage transition of saint hood:

Growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is available to all who will believe the report of scripture.

2 Peter 3:18 (King James Version)

¹⁸But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.

The word “growth” connotes increase. Grace is a virtue we can increase in. We can increase in both mental understanding; heart transformation and in other dimensions of our walk with God. Growth is something which comes best when there is an inside out paradigm by which our behaviour changes as we come into an ever increasing understanding of Christ in us as the hope of glory and yield to the working of the Holy Spirit and the Word on our minds and hearts. We shall examine the four stages of growth which all saints are appointed while in the dimension of flesh and blood. It must be noted however that God can well change the order of things regarding a particular vessel as it pleases Him. However, the uniform testimony of scriptures shows that the four part process expounded here seems to be the experience of a vast majority of saints.

Stage 1: Babyhood

At the New Birth, we start out as babes in Christ, needing the pure milk of the Word and to be pampered by our leaders. The transition from Sinner to Saint is only valid through the process of conversion (repentance and change of mind and attitude to sin) and conveyance into the Kingdom of God. Acts 3:19; Colossians 1: 12 -14. This is not about going to church from childhood. It is not about being a member of a congregation or even serving actively there. Anyone who is not truly converted is not a member of the Kingdom of God and cannot genuinely grow in grace! It makes sense to ask yourself this question: am I truly saved or am I assuming I am saved? If Jesus returns today, will I be among the number that have their names in the Lamb's Book of Life who will be taken up to meet with Him?

At this stage,

Saints desire spiritual milk and are unable to understand or receive the strong meat and bones of the Word.

1 Corinthians 3: ¹And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. ²I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. ³For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? ⁴For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Of this type of saints, Peter says:

1 Peter 2: Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, ²As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: ³If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

- They are still learning the ropes, so to say and first principles of the Kingdom which are easy for them to comprehend.
- ARE HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON SERVANTS OF GOD to teach them, answer questions of life
- Saints have to be encouraged to come to fellowship.
- The capacity for accepting and taking responsibility is severely limited.
- These saints need praise of men for even little tasks done.
- Please read through all the signs of carnality in an earlier part of this course. Carnality is the natural state of spiritual babyhood. This can be found among both young believers as well as in older saints who have remained ensconced in their soulish realms, with excessive emotional baggage that hinder their ability to grow spiritually. Because of insincerity with God and themselves; shame and fear of what people will say, many old saints who are spiritual babes have dug in, mired by their souls and hiding their true states. Unable to answer altar calls, they pack may leadership councils and yet are basically babes! Babes leading babes will only lead to disaster and the results are self evident with so much jealousies, envies, strife, vain humanistic ambitions and quest for power without character!

Hebrews 5:12,13: ¹²For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such

as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. ¹³For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

Stage 2: Servant hood

1. There comes a time when babes need the meat of the Word. With poor exposition of the word and inadequate knowledge majority of immature saints, make the transition to be servants in the “Church” . These saints still hold God as a surreal Being who is basically “far away”. They need to shout, scream and whine to catch His attention!
2. They serve Him out of duty; obeying instructions without knowing why.
3. Unfortunately, this attitude of serving God without knowing why or doing so out of duty without love can be dangerous and very limiting. This is because it is the bedrock of religion and the basis of the orphan spirit which inflicted many older denominations causing preference of laws of man over the Laws of the Kingdom.
4. Many people, though saved, are afflicted with this orphan spirit. What they know of God is and their relationship with Him fits this profile:
 - A distant creator who they essentially serve out of fear of what He will do to them(punishment) if they sin or if they do not achieve certain benchmarks of ministry success
 - They are therefore unable to see the reality that though God is in heaven and creator of the whole universe, He has paid the entire price for them to not just serve Him but to be redeemed from the hands of the enemy. This mindset thus equates pain, suffering, poverty and rejection for true holiness.
 - Serving God is out of a sense of duty, not love. They behave very much like the Elder brother of the Prodigal son and are often full of envy when sinners and those they consider “carnal Christians” seem to prosper more.
 - What servants call prayer can often be properly classified as complaining. The approach to God is legalistic. You hear this kind of statements: “God you ought to bless me because I have paid my tithes”; “God, why are the unserious sisters who are even sinning against you be married when the serious ones are still waiting?”
 - Servant hood can lead to a mercenary attitude to the things of God. There is an inherent inability to take responsibility for the things of God.
 - Servants are faithful to their leaders only to the extent of what will profit their interests. Once they chance upon what they consider a better route to their ambitions, their loyalty shift immediately. To that extent, servants are not good team members and can be full of treachery. Judas was a classical servant who hung onto Jesus as long as it gave him relevance. For just 30 pieces of silver, he betrayed his Master!

