

**THE CHRISTIAN LIFE**  
*of*  
**SACRIFICE**



"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

**---Luke 9:23---**

Moses Ayomikun Oladipupo

# INTRODUCTORY HYMN

## ---Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken---

*“Jesus, I my cross have taken,  
All to leave and follow Thee.  
Destitute, despised, forsaken,  
Thou from hence my all shall be.  
Perish every fond ambition,  
All I’ve sought or hoped or known.  
Yet how rich is my condition!  
God and Heaven are still mine own.*

*"Let the world despise and leave me,  
They have left my Savior, too.  
Human hearts and looks deceive me;  
Thou art not, like them, untrue.  
And while Thou shalt smile upon me,  
God of wisdom, love and might,  
Foes may hate and friends disown me,  
Show Thy face and all is bright.*

*“Go, then, earthly fame and treasure!  
Come, disaster, scorn and pain!  
In Thy service, pain is pleasure;  
With Thy favor, loss is gain.  
I have called Thee, Abba, Father;  
I have set my heart on Thee:  
Storms may howl, and clouds may gather,  
All must work for good to me.*

*"Man may trouble and distress me,  
'Twill but drive me to Thy breast.  
Life with trials hard may press me;*

*Heaven will bring me sweeter rest.  
Oh, 'tis not in grief to harm me  
While Thy love is left to me;  
Oh, 'twere not in joy to charm me,  
Were that joy unmixed with Thee.*

*"Take, my soul, thy full salvation;  
Rise o'er sin, and fear, and care;  
Joy to find in every station  
Something still to do or bear:  
Think what Spirit dwells within thee;  
What a Father's smile is thine;  
What a Savior died to win thee,  
Child of Heaven, shouldst thou repine?"*

*"Haste then on from grace to glory,  
Armed by faith, and winged by prayer,  
Heaven's eternal day's before thee,  
God's own hand shall guide thee there.  
Soon shall close thy earthly mission,  
Swift shall pass thy pilgrim days;  
Hope soon change to glad fruition,  
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise."*

**--Hymn by Henry F. Lyte (1793 - 1847)**

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# THE CHRISTIAN LIFE OF SACRIFICE

By

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Scripture quotations are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, KING JAMES  
BIBLE

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# INTRODUCTION

This is one of the books I broke off from my previously published book, "The Light And The Shining Light." In this book, I wish to write on the subject of the Christian life of sacrifice, as I see that this scriptural concept of the Christian life has been thrown away and trodden underfoot by many professing Christians. Christianity today is all about earthly gain. This is a source of a major problem as it affects all of our view of scriptures, our service to God, and the Christian life generally. Sacrifice depicted by the cross has always been the emblem of the Christian faith, but today, looking at the mindset of people about the faith, the sermons from the pulpit, etc. I suppose if the way people see the Christian faith is the way it is, we may as well get rid of the cross and put on the top of every church, coins, a mansion, a luxurious jeep, fine shoes, etc. The cross at the top of church buildings today is usually a misrepresentation of the mindset of the people within the church. So the mindset of the people within the church has to be corrected to conform to the emblem of the cross. This is the first and foremost essence of this book.

I believe that the church, from the time of the apostles, down the lane of history up to this present time, have always suffered serious identity battles, and when not well fought by the church, it turns into an identity crisis. Many times the church has fallen into a state of identity crisis in which Christianity is attributed to people who are not Christians but merely claim to be. However the identity battle of the present has been poorly fought by the church and has degenerated into a horrible crisis that has gone to another dimension peculiar to only our time by many indications. It is very important in times such as this to redefine who we, as Christians, are. The name of our most holy faith has been badly misrepresented, politicised, misused, and abused. Vain persons who have occupied the leadership posts of the church, for sake of gain and vanity, have opened the doors of the church wide to every dog, pig, wolf, goats, ravens, vultures, and every manner of unclean beings to dwell with the sheep. For only by this could they reach their vain goal of leading a church with a mega crowd. Were they to maintain the scriptural stance of what a church ought



to be, this their dream wouldn't be achieved, especially not so cheaply as they're achieving it. Were they to maintain scriptural stance of what the church ought to be, they may just end up with a handful of people. So while Christianity is the faith of the flock of Jesus, our depressing identity crisis portrays the flock of Christ to include sheep, dogs, pigs, wolves, goats, ravening beasts, etc. This is a dire identity crisis that must be addressed.

Seeing therefore that the church is currently suffering from a severe identity crisis, we must make every effort to redefine who we are according to that which is written in the scriptures. We must make that which is narrow appear narrow for broad is the way that leads to destruction. We must make what being a Christian means clear to all and refute all counter claims so that they who wish to be saved may not miss the mark. It is expedient both in the interest of the church and the dying world that the identity crisis of the church be addressed effectively. The second essence in writing this book is that I, by it, contribute to this effect.

There are many things that qualifies a Christian. And one of the principal and foremost qualification of a Christian, after baptism, is that he bears his cross. Without a cross a man can't be a Christian. Jesus says clearly in Luke 14:27, "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." It just is not possible. For this reason, I have written on this subject attempting to talk holistically on the subject of the Christian life of sacrifice. I hope to correct some of the misconceptions about what it means to bear our cross and all the demands of this very demanding statement. I'll also talk briefly of the immense benefit of the Christian life of sacrifice.

It is my sincere prayer that you, the reader, would come to see the importance of this glorious calling to bear our cross and follow Jesus, gladly bear the cross and reap its reward both in this life and in that which is to come. God bless you and thank you for reading.

Ayomikun.

# ABOUT THE COVER

When I thought of the cover design for this book, a lot of thoughts ran through my head. I had already designed a man taking a cross up a slope with the cross on his shoulder, but I didn't like the way it was looking. Just about that time, Ravi Zacharias published a book with a magnificent cover design. The cover had a scene of the statue of (who we should understand is supposed to be) Jesus Christ in Rio de Janeiro on a hill. Below the hill was a very beautiful expanse of land. It was a magnificent scene and having the book title, and other cover text, on such a photo was very nice.

I started thinking of something in that line as I thought I'd like my cover to be something like that. Probably a person on a hill and a beautiful expanse of land. So I thought of what someone could be doing on a hill to depict sacrifice. I thought of a cross on a hill and someone embracing it, but it wouldn't do. I thought of someone standing on a hill with a cross in his hand and raising it as if in triumph, but that wouldn't do too. Many other ideas which ended up being inadequate came into, and left, my mind as quickly as they came in.

So one day, I asked God to tell me what concept he'd wish to have me design the cover page with. As I prayed, I saw just the rough of the concept of this design in my spirit. It was just mainly the white and the black and the slanty division between them. I couldn't see how this would depict sacrifice. So I quickly picked my device which had a quick design tool and made a rough sketch of what I saw in my spirit. I designed a cross also, for that was an indispensable component of the cover. It looked nice having the cross on the white side and blackness underneath which I then understood depicts very well the separation from the world a Christian must achieve through sacrifice. The white and black depicts how distinct a Christian's life must be from the rest of the world.

But as a graphic designer, there is something called balance. That slant wasn't giving the design the balance I was looking for, so I made the

separation horizontal. This looked very okay. But I thought again that I should stick to the design I saw in my spirit and I restored the slanty division. As looked at it wondering why it was a slanty division I saw in my spirit rather than a horizontal one, I then realised that an upright cross on a sloping base depicted the Christian life of sacrifice most excellently. Just as a cross on a sloping base has the tendency to be tilted, so also every Christian has an ever ending pressure to bend to such pressure, but just as the cross remained upright, so must a Christian maintain an upright stance with his God, despite the pressure to be otherwise, through no other means than sacrifice.

So that is all about the cover. I'm sharing this so that you can make meaning out of the cover, and know that God does speak to his children in even little things as a book cover design. I'm so grateful to God for this concept. Having a cover design with meaning is always a joy to my heart.

# THE CHRISTIAN LIFE OF SACRIFICE

*"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23)*

This is an aspect of the Christian life many Church goers don't like to hear, even though it is about the most glorious part of our calling. They don't like to hear about having to give anything up. Just like a baby with its toys are many who profess the name of Christ, they can't give anything up. Sadly, some even would not want to give up their sins. But all the fleshly desires that makes us reluctant to give anything up cannot change what Christ has said. If we won't carry our cross, we can't have any part of him. Not his grace, not his mercy, not his love, not his miracles, and most especially not his kingdom.

Saints of old have come in terms with this and never shied away from this glorious call to carry our cross and follow Christ. Samuel Rutherford wrote saying, "I look not to win away to my home without wounds and blood." Charles Wesley also wrote in one of his hymns, "Ours the cross, the grave, the skies." He knew full well the glory of the cross, and loved it, and inserted it in his hymns as not what we even give but what we gain. He knew there is no skies except the cross comes first. So it is this glorious cross which is our emblem of sacrifice and self denial that I wish to write about.

Now what is the cross? I am not referring here to anything like a plus sign, but about what Christ said we must take up daily. Christ was crucified upon the cross and looking at his cross, we can define our's. I have heard many people use this word in a way that strips it of its meaning. I myself understood it this way until one day I heard the renowned Canadian Pastor of the 20th century A.W. Tozer expound this passage and I got to have a better understanding of what its meaning is, and it is what I learned from him I'd like to share with us briefly before going further to talk about it in

reference to sacrifice.

If something bad happens to someone, let's say the individual lost someone so dear to him or her, it is not his cross. If one day a man on his way to church finds himself in a torrential wind, and it becomes clear to him that it is going to rain and the church is still a far way off, that he tried to stop commercial vehicles so as to avoid the rain and they all refuse to go because of the wind and imminent rain. In the end he was caught in the rain and had to run for almost a kilometre on a tarmac road with his bare feet because his shoe got soaked and wouldn't let him run well. Having this experience, he says, "I must carry my cross and I did it well today." No, even that is not his cross. I have heard people who talk of women having lived a promiscuous life, and have committed abortion quite a number of times, and later came to know the Lord, but still suffer from complex health problems because of the bad life they've lived, and say this health problem is their cross. No, it is not. You may sometime hear of a man who probably committed a crime and repents of his wrong doing and would ask, "now that I've repented, can't God prevent me from going to jail?" And the person who is asked (probably a catholic confessor) responds, "no my son, you must bear your cross." That is not your cross.

Peter said quite very clearly in 1 Peter 2:20, "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." So it is quite clear that if we suffer for faults, whether sinful or not, it is not our cross. Christ did not die on the cross for his faults. Now note that I said whether or not your faults are sinful or not. If a man doesn't take good care of himself and falls sick, whether what made him sick is sinful or not, that is his fault and it doesn't matter whether or not he bears that patiently or not. And to such suffering Peter asks, "what glory is it?" The same goes for suffering for sins. He went on to say, "but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." So, suffering for well doing is what is acceptable before God. Peter went on to say in 1 Peter 3:17, "For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing." The cross is suffering for well doing and not evil doing. This we can see in the cross of Christ also, for the people despite testifying clearly, "He hath done all things well." (Mark 7:37), despite this, due to the influence of the enemies of well doing, the same people cried, "crucify him!" (Mark 15:13). So we know that our Lord was crucified for

well doing.

Jesus said in John 14:30-31, "Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence." Jesus' death on the cross was an expression of his love and outright obedience to the Father. He also said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends..." (John 15:13 - 14). So he also died for the love he has for the brotherhood of his friends including you and I.

Looking at the cross of Christ and seeing these things, we know that our cross ought to be things we bare upon ourselves knowing that it would only have negative consequences, and we yet go ahead to do them for two reasons, "obedience to God," and "love for the brethren." Christ didn't bare the cross because they forced him and he couldn't help himself. He bore the cross because he was obedient to God and he loved the brethren, including you and I. He didn't find himself on the cross because he was unfortunate and because he couldn't avoid it like the brother in the rain. He didn't die on the cross as a result of the bad things he did in the past, of which though he is now repentant still faces severe unpleasantness, like the woman with the complex health problems. There are many things that are not the reasons for which Christ bore the cross. The reasons he died on the cross are summarised in just two, obedience to God and love for the brethren. Our cross is anything we do in obedience to God, being fully conscious of the possible negative results that we'd get if we go ahead and do it, but still go ahead to do it in obedience to God and love for the brethren. It is this that Christ wants us to do daily.

When Peter said in, 1 Peter 2:19-21, "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:" He makes us understand that the life of suffering for the sake of God and love for the brethren is the very essence of our calling. He said Christ has left us an example of suffering. It is very sad that Christians today seek to follow Christ's example in things he set no example for. They say, Christ never fell

sick, so I shall never fall sick. Christ never lacked, so I shall never lack. And they could go on and on. But we are never told he left us any example of "divine health," as they call it, or abundance, and so on. If these things happen so that we never fall sick or lack, it is good, but the suffering that he has left for us as an example, we abandon and pursue what he didn't leave us as an example. We must repent of this evil and begin to pursue after that which he has set for us as an example.

If we suffer pains of the natural course of life, or because of unfortunate circumstances, or because of our own evil, we deserve sympathy no doubt, but Christ, when the women of Jerusalem wept for him as he carried his cross to Calvary, refused their sympathy saying rather than crying for him, they should cry for themselves. You don't sympathise with a man carrying his cross. He chose it, he had other alternative course of action with which he could have avoided this unpleasantness, but left those for the reason that he is being obedient to God, and that because of the love he has for his brethren. So you don't sympathise with a man who refuses his peace, safety, health, comfort or convenience so as to carry out his responsibility, rather if you must comment, it should be a comment of commendation. Therefore, if we see or know a man carrying his cross the way Christ did, if one must make a comment, it should be a commendation and not sympathy. Such commendations we may never get except from Christ himself thus the desire for commendation must not be one of the reasons we daily carry our cross.

