The Pilgrim's Guide Post

Volume 3 (Part 1)

Thy Word Is A Lamp Unto My Feet, And A Light Unto My Path (Psalm 119:105)



FIT FOR THE KINGDOM SERVICE

WISDOM EZE

VASHTI AS A SIGNPOST By Ruth Eze



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Thanks

Thanks to the disciples who laboured with me through the editing of this journal, to ensure, as best as possible, that what is written herein is presented clearly and, more importantly, that it is of the Spirit and is truth. Though you remain nameless, I really appreciate the grace of God at work in you. May God continue to find you fit for His use in Jesus' name. Amen.

Unless otherwise noted, all the scripture quotations are from the New King James Version of the Holy bible

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FROM THE EDITORIALS DESK

We sincerely thank the Lord our God and Saviour with all of our hearts, full of gratitude for His grace and for making it possible once again to send forth another edition of the Pilgrim's Guidepost. This is a case of the outpouring of His abundant grace and wisdom, as the Lord has been teaching us the nuggets of serving in His kingdom.

In this edition of the Pilgrim's Guidepost, the Lord is confronting us with the theme: **FIT FOR THE KINGDOM SERVICE.** The imperative of the availability of suitable vessels for the kingdom service cannot be overstated when it comes to achieving the purpose of God on earth. As we deal with this matter, the question is: who is fit for the kingdom service? The Lord began by showing us that it is anyone who is genuinely a captive of the Lord.

The Lord also confronted us with the implications of being the Lord's captive and the perils of not being His captive. We further explored the divine requirement for becoming the Lord's captive. This led us to discover that becoming the Lord's captive relates to God's dealings in one's life. These dealings create in a servant of God the required life for the kingdom service. It also became apparent to us that for one to be made fit for the kingdom service, God must first intervene in his life. We also saw that, as a matter of principle, God often interrupts a man He will grant access to His service. He interrupts his life ambitions, plans, careers, projects, and purposes in order to turn him away from his purposes and redirect him towards the pursuit of the kingdom service. These principles are clearly exemplified in the lives of God's servants. A close look at the lives of Paul, the woman of Samaria, Elisha the Tishbite, and Simon son of Jonah clearly shows the impact of the divine intervention and interruption.

It is also obvious that in the process of making a man fit for the kingdom service, the Lord normally and often **encounters** those He uses. One of the purposes of this encounter is to bring a person to his place of formation and commission. The encounter must continue from time to time, and this is what sustains God's servant in His task as a co-labourer with the Him.

In the matter of the Home Guide, the Lord also brought us to the story of Queen Vashti, the arrogant queen who lost her position. Her story came to us as a warning signpost.

These are transformative truths, and I pray you receive them whole-heartedly, as in buying the truth and selling it not. Allow these engraved words of truth to dwell richly in your heart, and may you manifest them greatly in your life to point people that watch your life to the Cross and heaven. May the doing of His words multiply His abundant grace and the true riches of God in your life, causing you to become a sweet-smelling savour of His life to your generation. May the blessedness of reading and doing His word abide with you in Jesus' name. Amen..



FIT FOR THE KINGDOM SERVICE

The greatest challenge the work of God has encountered in every generation is the scarcity of individuals who are fit for God's use. Throughout history, the insufficiency of usable individuals for the kingdom service has been the undoing of God's purpose for humanity on earth. It is not merely a matter of a shortage of individuals, but rather a scarcity of those who are truly fit for the kingdom service. God, as a fundamental principle, does not use a man solely based on his availability, but rather on his suitability for the task at hand. The work of God on earth will inevitably suffer delays and setbacks when men who are available are not fit for service and those who are fit are not available. This is because, in God's hierarchy of priorities, a qualified individual is just as essential as His purpose for humanity. Therefore, in His pursuit of fulfilling His plan on earth, He seeks out individuals who are fit and suitable (qualified) for His service.

It is clear from the teachings of the Scriptures that not all individuals are deemed suitable or competent for God's work. God's work is not intended for those who are not part of His kingdom. This is because the kingdom of God serves as the circumference for the kingdom service. Therefore, being within the kingdom is a fundamental requirement for serving in the kingdom. This principle is everlasting and non-negotiable. Every leader within the body of Christ should understand that being within the Kingdom is a prerequisite set by God for individuals to be considered for His service. Hence, in His pursuit of fulfilling His purpose on Earth, He seeks a suitable and competent individual who is within the kingdom for His work.

We acknowledge that there are occasions when individuals who are not aligned with God's kingdom may express a willingness to carry out His work (Jn 6:28-29). However, God will not permit such individuals to partake in His service, regardless of their eagerness or the urgent nature of the task. Throughout history, there have been instances where the work of God has required immediate attention and response. Nevertheless, appointing an individual to serve as a vessel for God's work is a process that God never rushes. As a matter of principle, God meticulously prepares the individual He selects for His service, irrespective of the urgency of the task. God does not view the time spent in equipping His vessels as time wasted. For example, God did not regard the forty years Moses spent in Midian preparing for his service as unproductive. God invests time in shaping the individuals He chooses to carry out His work. This is because, in the divine hierarchy,

the worker (vessel) is just as crucial as the work itself. The worker plays a crucial role in determining the quality, effectiveness, and longevity of the work. Therefore, God ensures that the vessel is refined before granting access to His work, regardless of the urgency of the work.

God does not compromise His standards; only individuals who are deemed suitable for His service are permitted to engage in it. God patiently waits for a well-prepared individual before engaging in His work among humanity. The service in His kingdom is considered sacred and, therefore, only entrusted to individuals who are thorough, sacred, and well-prepared.

Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.
Matt 7:6 NIV

When it comes to the question of who can partake in the service of the Lord, the passage mentioned above serves as a divine decree. It is made clear that sacred duties are not meant for those who are impure, just as pearls are not meant for swine. The dogs and pigs symbolize individuals who are morally unclean, those who are entrenched in sin, and consequently, are excluded from the realm of God. It is imperative to be within the kingdom of God in order to be eligible for serving in His kingdom. Only those deemed sacred will be granted access to partake in the sacred service. A prime illustration of this principle can be found in the encounter between David and Ahimelech the Priest, as narrated in the book of 1 Samuel

So David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has ordered me on some business, and said to me, 'Do not let anyone know anything about the business on which I send you, or what I have commanded you.' And I have directed *my* young men to such and such a place. Now therefore, what have you on hand? Give *me* five *loaves of* bread in my hand, or whatever can be found." And the priest answered David and said, "*There is* no common bread on hand; but there is holy bread, if the young men have at least kept themselves from women." 1 Sam 21:2-4

This passage pertains to the sacred duty of serving the Kingdom. The bread symbolizes the kingdom service. Just as there was no common bread for careless individuals in the hands of the Priest, there is also no common service in the hands of God. Every task within the kingdom of God is consecrated and cannot be entrusted to irresponsible individuals. Despite their hunger, David and his men were not immediately provided with bread by the Priest. His response to their 'hunger' was, **"...there is no common bread on hand ...** The Priest was unwilling to compromise God's standards, even for hungry individuals. Similarly, God will not compromise His standards when selecting individuals for His service, regardless of their desire for it. The Priest continued,**"...but there is holy bread..."** The Kingdom service is sacred; it is not meant for unholy individuals. No careless person is suitable for the kingdom service. Therefore, God will delay His work on earth until He finds an individual whom He has purified, made holy, and deemed suitable for His work.

As we implore divine assistance in our endeavour to be prepared for service in the kingdom, it is essential for us to grasp the true essence of being fit. To be fit denotes meeting the requisite standard for a specific purpose. It involves being qualified, or appropriate; possessing the necessary attributes or resources to fulfill a task. Considering these qualities it is evident that God selects individuals who are qualified, sufficient, or appropriate for service in the kingdom.