Stage 3: Intimacy or Friendship with Jesus

Let us bear in mind that Jesus had announced two previous transitions. The first was what He told Nicodemus in John chapter 3 that without the new birth experience mankind is engaged in dry religious observances! Jesus was in effect saying that every human being has a choice to accept membership of the family of God as basis of walking with God in His Kingdom or remain outside it observing dead religious rituals!

The second transition was themselves The disciples themselves experienced the frustrations of serving God with limited understanding of who Jesus was or why He came. They had dropped their fishing, taxation and other businesses and followed Him blindly. In the process,

they had displayed great carnality at various times. In one case, James and John had asked for permission to call down fire to consume an entire Samaritan village because they refused them access. In another case, they tried to prevent someone from casting out demons in the name of Jesus. In another faux pas of epic proportions, James and John recruited their mother to lobby Jesus about their ambition to sit on the right and left of Jesus in the coming Kingdom Matthew 20:20 - 28. Judas betrayed Jesus; Peter denied Him and when push came to shove, all but John forsook Jesus. Yet these were the very disciples Jesus handpicked after an all night prayer! Luke 6:12 – 16.

The disciples remained in this yoyo state of emotion driven service until Jesus announced their transition to be friends. Their actions were not perfect but their hearts were sold out to Him. John 15: 9-16. If your heart is right with God, be confident of this very thing: He who began a good work in you will complete it before the Day the Lord will appear! Do not despair that you are not yet there! Cheer up and embrace the process God has appointed for your perfection!

There happens to be an even better state of relationship we can have with God. It is that of FRIENDSHIP with Jesus. The disciples of Jesus were doing assignments given to them without question as servants. Shortly before His passion, Jesus announced their promotion and called them friends:

John 15:9-15 (King James Version)

⁹As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

¹⁰If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

¹¹These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

¹²This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

¹³Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.

¹⁴Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

¹⁵Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

These are features of saints who have responded to the upward call of Jesus and made the transition:

- A deep hunger and thirst for more of God creates a crises experience which launches saints into this stage of life. That crises experience is called SANCTIFICATION or CIRCUMCISION of the Heart. Through a supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, all other passions and yearnings such as quest for more material things, money, power, marriage, success in life are rooted out of their idolatrous hold on the heart of the saint. The saint literally taps into real grace to love God above all else!
- There is a deeper appreciation of the gift of righteousness which enables the saint to respond in kind to God. That response of appreciation for the gift of righteousness is called holiness. We know that sin is contrary to the nature of God, is filthy, offends Him and separate us from His Presence. Since we cannot afford this for even a minute, we go out of our ways to be proactive in our lifestyles giving no room for the enemy to cause us to slip. Because our body parts are completely consecrated to God, they serve only Him and do not respond to solicitations of Satan and sin.

- Saints pursuing intimacy with God are constantly aware that Christ in us is the hope of Glory and are aware that God is not afar off. He is also resident by the Holy Spirit, right in our hearts. We therefore are in a heightened state of awareness of the 24/7 Presence of the Lord.
- In this state of deep intimacy with Him, God reveals His heart to us and we revel in His Presence. He unfolds things to come and we walk in the Light.
- When saints are walking in intimacy with the Lord, they know the joy of obeying His commandments. As Jesus told His disciples, obedience to His commandments will be proof of a life of intimacy with Him!

A saint walking in intimacy with God can stumble or sin. However, the active conscience is immediately pricked by the Holy Spirit, convicted and responds by running towards and not away from God! The renewed mind knows what the Word says in 1 John 2:1, 2 and other scriptures and quickly receives reconciliation. 1 John 2: 1,2: ¹My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: ²And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Stage 4: Son ship

In as much as intimacy is a beautiful state to be in, there is even a yet more excellent state. That is the level or dimension of being in which we take our rightful position as sons of God! Several time one day, God spoke to me clearly “I want sons”. God is looking for the fruit of the propitiatory work of Jesus at the Cross in the form of sons who are like Jesus! He came to bring many sons to glory! Jesus broke down the middle wall of partition which kept the saints divided according to their races; gender; socio-economic standing and denominations. When people mature to become sons, they understand the heart of Father God, relate intimately with Him and make no provision for the flesh!