Let us bear in mind that sacrifice would cause us to bleed. It is painful, but it must be done for the love of God and love for the brethren. I do not write here of jolly activity in which we would be laughing and enjoying ourselves, but of what we would do with tears, inward bleeding, discomfort, and much more. But these things must we do if we are the friends of Jesus willing to prove it by obedience to him and love for the brethren. Is Jesus not worthy of such? This my brothers and sisters is the Christian life of sacrifice.

**Prayer:** *Dear eternal God. Creator of all the earth and all that is, that was, and shall ever be, I pray this day that you will grant me proper understanding of the glorious call of the Lord Jesus Christ for me to carry my cross daily and follow him. Keep all error and misconceptions far from me and bestow your understanding upon me to know your truth as you want me to. In Jesus' name I've prayed. Amen.*

# CHRISTIAN PRIESTHOOD

*"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:5)*

*"The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel..." (Deuteronomy 18:1-2)*

We all are called priests of God. Each and every born again Christian is a priest, not as some argue that only some called people are priests. No. Every child of God is a priest. This priesthood is also contrary to what some others think as well that it is when we get to heaven that we start ministering as priests, but we are priests even here on earth. As royal priests here, we offer sacrifices to God.

"The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance. Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them." (Deuteronomy 18:1-2). It is also written in Ezekiel 44:28, "And it shall be unto them for an inheritance: I am their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel: I am their possession." God is the possession of priests of which we are of a royal order. We as priest ought not to have an inheritance here in this world but have our hope fixed on eternity. Not that we should own nothing at all but our hope must not be in them. Our lives ought to be separate from our possessions so that as soon as we perceive that our possession stands between us and the higher fellowship with God or a consistent Christian life, we, without any debate, get rid of it. All we have must be external to us and God should be the only thing we truly own, for he has said, "I am their possession." Amidst the multitude of the world, we are separated and are expected not to share in the things of this world. Our life must be lived for the glory of God.

1 John 3:17 says, "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother



have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" The wealth we have is seen here as a thing that belongs to this world. It doesn't belong to us. We may for a moment decide how it is used, but time would reveal to us in clearest terms that we owned nothing of this world in the first place. Solomon was a rich man but lamented that though he laboured for his wealth another would take possession of what was his. So, though he had control over these things while he lived they were not truly his', else he'd have taken all he had to the grave. His case and indeed all our case are like that of people in the market place. Very crowded the market is during the day time, but it belongs to none of the people there. A time will come when they'd all have to go home and the market is left alone and becomes like a ghost town. Also, the life is like a rented apartment. Though you, for a while, have the access to the house, live in it, raise your family in it, and all that, but when the rent expires, you'd leave. You lived in it as if it were yours, but it was never yours, that's how the goods of this world are to us and the true Christian must live accordingly.

This is about the same thing with our bodies. It too ought to be external to us. We must sacrifice it too as well as its desires and use it, not for those things it craves and approves, but for those things that God approves of. We must sacrifice the body and its desires on the altar of God's pleasure and will. The pleasure the world gives are not ours. We are to have no part in it. God and the pleasure at his right hand that lasts forever is our everlasting possession. Nothing in this world is worth it.

John Newton perceiving this wrote in his hymn;

*“If Thou these blessings give,  
And wilt my portion be;  
Cheerful the world's poor toys I leave,  
To them who know not Thee.”*

The things the world crave for is to the man that knows the value of having God as his' a poor toy. To him, all the world is grossly inadequate to desire.

God wants his children to put the goods of this world where they belong. On the altar. And there be sacrificed. They must not own us, lest we perish with it. We must not place undue importance on them. They must not

contest our hearts with God. Love not the world. The only thing we truly have is our souls. If we lose that, we've lost all. We must keep it in patient endurance.

Our dear Lord, being a priest, was not offered but he offered himself as a sacrifice. If he were not a priest, he would need some other person other than himself who is a priest to come offer him. But our Lord being the great High Priest offered himself. We too, being priests, are to emulate him in offering ourselves as spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. So my dear brethren, we must know that the Christian priesthood is a life of owning nothin. God is what we own.

***Prayer:*** *Dear Father, I'm so grateful to you that you've made me a priest for you. Not just a priest but a royal priest. I'm so grateful for this undeserved honour you've bestowed upon me. I therefore gladly choose to rise to the responsibility of this glorious priesthood. All that the world, the flesh, and the Devil would seek to present to me so as to deter me from this, grant me grace to utterly banish out of my life and choose you alone for my everlasting possession. This I ask in Jesus' name. Amen.*

# DO NOT OFFER SACRIFICE OF FOOLS

*"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil." (Ecclesiastes 5:1)*

Indeed when there is a virtue, there is its vice also. It is very possible that when we wish to render sacrifices to God that we may tend to offer sacrifices contrary to his requirements. We must be very careful therefore that in our sacrifices, we offer acceptable sacrifices.

I know that many think that everything you give, especially in church, is a sacrifice to God, and there is no sacrifice that he doesn't accept, but the verse above clearly debunks the rightness of this thought. It says that we should be more ready to hear than to give sacrifices of fools. Meaning that there are sacrifices which are foolish though they be offered to God. This sacrifice is considered as evil, and thus is an abomination. In that he says "the house of God," we know full well that he also refer to the gathering of God's people. So we know that it is very possible to offer foolish unacceptable sacrifices in the very house of God. In the same vain, in the church, many do offer sacrifices of fools over and over again. These sacrifices are evil, and thus unacceptable to God.

Now what is it that defines what a sacrifice of fools is? A sacrifice of fools is a sacrifice that is not based on obedience to God, but on the contrary is based on ignorance. Every sacrifice based on ignorance is evil. For this reason, the writer says "be more ready to hear." It is better not to offer at all than to offer these evil sacrifices that are based on ignorance. Only offer things that you are sure is commanded by God and if it is commanded by him, do it to the uttermost extent of the commandment. Don't stop halfway in obedience.

We have people who preach that a Christian ought to pay tithe, and we

have those who accept that too. In fact majority of the church believe this. However, the truth is that tithing (given by Christians) is a sacrifice of fools. Your church leaders are not your priests. No part of the Bible speaks of them as the sort of priests though they claim to be. We have only the royal priesthood, which includes every believer, and Jesus our great High Priest and he alone is the high priest. Where did pastoral priesthood, or ecclesiastical priesthood come from? Many also give all manner of seed and other crafted offerings thinking they were obeying God. Brethren, read your Bible. If what you're doing is not commanded of God, cease from it though you think it is good. The foolish givers in offering the fools' sacrifice have only ended up sponsoring church division and infighting thinking they were doing something great.

Now I've spoken of only giving here because this is a major abuse done in the church of God. But this applies to every act of sacrificing to God. Where God requires a sheep, don't give him a pig. Where he requires a dove, don't give him a raven. Where he requires grain, don't give him creeping things. Just give him what he asks for alone.

Also don't give God things because you've rejected them. Those things that you would rather do without, and because you don't like them you offer it to God as a sacrifice. A man sees that lying is ruining him, so he stops lying because he'd rather do without it. A man sees that stealing is ruining his reputation, and so offers stealing to God as a sacrifice and says, "take it Lord. For your sake I steal no more." I don't mean that we should continue in these things, offering God these things alone amounts to just offering him contemptible things. Even a wise pagan would not be a thief, a liar, an adulterer, a cheat, etc. What therefore is the difference between we and they? Are we mere wise pagans? Should there not be something more for which we can say we are different from the pagan? We must offer everything to God. We must not stop at these evil things. We must offer to God things that are rightfully ours. We must offer him our rest, our time, our peace, and pleasure, our wealth, our prosperity, honour, and every other thing. To stop at giving God these evil things is to be like Saul. He went on God's assignment but only destroyed everything without value and kept the good ones. Destroying the bad things is part of the commandment commanded him by God, but stopping at destroying only vile things to keep good ones total disobedience. That is a sacrifice of a fool. For the Bible says, "But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the

sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly." (1 Samuel 15:9). The same way we offer to God vile and refuse things and keep the good ones. We deny him our time, our honour, our prosperity, and every thing that are of value, and give him the things by which we incur losses. Of such foolish sacrifice, Saul, like many of would do, justified himself fully as it is written, "And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD..." (1 Samuel 15:20). So my brethren, when Jesus told us to even hate our lives, let us not stop at anything short of that. Let us give him the whole of ourselves.

Do not let the society dictate what your religious commitment to your God should be like. The society is only bothered about general well being of people and not much about your relationship with God. For this reason, they desire that people should not steal, people should not lie, people should not murder and so on, so they set up institutions to make people have the mind to live this way. This is very good and only wise societies do this. For this reason, people often consider these things as standards for godly living. But society is not really bothered about your relationship with God nor your commitment to him because it ought not to. What has the society got to do with standing between you and God so as to draw you close to him? So do not let the religiousness of a good society place a limitation on your commitment to God so as to limit your commitment to him to not stealing, fighting, lying, killing, etc. While the society is good and wise to encourage and demand this of you, it would amount to sacrificing the sacrifice of fools to offer only these to God. You must go further to sacrifice even things that are of profit to you. Those things that are for your ease and comfort. You must let them all go if they stand in the way of complete obedience to God and expressing sincere love for the brethren.

There are also un sinful addictions. Things that are not sinful but, as addictions, don't let us walk with God as we ought to. Sometimes, we can go on and playing games switching from one to the other thereby having no time to pray, study the Bible, sing hymns, etc. Some people would even go on playing games for hours and hours and hours, and when they're tired, to take a break, they switch over to movies and watch for hours and hours and hours, and when they're tired of that again, they switch to games again,

and the cycle goes on. This is not supposed to be the way of a Christian life. Surely these things are not sinful. It is not that you're murdering people for hours and hours and hours, nor is it telling lies for hours and hours and hours, but it is just games. It doesn't even have to be those games in which you kill people, it may be a game as simple as football. But it is not the way of a Christian to choose these things over spending quality time with God and serving him. Let us sacrifice these things for the sake of God seeing that the time is short. I'm not saying these things are evil, but we mustn't let it rob us of our time with God.

What makes these things somewhat hard to give up is that we try to imagine life without them. Being mere imaginations they are far from the truth. You haven't lived without them, yet you wish to paint mere pictures of how life is without them and base our decision on these false pictures. It is very likely that until we stop a thing in reality we may never know how insignificant they are and how well we could do without them.

Another about giving up these things for the sake of God is that we don't feel the repercussion as we do things of this world. People can leave the most interesting tv show when they see that it is getting late because they must be early to work the next day. People could abandon the most interesting game to go find something to eat, because they're hungry. But who feels hungry, or who gets fired when we refuse to read our Bibles? None. But he that has tasted and seen that the Lord is good, that in his presence there is fullness of joy, and that walking with him is joy unspeakable and full of glory, such can never give up his time with God for these mundane things. So let us open our eyes and see the true poverty of the things of these world and the riches of following Christ and choose him above the things of the world.

Let's go the whole way in offering sacrifices of the wise and not of fools. Give your all to Jesus. Put all on the altar of obedience to God and love for the brethren. Paul wrote, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." (Philippians 3:7 - 8). Paul, remember, was a Pharisee. He probably didn't steal, he probably didn't tell lies, he probably didn't fornicate, he probably didn't do any of these things we often wish to sacrifice to God,

but those righteousness, and things that were rightly his' and for his benefit he counted them as loss and nothing but dung. He sacrificed life, comfort, wife and family, home, favour of the Jews, and much more for two things alone; obedience to God and love for the brethren.

Yes, we may not have a calling like Paul where we would refuse to marry or have a family, house, etc. Because seeing that these things would not allow him carry out God's command to him in person, he sacrificed them all, as important as they seem. So also, at every point in life where God's command and love for the brethren demands that we sacrifice all, let's sacrifice all. Let us not debate in our mind whether or not we should, let's just do it. Even when we marry, let us marry only if we know that it will help us to serve God better and refusal to marry would make us not to be able to obey God as we should. So in this case marriage is not deterring us from obedience to God or from the love of the brethren, but, seeing what manner of nature we have, and if we haven't been given the grace to defy that nature, let us marry so that we can obey God to a fuller extent. So our life, whether by marriage or by celibacy, must be lived in complete obedience to God and love for the brotherhood.

We should not consider what Paul sacrificed to seem as if different people have their own special calling to a unique level of sacrifice. But even in the case of marriage, we shouldn't see it as if God has allowed us where he refused Paul, but rather we must see marriage as a choice meant to enable us serve God better. So we are sacrificing the freedom of celibacy for a life of marriage for the sole reason of being able to serve God better and pleasing him rather than burning with lust. For this reason, we shouldn't go into marriage as the ideal thing or the way to go, but we must only accept to marry when we conclude for sure that we can't serve God well without getting married. So, people ought to marry only having carefully considered the possibility of being unmarried, and choose to marry when and only when we know that without it we are likely to burn with lust which will displease God.

Let us not offer a fool's sacrifice but put our all on the altar. From the start to the finish of Jesus' demands, we can see that what he requested for was nothing short of all. It therefore is a sacrifice of fools to give him in part and not in whole. Since he requested for all, let us, as wise, give him all. It is certainly not easy to sacrifice all these things, but are you willing to live

for God alone? Are you willing to place him as the first priority in your life? If so, then must all things be sacrificed. You can't have God and the world. But if you'd be desirous to have God above all things else (the strength may be absent), his grace is available to enable us sacrifice the sacrifice of the wise which is well pleasing to him.