It should be noted that when we refer to kingdom service, we are not making

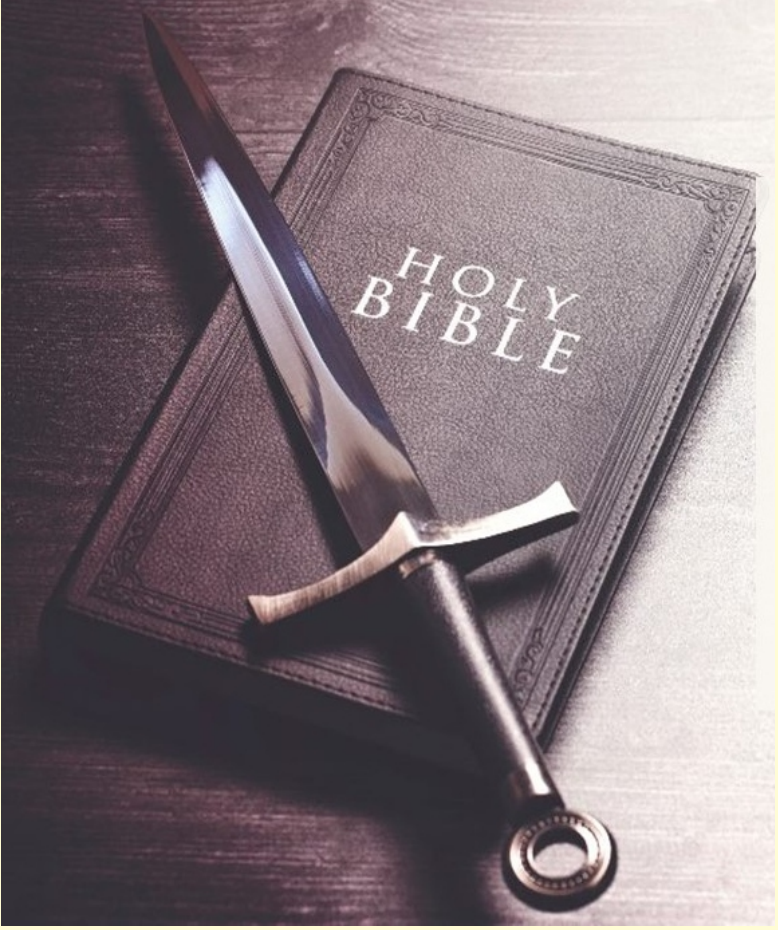
reference to church activities such as preaching, teaching, or singing within the church. These activities merely serve as platforms for the service. For further insight, I recommend the volume two of this journal (our task in the task). God is not merely seeking individuals capable of preaching or teaching the Bible. The supply of such individuals is abundant. Each year, numerous preachers and Bible teachers graduate from various theological training institutions. Therefore, the scarcity lies not in individuals capable of teaching or preaching, but rather in those through whom others can encounter the essence of Christ's life; individuals whose lives radiate the aroma of Christ's life. This aroma symbolizes the consecrated bread in the hands of our Father, and disseminating it constitutes the act of the service. Such service is not intended for careless individuals. It is an undeniable reality that individuals possessing such virtues are scarce within our congregations today, resulting in minimal or absent impact of Christ's life on earth.

While exploring individuals suitable for service in the kingdom, it is crucial to acknowledge that no individual is naturally qualified for such service. Every individual is born inadequate and unsuitable for any role within God's kingdom. Any individual granted entry into kingdom service is rendered adequate or suitable by God. Fundamentally, God initiates a transformative process within the lives of individuals He intends to use as vessels in His kingdom. God does not seek out perfect, capable or competent individuals from the general populace to utilize; He molds individuals into adequate instruments for His purposes. Every individual is naturally insufficient, inadequate, and unqualified for any task within the kingdom of God. Those who are chosen to serve in the kingdom are made competent and qualified by God. This suggests that men who are fit for the kingdom service are made. The term "made "implies a progression. There exist specific processes and protocols for developing individuals who are suitable for the kingdom service. Before we begin to look at these processes, we are going to first look at the man who is fit for the kingdom service.



WHO IS FIT FOR THE KINGDOM SERVICE?

Having established the fact that not all individuals are suitable or adequate for the kingdom service, the question is: who then is fit for the Kingdom service? Who can serve as a channel for divine Life, by engaging in the act of demonstrating and embodying the Life of Jesus to others? We earnestly pray that God will reveal to us those who are qualified for His service and also prepare us for the service, in Jesus' name. Amen.



THE LORD'S CAPTIVE

To become fit for the kingdom service, a man must first be conquered, captured and taken by the Lord as His captive. It is the process that made the early disciples fit for the kingdom service. This process remains the kingdom procedure for making men fit for the kingdom service.

But thanks be to God, who made us his captives and leads us along in Christ's triumphal procession. Now wherever we go he uses us to tell others about the Lord and to spread the Good News like a sweet perfume. Our lives are a fragrance presented by Christ to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those being saved and by those perishing. To those who are perishing, we are a fearful smell of death and doom. But to those who are being saved, we are a life-giving perfume. And who is adequate for such a task as this? *2 Cor. 2:14-16.* NLT

When it comes to the issue of a man, becoming a vessel suitable for use in the hands of God, or fit for the kingdom service, being a captive of the Lord is an essential requirement. It is a fundamental prerequisite for serving in the kingdom. Only those who are captives of the Lord are qualified for any role in the kingdom of God. They are the exclusive channels of Christ's life to humanity. The kingdom service is not for individuals whose submission to the Lordship of Christ over their lives has not been confirmed by the Lord. Such sacred service is not for those who are still loyal to the devil. It is not for those who are inclined to heed the calls of Self, Satan, and the world system. It is reserved solely for those whose loyalty to the Lord has been validated by Him.

As we strive to comprehend God's perspective on this subject, the primary aspect we will explore is the term 'captive'; who is a captive? A captive is an individual who has been captured or is being detained. It also signifies someone who has been taken and held as a prisoner of war. Furthermore, a captive can be someone who is under the control of another. In the context of our study, being a captive of the Lord implies being confined in the Lord; being under the control and the authority of the Lord. It also denotes being a prisoner of the Lord. Eph 3:1; 4:1; 2Tim 1:8; Phil 1: 9 **Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer** Philemon 1:1.KJV

Brother Paul's presentation of himself in the passage above is worthy of note: **"Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ…"** Would you be offended if you were introduced with the same description? Would you rather be recognized and acknowledged as a companion of Jesus? Do you understand that unless you are His prisoner, you cannot be His companion? The Lord's companions are found among His prisoners. Do you aspire to be His companion? Then you must be His captive. An interesting aspect of becoming

the Lord's prisoner is that He does not put or impose chains on their necks; they willingly take His yoke upon their necks. He leads and protects His prisoners with His yoke and not with chains. Another fascinating aspect of being captive or a prisoner of the Lord is that they are confined in the Lord and Him in them. It is a glorious honour to be a captive of the Lord.

Beloved, do you aspire to serve in the kingdom? Do you yearn to be a channel of Christ's life to humanity? Is it your desire to witness individuals being touched by the life of God through you? If so, you have set your sights on a worthy endeavour. Becoming a channel of God's life to humanity is a treasure that Heaven does not bestow on a person hastily. Likewise, Heaven does not delay in withdrawing it from an individual who is no longer deemed worthy to bear it. It is a glorious experience to witness individuals encountering God through our lives. The satisfaction of impacting others with the Life of Christ is incomparable. Friend, can individuals perceive God through you? Do you exemplify God's life? The Lord only entrusts such sacred service to His captives. One amazing aspect of being a captive of the Lord is that it grants an individual the privilege of becoming a steward of the divine life. The captives of the Lord are the stewards of His life on earth. Beloved, what could be more glorious than this? Is there anything more worthwhile to live for? The ancient men who discovered this treasure relinquished joyfully all they possessed to obtain it. God confines in His captives with His plans and secrets. They are the custodians of His agenda on earth; He reveals His intentions to them. This is why they were grateful to God for choosing them as His captives. Are you one of the Lord's captives? You cannot be deemed suitable for the kingdom's service or a channel of His Life on earth until you becomes His captive.
God will only entrust Himself and His purpose to individuals who are confined in Him. Only such individuals are suitable for kingdom service. They are the individuals He will involve in the service of being channels of Christ's Life on Earth. Unless one has become the Lord's captive or His prisoner, Heaven will not entrust into his hands the stewardship of Christ's Life. Remember we are not discussing preaching or teaching here. While there are plenty of preachers and teachers, it is evident that we have few men through whom we can experience and witness the Life of Christ. Men who can impact others with Christ's Life are scarce among us. Therefore, our focus in this study is not on men who can preach or teach but on men whose lives reflect the Life of Jesus. We are interested in men who can influence others with the Life of Jesus. God has always sought a bearer of His Life and not just a preacher of His life. Channels of the divine life have always been the essential requirement of heaven in every generation. This is because only such men are fit for kingdom service.