This state is where we take responsibility to execute the ordinance of our Father God because we are led by His Spirit 24/7 and have no other pursuit dear to us than to be His regents on earth, doing what Jesus would have done, were He physically present. He rules our hearts and from submitted hearts, He exerts His influence on the world around us. Sons take responsibility for the estate of their Father. They speak with enemies at the gate and give Satan no room to operate!

From Friend to Son the transition is through the process of sanctification of the heart followed by receiving and walking in revelation which liberates. John 8:32, 36. The mature son takes responsibility for representing The Father where he or she is planted. Revelation makes you to ignore the carnal senses and always focus on what God says and the unseen which is permanent 2 Corinthians 4:16 – 18. In this state of being, all walls crumble and the saint lives in the reality of the blessedness of the will of God. There is neither male nor female, white, black, Jewish nor Asian; there are no denominational walls to cling to. We become the living reality that Jesus is who He says He is and demonstrate His Character, Presence and Power anywhere we show up. We have no glory in the flesh in any way and neither flaunt our pedigree, education, physical assets nor do we seek any credit for anything it pleases the Father to accomplish in and through us! Struggle of all types cease as knowing, submitting to and doing the will of God becomes one seamless conundrum of Kingdom life free of worry and anxiety for temporal things. Matthew 6:25-34; Romans 14:17,18

Here are the epic scriptures which announce this state of being and the responsibilities attached:

The most dramatic transition however was to come only after Jesus went to the Cross and paid the price of spilling His blood as the Lamb of God. At this point, a paradigm shift became the new reality: Divinity which became humanity through the incarnation had met and kissed an equal yet opposite principle – humanity could now function with a measure of divinity while still in the body and be used of God to demonstrate His Presence and Power by the in dwelling Holy Spirit!

That was the essence of what happened in the Upper Room when 120 saints who believed and obeyed till the very end received the baptism in and of the Holy Spirit! To make sure that no one was in doubt about this extraordinary development, the unlearned fisher men began to utter speech in the polished languages of various nations and peoples who gathered at Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost.

Within a generation the new reality was sealed when the imperial Roman army led by the redoubtable General Titus sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple. The Temple was the grand epitome of the Old wine skin of religion and needed to be destroyed so that the new wineskin would come into effect. That new wineskin is the fleshly tables of the hearts of the redeemed of the Lord on which the Constitution of the Kingdom of God are inscribed with the very Spirit of the Living God!

John 20: 16 – 23:

¹⁶Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

¹⁷Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

¹⁸Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the LORD, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

¹⁹Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

²⁰And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the LORD.

²¹Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

²²And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

²³Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

Romans 8:12-17 (King James Version)

¹²Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.

¹³For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

¹⁴For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

¹⁵For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

¹⁶The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

¹⁷And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Galatians 4:1-7 (King James Version)

¹Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

²But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

³Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

⁴But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

⁵To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

⁶And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

⁷Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Because of the Law of God wired into their spirit man and to which their souls have wholly yielded, sons of God are not ruled by legalism and observances of ordinances out of servile fear. They walk in true liberty because the truth of Christ they know has set them free! This is by no means the negative type of liberty called lasciviousness or giving occasion for the flesh to engage in self indulgence! Rather, it is the life that is so imbued with the living reality of divinity that resides in the heart that sin has no room to manipulate it. It does not co-mingle with anything of darkness in the thought process and hence enjoys a life that is wholly wired to please the Father.

Galatians 5:1, 13 - 16 (King James Version)

¹Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

¹³For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

¹⁴For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

¹⁵But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

¹⁶This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Revelation is a central currency of the Kingdom of God. Having an understanding of what happened at the Cross has an extreme liberating effect on the saint. The truth of the victory of Jesus over Satan, Sin and Evil at the Cross is something that births the faith to press into the living reality of full redemption.

John 8:32-36 (King James Version)

³²And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

³³They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

³⁴Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

³⁵And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

³⁶If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

In a real sense, sons have appropriated fully, their identificational privileges. They understand what the death of Jesus at the Cross means.

The Ways of Sons – Principles of Son ship!

It can be seen from this profound revelation given by God that the ultimate purpose of God in sending Jesus to this world was to redeem out of this carnal and fleeting world a peculiar people unto Himself as members of His family. The scripture below sums this truth up in great detail:

Hebrews 2:10-18 (King James Version)

¹⁰For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

¹¹For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

¹²Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

¹³And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

¹⁴Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

¹⁵And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

¹⁶For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

¹⁷Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

¹⁸For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

As we have seen in this study and all through the scriptures, no one is born – spiritually or naturally who begins to walk and run immediately. There is a Law of Growth which follows the principle of process. That is why people go through the process of babyhood in Christ to Servant hood and onto Intimacy/Friendship with Jesus. The ultimate purpose of God is however to bring many sons to glory.