***Prayer:*** *O Father, I see that it is very common and easy for me to offer refuse things thinking I'm offering you so much. Forgive me for this error, and grant me the grace to offer to you, and for you, all you require from me in absolute obedience and love. In Jesus' name I've prayed. Amen.*



# A TRUE CHRISTIAN WOULD LET GO

*"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ."  
(Philippians 3:7 - 8)*

I heard a story of a young lady that touched me deeply and helped to see that many so called Christians know not the nature of their calling. They know not that being a Christian marks the beginning of a new life, and this new life marks the end of many other things. The story goes thus:

*"A young, talented and tender-hearted actress was passing along the street of a large city. Seeing a pale, sick girl lying upon a couch just within the half-open door of a beautiful dwelling, she entered, with the thought that by her vivacity and pleasant conversation she might cheer the young invalid. The sick girl was a devoted Christian, and her words, her patience, her submission and heaven-lit countenance, so demonstrated the spirit of her religion that the actress was led to give some earnest thought to the claims of Christianity, and was thoroughly converted, and became a true follower of Christ. She told her father, the leader of the theater troupe, of her conversion, and of her desire to abandon the stage, stating that she could not live a consistent Christian life and follow the life of an actress. Her father was astonished beyond measure, and told his daughter that their living would be lost to them and their business ruined, if she persisted in her resolution. Loving her father dearly, she was shaken somewhat in her purpose, and partially consented to fill the published engagement to be met in a few days. She was the star of the troupe, and a general favorite. Every preparation was made for the play in which she was to appear. The evening came and the father rejoiced that he had won back his daughter, and that their living was not to be lost. The hour arrived; a large audience had assembled. The curtain rose, and the young actress stepped forward*

*firmly amid the applause of the multitude. But an unwonted light beamed from her beautiful face. Amid the breathless silence of the audience, she repeated:*

*‘My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine;  
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign;  
My gracious Redeemer, my Saviour art Thou;  
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, ’tis now.’*

*This was all. Through Christ she had conquered and, leaving the audience in tears, she retired from the stage, never to appear upon it again. Through her influence her father was converted, and through their united evangelistic labors many were led to God.”*

Now that's a Christian who knows and felt what it means to be a Christian.

## **The Lord Makes Demands**

*“He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.”  
(Matthew 10:38)*

Your profession as a Christian ought to make clear changes in your life. Your Christianity ought to make its demands from you of which if you refuse to yield, you'd not be a Christian. Did not Christ make his demands? Did he not say that anybody who lays his hands on the plough and looks back is not worthy of him? Did he not say that if we must be his disciples, we must hate brother, sister, mother, father, wife, and ourselves also? Did he not say that the criteria of being his friend is love expressing itself in obedience? Did he not in referring to the Christian life of sacrifice say that if we don't daily carry our cross, we can be none of his? But Christians of today are busying themselves in an unchristian way being deceived with foolish doctrines that seem to make the Christian life to be one without demands. But Jesus makes his demands of us. A true lover must. Let's be clear on that.

What happens if we fail to yield to these demands? If we fail to yield to his demands, haven't we refused ourselves his Lordship, friendship, kinship,

kingdom, and much more? It is the same with everything about our faith. There are things that are incompatible with our faith. Do we excuse it just to please ourselves? Or do we leave it and abandon it so as to cling to Christ? The answer is simple.

Romans 15:3 says, "For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me." Seeing that even Christ forsook everything including his dear life, what are we holding so dear to us that we don't want to let go? Wisdom and love calls us this very moment to let go of anything that will hinder us from being outrightly obedient to God and from doing what is to the benefit and edification of the Christian brotherhood.

Paul counted all things as loss to be able to have Christ. So must we, if we would have Christ, let the world go. Every true Christian like the Christian convert above would let the whole world go, if Christ is at stake. She gave up a living for the sake of a consistent Christian life. Not like people we are surrounded with who say they are Christians yet imbibe the values of the world, and reflect the life of the world, not willing to let the world go, yet they call themselves Christians. We mustn't allow ourselves to be deceived by their large numbers. In these sad days of compromise, we must stand not just from the world, but also from popular Christianity.

If we are true Christians, we may find it hard to let things go whether they be family, friends, fame, power, possession, achievements, acceptance, etc. But over time, a true Christian would let the world go and have Jesus though it causes deep pain. Just as Jim Reeves sang, "I'd rather have Jesus..." Whether it is by sweat, or by tears, or by blood, the true Christian by and by would let go for the sake of Christ who let go by these means for our sake. Brother you must let go.

**Prayer:** *O God, I see my mean proclivity to hold on to what you'd rather not have me have, just like a little baby. I'm sorry for this O Lord. From now on, help me to let go of all that would not let me live a consistent Christian life. Teach me to sacrifice all that displeases you in Jesus' name. Amen.*

# SACRIFICE OF LIFESTYLE

*1 John 2:15, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."*

Let us be careful how we live. The Christian life demands that we sacrifice first for God, then for the brotherhood as well as for our own consistent Christian life. We must not conform to these world nor to its standards even if they'd profit us. Rather, whatsoever profit we think they can offer us should be sacrificed and counted as loss and despised as dung. I remember, in the previous chapter, "A TRUE CHRISTIAN WILL LET GO," that I talked of a lady who sacrificed her profession and her family's livelihood for the sake of a consistent Christian life. That is what a Christian ought to be.

## Sacrifice, Separation, and Distinction

*"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John 2:15 - 16)*

There is a lifestyle that a Christian must imbibe. A lifestyle of absolute surrender to Jesus. We may not necessarily actively and consciously seek to be different nor take pleasure in being different for just no reason. Rather, where necessary, we must be different and allow scriptures and proper reasoning to guide us. Where the things that guide the way of life of the world are principally the love of the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, our lives ought to be naturally different seeing these are not the things that guide us. It would be too absurd that two set of people guided and motivated by two different things which are so antithetical one to the other should live in the same way. When the

people of the church increasingly look like the world, their celebrities, and pattern their lives after the manner of the world, it is because, though they claim and try to believe otherwise, the Bible is not their guide but the love of the world, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

We must live a life that is clearly distinct from the world. For this is what sanctification means. It means to make holy by setting apart from others. There is no way for us we can be set apart if we are not willing to leave the world and its passions behind. We must sacrifice its cravings and its alluring vanities for the glory and excellency of following Jesus.

1 John 2:29 says, "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." Seeing that he who called is righteous, we must be righteous and take good care to remain righteous. Surely the world is not and cannot be righteous, so must sacrifice all to maintain a righteous life. This of necessity produces a clear difference between us and the world.

Narrow is the way that leads to the Kingdom. Not all lifestyle can fit into it. A Christian must understand that his life must be different from the world as light is different from darkness. If we hold a view of Christianity that gives room to every pattern of life and human traditions, then we should know that we most certainly have left the light and plunged into darkness. "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness..." (John 8:12).

## **Letting The Things Of The Natural Man Go**

*"whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:33)*

There are many things in Christian faith that a contrary to the natural man. There are things that we naturally find hard to accept. If you profess to be a Christian, whether you're truly so or not, I don't know, but for the mere fact that you profess to be Christian, you have identified yourself to be one.

Good. But Jesus now says, "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." (Luke 16:8). He's saying here that the children of the world (non-Christians) are wiser than the children of light (Christians). Since you've identified yourself as a Christian, you find it hard to accept, for this is against the pride of the natural man who by nature desires to be above all others in all things. But seeing this is what he says, what do you do? Seek to change it? Do you try to explain the true meaning of the statement out of it? Do you say, "no, the God I serve is called Wisdom, how can the children of the world be wiser than I? No way." Do you put it forward for debate? No, you must accept it. For the Christian life of sacrifice entails that we sacrifice those natural notions of ours so as to accept that which God has said or ordained.

Many practices of many professing Christians today are not meant to be but because they are not willing to make sacrifices of these things of the natural man, they allow it contrary to scriptures. Which of your prominent Christian women don't you find using jewelries, but the Bible says, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array." (1 Timothy 2:9). We find that many other things in terms of dressing and appearance are contrary to scriptures and church traditions.

Many, not willing to accept such hard statements have altogether denied the faith. I've heard many who say "my God does not have a storehouse of wickedness from which he pulls out things to punish his children when they sin." This they say against the truth that God disciplines his children. Sadly they've have misconstrued discipline for wickedness. So, THEIR God does not discipline his children when they sin, but hear what Jesus says, "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." (Luke 12:47 - 48). So whether wrong be done in knowledge or by ignorance, their is discipline for the wrong doer. But THEIR God does not do that. Have they by this statement not denied the One, True, and Living God? Just because they don't want to let go the notions of the natural man that is antagonistic to discipline.

The list of denials go on and on and on. People everyday, everywhere keep saying these things, denying God to keep the notions of the natural

unregenerated man. The true Christian, though it be by pains or tears, would let even these go.

We need to have and pray for the courage to bear this cross. It is not something that a man who's not courageous can do. For a person to embark on that which is perceived to prone to inflict hurt requires courage. Wait upon God in prayer, and that courage for the cross shall come like a flood into your heart.

***Prayer:*** *Dear Lord God, I see that in the absence of courage and strength to sacrifice the lifestyle I inherited from the world, all I can do is excuse them. I have no strength nor power to crucify them. Grant me the courage and strength to forfeit the world and embrace the cross of Christ your Son. Thank you dear Father for I know you'll grant me my request. In Jesus' name have I prayed. Amen.*

# SACRIFICE IN THE PLACE OF PRAYER

*"And 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." (Matthew 26:39)*

Another area of sacrificing is in the place of prayer. How I wish that Christians would realise that place of prayer is the place of sacrifice, how much more would our prayer time be fruitful. The error in the place of prayer is that it is the place of begging, demanding, intimidating God, or other unwise interpretation of the meaning of prayer as shown to us in scriptures. We often think that what we ought to be doing is bring our needs to God which is good, but we must follow the examples of Jesus, both that which we learn as taught and that which we learn as did.

John 6:38 says, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." Jesus' very essence was just to do God's will and not his own. We should have this mind also which was in Christ.

In the Lord's prayer, Jesus taught us that there are three different things that holds the principal place in prayer. They are, the honour of God's name (Hallowed be thy name), the fulfilment of his eternal plan (thy Kingdom come), and the doing or fulfilment of his will in the earth (thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven), and the first two can be summarised in the third (thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven). Only after these should the issue of daily bread and other life's issue come up. So we see the important spot the will of God is placed in the list of things that should occupy our prayer. Not only do we place our needs before the will of God, but our prayer time is sometimes occupied with prayers for frivolities and fantasies. We place even these frivolities ahead of God's will. We who pray earnestly for a fine jeep and expensive property that would offer convenience but cares little or nothing about the will of God. Many other things occupy our prayer time such as our being magnified before the



world, the destruction of our enemies, our prosperity, and so on. But Jesus taught us to pray first and foremost for the will of God to be done.

## **Sacrificing The Will In The Light Of The Knowledge Of God's Will**

*"And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him." (Luke 5:27-28)*

Now we have seen that we ought to place the will of God high in what we could call our preferential list of prayer items. Now we may think that this means the listing up of these items in terms of which we should pray for first, and placing the will of God first so that when we pray, we first pray for the fulfilment of the will of God (probably even briefly) before delving into our own will. But here I speak of sacrifice. If his will is down and your will is up, shall you first pray for down, then proceed to pray for up? Shall you not sacrifice your up for his down? Of necessity, the will of God negates the will man. For this reason, we must always sacrifice our will for his own. Though in looking at what Jesus taught us, we see a proper pattern in listing our prayer priorities, but in looking at what he did, we a total sacrifice of the will. In such a life he set for us an example that should guide our prayer life. SACRIFICE.

"And 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." (Matthew 26:39). In that hour of agony, Jesus had his desires, his own will just as we all have, but in the place of prayer he sacrificed his own will for the will of God. Yes as we live, as we play, as we plan, as we work, as we rest, we may have our own will, but the place of prayer is a place of sacrifice where our will is sacrificed for his own. In all our ambitions, in all pursuits, in all our strife, whatsoever it will that may exist in us that puts us through these things must be sacrificed for the will of God in the place of prayer. This is the essence of the Christian prayer life. It ought to be marked by a continual sacrifice.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23). My brethren it's not easy but by his grace we must do it. Our prayer place is a place to align our will to the will of God. Can you make a metal straight without the fierce heat of a fiery furnace, how then can you align a will as strong as that of man to the will of God with ease? Our view of prayer ought to change completely. It's not about us but about him. We must bare our cross daily in the place of prayer. What does this mean? If we must bare our cross daily, and because this means that everyday is a crucifixion day for us, then must every night be to us an eve of our crucifixion day. For this reason we ought to spend every night in our Gathsemane, with thick drops of sweat mingled with blood, in anguish of soul, and in sorrow of heart, laying aside our will, picking his up, prepare ourselves for the next crucifixion day saying like the Lord said, "not my will but thine be done." With a bleeding heart because it is not possible to lay down the will with a smiling face. No it must be with heavy drops of sweat and blood.

Luke 22:43 says, "And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." The strength with which we approach our cross daily must be from above if we must prevail. The strength of men, whether ours, or whether it be from another, will and must fail. We must spend every night in earnest prayer if we must have strength to bear the cross the following day. If we embark on God's assignment with our own strength, failure is imminent. But if we have the will to bear our cross, we can find strength in the place of prayer.

"The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.'" (Revelation 4:10 - 11). As we look upon God and behold his awful majesty, we also cast down our crown before him. Our crown which is our glory, our splendour, our all, of which the will of the natural man is to retain and magnify, but we should, with the elders throw it before his throne for the sake of his own will.

May God help us to transform our place of prayer to be all about him and none about us in Jesus name. Amen.

**Prayer:** *Dear sovereign and wise God whose majesty surpasses all glory, I pray sincerely today in the words of Charles Wesley, "THOU God of truth and love, I seek thy perfect way, Ready thy choice to approve, Thy providence to obey: Enter into thy wise design, And sweetly lose my will in thine." In Jesus' name have I prayed. Amen O God.*

# THE BURDEN OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

*"For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened..." (2  
Corinthians 5:4)*

*"Take my yoke upon you..." (Matthew 11:29)*

One much denied fact of the Christian life is the fact that it is a life of many burdens. Not only do we have pressures from without, we also have pressures from within which puts us in between two great pressures. Paul expressed it this way, "...we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears." (2 Corinthians 7:5). So it's a life of burden. If it has no burden, then it has no cross, and if it has no cross, then it's not the Christian life. And to follow Jesus without picking up your cross of burden is to embark on a long long journey heading to nowhere.