As we look into the scriptures, we will realize that God has never been without a witness (a vessel suitable for His use) in every generation. An interesting aspect of these adequate men is that they all originated from among God's captives. They were all individuals confined in God. Until a person has become a captive of the Lord, he is not yet a candidate for kingdom service. Blessed are the Lord's captives for they shall bear and influence men with the Life of Christ. It is evident that the significance of being a captive of the Lord cannot be overstated in terms of preparing for service in His kingdom. In 2 Corinthians chapter 2:14, Paul expresses his gratitude and jubilation for being a captive of the Lord.

"But thanks be to God, who made us his captives and leads us along in Christ's triumphal procession. Now wherever we

go he uses us to tell others about the Lord and to spread the Good News like a sweet perfume". NLT

Beloved, isn't that strange? How can one feel joyful at the thought of being taken captive? There is no doubt such excitement is ridiculous to every natural man. No natural man would ever wish for or consent to being captured or being subjected to the authority of another, even if that person is God. By nature, every individual yearns to break free from the dominion of another. However, once someone becomes a captive of the Lord, the desire for "freedom" dissipates. This is because, upon becoming His captive, they comprehend that the entire world pales in comparison to the benefits and value of being the Lord's captive. Being captured by the Lord is an invaluable treasure; those who have experienced it would not trade it for anything, not even the entire world. Individuals who are captured by the Lord have realized through firsthand experience that being a prisoner of the Lord characterizes true freedom. They have also discovered through experience that being the Lord's captive is the essential prerequisite for receiving, containing, and nurturing divine Life. Furthermore, they have discerned that being a captive of the Lord is the key to becoming a channel of Christ's Life. **"But thanks be to God, who made us his captives..."** The early disciples were filled with gratitude towards God because they understood that being His captive is a privilege. Those who have been apprehended and confined in Christ are truly fortunate. It is a state of existence that no one would ever encounter and wish to forfeit. They acknowledged that unless one becomes a captive of the Lord, he cannot be a vessel suitable for God's use, even if he is "available" for His service. They comprehended the notion that men who are usable and beneficial to God are His captives. It was due to this realization that they were expressing their thankfulness to God for making them His captives. God's desire for the individuals He intends to use is to first make them His captives. This is because divine endowment, power, or grace can solely be accessed, manifested, and sustained in God. Another reason is that God employs His vessels within Himself; He is the environment for His work. Consequently, being a captive of the Lord is the eternal and irreversible principle of the kingdom that enables an individual to engage in the sacred duty of serving as a channel of divine life on earth.

Only His captives are suitable for kingdom service. This is due to the nature of the service of the kingdom. It is essential to remember that this service is not exclusively about what we can do on our own, but rather about what God accomplishes through us. God utilizes individuals within Himself; hence, it is imperative that whoever He employs must be within Him. God does not merely summon an individual to carry out His work; instead, He calls upon them first to be within Him, to walk in and with Him. As an individual progresses in these fundamental walks, God will grant him access to His work not to execute it, but to observe and affirm that God alone performed all that was accomplished. Unless an individual has become the Lord's captive, confined in Him, he cannot walk with God. Consequently, he will be devoid of the privilege and access required to participate in His work.. (Please look for the first volume of this journal; walking in God's work for details).

In order for individuals to enter into the sacred realm of kingdom service, God has chosen to envelop them within Himself. This is an unchangeable prerequisite for anyone aspiring to engage in kingdom service. Are you one of His captives? Have you been enfolded by Him? It is crucial to note that those who belong to Him are not merely with Him, but also within Him. It is preferable for an individual to have never been born than

to live and die without surrendering to the Lord. This is because true direction and fulfillment in life can only be found in Christ. A life lived outside of Christ is a life wasted, filled with confusion and frustration. Regardless of a person's accomplishments independent of God, in due course he will realize that he has gained nothing. Those who willingly submit to the Lord are blessed. Throughout the ages, God will always guide and work through such individuals. They are deemed suitable for kingdom service, and they are the ones who can radiate the essence of Christ's life. They also serve as channels of divine light to a world engulfed by darkness.

A distinctive characteristic of the individuals mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:14 is the joy they derived in being captives of the Lord. **"But thanks be to God, who made us his captives..."** they are willing prisoners. They were not forcibly taken captive; rather, they willingly surrendered. This is evident in their response to their capture; they were thankful for being taken captive. Only a willing captive will remain grateful to his captor. They expressed gratitude to their Captor (God) due to the nature of His captivity. While God captures and claims individuals as His own, He always leaves the door open for those who wish to depart. This is remarkable. It signifies that those who remain captive to Him do so voluntarily. This stands in stark contrast to the devil, who does not grant freedom to his captives even if they desire to leave (Isaiah 14:17).
As we reflect on those individuals from the past who willingly bore the Lord's yoke and became His captives, the question to ponder is: where do you stand in this regard? Are you one of His captive? What is preventing you from submitting to His yoke? Do you believe that being confine in Him will deprive you of anything valuable in life? Consider those who submitted to the Lord and name one valuable thing they lost as a result. Do you think individuals such as Peter or the man from Gadarene (Mk 5) could have achieved a greater destiny outside of God's hands? Those who yielded to the Lord and became His captives avoided the perils of falling into the clutches of the devil.

Individuals who have been apprehended by the Lord lived to demonstrate their gratitude to God for capturing them. Becoming the Lord's captive has been the heartfelt desire of Christ's disciples, who through divine grace caught a glimpse of its eternal benefits. Those who walked along with God in His works, who also served as channels of divine life on earth, never compromised this eternal condition; it was their source of pride. Men who have been apprehended by the Lord lived to demonstrate their gratitude to God for taking hold of them. 2 Cor 2:14-

Brother Paul used the term captives because that is their identity. They are captives of the Lord. They did not simply approach God; they were encountered, conquered, captured and made captives. **No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him...** John 6:44. All who came to Him were captured (drawn) by Him. They were taken captive from their former captor; the Devil. **"...When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive..."**Eph 4:8. He took captives captive: Hallelujah! Do you realize that all men are captives? Yes, including you. Many are captives of the Devil, Sin, Self, Fashion, and Mammon (money). Every man is a captive, even you. But the question is whose captive are you? Who has control over your life? The question is not whether you are a captive; all men are captives. The implication is that not being a captive of the Lord does not exempt a man from being a captive. This is an undeniable truth. In light of this reality, it is essential for us to consider the implication or the potential impact of being a captive of the Lord.

THE IMPLICATION OF BEING A CAPTIVE OF THE LORD.

But thanks be to God, who made us his captives and leads us along in Christ's triumphal procession. Now wherever we go he uses us to tell others about the Lord and to spread the Good News like a sweet perfume. 2Cor 2:14 NLT

The term implication in the context of our study refers to the consequence of a decision or action. It is evident that we are examining the consequence of becoming a captive or prisoner of the Lord. It is important to recognize that being a captive of the Lord carries significant implications. These implications are the primary reasons why many individuals avoid becoming the Lord's captives. While many appreciate the benefits of being a captive of the Lord, they are often fearful about the consequences. It is truly an amazing experience to be guided and protected by the Lord as His prisoner. Most individuals would desire to be the Lord's prisoner if it only involved being guarded by Him. Everyone would welcome being protected by the Lord, but only a few would be willing to submit to His leadership. This is where the challenge lies.

“But thanks be to God, who made us His captives and leads us along in Christ's triumphal procession..." Being led as a prisoner of war is the resultant effect of being a captive of the Lord. The fear and shame associated with being led as prisoners of war are the primary factors that deter many individuals from surrendering to the Lord as His captives. **"...and leads us along in Christ's triumphal procession."** Most individuals would be willing to be captives of the Lord, as long as they are not led along in a triumphal procession. Being led by the Lord in His triumphant procession is the issue that often prevents many individuals from becoming the Lord's captives. However, the Lord leading His captives in His triumphal procession is an unchangeable daily practice in the kingdom of our Father. **"...and leads us along..."** Being a captive of the Lord involves surrendering the leadership of your life to the Lord. This has been a longstanding divine requirement for anyone whose desire is to serve as channel of Christ's life on earth.

Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry *you* where you do not wish." Jn 21:18

The Lord brings His captives to a point where they willingly extend their hands to be guided by Him. Not to where they desire to go, but where the Lord intends to lead them, often to places they would not choose themselves. This is the essence and significance of being under the Lord's guidance. Unless a person is willing to be led by the Lord as a prisoner of war, he is not truly conquered and captured by the Lord. Service in the kingdom necessitates that individuals stepping into it must present themselves before others as individuals who have been conquered and taken captive by the Lord. This is a position that no natural man would willingly assume. When you become a captive of the Lord, you relinquish the control over your life to Him. He directs His captives according to His ways, not theirs. He steers them towards His will, not theirs. Those who resist the leadership of the Lord show by their life that they are not truly captives of the Lord. Beloved, who is leading you? Is it the Lord? Can you honestly affirm that it is the Lord guiding you in your current endeavours?

It would not be an issue if the Lord only leads men along His way and into His will, and not as prisoners of war. Where the matter lies is in leading men He has conquered and captured in His triumphal procession. There exists a procession known as Christ's triumphal

procession. The term triumphal signifies a celebration of victory or triumph. A procession denotes a parade or exhibition. Thus, a triumphal procession is a public parade or display of victory. The honour of a victorious army commander returning from battle is showcased in the public parade of captives or conquered individuals. This parade is known as a triumphal procession. It is the most challenging aspect of being a captive of war. Not only have these individuals been defeated and captured, but now they are openly displayed, which is extremely difficult for the unconquered to yield to. This is the implication of becoming a captive or prisoner of war. The Lord also leads men and women He has conquered and captured in this grand display. This is the implication of becoming a captive of the Lord.

A person's willingness and submission to follow the Lord in this procession is the true evidence of his or her captivity under the Lord. The Lord will not only conquer a man, He will also, as a matter of principle, parade him before men as a conquered man in His triumph procession. He desires to present His captives to all as individuals He has triumphed over. Wherever He leads them, He proclaims to all that these are individuals He has conquered. Few individuals would willingly accept this. Will you allow the Lord to declare to everyone that He has triumphed over you? That is the consequence of becoming a captive of the Lord. Any attempt to escape this procession is evidence that you have not been conquered and that you are not among His captives. Moreover, being ashamed to participate in this parade is also a sign that you are not one of His captives.

Beloved, are you among His captives? Can you be led in Christ's triumphal procession and be presented before others as someone He has conquered? Can He display you as a businessman who is not motivated by money? Can He display you as an individual who does not aspire to be anything other than what He has planned for you? How do you respond when following the Lord makes you appear foolish or weak? Do you feel embarrassed? Do you feel compelled to prove to others that you are neither foolish nor weak? This indicates that you are not yet a captive of the Lord. The truth is that while many may be willing to allow Jesus to conquer their lives, they are resistant to being displayed as individuals He has conquered. What they fail to realize is that unless they obediently follow in this procession, the Lord will not recognize them as His captives. Consequently, they will be unsuitable for service in His kingdom. We serve Him acceptably as we follow along in His triumphal procession It is my prayer that the Lord will so thoroughly conquer your life that being displayed as His captive will be the delight and the desire of your heart in Jesus' name. Amen.

THE PERIL OF NOT BEING THE LORD'S CAPTIVE

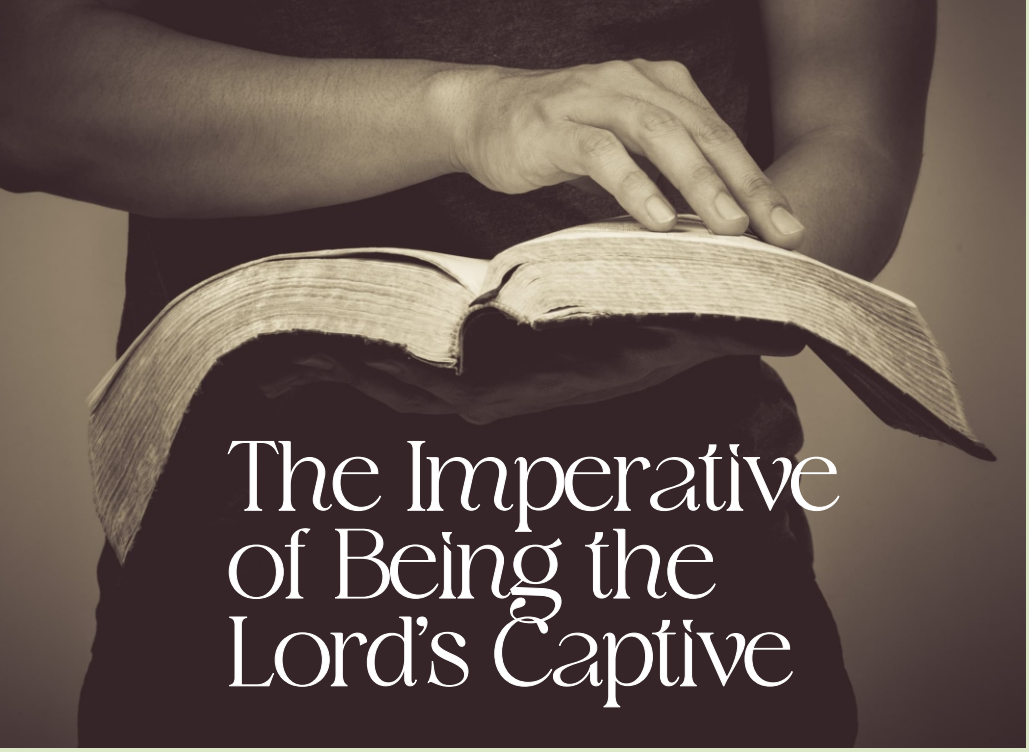
The understanding of the peril of not being a captive of the Lord is fundamental to one's total submission to Him as His captive. It is an obvious fact that there is no vacuum in nature. What this implies is that not being a captive of the Lord does not exempt a man from being a captive. Whether a man is a captive of the Lord or not he is a captive. This is one of the perils of not being a captive of the Lord. The imperative of a man yielding to the Lord as His captive becomes more obvious when you consider the fact that every individual will live at the mercy of his captor. A man will always submit to whoever has control over his life, whether it is God or the Devil. It is not only that a captive will

submit to his captor, he is also bound to reflect his life. Each individual reflects the life and character of the one who has taken hold of his or her life. When individuals engage in wicked behaviour, they are essentially mirroring the Devil who has enslaved them. Wickedness is a direct reflection of the Devil's influence. It should come as no surprise when observing a woman confidently walking along the street in revealing attire; she is simply embodying the life of immorality that has taken hold of her. Many of these women take pleasure in wearing clothing that exudes sensuality. Some even take pride in being seen as seductive figures. These women are merely showcasing the influence of the one who has captured their lives. They are essentially reflecting the Devil who has captured them as his own.

Numerous individuals have fallen prey to the lure of the spirit of money and as a result, have become servants of Mammon. This is the kind of life you see in a man or a woman when he or she is not a captive of the Lord. It is disheartening to note that many of these captives of Mammon hold positions of authority in various religious institutions as ministers of the gospel. Ministers whose primary motivation for being in the ministry is financial gain. Such ministers are more concerned with financial wealth than the spiritual well-being of their congregation. They behave in this manner because an individual will inevitably mirror the life of the one who has taken control over him, regardless of his location. This explains the prevalence of corrupt practices, immodest attire, infidelity, and discord even within religious institutions today. Location does not impede the manifestation of the influence of the one who has captured an individual. An individual who is a captive of the Devil will undoubtedly reflect his life and character, even if he is standing in a pulpit. The peril of being a captive of the devil cannot be overstated. The Devil views his captives as his targets; and he does not release them from his hold (Isa 14:17). Those under the Devil's control live in bondage throughout their lives. The captivity imposed by the Devil brings about death, despair, unrest, and enslavement. This is one of the perils of not being a captive of the Lord.

Another significant consequence (peril) of not being a captive of the Lord is that it will deprive an individual of the privilege of being fit for the kingdom service. Lack of submission to the lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ robs a man of the privilege of serving in the kingdom of God. There is a necessity for you to pray earnestly about this matter. Upon a close look at this matter, it becomes evident that unless one surrenders to the Lord, he is bound to be under the dominion of the Devil. Consequently, he will embody the character of the Devil wherever he goes. An individual will always submit his or her life to his captor (Rom 6:16). Therefore, only those who are captives of the Lord will willingly offer their lives to Him. Those who have realized this truth remain bound to Him. They take pleasure in proclaiming that they have been conquered and captured by the Lord. They do not feel ashamed to be displayed by the Lord in His victorious procession.