Enabling saints to make these critical transitions is the very reason why Jesus released His Fivefold offices of Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher and gave them to different men and women in His Body on earth. Let us read Ephesians 4:11 – 16 again carefully and see that the fivefold was given for the very purpose of ensuring that SAINTS GROW UP AND MATURE TO BE SONS ABIDING IN THE HOUSE and not orphans and mercenary servants who are tossed through by every wind of doctrine:

Ephesians 4:11-16 (King James Version)

¹¹And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

¹²For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

¹³Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

¹⁴That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

¹⁶From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

The sad reality of immature saints taking titles unto themselves and proceeding to make babes out of their state of babyhood is the reason why the Church of Jesus Christ has been

substantially powerless for the past 50 years or so. This has led to evolution of many doctrines of men and demons which pander to the flesh. These doctrines are standard fare on many so called Christian television programmes and conferences where people are given measly sops of humanistic wisdom targeted at their emotions to make them happy. Week in week out, saints go to “church” and by that they mean a building of brick and mortar to get a fix of emotional effusion coming out of babes with high sounding titles.

Thank God for His mercy and patience. Thank God that He has not given up on His dear Church in spite of the gang rape she has suffered from many wolves serving the cause of Satan and the flesh. The clear plan of God for His Church – comprising all those who are redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb – is articulated clearly in Ephesians 5:25-27

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

²⁶That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

²⁷That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

The Church that Jesus Christ is coming to take out of the way for the world and the pseudo kingdom practitioners to suffer the just consequence of rejecting the real Him will be a Church without spot(of besetting sins), wrinkles(of traditions of men and humanistic ideologies men masquerade as Kingdom teachings) and other such things(the dis-unity caused by denominationalism and its opposite, ecumenism).

From Europe to Africa; from Asia to Oceania; from North to South America and the Islands of the vast Oceans and seas, the Holy Spirit is using the water of the Word to wash the Church of Jesus Christ clean. The Lord is once again exalting the teaching ministry and using the fivefold to feed saints with biblical truth, not the wisdom of men who have backslidden from the faith. The result is that even in unlikely places and among hitherto unusual people, God is raising a company of saints who know the truth which sets free. They are no longer addicted to the lying ways of backslidden preachers and tares commissioned by the Devil to confuse saints. These saints are transiting to the state of son ship and make no provision for the flesh. They know instinctively that Jesus is coming back soon. They also know that it is not the will of God for them to fold their hands and wait or be indifferent. They lay their hands on the plough to bring in the largest harvest ever, obeying the voice of the Lord Jesus who charged them individually and severally “occupy, till I come” in this epic passage:

Luke 19:10-27 (King James Version)

¹⁰For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

¹¹And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

¹²He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

¹³And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

¹⁴But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

¹⁵And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

¹⁶Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

¹⁷And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

¹⁸And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.

¹⁹And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

²⁰And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:

²¹For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

²²And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:

²³Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

²⁴And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

²⁵(And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

²⁶For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

²⁷But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

The Ways of Sons

1. **Revelation:** They receive revelation of the deeper mysteries of the Kingdom. This revelation establishes what is, what will be and what is to come. Their lives are thus anchored on the fresh insight they gain into the mind of God concerning the soon return of Jesus Christ and their role in preparing saints and the world for that hard reality.
2. **Understanding:** Revelation becomes life transforming when it is properly understood from the God rather than man point of view. Because their hearts are free of agendas and self pursuits, sons are able to grasp the heart of Father God.
3. **Death to self:** All that sons can ever be in their walk with the Father on this side of eternity are hinged on the fact that they chose to die in order to live with and for Him! They are dead to self ambitions; vain pursuits and the fancies of this world have no grip on their souls.
4. **Total Consecration to seek God, His Kingdom: and its righteousness:** With death to self, their eyes are single and their hearts totally sold out to pursuit of the Kingdom of God and its righteousness. Matthew 6:25 – 34. The righteousness of the Kingdom has been amply articulated in GSoM Courses 128 and 120. Interestingly, sons never arrive. Like Paul in Philippians 3: 1-14, they are in a never ending quest to be all that God has ordained them to be.
5. **Absolute Trust in God:** This translates to trusting Him as sons trust their fathers to take care of everything about them. When those expectations are not yet manifest, as good sons they do not throw a tantrum or pity party. They just “know” that daddy will take care. They therefore rest in His love!
6. **The World:** Sons avoid entanglement with the corrosive influence of this world. Sons realize that the exhortation of the Father is true concerning the world. They accept the reality that though they are citizens of nations in the natural, they are firstly citizens of

the eternal Kingdom of God. Their first loyalty is to God and flowing there from, they are subject to the rulers God has set over nations, even though such people may not know Him. 2 Corinthians 6:14 – 18; 2 Timothy 2:4; 1 John 2:15-17