It is not in denial of these that we overcome but in the acknowledging of it. Therefore we must acknowledge it and live accordingly. It is continuing in the bearing of this burden that we receive comfort from above. For this reason, Paul went on to say, "Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;" His comfort may come to us through brethren, siblings, friends, life's circumstances, or even from nothing tangible, but the source is God. For he is the source of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3).

It was the manner of the apostles to write on the perils they go through and expect to go through but still express absolute trust in God who will give them the victory. The same must be our approach to these facts about the Christian life. We must acknowledge it and be rest assured that God will, through these burdens and sufferings, and not apart from it, give us the victory through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Thomas à Kempis wrote in the clearest terms informing us of one of the fundamental sources of the burden of the Christian life, "Nature is very unwilling to die, and to be pressed down, and to be overcome, and to be in subjection, and to bear the yoke readily." Our nature is not in agreement with the holy ways of God, so it will resist and seek to avoid it. Seeing that what is required is contrary to what we are by nature, it of necessity becomes to us a burden. But our calling is to pick up this burden of working against that which is our nature in obedience to God and love for the brethren, and thereby shall we be counted worthy of Christ.

It is written in 2 Corinthians 5:2-4, "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." So my brethren, let us bear the burden of the Christian life from any area of life it comes. Let us not flee, resist, or avoid it, but let bow our shoulder to bear it with all joy and gladness. Let us do it for ours is the groaning as well as the glory, and the glory cannot be apart from the groaning.

## **Self Denial And The Daily Cross**

*"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23)*

When Jesus says we should take up our cross daily and follow him, he meant it should be DAILY. Not once for all, not once a while, nor when you are feeling blessed only. Daily.

The reason why many of us are not conscious of the fact that sacrifice ought to be done daily is because of the high level of compromise we have found all around us. Every sin has been baptised with heresy and have thus been given a baptismal name. But he who must follow Jesus must encounter something, little or great, that he must let go for his obedience to God and for the love of the brethren. It may be his favourite TV program that he'd have to let go to make out time to write for the edification of

saints, or let that program go because it prevents him from living a consistent Christian life, perhaps because their are elements that causes the mind to think of evil. It may also mean breaking some relationship or stoping some activity to be able to make out time for personal prayer and study of the Word of God. In some other degree, it may be that one has to lay down his life in order to obey God, as Polycarp did when he refused to deny Jesus. There are different degrees, but a Christian that must follow Jesus must of necessity have a cross, whether little or great, to carry every single day.

Our preachers are also not doing a good job in letting people know how they ought to carry their cross. Some preach that a good God cannot allow you suffer. Others preach about prosperity to make people think that all that God desires for them is to live a life of comfort and always be in a convenient state in life. Some of these things are taught blatantly while some are taught subtly. But how false are these. Paul wrote, "I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily." (1 Corinthians 15:31). The man who must follow Jesus must die daily. You may think it's Paul who should die daily, but read this also, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12). Also we read in Acts of the apostles what Paul did, "...exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22). Look at those, "ALL that will live godly in Christ Jesus," and "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Those are facts. Suffering in the will of God is an essential part of our calling. If you're not suffering, please check your life for the places where you've compromised and make amends. Making amends may mean placing ourselves in a position that attracts immediate sufferings, but let not fear deter you. This is your Lord's calling. Endure hardship as a good Christian soldier. The words of à Kempis Thomas goes, "Let us follow bravely, let no man fear terrors; let us be prepared to die bravely in battle, and let us not so stain our honour, as to fly from the cross."

1 John 2:15 says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." We see that we should not love the world. We should not crave for its dainties. The natural man craves for these things, lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, but we are to deny these things. There is no

loving God without self denial. The world in every clime of human existence, things are not the way that a Christian will not have to put away something for the sake of God. Talking about the business environment, Philip Delves Broughton, in his book, *What They Teach You at Harvard Business School*, said, "Call it bluffing or anything else you like, but the environment is not kind to the honest man." A Christian must sacrifice the kindness of the business environment and deliberately work honestly even though it means placing ones self in an unfriendly environment. This is how it is in every environment. The political, the academic, the social, and the financial and environment. All are unfriendly to the honest man. Shall a Christian therefore lay aside honesty of the sake of kindness from the environment around him? The Bible expressly commanded, "Let us walk honestly..." (Romans 13:13). The world we find ourselves we always and daily present us with things to challenge our obedience to God's commandments to us, that is where we must in obedience to God sacrifice these things.

From of old, pleasing God has not been a fanfare but a warfare. Abel was killed of Cain because he was righteous. Till this very moment, the life of any who must obey God is a life of burden. Which of the prophets of old lived a life without persecution? Even when they prophesied, often started saying, "the burden of the Lord." Service to God has always been a burden and so is the Christian life. Let no man deceive you.

## **The Burden Of The Christian Doctrine**

*"For 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;" (2 Timothy 4:3)*

Just as mentioned above that prophets of old started their prophecy with the words "The burden of the Lord," we must understand that the Christian doctrine of the church today is as burdensome as it was in their days. Many have thought that the Christian doctrine is one that people like, but people by nature don't like the Christian doctrine. Even the truly generated may not like it, but will endure it till it has worked in his nature, transforming

his Adamic nature into the Christ-like nature.

On the day Jesus told his many disciples to eat his flesh, they found it hard to accept and so many left. The truly regenerated too which were the eleven also found it hard to accept that doctrine but still remained with him. So also is every sound doctrine. They are not pleasing, but the truly regenerated would endure until it kills the natural man, its lusts and passions.

When you sit in a church somewhere, and you hear a sermon in which everybody is amused, happy, and enjoying every bit of it, there's a problem. The Devil is in that sermon. Don't you think that it is a sound doctrine. Note that in the verse above (2 Timothy 4:3), Paul wrote that sound doctrine ought to be endured. So we know for sure of that sound doctrine is a burden that needs to be endured and not enjoyed. I'm a living witness that hard truths are what builds up a Christian and not amusing or motivational talk. People who imbibe such things end a confusion to themselves and also to the church.

Sound doctrine is that doctrine that teaches us to die. But who wants to die that God may live in him. Everybody wants to live his own life and only desires that God should bless his own living. That's all. Who wants to give-up things for the sake of God? The natural man is not willing to die for another man to live in him, not even if that other is God. How can sound doctrine which teaches us to die be a source of anything other than what should be borne with patient endurance?

That the Christian is, or would be, burdensome when preached to the natural man is not a possibility but a 100% certainty. General resistance of a doctrine is almost (but not necessarily) an evidence that it is a true and sound doctrine. Paul said in Galatians 1:10, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." The doctrine of Christ preached by his true servants cannot please men. Not even the redeemed. But, as said, the redeemed would bear it, and allow it to work with its cleansing power in them. Apostle Paul went on to say, "And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased." (Galatians 5:11). The sound doctrine of the cross has its innate offence. For the mere fact that we live in a fallen world, we should



expect resistance whenever we preach sound doctrine.

The Christian life, as a life of sacrifice, is a life in which we must endure the word of God. Not just enduring it till the speaking of it is over, but the painful embracing of it to the betterment of our soul and spirit.

## **The Burden Of The Christian Brotherhood**

*1 John 2:9-11, "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."*

*"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2)*

The Christian brotherhood is a one in which we share a lot in common. Many at times people would show interest in a particular thing, organisation, relationship, or activity for its benefits but would not desire its losses. But we know that as a united brotherhood we are, as Paul describes it, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Ephesians 4:4 - 6). So we have so much in common. And where in this common faith we see losses to borne, let us gladly bear it.

The burden of the brotherhood has been well acknowledged, accepted, born by saints of old. Charles Wesley wrote in his hymn;

*"Then let us ever bear  
The blessed end in view,  
And join, with mutual care,  
To fight our passage through;  
And kindly help each other on,  
Till all receive the starry crown."*

We can see in those lines the care and concern by which we must help each other as brethren of a common hope and salvation.

In this brotherhood, we are a part one of the other. For this reason, we share our joy, love, protection, success, and all good things. On the other hand we share our woes, failures, persecutions, hatred, sadness, gloom, and all evil things. Martin Luther, the reformer, likened the Christian brotherhood to a community. A community shares in its prosperity. If the roads are good, everyone enjoys of it. If there is peace, everyone enjoys it. If there is a good leader, everybody is happy. But if there is insecurity, everybody panics. If there is an evil leader, everybody fears. If there is war, everybody suffers. If the community be esteemed highly by others, everybody glories. And so on. The same way, everyone in the Christian brotherhood benefits together and suffers together. The Bible completely agrees with this for it written, 1 Corinthians 12:26 "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." For this reason, we must be willing both to enjoy with the brotherhood and be willing to suffer with it also.

On the negative side, we must bear the burden of the brotherhood. We must be willing to bear its shame, loss, fate, and all. We may even of the same brotherhood bear what is unpalatable. But we owe this brotherhood a responsibility to bear its burden and sacrifice for it. To ensure that love continues, we should make sacrifices and gladly bear its burden, for it is written, "Let brotherly love continue." (Hebrews 13:1).

The prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi helps us very well the mindset with which this can be well done. His prayer goes;

*Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.*

So we bear the burden of hatred (if at all we experience this in the midst of

the brethren, true brethren), injury, doubt, despair, darkness, sadness, etc. and having borne that give back love, pardon, faith, hope, light, and joy. He gave a perfect example of what we should seek in the brotherhood saying;

*O, Divine Master,  
grant that I may not so much as seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love;*

So in this brotherhood, we should not seek to be on the receiving end but to be on the giving end. We shouldn't be seeking for consolations, to be understood, nor to be loved. Rather we should be seeking to console others, understand others, and love others. If only we could do these, we would successfully bear the burden of the brotherhood. He ended the prayer showing the rewards of such sacrifices;

*For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.*

So while the benefits of bearing losses are not always conspicuous, it is nevertheless real and immense. Let us do this for the brotherhood knowing that by these sacrifices, we shall be blessed.

Now I must point this out, you must be careful about the false brethren for they're not brethren in the first place. What makes us brethren is that we are part of one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, etc. There are many people who have nothing in common with the brotherhood, yet they associate with the brotherhood for reasons best known to them. I'm not talking about such. If any man's a thief, or an adulterer and associates with us, can we then call such a brother. Of our common hope we are told, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:3). So people who haven't cleansed themselves from such things cannot be called brethren. When I speak about bearing the burden of the brotherhood, I don't refer in any way to just any one who associates with the brotherhood or calls himself a Christian, but I refer to those who have this common faith, hope, Spirit, baptism, etc. As a matter of fact Paul told us clearly, "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother

be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." (1 Corinthians 5:11). So let us not think that it is everybody who associates with us that is a brother. We have no burden to bear from any who does not share with us a common hope, salvation, Spirit, baptism, etc.

When we see any of those in the brotherhood in need, let us lend them a helping hand. Let us let go of our convenience to ensure that all is done to the best edification and welfare of the brotherhood. Render your services without expecting gain. Help those in need without hoping for a payback sooner or later. Make these sacrifices. Bear the yoke of the brotherhood. For it is not that when you render services of any kind for the edification and welfare of the brotherhood, you are not worthy of reward, but sacrifice these for the brotherhood. See all that can be done for the brotherhood and is within your power to do it, go ahead and do it without expecting anything in return. This is worthy of the true blessings of God.

"I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died." (Romans 14:14 - 15). Now this is a very important aspect of our Christian life of sacrifice. Sadly, this manner of sacrifice is very much ignored today. We are meant to sacrifice things for the sake of others, but no body wishes to do that.

I fault the trend of the church and the deep compromise and contempt of scriptures we find in our midst. I fault the fact that contrary to what is in the scriptures, women no longer cover their hair in church and during prayer. Contrary to what the church practiced, women wear trousers like men, use makeup and other things. This has clearly been achieved by a revolutionary spirit. To be able to confront the church and not merely make it tolerate these contrary manner of life, but to go all the way to make it approve of it. Such must be by a very strong revolutionary spirit. I have witnessed the arguments and agitations for the church to tolerate and accept these things and indeed the church, that is that which is seen to be so by the world, has accepted it in every way.

A lot of truth were obfuscated in order to achieve this great compromise in

the standards and so would not be handled casually. I can see through all the lies and the stupidity of the claims of all who have thrown their weight upon these compromises, but I won't present them here. I'd probably dedicate a book to handle these things and present to us the stupidity whereupon the modern day compromise is founded. However it is good to point that all the push and agitation that saw the church shift grounds to these compromised standards were done by people clearly refusing to heed the injunction that we ought to sacrifice for our brethren's sake.

Now, here is what I mean, if wearing of trousers by women were right, and the host of the church has a stand against it, why go ahead and wear it? Today, many have chosen to join the band wagon, not because they were persuaded that these had suddenly become good, but do it contrary to their conscience because they were pressured to. Therefore, those for whom Christ died are being killed for fashion's sake. Many other things that are done are done in total disregard for those for whom Christ has died. This we are told at this is contrary to charity. And being contrary to charity, no matter the excuses that people give for the evil standards of the contemporary church, these compromises remain evil.