Lord, may our lives be completely surrendered to you. May you prevail over us as you did in the lives of the Apostles and deliver us from the perils of not being your captives. May we also willingly submit to your authority, and may you proudly showcase us as individuals you have triumphed over in the name Jesus'. Amen.



The Imperative of Being the Lord's Captive

The significance of being a captive of the Lord cannot be overstated. Throughout our study, we have observed that only those who are captives of the Lord are suitable for the kingdom service. The importance of being a captive of the Lord becomes even more apparent when we acknowledge that only His captives will have the privilege of walking with Him, in Him, and in His work. This is the essential nature of being a captive of the Lord. The ultimate fulfillment in life is to be under the dominion of the Lord. Fortunate are the Lord's captives, for they will inherit eternal glory. God Himself is the ultimate reward and inheritance of His captives. He presents Himself as the possession of His captives, which is one of the greatest advantages of being the Lord's captive. God does not exploit His captives; rather, He positions Himself as their greatest asset.

God protects and leads His captives. They are liberated from all other forms of captivity, as the evil one has no power over them due to their confinement in God. God is attentive to those who are under His control. He also entrusts them with His secrets. God has no reservations about entrusting His plans to His captives, as they are trustworthy. He confidently engages in His work with such individuals, as they bring Him great pleasure. The men of old who grasped the significance of this privilege lived their lives filled with gratitude towards God throughout their time on earth. They remained thankful to Him for choosing them as His captives. Even when given the option to be released, they willingly continued to be captives of the Lord (Heb 11:15-16). They openly declared to all that they were under the Lord's authority. They pursued being His captives daily as if it were a hidden treasure. For them, being a captive of the Lord was the most desirable state for a person on earth. They did not seek material gain, but rather focused on eternal rewards. They made God their primary pursuit, not His material blessings. They carried out God's work without any desire for recognition, acclaim, or visibility. They rejected human praise, endorsement, and acknowledgment. In their quest to reflect the Lord who had captured their hearts, they disregarded their own reputations. Their singular plea was:

"Not I but Christ, be honored, loved, exalted; Not I but Christ be seen, be known, be heard; Not I but Christ in every look and action, Not I but Christ in every thought and word. Not I but Christ in lowly silent labour, Not I but Christ in humble earnest toil, Christ only Christ, no show no ostentation, Christ, none but Christ, the gatherer of the spoil"



A CORRECT LIFE

The Divine Requisite for Being The Lord's Captive.

Our lives are a fragrance presented by Christ to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those being saved and by those perishing. 2Cor 2:15 NLT

A correct life is a fundamental virtue in a man's pursuit of becoming a captive of the Lord and suitable for the kingdom service. When we refer to a correct or an ideal life, we are talking about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Brother Paul stated, **"...Our lives are a fragrance presented by Christ to God."**

It is important to understand that the life of a man is God's primary focus in preparing him for His service. A man's life serves as the cornerstone for shaping him into a vessel suitable for service in the kingdom. A correct life is the fundamental principle of preparing an individual for God's use. This principle is timeless and non-negotiable. Even the Lord Jesus had to meet this criterion to be deemed suitable for service in the kingdom (John 1:4-5; Mark 1:11). Anyone who does not embody this correct life is not deemed fit for service in God's kingdom. Those who disregard this correct life render themselves unsuitable for service in God's kingdom. Just as raw materials must undergo processes to be transformed into a finished product, individuals must undergo a process to be transformed into a correct life and be suitable for God's use. The initial phase of this process involves aligning one's life with the image (life) of Jesus. This is because the life of Christ is the requisite life for service in the kingdom. Brother Paul further explained, **"...Our lives are a fragrance presented by Christ to God."** Here, Paul is describing the kind of life that God seeks in His chosen vessels. It is a fragrant life; a life that emits the fragrance of Christ's life. Such a life is suitable for service in the kingdom. Until a person is transformed into this life, they will remain unsuitable for God's use. This fragrant life is what God seeks in those He appoints for His work. What does this fragrant life that Brother Paul speaks of entails? It is the aroma of Christ's life within them. **"...it is the fragrance of Christ within us..."** This is the life that God molds individuals into to make them suitable for His use. Paul and other believers were transformed into this fragrant life (Christ-like life), making them fit for service in the kingdom. Those whom God appoints to serve emit the aroma of Christ's life. They become channels of the Christ's life through the life of Christ within them; not as an additional life, but as their sole life (Col 3:4). The impact that God had through them in affecting men with the life of Christ serves as an encouragement, that it is possible for each one of us to become suitable for service in the kingdom. Do you desire to be fit for service in the kingdom? Are you prepared to be transformed into a life suitable for God's use? It is important to note that no one is born suitable for service in the kingdom. Everyone who lives a correct life is molded into it. My prayer is that God will work on us and transform us into the likeness of Christ. I also pray that He will not give up on us, regardless of how many times we mar in His hands.

The Place of God's Dealings in the pursuit of a correct Life

The place of God's dealing in the pursuit of a correct life is very crucial and unavoidable. **But thanks be to God, who made us his captives and leads us along in Christ's triumphal procession. Now wherever we go he uses us to tell others about the Lord and to spread the Good News like a sweet perfume.** 2Cor 2:14 NLT

Brother Paul began to elaborate on the transformative process that molds individuals into worthy servants of the kingdom by stating; **"But thanks be to God..."** The question is: why was he expressing gratitude towards God? What did God do to them? It should be noted that Paul was not expressing gratitude to God for what He did for them; rather, he was thankful for what He did to and in them. **"But thanks be to God, who made us..."** Here, the reason for this appreciation was not rooted in what God did for them but in what He did to them. He mentioned, **"...who made us..."** and not who bestowed upon us or who gave us one thing or the other. It is usual for individuals to thank God when He has done something for them. In the case of the early disciples, they expressed gratitude to God for what He did to them and not for what He did for them. In the context of this discussion, when we mention what God did to them, we are making reference to the dealings of God in their lives. Again, when we use the word dealings, we mean the labour of God on their lives. It was these dealings that they submitted to, which molded them into the appropriate life that made them suitable for the kingdom service. These dealings could also be viewed as the workings of God in their lives. God laboured, and worked on them to cultivate the type of life required for service in the kingdom. The cultivation or the formation of a proper life is the objective of God's dealings or labour in an individual. The question that arises is: what did God do to them that made them fit for service in the kingdom? Remember, the question is about what God did to them, not what He did for or with them.

Many individuals seek what God will do for them; they pray and fast for it. Few individuals also long for God to do things with or through them. Rarely will you encounter an individual who yearns and cries for God to do something to him. Why is this so? It is because not all individuals are aware that as a fundamental principle, God will do something for and with an individual He has done something to. As a matter of principle, God will only labour with a man He has laboured upon. This is a crucial matter. God endeavours to do something to an individual He will do something with. As a basic principle, God must test an individual He will endorse, and He must endorse an

God Approved Life, A Product of His Dealings.

It is evident from the historical accounts of individuals, both men and women, who have been granted the privilege of participating in the work of God, that they were individuals who underwent profound experiences orchestrated by the Lord. Each one of them was guided along a transformative journey by the hand of God, with the ultimate purpose of shaping a life that aligns with His divine will. The men whom God has chosen to utilize are characterized by their willingness to submit to the transformative processes ordained by Him. In the context of our study, the profound experience is what we refer to as God's dealings. It could also be called the labour of God on a man's life.

God denies a man access to divine service when his life lacks evidence of His dealings. Even a zealous individual could be asked to return from God's service when it is evident

that God has not laboured in him. This is because he will lack this prerequisite life for the kingdom service. Look at the account of Elisha:

And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and *then* I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what I have done to you?" 1 Kings 19:20 Elisha, although very zealous, and willing to respond to the work of God was instructed to return because nothing had been done to him. He does not bear the evidence of God's labour and dealings. **"...Go back again: *for* what have I done to thee?"** The word "for" in that passage means because. Elijah instructed Elisha to go back again because nothing had been done to him. It was as though Elijah was conveying to him, "go back again because the necessary divine dealing in your life that will equip you for what you hastily pursued has not yet transpired." Only individuals whom God has done something to, individuals He has laboured upon, are suitable for service in the kingdom.