7. **Lifestyle:** Sons live spare! They do not find pleasure in the toys and fancies which drive the multitude and babes. Because of this, they discover the blessedness of owning nothing! They live like Jesus and other sons who are now part of the Church triumphant! Sons realize that Jesus is our perfect model. 2 Timothy 2:3. Because of this, the Father can entrust sons in the market place with wealth of the Kingdom. Money has lost its grip over such people and can be properly used as a servant.
8. **Experiential Manifestation of the Kingdom in the now.** Jesus made it clear that while His Kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36) and would be manifested in the future (Acts 1: 4 – 8), yet those who have become its citizens have the Kingdom in their hearts(Luke 17:21). For this reason, they learn the blessedness of cultivating the Kingdom life and guarding their hearts with all diligence lest any other thing crowd out what is so precious! Instead of sloganeering and throwing about the word “Kingdom”, they know of it experientially as they enjoy a vibrant relationship with the Father which manifests in the indwelling spirit of righteousness; peace with Him even in the midst of external pressures and joy in the Holy Spirit which gives them strength from within. Such sons are a sight to behold as they are strong, stable, assured in Christ and bold as lions!
9. **Integrity & Character:** Sons understand from the Word and the indwelling Holy Spirit that they are called to manifest and represent Jesus in all situations. They allow Him by the working of the Holy Spirit and through circumstances to work out the full measure of Jesus into their lives. They know that they are called to a level of righteousness which exceeds that of the hypocritical religious world Matthew 5:20. Because the Laws of the New Covenant and the Family of God is wired into their hearts, the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5, 6 & 7 becomes the standard frame of reference for behaviour during their pilgrimage on earth. Philippians 2:12 – 15; 1 Peter 2: 9 – 17.
10. **Discipline & Order.** Sons are disciplined people who know and understand principles of order. They do not recognize fellow sons not after the manner of men (age, gender, wealth, height, etc). The truth is that they know no one after the flesh. Rather, they know fellow sons by the Spirit! They are led by the Holy Spirit to know the spiritual assignments of other sons and recognize those God has given scope of responsibility or vastness of revelation that is greater than theirs. While they are secure in what is committed to them, they joyfully align with those other sons, keeping rank without loss of face. Thus aligned, they rally together under the banner of the King of Kings, Jesus Christ and synergize to release the quantum of spiritual energy needful to take territories assigned to them jointly. 1 Chronicles 12:38; Joel 2:7, 8.

11. **Intimate relationship with God in a new dimension.** Sons enjoy a whole new level of intimacy in their relationship and walk with God! God is no longer a vague surreal unknown personality. He is no longer an object of religious devotions. God comes alive in them as a Father. Abba encapsulates this reality of an intimate Father-son relationship! With Jesus, He is not just a far off Saviour. Jesus comes alive as a model, near Kinsman, friend and in a sense that is deep and yet profound, an Elder Brother! John 20: 11-17; Galatians 4: 10 7; Hebrews 2: 10 – 18. The reality of Jesus is that in Him, divinity became humanity so that humanity will receive and walk in a measure of divinity! Yet, this is not the kind of blasphemous concept of the pseudo-kingdom preachers who deny the divinity of Jesus.
12. **Empowerment:** Sons deliberately and actively cooperate with the Holy Spirit to use them as instruments of empowering the flock of Jesus Christ. They do not treat the flock as their own but as a sacred trust committed unto their care to impart with the wisdom and grace of God through His word and anointing of the Holy Spirit to the degree that they mature, discover and take their place as active, functionally relevant parts. When sons are in five fold ministry, they will invest all of the grace of God, anointing of the Holy Spirit and revelation they have received to point people to the ultimate Son, Jesus Christ! They therefore teach saints to produce disciples. They invest time in making ministers of the disciples through the process of training, equipping, activation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and calling and end up releasing such people into ministry. No one stays in their ministry as a “member” of the congregation. Their concept is that saints are rather functional members of the Body of Christ according to Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12: 1- 32; Ephesians 4:7; 1 Peter 4:10,11 which is their guide book for ministry. Ephesians 4:11 – 16; 1 Peter 5: 1 – 6. On the part of the saints, they do not know preachers after the flesh but by the Spirit! They do not join ministries on their own accord, out of personal preference nor are they moved by effusion of passion in preachers or their charismatic manifestations! They know, according to the Word that those things can be deceptive. They therefore are mindful of who speaks into their lives, who lays hands on them and who are their covering. Sons therefore seek the counsel of the Father as to who He has ordained to be the vessel to empower and release them!
13. **Understand the Mystery of the Church.** True sons will never be among the company who speak evil of the Church. They know that the Church is a reality of the Saints Militant and Triumphant with Jesus as the Head. Because they have this revelation, they know and take their place in the Body of Christ and discharge the grace and revelation granted them with all diligence to the Body and humbly receive what is granted other vessels. They therefore do not build “churches”. They do not participate in the devious business called denominations which essentially divide the Body and put it into a permanent state of strife. Sons do not split hair over what they do not know. They go to the Word and whatever is not in the Word and contradicts the word they treat with a healthy scepticism until the Holy Spirit confirms otherwise.
14. **Understand the Kingdom of God, live it out, preach and demonstrate it.** True Sons have a proper, Holy Spirit inspired understanding of the Kingdom of God as expounded in the Holy Scriptures. They know the King; they know that though all