Let us assume that wearing of jewelries, for example, were right, would it not be better to let it go because of those who see it as wrong? But people who call themselves Christians say, as is observable in their actions, "if they don't like it, they can go to hell." For jewelries' sake they are willing to destroy those for whom Christ died. Not only are they doing this for what is right but for what is clearly wrong (1 Timothy 2:9). This is just like stealing and saying, "if they have a problem with my stealing, they can go to hell." This would have been easy to handle, throwing the thieves, and disobedient ones out of our fold, but we have so many false shamefully shameless leaders who have embraced such people and admitted them into the fold. Looking at the shameful role those who assume the leadership post in the church have played in the identity crisis the church is currently facing, I agree so much with a preacher who said "the church is suffering from an epidemic of amateurs." How true. We have such brilliant intellectuals who can make meaning out of nonsense and nonsense out of meaning, but at the same time, they are such spiritual amateurs that they don't seem to know their left from their right in spiritual things. This is so bad. But the true Christian, would not ignore his brother or say, "he can go to hell," but consider him in his actions and choices he makes.

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing." (1 Peter 3:8 - 9). To round off on the burden of the brotherhood, this passage explains how we must go about bearing this burden into details for easy comprehension. We must maintain oneness of mind. This is not to be tolerant to anything or accepting everything from anybody in the name of tolerance, rather we must leave behind all our differences of opinion and unite in the commandments of the Bible. This is the blessed unity and not the unity of indifference to good or evil. So let us keep these commandments and fulfil the law of Christ.

I pray God will help to bear each other's burdens in the love and fear of God, the wisdom of Christ, and the purity of his holy word, in Jesus' name. Amen

## **His Yoke Is Easy**

*"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28 - 30)*

*"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5:3)*

For the mere fact that we have burdens to bear does not provide us a reason to be fearful. It only should wake us to the reality of a life that we are told by apostle John that is not grievous. A life of obedience to God's commandments. Yes to the natural man, these burdens are scary, but to us, they are there for a show of strength. Strength not ours but his'. God desires that by them his strength may be made manifest through us for his glory of which we are partakers. So rejoice in these things.

The Bible tells us, "He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall

be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail." (1 Samuel 2:9). So we see that his saints prevail because of his own strength and not the strength of his saints. In that it says, "HE will keep the feet of his saints," we know that it is by his making that they shall prevail. It also says, "by strength shall no man prevail." The fact that strength is omitted in the requirement for success does not put in doubt the fact that we shall prevail because God promises, "they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee." (Jeremiah 1:19). God will strengthen you in bearing these burdens and that is why it is not and won't be grievous. Apart from him, not only is it grievous, but it shall be impossible to bear these burdens. But by the grace which comes to us through Christ, this yoke is easy, the burden light, and the commandments not grievous.

Should the eagle fret because there is a need to fly? So why should you fear because of the need to bear the burden of the Christian life? The God who bestowed the eagle with the strength that it needs to fly would provide you with the strength that you need to to bear the burden of the Christian life. So let's rely on God in all things.

## **The Enemies Of The Cross**

*"(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)" (Philippians 3:18-19)*

Finally my brethren, now that we have seen a few of the burden of the Christian life, let us be ware lest we resist it, refusing to bear it and teaching others not to, in our bid to escape the burden. To do this is to be an enemy of the cross.

The cross has many enemies who often don't appear so. To preach a Christian life without a cross, or a Christian life with a cross void of offence, or burden, is to negate the doctrine of the cross, and to do such is to be an enemy of the cross. To deny the burden is to be an enemy of the

cross. Such people are a grief to the true Christian as they were to the holy heart of apostle Paul so much that he wept. Such people who preach a fair Christian life full of abundance and our will always being done as a result of our believing in Christ will end up in destruction. For the true Christian doctrine teaches us to die daily, but they teach us to live everyday. Such enemies of the cross are even those who preach prosperity and reject suffering for the sake of Christ. Or that one is a disgrace to the Church of Christ if he is not living well and not contributing to the church financially. Their approach to evangelism is not conversion but seduction. They seduce people with a fair sermon. One of the people I know who do this a lot would tell you all manner of ways God blesses people with riches, prosperity, and so on, and end up his long narration on types of blessing by saying, "you're only entitled to these blessings if you accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour." How contrary is this approach to that of Paul who said, "...we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22). It is for the sake of such hypocrites and enemies of the Cross that we have foolish "Christians" who don't even know why they're Christians at all. They think it is about prosperity, fun, excitement, enjoyment, and all, not knowing that they're being duped by profit making scamsters. They don't know that Christianity is a life in which you die to everything DAILY, that you may live eternally.

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4:4). So not only are we enemies of the cross if our life is centred upon mundane things so as to deny the truth of the cross, we are also, by our friendship with the world, enemies of God himself. For it is our friendship with the world that makes us not to be willing to sacrifice it. This makes us enemies of the cross and of God. But people don't see it this way. They so love the world and its vanities that rather than sacrifice it, they'd spiritualise it. They'd attribute wealth, riches and ease as the blessings from God. They are so blinded by their love of the things of this world that they can't even see how much they've stood in opposition to the cross of Christ.

It is for this reason that Paul describes such hypocrites as having their belly as their gods, and glory in shame, and that they mind earthly things. Such people are blinded from the realities of heaven. They can't sell all that they have to follow Christ. No. These mundane and temporal things are the



things they care about. Much of these hypocrites occupy the pulpits of the modern day church. You can see how wealthy they have become with these false doctrines. But don't envy them for their end is destruction.

Contrary to these hypocrites, we must be willing to say in the words of Adoniram Judson (1788-1850),

*“We love Your name, we love Your laws,  
And joyfully embrace Your cause;  
We love Your cross, the shame, the pain,  
O Lamb of God, for sinners slain.”*

As friends of God and of the cross, we must maintain that it has its burdens, it has its offences. We must of ourselves bare these burdens. Our lives must reflect a life of sacrifice which would be repulsive to the dying world including these enemies of the cross.

***Prayer:*** *Dear Lord and Father, it is undeniable that faith in Jesus, your Holy Son, comes with burdens for our shoulders. Yet I'd rather have his light yoke on my shoulders than the unbearable yoke of eternal damnation. Help me and all your children to bear this yoke in whole and never in part. In Jesus' name have I prayed. Amen.*

# BEING MEN OF OUR OWN WORDS

*"My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger, Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth. Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself, and make sure thy friend. Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids. Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler." (Proverbs 6:1 - 5)*

Sacrifice is needed if we must be men of our words. We must sometimes sacrifice our comfort in order to keep our words. Ability to keep our words is a major test to prove if or not we are men of integrity.

We need to be able to choose between what is convenient for us and what would make us be men of our words. There are times that to be men of our words, we must make sacrifices. When we need to choose between what is convenient for us and what would make us be men of our words, let us sacrifice convenience to keep our words. In some circumstances, it may be a light sacrifice, at other times it may be a very tough and demanding sacrifice. Whether big or little, let us learn to make the sacrifices needed to keep our words.

In the twentieth chapter of 1st Samuel, Jonathan swore to David that if evil was intended of Saul, he'd let David know, and if good, he'd also let him know. He fulfilled it quite easily. That's an example of a light sacrifice when it comes to keeping one's own word. On the other hand, a man who kept his word, though it grieved him much was Jephthah. In Judges 11:30-31, Jephthah made a vow to God that if he won the battle that was before him, he'd sacrifice, as a burnt offering to God, anything that comes out of the door to greet him. In the end, it was his daughter, a virgin, who came to greet him. Tough as it was, he fulfilled his word. He sacrificed the damsel as a burnt offering. So we can have easy sacrifices to make when it comes

to keeping our words, and we may have tough ones, what is important is that we keep them. My advice is that we be very careful about the words we utter, but once uttered, we should go all out to keep them, whether by sweat, tears, or by blood.

Both Jephthah and Jonathan swore, but in this new dispensation, all our statements are binding on us. Jesus said our yes should be yes, and our no should be no. So while it took an oath for men in the past to consider their words solemn enough to go all out to keep them, we must keep each and every thing we say, for this is the Lord's command. For this reason, the solemnness of our simple affirmation is equal and as binding before God as their oaths. We'd be judged if we fail to do this. Before we speak, we must consider if we'd be willing to go all out to keep what we've said. "But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Matthew 12:36 - 37).

In this regards also, our key text for this chapter talks of sacrificing a lot in order to keep one's words. In doing this, the writer says that we deliver ourselves. The writer lists things that we should go all the way to sacrifice for this deliverance. He says humble yourself. This means sacrifice your reputation. Ignore what people will say and just keep your word. So far as it has come out of your mouth, just go ahead and keep it. He says give not sleep to your eyes. That's tough enough, but he goes ahead to say, don't even give slumber to your eyelids. This entails the highest degree of bodily discomfort. We should sacrifice everything to save ourselves. In shying away from keeping our own words because of the sacrifice and inconvenience it entails, we trap ourselves like a roe in the hand of a hunter or like a bird in the hand of a fowler. But when we make this sacrifice, we deliver ourselves.

Let us, dear brethren, sacrifice our convenience, comfort, reputation, etc. to keep our words completely. Where we ought to be careful is in the pronouncements we make. But once we've made it, let's sacrifice all to keep it. God bless you.

**Prayer:** *Dear God, integrity is one of the marks of a true Christian. I pray to be a man of integrity in all things I say and do. Help me to be careful*

*with my words and help me that, once I've spoken, I keep all that I've said,  
whether it be by ease, stress, or pain. Grant me this grace dear Lord.  
Amen.*

# THE GLORY AND EXCELLENCY OF THE CROSS

*Galatians 6:14, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."*

*Romans 8:17-18, "if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*

## The Rationale Of Choosing The Cross Of Christ

*"Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens: And he saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant; and bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute." (Genesis 49:14 - 15)*

Now if we've seen all the burden and pains of the cross, why should we still go ahead and bear this cross? What is the rationale? Do we do it because we don't know the disadvantage of incurring losses? We do, but there is no better choice in life than to pick up one's cross and follow Jesus, the crucified, risen, and enthroned.

The verse above talks about Issachar, who is here described as a strong ass bearing two burdens (which we can say are the burden within and the burden without). The reason for doing this was because he saw that rest was good, and the land was pleasant, and to attain to that rest that was good, and to that land that was pleasant, he bowed his shoulder to bear the

burden even becoming a servant to tribute. So also, we, if we must attain to God's eternal rest and to the pleasant land of that New Jerusalem, wisdom only demands that we bow our shoulders to bear that burden of the cross of Christ. This is the foundation of the rationale of the cross. For seeing that good eternal rest of God, and the pleasant land of that New Jerusalem, we have something with immeasurable benefit to gain in attaining to them, and we have something with immeasurable loss to incur if we fail to attain to them. For this reason alone, since there is no other way to the crown but through the cross, we bow our shoulders to attain to that which our eyes have seen. This is not to mention the terrors of Hell. For on the other hand, we have seen the terrors of Hell and torment that would be ours should we fail to attain to God's eternal rest, we have a terror of immeasurable torment that shall be ours, and should we attain to that rest of God, we have saved ourselves from all that, and this avoidance must be, and can only be done by means of the cross alone. So we have all blissful eternity to gain, and all doleful eternity to avoid, if only we would bow our shoulders daily to bear this cross and follow Jesus.

So the two things that should inform a Christian's choice, wise choice, of bearing the cross, are summarised in these; fear and hope. Other benefits of the cross of Christ are which we will not talk about in this chapter but in the next one, eternal gain, the means by we achieve spiritual maturity, victory over sin and the flesh, being more than conquerors, and satisfaction of the soul. There are obviously a numberless others, but these are they which I'd talk about in this book.

## Fear

*"Wherefore, 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." (Philippians 2:12)*

Contrary to what many of the vain motivational speaker we have today would teach, fear is an integral part of the Christian faith. This is different from the fear of God which is the deep reverential fear. The fear I'm talking about is not a fear of reverence but a fear of terror. A fear that causes one to

tremble, and tremble because of a fearful expectation. The expectation of eternal damnation that belongs to as many as God shall condemn. It is in this fear that we must work out our salvation.

It is also not that Adamic fear that makes one run away from God, but the fear that constrains you to do God's will. It is the fear that he who said he would execute judgment on the wicked is not only able but is really, most certainly, going to do it. It is the fear that keeps you away from that wickedness.

What is the reason for such fear? It is glaring that if the glory to come by the working of God to those who believe is beyond what the mind can conceive (1 Corinthians 2:9), the terrors to come to those who don't believe is also beyond what the mind can conceive. For if the glory to come is beyond what the mind can conceive because it is by the working of the incomprehensible power of the Almighty God, so also is the terrors to come to those who don't believe by the working of his great power. For the greatness of this terror, we must fear. With the terror of these we must work out our salvation so as not to end there.

Hebrews 4:1 says, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." So we see that just as the Bible admonishes us to be wise, to be courageous, to be patient, etc. it also admonishes us here to fear. So we must learn to fear horrors of Hell, for this is wise to do. Was it not in fear that Noah acted wisely to build the arc? And was it not in not fearing that the rest of the world perished in the flood? For Hebrews 11:7 says, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Noah prepared the arc for fear of perishing in the flood. It was by the actions of that fear that he saved his soul and that of his house. So also many would end up in hell because they are not afraid of Hell. They make light of it and so shall they end up there unless they repent.

Now let such fear not be seen as a thing that is unwise to feel. No, for the Bible says, "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished." (Proverbs 27:12). It takes a fool to see the things about Hell and eternal damnation and not with complete

earnestness and resoluteness, being moved with fear, seek to avoid it in any way possible, even if it is by means of the cross alone.

Now let us consider the Hell we're talking about here. Two major things make Hell a place of immense torment which are, its torment, its duration. Let's consider its torment. If a person steps on a smoking match stick that is put out but merely glowing red, he'd take off his foot at once. If a person were to put your finger in a flame as gentle as that of a candle, you'd probably scream for pain and force your hand out of it. If a you were to find yourself in a building engulfed in fire, your struggle and improvise any possible means to get out. But all these are nothing compared to the torments of hell. I've read about occasions where tormentors torture people by pressing the glowing end of a cigarette to their skin, but what shall a man then say about fire burning with brimstone and sulphur and being fully immersed in it? So based on the torment alone, seeing that every wise person seek to avoid these little forms of pain (little compared to Hell), how much more should a man bow his shoulder to bear the cross of Christ if it is the only means by which a man may avoid the torment of Hell.