Undoubtedly, Elisha became a usable instrument in the hands of God as a result of God's labour and dealings on his life. The profound impact of God's nurturing, and incubation of Elisha's life through Elijah over a span of 13 years was clearly reflected in the remarkable efficacy of his prophetic ministry. Through God's dealings and labour in the life of Elisha, the life (character) required for the kingdom service was produced. God meticulously works on the individuals He intends to utilize in order to mold them into His own image and likeness. Genesis 1:26. This is the point He brought men of old, whom He permitted to engage in the sacred service of His kingdom.

God's aspiration and endeavour to shape His vessels into His image and likeness is evidence that His life is the sanctioned life for serving in the kingdom. This wouldn't pose an issue if His life stood alone. However, there exists an alternative life. It is important to acknowledge that this alternative life is unsuitable for any role within the realm of God. Not only is it unsuitable, but its participation in God's work brings contamination to it. This life is referred to as the natural life, sinful life or falling nature. It is a life that stands in opposition to God and all that He stands for Gal 5:17. It is a life that aspires to be independent of God. It is not submissive to God and indeed cannot be (Romans 8:5-8). Unfortunately, every individual entered this world with this unsuitable life (fallen nature). This is why God must labour on every individual He will grant access to His service. This labour, dealings, or making is to instill in an individual the life God permits into His service.

It is important to note that it is only God who can handle this natural life. This is one of the reasons why God's dealings are crucial in transforming a man into a usable vessel in the hands of God. Only God can bring the dominion of this sinful life to an end in the life of a man. The training of men can only give a man skill and make him a professional, but it has no capacity to change his life. Individuals who are conformed to the image and likeness of Christ are products of God's dealings. The life (Christ's life) we observe in the early disciples and their attitude towards the dealings of God in their lives clearly indicate that God's labour on their lives were thorough 2Cor 2:14-16 NLT

In every era, God walks and works with and through individuals He has meticulously crafted, individuals who are equipped to embody the life of Christ. He only bestows the privilege of engaging in His service upon such men. This is because they possess the qualities necessary for His service. Individuals lacking this essential life are excluded from serving in the kingdom. They are prohibited from participating in the magnificent role of conveying the divine life to others. It is truly

regrettable that many of these individuals, who are barred from this noble duty, are actively involved in various religious duties, such as preaching, teaching, and singing. However, they cannot deny the fact that, despite their active roles in the church activities, they lack the life of Christ needed to affect others for God. Spiritually, one cannot impact what he does not possess. The proliferation of such individuals in our churches today is detrimental to the church.

Beloved, is this your reality? Are you engaged in activities but failing to make impact on others? Could it be that you have been denied the opportunity to serve as a channel of the divine life? What value does a minister bring to heaven if he cannot impact the life of Christ to others? The truth is, such a minister or ministry holds no significance in the eyes of God. A fruitful minister is one who serves as a channel of the life of Christ; only such a minister can influence the world with the essence of the Kingdom. This should be the primary concern for each and every one of us. We should be focused on impacting the life of Christ to others. Unfortunately, many are not concern about this crucial task. Similar to Martha in the Bible (Luke 10:40), many are preoccupied with numerous matters and overlook the one essential thing. Many are also unable to impact others with the life of Jesus because they don't possess it. This is a result of their unwillingness to submit to the incubation of their lives until the new life is hatched. A lack of submission to God's dealings has robbed the present-day church of men who are dead to: life, death, sin, self, pleasure and the world system.

As a gospel minister, what is your focus in your ministry? What burdens your heart? What do you dedicate your fasting and prayers to? Is it centered on acquiring material possessions like buildings, cars, lands, and money? Regrettably, these are the pursuits and concerns of many.

A man cannot continue to carry such strange burdens and expect to be a channel of the life of Christ to humanity. The question at hand is: How can we address this predicament? How can one be free from these impediments that rob a man of access to divine service? The only viable course of action is to emulate the practices of men of old, who diligently yielded to God's dealings. If we desire to hear God's call to enter His field (Matt 20:4), we must submit to His dealings that molds a person into the likeness of Christ. The reason for this is that we have no ministry among men until they see Jesus reflected in and through us. We must implore the Lord until we become channels of His life on earth. We must not remain silent until our hearts are liberated from these worldly desires that hinder access to kingdom service and until our focus shifts to the one essential thing. Serving as a channel of Christ's life to humanity is the one thing that is needful in the ministry. Men of old who understood this truth pursued it wholeheartedly. They pursued it by submitting to the Lord's dealings. We, too, must yield to God's dealings to be equipped for His use.

Beloved, can you devote time to prayer over this matter? Pray until your heart is willing to accept God's dealings that will engrave the life of Christ within you; until you can also express gratitude to God for making you His captive. Pray until you are transformed into the image and likeness of Christ. Until you display nothing before others except the life of Christ.

MAKING A MAN FIT FOR THE KINGDOM SERVICE

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." Gen 1:26.

One unique thing about God's instruments or vessels for His works is that they all emanate from Him. He makes His vessels; He does not borrow vessels for His work. God is deliberate in crafting every one of His vessels so as to fit into the purpose. The word that introduced the first man who stepped into God's work is: "**Then God said, let us make man…"** it was not , the first introduction of God's work but the introduction of God's making. God's primary focus on every man He intends to use is to make him. This is because, as a matter of principle, He makes the men He uses, and He uses the men He has made. It is also important to note that the word "made" is a process; therefore, there is a need for us to look into the process that makes men fit for kingdom service.

THE PROCESS OF MAKING A MAN FIT FOR THE KINGDOM SERVICE

But thanks be to God, who made us his captives and leads us along in Christ's triumphal procession. Now wherever we go he uses us to tell others about the Lord and to spread the Good News like a sweet perfume. Our lives are a fragrance presented by Christ to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those being saved and by those perishing. To those who are perishing, we are a fearful smell of death and doom. But to those who are being saved, we are a life-giving perfume. And who is adequate for such a task as this? 2Co.r 2:14-16. NLT

In the passage above, Apostle Paul exemplified individuals who were deemed worthy of engaging in the kingdom service. It is imperative for us to look into the transformative processes that produced them. What steps did they take to reach the level of readiness required for kingdom service? May the Lord guide us as we explore the pathway that made them fit for the kingdom service in Jesus name. Amen

THE PATHWAY OF DIVINE INTERVENTION.

In our quest to be made fit for God's use there is a need for us to look at the Place of divine intervention in making a man fit for the kingdom service? Divine intervention marks the initial divine step towards preparing an individual for the kingdom service. Intervention refers to the act of interfering in a sequence of events, potentially impacting the interests of others. Therefore, divine intervention entails God intervening in human affairs, affecting the individual's interests. The journey towards readiness for kingdom service commences at this juncture. No individual is naturally suitable for God's service. By nature, man is unfit for any role within God's kingdom. This is due to the inherent rebellious, dishonest, and disobedient nature that every individual began his journey on earth with since the fall. The natural state of man is characterized by rebellion, dishonesty, and disobedience, posing a threat to the kingdom of God. In addition to being inherently rebellious and disobedient, every natural man lacks the inclination to seek change. By nature, men do not possess the capacity to obey God; they also view submission, obedience, and honesty as signs of weakness and foolishness.

Without divine intervention, individuals remain trapped in this state. Only through divine intervention can one develop the desire to seek, submit, and follow God's ways. Therefore, obedience and submission to God's will, purpose, and principles are products of God's intervention. No natural man has the capacity in himself and by himself to become submissive, honest or obedient to God. It takes God's intervention in a man's life for him to submit and obey God. Obedience and submission to God are the characteristics of a life in which God has intervened.

Only through divine intervention can

individuals become suitable for service in the kingdom. Access to God's service is granted only to those whom He has transformed through His intervention. Therefore, divine intervention is a prerequisite for readiness for kingdom service. It is imperative to understand that those who are not prepared for God's service will not be permitted to engage in it. However, the absence of access to God's service does not equate to idleness. Humans are inherently industrious beings, engrossed in various pursuits. Unfortunately, those who are not born again are preoccupied with self-serving endeavours, being ignorant of God's purpose for their lives. Divine intervention is crucial to inform and redirect individuals towards God's will and agenda for their lives. The primary objective of divine intervention is to reposition and redirect individuals towards God's purpose, countering the natural inclination to pursue their own agenda.

A man can only pursue the agenda of God for his life by the intervention (interference) of God in his life.