humans were created by Him and for His pleasure, not all are subject to Him in the present life. They understand that the domain of the King comprises all who are subject to Him. They understand that in this present life, citizens of the Kingdom are ruled by the Constitution of the Kingdom which is the Holy Scriptures. They know from the Word that though they are physically in this present world, they are not of it and cannot be caught up with its fancies. They realize that Jesus preached the Kingdom and wants His people to receive it in their hearts and be His Ambassadors to the dying world. They therefore preach the gospel of the Kingdom as a lifestyle. They invest in equipping the saints to walk in the full authority of the Kingdom so that they will be the Light of Christ to illuminate the darkness around them and like Salt, preserve their environments from corruption. In spite of these, true sons know that the real deal of the Kingdom will occur when Jesus returns to set up His earthly rule from Jerusalem the City elected by God through Melchizedeck.

15. **Understand the Mystery of election of Israel and the covenant of Abba with Abraham.** True sons walk in this critical revelation that the covenant of God with Abraham in Genesis chapters 12, 15, 17 and 22 is an enduring one unto eternity. They also realize that because of the spirit of religion and hardness of heart, God concluded Israel in unbelief for a season and turned to the gentiles to raise a people who were not His people at first. They realize that while Jesus will take away His precious Church from the earth for a season, He will return to earth basically to rescue Israel from the final holocaust planned by the anti-Christ and world powers. God will be true to His covenant during the Great Tribulation and ensure the salvation of all His elect of Jewish origin. The coming of Jesus will consummate the programme which began with Pentecost and its aftermath: to make of the two – Jews and Gentiles – one new man: the remnant of God! Romans 9, 10, 11; Ephesians 1, 2, 3.
16. **Responsibility.** Saints take full responsibility for the Father's business on earth. Sonship confers on them the privilege of guarding and defending the charge of Abba. They do not keep quit when wolves manifest to ravage the flock of Jesus Christ through false doctrines or cunning craftiness of men to deceive. They do not commit the sin of indifference like the people of Meroz in Judges 5:23. They behave like the Good Shepherd, Jesus and are willing to be persecuted, ridiculed, conspired against and even martyred for the sake of the Sheep John 10: 1-18; Luke 19:10 – 27.
17. **Active Co-labourers with Jesus.** True sons are active co-labourers with Jesus. They do not just preach for sinners to be saved. They go further to announce with clarity the coming Kingdom of God when all violence, disease, death, crises will cease. They announce because they know that the global peace and good life universally desired by all humans shall only come to pass when Jesus returns to rule and reign on planet earth! They preach this coming Kingdom with passion and all zeal. Yet, they do not live in monasteries in the present! They are actively engaged in ensuring that pollutions of their environment and nations by sinners and human governments are interceded for and repented of through representational repentance. They stand in the gap for their peoples and nations pleading their cause for the mercy of God.

Son ship therefore connotes a state of taking responsibility to know the perfect will of God in all situations; Knowing the will of God, they take responsibility to do what Jesus would have done if He were physically present. The will of God is thus their dwelling place! John 5:30; John 6:38