Jesus also says plainly, "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." (Luke 12:4 - 5). He didn't just say we should fear him but also gave us the reason why we should fear him. He did not tell us that because of his majesty, or because he has done so much for us, how dare we pay him evil for good, and so on which we can term to be that reverent fear that every Christian ought to also have. The reason he gave was rather that we should fear him because he is able both to kill and also to cast in hell. So Christ here is admonishing us to fear with the fear of torment and not mere reverential fear. For this reason, we are not to fear others, whether they be terrorists, armed rubbers, etc. We must fear God alone for his mighty power with which he can cast into Hell. We can be sure by all these that fear is a Christian virtue.

Let's move on to its duration. The worst thing about Hell is not its torment but for the endlessness of the time that one shall spend there. Here's why. Suppose you were in a room with no doors and only windows with burglar proof. With you is this boring guy who only taps away in a boring and



annoying way on the strings of his guitar. You can't sleep, you can't read, you can't concentrate, you can't do anything. You're convinced that he'd never stop, and you can't make him stop, and you'd be there in that room for a week listening to this boring guy. Outside this room is bustling with activities, fanfare, enjoyment, and other social stuff, but you're trapped here. I suppose if ever you get out of that room sane, you'd never return there again. But let's say you're to be there for a month. Or for a year. Or a century. Or forever, world without end. That would be indeed Hell. You're not being tormented with any fire or burnings, but for the duration of this mild unpleasantness it would be a Hell for the individual. Now consider that is not just boredom, but the very fire of Hell burning the person, not for two days, not for a week, not for a month, not for a year, or a century, not even a millennium. It shall be forever and ever. That is just an imagination of what Hell is like but it's worse in reality.

What then shall we say of that. Shall not a man who is wise gladly take up his cross and follow Jesus for the sake of these only. It is in the fear of these that we are told to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

## **The Rewards of Fearing**

*"For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." (Isaiah 66:2)*

*"Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed." (Isaiah 66:5)*

We can see that there is a reward for those who tremble at the words of God. For this is wisdom to do so. In the first verse, God says, he look to him that is poor, of a contrite spirit and trembles at his word. So, despite the fact that you pray and pray, God will not look to you (give you any attention) except you possess these characteristics including trembling at (fearing because of) his word. This fear is that fear that'll make your

abstain from what displeases him.

He also says in verse 5 that to those who tremble at his words, their persecutions shall be turned to joy and the persecutors shall be ashamed. All these for just trembling at the words of God. Fear of Hell as revealed in the Bible is therefore a Christian basis for choosing the cross.

## Warning Against Casting Out Fear

*"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." (1 John 4:18)*

Very often people use the verse above to make fear an evil thing contrary to what we have looked at earlier. It is not only peculiar to our time. Old time writers too do the same and there is nothing devilishly wrong in that, but we must at all times have every part of the scriptures in consonance with every other part. If we haven't understood a portion of the Bible in a way that it agrees with every other part, we haven't understood it yet. So this verse of necessity can't be contradicting the other parts of scriptures that asks us clearly to fear.

So here we go. The Bible, in this verse, did not say that the man who is perfect in love casts out fear but love itself casts out fear. When we do not take up the responsibility of love, we are sure to act in a way that is detrimental to our spiritual growth. So we must work on ourselves to grow in the love of God until fear of itself, being driven away by love, leaves us. Here's what I mean, we don't have to be engaged in driving out fear as many Christians do. They employ many portions of the Bible for this fear driving enterprise. They politely ask it, if it doesn't leave, they rebuke fear, if it doesn't still leave, they stab it in the head, perhaps with the "sword of the spirit," etc. But it is not our lot to do that.

Another portion of the same epistle of John explains this to us where it says, "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." (1 John 2:5 - 2:6).

He later went on to say, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John 14:21). We're told here that what it means to be perfected in the love of God. It is by keeping his commandments that we know that we are perfect. This is in total agreement with what Jesus said saying, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15). So, we can understand fully well that John meant to say, only when we keep God's commandments consistently are we perfected in such love. When we attain to such a state, we are made perfect in love. Such perfect love showing itself in obedience to the commandments of God is what drives fear away.

We probably can understand this in the light of the government of the world. The Bible says, "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." (Romans 13:3 - 14). When your actions are right and according to the laws of the land, you walk boldly and confidently knowing that no ill would come your way because of your actions. However, if you've been doing evil, you'd always live in fear even when there is really no reason to fear, in the sense that no one is making any attempt to discover your faults. But if you're doing well and you receive a letter to submit yourself for inspection, you gladly do so because your good works would be made manifest by the very same inspection. So when through love, expressing itself through obedience, you have done the will of God, fear must go for it cannot stand in the presence of such love. It is in this sense that the apostle John says, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." (1 John 3:21).

Imagine Jesus fearing Hell. Imagine him praying out of fear, "O God, forgive me this evil I've done. I don't want to go to Hell." Such fear is impossible for an one such as Christ to have. Jesus could never fear Hell and here's why, he confessed plainly, "I do always those things that please him." (John 8:29). Were this to be our stance, we too would have a perfect love that would cast out fear, for when we ALWAYS do his will, we no longer have fear of torment. Here is a confirmation of this, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment:

because as he is, so are we in this world." (1 John 4:17). When we have become as he is in an outright, absolute, and consistent obedience to God, we have boldness (absence of fear), and this is because our love is now made perfect.

So, dear brethren, I do not say that we can become perfect in any way while in the flesh, but let us allow our love to grow stronger and stronger, daily, towards perfection. Let us also allow love to do its work without our interfering. Let us be focused in allowing the love of God to consume us wholly and forget about casting out fear for when love has consumed us wholly, fear would of itself, in the presence of perfect love, depart from us.

So this virtue called fear is one reason why it is wise and rational to choose the cross of Christ, seeing that the land is sweet and rest is good. For reason of the fear to lose this sweet land and good rest, as well as the fear of incurring damnation to our souls, we choose the cross of Christ. To do otherwise is irrational, foolish, unwise, reckless, and suicidal.

## Hope

*"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (Hebrews 6:18)*

Now let's take a look at hope. Another tangible rationale of choosing the cross is the blessed hope that as many who carry this cross have. A hope that cannot disappoint. We have hope that if we endure till the end, we have a reward which is beyond our imaginations.

**1. The Glory:** Romans 8:30 says, "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified:and whom he justified, them he also glorified." By this we understand that the call to take up our cross daily and follow Jesus is a call to them who are predestinated, and it is a call to justification and glory. O that we may know the glory and excellency of the cross we are called to bear.

The glory laid up for those who take up their cross is great beyond measure. The very hardness of taking up the cross shall turn out in the end to be for the glory of they who did so. God puts us through life's trials not because he can't just help us put a complete total end to it, but he allows it that our glory can be glory indeed. This tells us that the very cross we bear is for our glory when our sacrifice is complete.

It is very possible for God to just take us home the moment we get converted and become Christians. Yes, he can, but he is not interested in having in Heaven a company of ignoble people. People unworthy of glory of any kind. He wants people who get to Heaven to be indeed worthy yet having nothing to boast about. The fact that God does not want us to have anything to boast about so as to instigate pride in us does not mean he does not desire that we have to our merit things for which we shall be considered worthy of the honour he is preserving for his own. There's no cheap honour in Heaven. For this reason God said of some of the people of the church of Sardis when he said, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy." (Revelation 3:4). Mark those words, "FOR THEY ARE WORTHY." It is their worthiness that shall make them walk with God in white. White signifies honour.

Why is this so? Let us take the issue of the World Cup for example. Why glorious is winning the World Cup so honourable. Anytime a nation wins the World Cup, the whole world for a considerable amount of time can't stop singing the song of that nation. When Germany won the 2014 World Cup, the whole World Went crazy about Germany. I saw all manner of photos and posts on Facebook. I saw people from many countries wrapping their bodies with German flags, snapping and posting it on Facebook. The adoration was just so much that I got jealous, because my country, Nigeria, has never won the World Cup before.

What makes winning the World Cup glorious? Is it because the trophy is made of gold? See the host of nations that have never lifted that trophy before is it because the wealth of that nation isn't sufficient to get such trophy from the gold smith? Imagine how ridiculous it'd be for a nation to spend heavily on getting such a trophy, have their best stadium full with spectators, have guys dressed as if intending to play a football match, eleven players on one team and another eleven on another, and for nothing,

a voice speaking with a microphone announces to everybody that one team had just won the cup. Hearing this everybody starts jubilating and celebrating that they've won the World Cup. How stupid would that be? That is how it would be were God just to end all our problems and take us with himself to Heaven without the cross. It would be as ignoble and contemptible as that stupid celebration of winning the World Cup trophy bought from the goldsmith. But you can be sure that nothing of ridiculousness shall be in Heaven. It would be joy unspeakable and full of glory. True and worthy glory.

What makes winning the World Cup glorious is the series of hardness the winning team went through. Starting from their trainings, preparatory friendlies, qualifiers, the World Cup group stages, the knock out stages, etc. Looking at the fact that they had gone through all these hurdles to emerge as champions is what makes it glorious. That they succeeded to attain what every other team failed to attain is what makes it glorious. I assure you that there are many other football tournaments in the world including those you don't hear about but none is as glorious as the World Cup. This is because The World Cup is the toughest and thus the most glorious. Your glory and my glory is what God desires in giving us a cross to carry.

That we made it to Heaven (of course by his grace) where many others failed is to our glory. In getting to Heaven while all these contrary forces oppose us, we become more than conquerors. This is glorious. That we went through many hardship and still made it is to our glory. God wants us to be worthy of the glory of Heaven and gives us the grace and assistance of the Holy Ghost so that when we get there we'd have nothing still to boast about. Seeing the contemptible ridiculousness God would not allow to exist in Heaven, and that the means by which he would make Heaven truly glorious, we can conclude that the glory and excellency of the Christian cross is summarised in the fact that what will make Heaven Heaven indeed can only be afforded by the cross we choose to bear now.

Many other things makes Heaven glorious. In fact, Hebrews 11:26 says, "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." The reproach itself is greater than the treasures of Egypt, how much more shall his glory be. The hope of attaining this glory is enough for us to choose the cross and damn the world.

**2. The New Name:** One of the things to hope for is the new name. Jesus said, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." (Revelation 2:17).

It is very funny how some people give names to their offspring. I saw a footballer with the name, "Drink Water." (My apologies to that footballer). I may as well some day see someone called "Arrest Me." Some give their offsprings names loosely just for mere identity, others cautiously give their offsprings names assuming that it has a role to play in the bearing of the life of the child. I once went to a child dedication in which the child was given the name, "Nothing Pass God" which is to say, nothing is more than God. There are many other fantastic names I've heard of. Funnier it is when you see events that these names don't count in the success or quality of life of the individual's. There are people with the most glorious names who lived the most regrettable lives and others with common names who end up being great.

The other ways people are named (not at birth) is after their achievements or qualities. That is to say they are named in reference to a past accomplishment, for example, King Richard I was known as Richard Cœur de Lion or Richard the Lionheart because of his reputation as a great military leader and warrior.

Others by their character. Sometimes in such cases, the person is well known by this name, and at other times which is more common it is just used momentarily. For example some one whose known for making noise in class can be called "the noise maker."

Seeing the way men name their offspring, the way we name people after their accomplishment, it is quite different when God names people. Since the new name that shall be given to those who overcome would be given by God, let's scan through scriptures to see where God gave names to people and see what we can learn from it.

God gave a new name to Abram when he said, "Neither shall thy name any

more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee." (Genesis 17:5). God gave him a name with the reason of what he has now made him. A father of many nations. Something we see in our days as being completely fulfilled. Not only is he the father of the children of Israel, Ishmael, etc. he is the father of all those who live by faith in the One, True, and Living God (Romans 4:11). Through him the Saviour came into the world. What a glory attached to just a name.

He gave a name to Jacob, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." (Genesis 32:28). The glorious people of Israel were not called after Abraham, Isaac, or even Jacob, but by that new name which God bestowed on Jacob. As a prince indeed has the nation of Israel ever been. All that glory was attached to the new name given to Jacob.

God also gave a name to our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The angel delivering the message to Joseph said, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21). Because he was to save man from their sins he was called Jesus. He was given many names by God prophetically. One of the most prominent of these is where it says, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6). We can see all these fulfilled.

There are many other instances in the scriptures where God gave names to people. Read for Isaiah 62:1-5 to see how God gave a name to Zion. God does not take the issue of names lightly when he gives it.

There is something common with the way God gives names to people. It always has to do with power, glory, honour, prestige, etc. he is bestowing on the one he is naming. So when we read in the Bible where it says, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." (Revelation 2:17).



Note that it says that no man knows the name except the one who receives it meaning the name is not for identity but of power, glory, honour, majesty, etc. That it says also that no man knows he except the one who receives it also tells us that the one who received it becomes a mystery as God is a mystery. There are some things we know about God, but we don't know all of him. So shall that person be. Since the name is about power, glory, etc. it means that the person shall be in power and glory beyond the understanding and knowledge of others. This is great power, glory, and honour indeed. Shall we not for the sake of such excellency choose the cross of Christ our Saviour?

**3. Kingship:** "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Revelation 3:21).

It is well known that when we make it to Heaven, we shall reign with Christ as kings and priests. It is one thing to reign as a priest, it is another thing to reign as a king, but the honour that shall be to those who are counted worthy of Heaven is both the honour of a king and priests. Jesus says we shall sit with him on his throne if we overcome just as he overcame and is set down with his father on his throne. But seeing that it is by means of the cross that he ascended to the throne, shall we not choose to bear our own cross to ascend to that glorious throne?