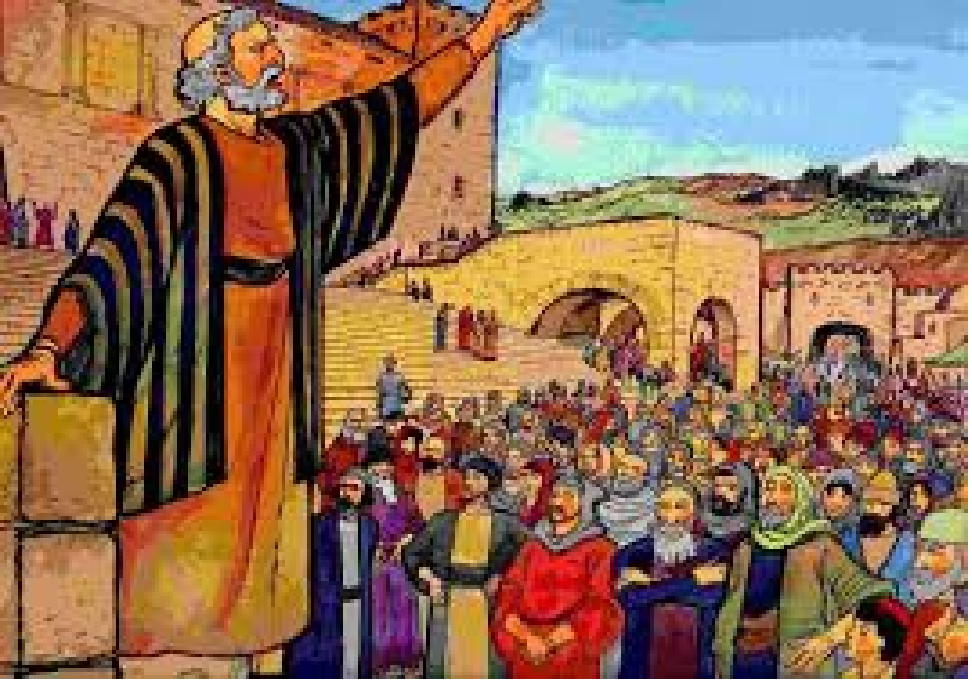
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Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:43-45.

It is evident that our salvation is solely a result of divine intervention. No individual has the ability or willingness to approach Jesus independently. The arrival of each person to Jesus is exclusively through God's intervention. To comprehend the severity of the natural state of man, consider the following passage once more: **"...No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me drew him..."** Have you noticed the term "drew" in that passage? What does it signify? It indicates that man will never naturally have the inclination to approach Jesus. Apart from the fact that the Lord is not the desire of a natural man, He is also not his focus or pursuit. Hence, man can only come to the Lord when drawn to Him. The term "draw" denotes to move something by pulling. Based on this definition, it is apparent that no one will come to Jesus without divine pulling. This divine pulling is what we refer to as divine intervention. It is important to note that we are not discussing a person coming to church or to fellowship. There is a distinction between coming to church and coming to Jesus. It is regrettable that many leaders in our fellowship centers are yet to come to Jesus. It should not be assumed that anyone present in the church has truly come to Jesus. One could be in a church but not liberated from Sin, Self, and the World system. As a result, it will be difficult for him to come or follow Jesus. Therefore, divine intervention is necessary in the life of an individual before he can truly come to Jesus.

Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do? Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call. With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, Save yourselves from this corrupt generation. Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. Acts 2:36-41 NIV

In order to have a further understanding of the pathway of divine intervention and its role in the salvation of mankind, there is a need to look at what happed on the day of Pentecost. From this passage, I would like to highlight three elements: Peter's message, the people's reaction, and God's



The message of PETER

"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. *When the people heard this…"*

It is evident from this passage that the people heard the message of Peter. The importance of preaching the word of God in the endeavour to save the souls of humanity cannot be overstated. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation Rom 1:16. Without preaching it, there will be no means for God to impact the souls of individuals. We must be cautious not to treat the word of God with indifference. We must be vigilant not to substitute the word of God with anything else. The devil is actively trying to snatch the word of God from our mouths and hearts. During our gatherings, we must intentionally allocate significant time for the word of God. We should not allow dancing, singing, special performances, and announcements to overshadow the service. It is essential to remember that the pulpit is meant for the proclamation of the word of God. Therefore, the word of God should not be overshadowed by other activities. The word of God should be the central focus of our assembly and should be delivered when the majority of attendees are present. Church leaders and Christians, in general, must hold the word of God in high esteem. We must also endeavour to ensure that we present it before all men. When we deprive individuals of the opportunity to hear the word of God, we are indirectly depriving God of the means to impact their hearts and potentially save their souls. And without salvation, they will not be suitable for service in the kingdom.

Having established that preaching the word of God is crucial in leading individuals to salvation, it is also imperative to recognize that merely preaching to make people hear something is insufficient. The accuracy of the message being preached is also not enough. Undoubtedly, Peter's message was accurate and biblical. However, as commendable as the message was, that alone was inadequate for their salvation. If all they had heard that day was the message, their response would have been different; at best, they would have returned home with knowledge of the stories Peter shared. The impact of the word that prompted them to respond and turn to the Lord went beyond the mere recollection of the biblical narratives they heard. We must acknowledge that regardless of how wonderful, well-rounded, and biblical our message may be, it is not adequate for leading individuals to salvation.

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. John 3:5

A person requires more than the water (the word) to experience spiritual rebirth. **The word** without **the Spirit** can only produce individuals who possess knowledge of the word of God but lack its life-giving power. Many preachers have erred in assuming that a sufficient understanding of the Bible equates to salvation. Unless the Spirit breathes life into the word of God, it remains a mere script. Nothing is as ineffective as the word of God devoid of the Spirit of God. In

the context of our study, the phrase "word of God" here implies the written word. It is undeniable that the word of God is being proclaimed extensively. The issue lies in the fact that people's lives do not seem to align with the message they have been hearing. What could be the reason? Clearly, it is the absence of the Spirit of God. It is the Spirit of God's influence on the word of God that empowers it to save a sinner. A generation can pass without experiencing the transformative power of salvation, not because there were no preachers or the absence of biblical truths being preached, but because they were disconnected from the Spirit of God. We must not rely solely on the message but rather seek the Spirit's empowerment on the word of God in our endeavour to save the souls of men.

THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE

As Peter was preaching, something happened, look at the reaction of the people;

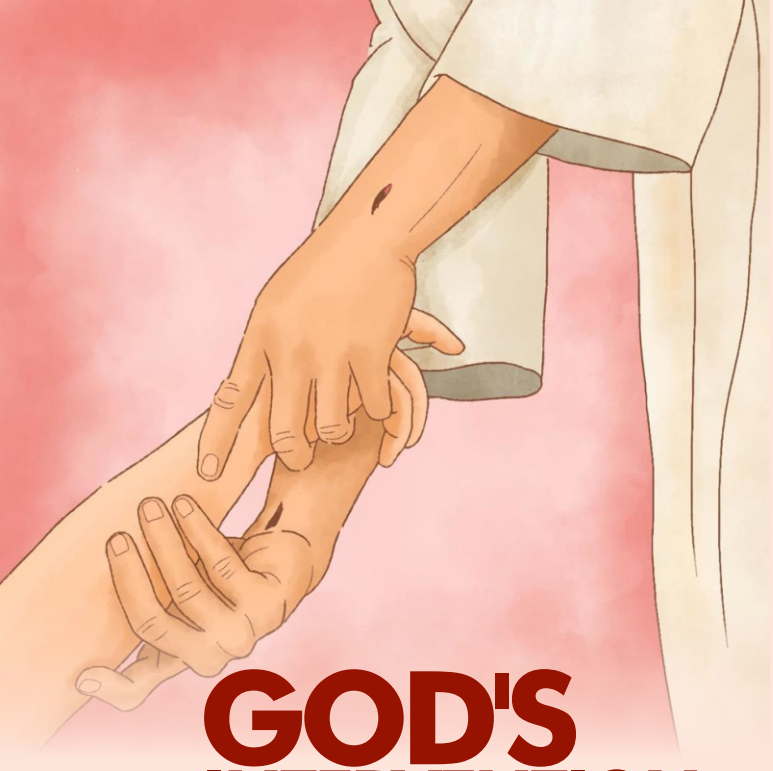
"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, Brothers, what shall we do"? Upon hearing this, the audience was deeply moved and turned to Peter and the other apostles, inquiring, **"...Brothers, what shall we do"?** It was a profound moment! This is the desired outcome every preacher hopes for after delivering a sermon. Just a few moments prior, they were ridiculing the disciples, accusing them of being intoxicated. But a short while later, they found themselves seeking guidance from those they had mocked. What caused this sudden shift that led them to seek direction from individuals they had previously belittled? Consider their plea once more; **"what shall we do?"**