**4. Endlessness Of Time:** "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." (Revelation 22:5)

There are many other things for which we hope for, but I don't wish to talk about them now as I don't have much to say about them, because I really don't understand what they mean to an extent good enough to talk about them. Things such as the hidden manna, the tree of life, etc. The other ones not mentioned here can be understood in the light of power, glory, etc. Things we should crave for seeing that the giver is God.

The last I'd like to talk about is the endlessness of time. As I said in respect to fear that the endlessness of the time in Hell is what makes it Hell indeed, so also here, the endlessness of the time in Heaven is what makes it

Heaven indeed. All the glorious benefit and splendour that shall be given to the overcomers shall not be for a year, a decade, century, etc. It shall be forever and ever, world without end. That is Heaven indeed. Lamenting the brevity of time here on earth, David said in 1 Chronicles 29:15, "For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." But our time in Heaven shall be endless and the joy, glory, and power, shall never wane.

It would be mini-hell to be given such power, glory, splendour, authority, etc. for a month, a year, a century, or even a millennium. When you have all these for only a specified period, you'd want to use it, overuse it, and even misuse and abuse it because you know that all of it shall come to an end at an appointed time. Even if it were a millennium, you'd have started feeling the gloom of brevity when you've spent five hundred years, and the pain of your mini-hell shall become very intense when you've spent about nine hundred years of your glorious time. People who have played demo games or used demo software would know the feeling of what I'm talking about. The better the game, the more painful the expiration of the demo is. The more the glory, the more pain we'd feel should we have it for only a specified period and not forever. But all that God has promised us shall last for ever and ever, world without end.

These are a whole lot of things to hope for, and when we have such hope it is expected of us, as wise, to purify ourselves through sacrifice, forsaking those things that pertains to the world and its lusts, and clinging to the way of Jesus our saviour. It is written, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:2 - 3). Let us, as people with this blessed hope, sacrifice the things of the world and its alluring vanities and bend our backs under the burden of the cross.

What ever you do, don't miss Heaven. Live a life of Hope for these things. The hope for these things is what makes it wise to choose the cross of Christ. Not knowing these things is ignorance, and failure to choose the cross in the light of these things is complete folly. Let us like Issachar bend our shoulders between two burdens, bearing our cross, seeing that the land is pleasant and rest is good. Let's be wise and choose the cross of Christ.

In the following chapter we shall talk on the rewards of the cross.

**Prayer:** *O God, I see that the call of Jesus to us, asking us to carry our cross and follow him, is far more glorious than it appears. As a matter of fact, it is glorious directly contrary to how it appears ignominious. Dear Lord, in the light of this, help me and all your children to be always conscious of that good eternal rest and that pleasant land of the Heavenly Jerusalem set before us, and for this reason, and other wise reasons, make this wise choice of bowing our shoulders beneath the burdens of the cross. Let us choose this instead of the passing vanity the world is ever offering. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

# THE REWARDS OF DYING ON THE CROSS

*"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." (2 Timothy 2:12)*

One of the things I find most difficult in writing is on rewards of well doing. Because of the immeasurable abundance with which God rewards his own, it is really hard to say anything worth while in comparison to it. To even talk exhaustively on the benefits of an earthly thing is hard to do not to talk on the transcendent rewards that comes with obeying God in anything. But for you the reader, know that whatsoever is written here is just little compared to what the benefits really are. I'd just say here and now, before going on, simply and summarisingly that "dying on the cross is life eternal."

Hebrews 11:35 says, "Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:" Better resurrection? Praise God! These people, though they were offered deliverance refused it for a benefit which is to "obtain a better resurrection. If only God will open our eyes to see the rewards of the cross, shall not we gladly sell all that we have for that reward? I believe that the unwillingness to carry our cross, any time we see the opportunity to, is tied to one form of blindness or the other of the realities of Heaven. O Lord open our eyes. Amen.

## Manifold Blessings

*"And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." (Luke 18:29 - 30)*

One of the benefits of sacrificing for the sake of Christ, obedience to God, and love for the brethren is manifold reward in this life. I don't like talking about these things as I don't like to move my reader to have their minds on them, for earthly gain is a wrong thing to base ones hope of reward for well doing, but since Jesus made mention of them and I've witnessed the truth of this promise, I wish to drive into your heart (the reader) a strong confidence that to sacrifice anything for the sake of Christ, obedience to God, and love for the brethren is not a loss. Yes of course, the most important reward which is way beyond measure is the eternal reward, but we do have great rewards in this life also as Jesus clearly states in the text above which I can't just ignore. So as we look at these rewards, let it not move us to have our expectations of the things of this world, but have all our gaze upon that eternal glory which shall be ours at the coming again of Jesus our blessed Redeemer. Let not the love of them be the motive of our sacrifices to God. The Bible verily says in 1 Corinthians 15:19, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

Now it is important to know what manifold means lest we have wrong expectations from him in this life. Manifold means having many different forms and elements. So when Jesus spoke of manifold rewards, he wasn't just referring to the fact that the reward is much or many. Some would think that if they should give up promotion for the sake of the cross, by this statement of Jesus, it means they would receive very many promotions as a reward. Or if they should give up a little fame, as a reward they'd become superstars. But that is not what Jesus was saying. If you give up anything, you'd receive a reward much more than you lost in many different forms and not necessarily in the form you sacrificed. So when you sacrifice money, don't get disappointed when you don't get money back. You could give up money or career advancement and be rewarded with something different such as good health, long life, wisdom, etc. But mark my word, you can't go on rewarded.

I am a living witness to this truth. When I was growing up, I was never educated on the wrongness of software piracy. In fact I didn't know there was anything like that. So my life was built around these pirated softwares. I played pirated games, I used pirated OS, I did my computer works and learning with pirated softwares, whether it was graphic design, animation, video production, music, etc, all these were done with pirated softwares. It

was in fact my life. One day, some years after being born again, I picked up a book titled, "A Christian in a Non Christian World," by Charles Seeth, and in it I read that using pirated softwares was equivalent to stealing. I battled a while with this fact. I wondered how my life would be without pirated softwares. If the very OS I use is stolen, it means I can't use my PC any longer, then how can I survive? From that time I gradually stopped using my PC and any time I did, it was with guilt. But that was the point I saw my professional and career breakthrough, and Christian revival and ministry started. My elder brother just came to me one day and said (paraphrased though), "have you heard of this really amazing OS called Ubuntu? It is immune to virus, it is this, it is that, and it is free." He went on and on and showed me the cd for it. I was so amazed. I wanted to install it immediately but he refused to have it replace the existing OS. But on the pack I read that you could boot the OS from cd without installing it on the hard drive. So I started using Ubuntu loading it from cd.

When I used it, there was nothing really cool about it if you used it the default way it was installed. Since I was booting it from CD I couldn't install any additional software. Even if I did, I'd lose them when I reboot. Also, there were no cd vendors who sold Ubuntu softwares around. For this reason the formats of music I could listen to and videos I could watch were limited. No games. Before this time, I was a big time gamer. I could play games all night and at the breaking of the day I'd start dozing off while playing. That was a huge waste of my time and life. But on Ubuntu, there was no games except card games which you'd get bored of after about two rounds. There was however, good productivity softwares such as office tools and a PDF reader. It was at this time that I began to be more serious being forced to by circumstances. Now I was stock with a PDF reader and a bunch of office tools. Any time I went to the cyber cafe, I always downloaded free PDFs to go read at home else I could die of boredom. This was how I got into the reading habit. Blessing 1.

When I was using a pirated OS, I also used a pirated and very High End 3D animation software. Now that I was stuck with Ubuntu, I had to look for alternatives. It made me really sad as I had patiently gone through a very tough learning process to be able to do 3D animations, but I was letting all that go to start afresh. It was painful but I had no choice. I used and learned a number of softwares before finally settling with Blender 3D which I've found to be the very best 3D software I've ever heard of. This

experience of learning many softwares didn't just make me to know many softwares, say five, but it has made me to know what to expect from softwares so that I can just pick up a new softwares and within hours know how to use it to a good extent. Blessing 2.

When I started reading PDFs, I got to download the book, "The Pursuit of God," by A.W. Tozer. That was the first of his book I read before I started listening to his sermons and read other of his books too. Reading that book sparked a great revival in me that hasn't left me since. Other free Christian books helped edify me to a very great extent. Blessing 3.

Reading many PDFs and using the office tool available on Ubuntu, I saw that I could easily export anything I typed to PDF, immediately I saw the prospects of becoming a writer. Not long after that I commenced writing. Today, I'm the author of five books, and this one is the sixth. So this book is a product of a blessing that is as a result of a sacrifice I made. That sacrifice gave me not just a career but a business also. I also run an enterprise (Crystal Frames), which among others does publishing and selling of ebooks. Very soon would also be into hard prints too. Blessing 4 & 5.

That's about how far I'd go. I could go on and on, but I don't wish to bore you with the endless talk of the profit of my sacrifice. Each of these blessings far outweigh what I gave up. Then imagine how much more they'd outweigh what I gave up if considered collectively. I gave up using pirated softwares, I didn't necessarily got back those particular pirated softwares, but I got a manifold more reward for what I gave up. There many are other times when I sacrificed little things and I've gotten far better things because I gave those little things up. So I don't just tell you of the truth of Jesus' promise because I read it in the Bible, though that were a sufficient reason to tell you, but I have experienced it myself. So, believe in it. Jesus is able to reward you in this world far more than you can think. Though our major aim and expectation shouldn't be on the things of this world but on eternal reward, yet it is important to be convinced that God does reward us even in this life as a teaser of that which is to come. So be rest assured that your sacrifices won't go unrewarded.

# Eternal Gain

*"...he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." (John 12:25)*

Now to the more important and far greater reward. Saint Francis of Assisi puts it succinctly, "it is in dying that we're born to eternal life." Dying on the cross (that is in an act of Christian sacrifice) gives the most important benefit of eternal life. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." (John 12:24 - 25). He doesn't mean that if we lose our lives for any reason but, as he puts it elsewhere in the Gospels, "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." (Matthew 10:39). It has to be for his sake.

The cross is not a loss. Yes, the earthly good (including the earthly rewards of our sacrifices) may be destroyed or deprived of us, but it rewards us with eternal goods. A man, by means of the cross may experience pain, but this is dung compared to its benefit both here and in Heaven. à Kempis Thomas wrote, "Truly the life of a truly devoted servant is a cross, but it leadeth to paradise." Understanding this, Ferdinand Q. Blanchard (1876-1966) wrote in his hymn;

*"O suffering Lord on Calvary,  
Whom love led on to mortal pain,  
We know Thy cross is not a loss  
If we Thy love shall truly gain."*

Now, what comes to mind when we think about the gain of eternity? How much is this gain we're talking about? Apostle Paul wrote, "But 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." (1 Corinthians 2:9). To have a glimpse of what gain we could win by the cross is like, we only have to look at the rich and powerful people of this world. I don't know if you've ever read about or watched a documentary



about the richest people in the world. It's quite amazing how people get this wealthy and you wonder if they'd ever be able to spend all that money. Of course they can't. Though they spend it on amazing projects, luxurious houses, personal space shuttle for space tourism, etc. They just can't spend it all. Consider the wealth of the Pope which he got through deceit, theft, and extortion, consider the wealth of the nations, consider the empires of wealth owned by business people. Consider all that, then see it all (put together) should help you to widen your scope of thinking, but don't stop there. Now widen the scope of your imagination more and more. Widen it to its limits, even when you've done that, you still haven't conceived what God hath prepared for them that love him. Now I don't want you to go on and on in the imagination stuff, I'm just driving home a point that the greatness of what God has prepared for us in terms of power, authority, glory, wealth, splendour, etc. has not yet been conceived and shall never be able to be conceived by the mortal mind.

I believe that the Psalmist referred to what God has in store for those who love God when he wrote saying, "For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them." (Psalm 75:8). All that wealth, power, splendour, etc. is just dregs of what God has in store for his own. I know many see the cup here as God's judgment but I don't think it is referring to his judgment. That which is God's judgment on the wicked is described this way, "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation." (Revelation 14:10). Note the contrast. While Revelation 14:10 says the wine is without mixture to be for judgment, Psalm 75:8 says it is full of mixture. Notice that wisdom also offers her hearers mingled wine where it says, "Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." (Proverbs 9:5). So this is my interpretation of that passage; all the collective wealth and splendour we see on earth through all ages are but dregs of that which God has prepared for those who love him, and we know not the size of the cup.

When you look at these show of wealth, and see that these put together are mere dregs of the true wealth, you can only then try to imagine what manner of gain is kept in store for those who endure to the end. You can only try because you don't know how big the cup of the Almighty is. Apart from these, just take a glance at the length of time you've got spend

enjoying this gain in Heaven. I mean what length of time could be used in describing how long eternity is. Forever and ever and ever, world without end. We see only in part, yet we by these know and can conclude without any doubt that the cross is surely an immense unquantifiable gain beyond all imaginations.

## **The Legal Tender Of The Christian Life**

*"I counsel thee to buy of me..." (Revelation 3:18)*

There is no wealth of experience in the Christian life but it must be by sacrifice. It may interest you to know that the Spanish currency Cruzado has something to do with the cross, crusade, and the sacrifice that is done through them. It must have been that people in one way or the other saw that the sacrifice of the cross is a means of gain. That is absolutely true. All Christian virtue, gifts, maturity, experience and more must come by sacrifice. As we hope, pray for, and anticipate revival, it doesn't come cheap brethren. It only comes by means of the cross. We must understand the cost of revival and other rich Christian experiences, and purchase it at its right cost and with the acceptable legal tender which is non other than this very same cross which Christ gives us to carry.

It is well known that people whose life has made them carry a cross heavier than others often seem to have a more refined character than others. Sometimes, even people who are not Christians who have gone through a tough experience also have a character that is very soothing. Going through hardness (including that of bearing the cross) has a way of making us strong. Proverbs 20:30, "The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so do stripes the inward parts of the belly." Here the writer speaks of the unpleasantness of discipline. It says it purifies him who bears it. So, we really can grow spiritually and character-wise when we go through hardness and don't allow it kill us. Kill us in the sense that it makes us bitter, hateful, and possess other forms of ill feelings that can arise as a result of enduring unpleasantness. So, when we see a cross before us of which we know would bring to us hardness, however great we think the hardness is, let us not avoid it but rather reach for it manfully and bear it on

our backs as occasion so demands knowing well that it is an opportunity to grow stronger, bolder, and finer in character.

Now, in the Bible text above, Jesus says, "I counsel thee to buy of me..." By this word "buy," he meant that an exchange be made. He meant that you give up something for the things that he is willing to give you. It means you must sacrifice something for all the things he is offering. The full verse reads, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." (Revelation 3:18). So he offers here a whole lot but they just won't come without our giving up something. For that reason, we know that the sacrifice of the cross is the legal tender with which we purchase from God and his Christ.

Paul says in Philippians 3:7-8, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord:for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." Sacrificing everything for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. You may think that anything on earth is worth something, until you see the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and when you see this, the glory of the cross by which we may crucify all the world for this knowledge becomes glaring to us.

If I walk up to a store and desire to purchase something, I won't just go up there, find what I wish to buy, take it and go my way. No that's not going to happen. If it does I'd find myself in jail. That is how it is also with spiritual maturity, intimacy with God, revelation, wisdom, power, and other things that come from God. That Jesus says "...buy of me," it means we must give up something for that which we want from him. This we must do by offering ourselves as a living sacrifice. It is sad that Christians of today want to be a people of power, of deep intimacy with God, people with profound understanding and wisdom, without paying the sacrifice for it. But we see here that Jesus did not say, "come and take of me," but "come and BUY of me." So these things doesn't come to those who aren't willing to make the sacrifices for them, but people who will let go of anything that stands between them and the obedience to God and expressing their love for the brethren. It is God's will for us to have these things, but we must

give up things, though they be ours, to have the things that he offers.

à Kempis Thomas wrote, “the more perfectly a man forsaketh things which cannot profit, and the more he dieth to himself, the more quickly doth grace come, the more plentifully doth it enter in, and the higher doth it lift up the free heart.” So, the sacrifice of dying to the self enables us to have more grace for deeper experiences, commitment, power, etc. from God. There is no other way but by means of sacrifice.

The ultimate experience of eternity with God also comes with a tremendous sacrifice. For, it is in dying to the self that we are born to eternal life, and it is in overcoming the self that we overcome the world. We must pay that ultimate sacrifice of dying to possess that life of eternity. Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." (John 12:24 - 25). O the glory of Christian sacrifice.

There are levels of spiritual experiences and maturity that even prayer and fasting can't buy. So this ought to be the most emphasised aspect of the Christian life. It is sad that people emphasise prayer, fasting, speaking with tongues, but ignore the all important virtue of a Christian life which is the will to sacrifice more and more for the Lord's sake. The more we let go, the more we can have him in the fullness of his glory and power.

He that makes sacrifices for the Lord's sake would not need fly into the heights of piety but simply soar higher and higher into the perfection's heights of piety. Imagine how hard a man would try in vain to live a pious life if he cannot let go that activity, place, relationship, etc. that hinders him. When Jesus said, "Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire." (Matthew 18:8). He spoke here of the sacrifice by which we can live a stress free pious lives. Such a person that does not sacrifice things that are inimical to living a consistent Christian life would try to pious with much struggle. He'd probably have to short his eyes at times, close his ears, and bridle his mouth. With all this he may not still live a pious life. But if he sacrifices those things that are inimical to a consistent

Christian life, struggle would cease and piety would be with ease.

Every step that we take into Christian maturity and deeper relationship with God must be a step we take with the cross on our backs. It drives us deeper into a realer communion with him. There is no Christian of any attainment worthy of note that didn't do so by means of the cross. They let go so much and gained by the same cross so much. There is no way we can attain to spiritual maturity except by means of the cross. It is by the bearing of the burden of the cross that we become stronger. I know full well that I grew much more through hard times than at times of ease and comfort. Nothing moves us when we get used to sacrificing for the sake of God and love for the brethren for by it we become strong.

## **Victory Over Sin And The Flesh**

*"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;" (1 Peter 4:1)*

Peter makes us understand by this statement that when we suffer in the flesh, we have cease from sin. So we know that suffering has its part to play in our victory over sin.

When we sacrifice things for the sake of God, that is the only way we can cease from sin. Imagine a man who cannot do without watching movies but wishes to live a consistent Christian life. He watches in movies of the paganistic life of the world, how they dress, the dirty slang they use, there worldly system of judgment, nudity and semi-nudity, etc, and can't let these go. He's bound to keep falling and never live a consistent Christian life. I too was that way. Living a consistent Christian life was very hard for me (and is still hard but not as hard as then) until I sat down and tried to see the source of the fleshly and evil desires and thoughts that always rise up in me. Over time I could trace each back to one movie or the other. Mind you, these movies were not rated 18+ but these movies that are deemed okay by the world for public consumption were the source of my problem. I thought I'd restrict myself to only Christian movies, but this also had its

bad effects. Over time, I stopped watching movies entirely (which was a sacrifice) and this helped me to a very good extent. The cross helps us deal with the issue of sin at the root and there is no where better to deal with a problem than at the root.

Our text in 1 Peter 4:1 says, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;" The cross by which we suffer in the flesh gains for us cessation from sin. Ceasing from sin is one of the hardest things any human can face. But the cross can gain for us purity through our sacrifices.

Apart from this, seeing that maturity comes by means of the cross, we know also that the victory over sin is not limited to sacrificing things that can lead to sin, but it also gives us inner strength that enables us overcome temptation.

So the more we can sacrifice, the purer our life becomes and the more blissful. There has been no time I gave up a lifestyle that I felt bad over time that I did. So we must learn to sacrifice things that we know or suspect may hinder our consistent Christian life. No matter how Christianly a person may seem, I can't see him as a true brother until I've seen how much of the things that are rightfully his own that he is sacrificing for the sake of Christ. For I know that such has truly come out of the world though he may have many imperfections. For a man that has suffered for that which he has come to know to be the truth is indeed a Christian whether or not he has many faults. For indeed such a man, the Bible tells us, by virtue of his suffering, has ceased from sin.

## **More Than Conquerors**

*"As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Romans 8:36 - 37)*

Through the cross we become more than conquerors. By dying on it we

overcome the world. Mere sacrifices done for the mundane things of this world cause men to be overcomers, how much more shall we overcome when we sacrifice for the sake of God and for eternal gain.

A perfect example of people who live sacrificial lives and find a reward by so doing are athletes. Even Paul had to make reference to them when it comes to discipline. "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." (1 Corinthians 9:24 - 25). There is no way that an athlete can succeed without sacrifice. I think the level of their success is directly proportional to their sacrifice. I know very well what footballers in particular go through as I myself was an aspiring footballer. They sacrificed a lot, their time, diet, rest, etc. and allow themselves go through rigours, stress and strain to become successful. That is looking at it in reference to the things of this world.

But looking at it from a spiritual view we can see that the victory we achieve through the cross is by far more compared to the gains of this world. Jesus says, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33). It is by the death of the cross that Jesus says I've overcome the world. The cross gives victory in all spheres of our existence. It makes us overcome the world, the devil, his host, his trickery and wiles, and all things else. We overcome even in carnal things such as in academics, career, financially, etc. It is by the cross that we overcome the world.

1 Peter 5:10 says, "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." These perfection, stability, strength, and settlement comes only AFTER we have suffered a while. This is not a suffering that is imposed on us, but a suffering that comes our way as we choose to obey God and to do that which the love of the brethren drives us to. This suffering we willingly accept. This is our cross and by it we overcome and are more than conquerors. There is no shortcuts, no escape routes, no other way whatsoever to overcoming the world other than the way of the cross. By it, and by it only, borne by the strength which Christ imparts, can we be more than conquerors.

# Satisfaction For The Soul

*"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied,  
when I awake, with thy likeness." (Psalm 17:15)*

Finally, the cross is the only means to achieve satisfaction for the soul. The soul cannot be satisfied apart from the cross of Jesus. In the hymn of Daniel W. Whittle (1840-1901), I Shall Be Satisfied, he wrote;

*"Soul of mine, continue pleading;  
Sin, rebuke and folly chide;  
I accept the cross of Jesus,  
That thou may'st be satisfied."*

The soul can't be satisfied without our full acceptance of the cross and Daniel Whittle understood this. The Christian that must truly grow must seek to be able to perceive the yearning of his soul. He must develop his hearing to be able to perceive the calling of his soul. The soul craves to be satisfied and such satisfaction cannot be achieved until we have sacrificed all on the cross. Until we have sacrificed sin, folly, inordinate affections for things of this world, pride of life, lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and any other thing that is inimical to the will of God. Only when we have sacrificed these that our soul can be satisfied.

I believe that what the psalmist expressing in Psalms 17:15 was the yearning of a soul. The soul says concerning God that it will be satisfied WHEN it awake in thy likeness. So the soul desires to have the resemblance of God. What distorts the soul from such resemblance if not sin, pride of life, lust of the eye, lust of the flesh, inordinate affections of mundane things? These things hinder the soul first from beholding God, and secondly it hinders the soul from being in the likeness of God, thus refusing the soul satisfaction. It is in the sacrificing of these evils that our souls can find satisfaction. O may our souls keep pleading until we become concious of its cravings and chide our sins and folly in Jesus' name. Amen.



**Prayer:** *O God, I see that your cross is not a loss. Grant me the grace to choose to carry my cross daily for the sake of such immense rewards, both in this life, and most of all, that eternal reward. Help me not to shy away from it and thus stain my honour. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

# THE SACRIFICE AND EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST

*"Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." (Job 2:4)*

*"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us..." (1 John 3:16)*

Jesus gave up his best for us. In the book of Job we read that a man would give all that he has for his life. So if Jesus gave his very life for us out of the great love he has for us, we know he gave his best and all. We too should give our best and all.

## His Purpose Of Dying

1. Obedience: "And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him." (John 8:29). Jesus died on the cross contrary to his will out of obedience to God. We too should be willing to sacrifice all on the cross in obedience to God.

2. Love: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." (Revelation 1:5 - 6). It was also love that drove Jesus to die for us all.

## **The Will Of Jesus**

"And 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..." (Matthew 26:39). The will of Jesus was not to die on the cross. Not that he wished not to save the world, but I supposed he prayed for an alternative means to save the world than dying on the cross.

## **The Will of God**

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." (John 10:17). It was the Father's good pleasure to have Jesus die on the cross for humanity's sake.

## **The Will Which Jesus Chose**

"...nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matthew 26:39). Jesus chose the Father's will over his own will. It was his life at stake here, not fashion nor fame. It was his life he was asked to give up in a shameful way, but he choose that will over his own will.

## **The Glory Of His Death**

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he

humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:5 - 11). Look at all the honour the loving Father vested upon his Son for this singular act of dying for mankind.

His consciousness of the joy ahead of him which he was to attain by means of the cross, and not apart from the cross, is one of the things that made him to choose to die on the cross. It is written, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2).

## Our Duty

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:5). Dearest brethren in Christ, whom, I love with sincerity, we must know that, in all things, Jesus is our perfect example. We've seen all he did, his reasons for choosing the cross to sacrifice nothing lesser than his very life, his own will, the will of the Father, how he chose the Father's will above his own will, and the resulting glory of a sacrifice of such magnitude. Let this mind be in us also. Shall we not in the light of these sing again with all sincerity the introductory hymn of this book by Henry F. Lyte? Let's sing:

*“Jesus, I my cross have taken,  
All to leave and follow Thee.  
Destitute, despised, forsaken,  
Thou from hence my all shall be.  
Perish every fond ambition,  
All I've sought or hoped or known.  
Yet how rich is my condition!  
God and Heaven are still mine own.*

*"Let the world despise and leave me,*

*They have left my Savior, too.  
Human hearts and looks deceive me;  
Thou art not, like them, untrue.  
And while Thou shalt smile upon me,  
God of wisdom, love and might,  
Foes may hate and friends disown me,  
Show Thy face and all is bright.*

*“Go, then, earthly fame and treasure!  
Come, disaster, scorn and pain!  
In Thy service, pain is pleasure;  
With Thy favour, loss is gain.  
I have called Thee, Abba, Father;  
I have set my heart on Thee:  
Storms may howl, and clouds may gather,  
All must work for good to me.*

*"Man may trouble and distress me,  
'Twill but drive me to Thy breast.  
Life with trials hard may press me;  
Heaven will bring me sweeter rest.  
Oh, 'tis not in grief to harm me  
While Thy love is left to me;  
Oh, 'twere not in joy to charm me,  
Were that joy unmixed with Thee.*

*"Take, my soul, thy full salvation;  
Rise o'er sin, and fear, and care;  
Joy to find in every station  
Something still to do or bear:  
Think what Spirit dwells within thee;  
What a Father's smile is thine;  
What a Savior died to win thee,  
Child of Heaven, shouldst thou repine?"*

*"Haste then on from grace to glory,  
Armed by faith, and winged by prayer,  
Heaven's eternal day's before thee,  
God's own hand shall guide thee there.*

*Soon shall close thy earthly mission,  
Swift shall pass thy pilgrim days;  
Hope soon change to glad fruition,  
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise."*

May the strength and grace of the Godhead be with us all. Amen.

**Prayer:** *O God, help me, by simple obedience, to choose to pick up my cross daily and follow Jesus. He has set us a perfect example in all things that pertains to life and godliness. Help me and all your children to follow his example and lay down our best and all in whatsoever obedience to you and love for the brethren requires. Though I've come to the conclusion of this book, let me continue with you in this might in Jesus' name. Amen.*