Not what shall we know? This clearly illustrates a positive response to the word of God. Accepting responsibility promptly illustrates a man's affirmative reaction to the word of God. Their plea was centered on what actions to take. Is this your reaction whenever you engage with the word of God? It is conceivable that as you read this journal, you may be seeking knowledge rather than guidance on actions to take. Until an individual's response to the word of God mirrors that of seeking direction on what to do, rather than what to know, it cannot be asserted that the word of God has had a transformative impact on his life. However, without the intervention of God, no individual will be moved by the word of God to the extent of seeking guidance on actions to take. Typically, people inquire about what should be done for them, not what they should do. If the prevailing sentiment among congregants in our churches today reflected a desire for guidance on what to do, we would undoubtedly be experiencing a spiritual awakening. Alas, the issue lies in the fact that the majority are only seeking assistance with what should be done for them

"What shall we do?" signifies a genuine impact of the word of God on the lives of individuals. The transformative power of the word of God on individuals serves as evidence of the Holy Spirit's nurturing of the word. It is our desire to witness individuals seeking direction on actions to take after hearing the word of God.

"...brothers, what shall we do?"

This was the response of the people. What a profound impact! Undoubtedly, this surpasses the words spoken by Peter. We remain hopeful that God will guide us as we seek to know the place of God's intervention on these men that made them so impacted that they surrendered to the Lord without reservation.



GOD'S INTERVENTION

"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart..."
This is the secret of the impact. The reaction of the people was as a result of God's intervention. It was God who drew the three thousand men that believed in Jesus on that day. It was not just the preaching of Peter. Look at how this version rendered it:
Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" NASU.
This must be God at work.

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me drew him... Jn 6:44.KJV
God will never passively wait for a man to willingly seek Him on his own accord. Such an occurrence has never transpired and will never happen. It is only by God's drawing that a man can be led to the Lord; this drawing is what we refer to as God's intervention. We are entirely reliant on God for the salvation of men, as every man, by nature, is lost and incapable of finding his way.
For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Lk 19:10.

Man was led astray by Sin, leaving no hope for him to find his way back to God. Jesus came to seek and find man, leading him back to God. This involvement in the life of a lost man is what we describe as God's intervention. Consider this passage:
He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves. Col 1:13 NLT Note the phrase, **"...he has rescued us from the one..."**

The condition of a natural man necessitates rescue, not just from something, but from someone. It is crucial to acknowledge that this someone is not ordinary individual. The Bible used a definite article in describing him, **"...from *the* one who rules in the kingdom of darkness..."** Every man, since Adam's fall, has commenced his journey under the rulership of the one (The Devil) who governs the kingdom of darkness. For a man to be liberated from his dominion, he requires God's intervention. He needs to be rescued. The devil does not release his prisoners willingly (Isaiah 14:17). The three thousand individuals who believed in Jesus on the day of Pentecost would have departed unsaved if God had not intervened in their lives that day. This underscores the critical nature of God's intervention in the salvation of souls.

The cruciality of God's intervention in the pursuit of salvation for man cannot be overstated. Every captive of the devil will remain under his control unless God intervenes in his life. This is why God's intervention is central in the pursuit of saving the souls of men. It is widely recognized that every man, starting from Adam's fall, embarked on his earthly journey as a slave to Self and Sin. It necessitates God's intervention for a man to break free from this enslavement. Liberation from the bondage of Self and Sin signifies the commencement of a man's journey towards suitability for kingdom

service. When God looks upon a man and desires to enlist him in His service, the initial step He takes is to intervene in his life. This intervention is merely the inception of a man's journey towards readiness for kingdom service. God's intervention is central because it is the foundational step God takes in a man's life to prevent him from perishing eternally. A man will amount to naught in life, in God's plan, and in eternity unless God intervenes in his life. Every natural man is similar to a deaf and blind individual, moving wildly towards destruction without an inkling of the peril ahead.

The three thousand men who joined the church on the day of Pentecost were rescued from damnation through God's intervention. Only through God's intervention can a man be liberated from the bondage of Sin. Gratitude is owed to Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost; it was a powerful message, but it would have been ineffectual without God's intervention.

When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do? Acts 2:37 NIV.

Peter's message alone would have been mere noise if God had not pierced the hearts of the people. Only God can penetrate a man's heart, knowing precisely where to make the cut for a positive impact. Gospel preachers must understand that God's intervention is indispensable in leading a man to wholeheartedly surrender to the Lordship of Jesus. It is imperative to recognize that unless a man's heart is pierced, he remains unsaved. A man's heart can only be pierced through God's intervention. This underscores that without God's intervention, it is virtually impossible for a man to be liberated from the yoke of Sin and Satan.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves Col 1:13 NIV.

We, as believers, are the outcomes of God's intervention. It is evident that no man can simply rescue himself from the realm of darkness. Anyone ensnared by the devil can only be freed through God's intervention. This implies that even the three thousand men who turned to Jesus on the day of Pentecost would have remained captives of Sin and Satan if God had not intervened. Therefore, a man will linger as a captive of Sin and Satan until God intervenes in his life. The importance of God's intervention in the pursuit of saving the souls of men is obvious.

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Acts 2:5

Among the three thousand individuals touched by God on the day of Pentecost were devout (religious) men. These individuals were deeply religious, yet their hearts were untouched by God. This demonstrates that one can be devoutly religious but untouched by God. In the context of our discussion, being touched by God involves a man reaching the point of complete surrender to the Lord. It is possible for an individual to be deeply involved in church activities, even assuming leadership roles, yet remain untouched by God. The account of Nicodemus in John 3:10 exemplify a leader who was untouched.

Jesus replied, 'Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? Jn 3:10**.** Despite being a teacher of Israel, Nicodemus lacked a profound revelation of the Lord and did not know Him experientially. He viewed Jesus merely as a teacher from God, not as the Saviour of the world. Such superficial knowledge was

insufficient to instill trust in Jesus for salvation. He needed a profound revelation of Jesus through God's intervention to reach the point of placing his trust in Him. Regrettably, despite being a prominent figure in the Jewish community, Nicodemus was unsaved. Are you similar to Nicodemus? It is possible to be a diligent worker and leader in your church yet remain unsaved. Regardless of your leadership role, you may not have encountered the Lord Jesus Christ. Despite the time you have spent in the church, you may not have encountered God's intervention that liberates individuals from sin and draws them to Jesus. What has hindered you from undergoing this transformation? I urge you to implore God for His intervention in your life. Unless God intervenes in a man's life, there is nothing he can do to help himself spiritually. It is apparent that without God's intervention in a man's life, he is powerless to escape eternal damnation. This underscores the crucial role of God's intervention.

Having clarified this, it is essential to recognize that divine intervention is God's initial step towards making a man His captive and suitable for His service. It is not the only step, but the fundamental step in leading a man to liberation from Sin and Satan. It is the primary divine step towards preparing a man for kingdom service. Thus, liberation from Sin and readiness for kingdom service can be encapsulated as the outcomes of God's intervention. It cannot be affirmed that God has intervened in a man's life until he is drawn out of Sin and Satan's dominion to Jesus. This constitutes the primary aim of God's intervention in a man's life. Every subsequent step God undertakes to prepare a man for kingdom service is predicated on this primary objective.

Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them.* And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Act 2:41-42.

We are grateful for the transformative impact of God's intervention in the lives of these individuals. The account of verse 42 attests to the thorough and effectual nature of God's intervention in their lives. May God intervene in your life to the extent that you, too, can steadfastly adhere to His teachings and engage in fellowship with the Holy Spirit. May nothing obstruct God's intervention in our lives until we are prepared for kingdom service. As we look at the pathway of God's interruption, it is our prayer that our lives will be divinely interrupted until we become fit for God's use in Jesus name. Amen.



BROTHER PAUL

Undoubtedly, Paul emerged as a valuable and effective vessel in the God's hands. The enduring influence of Paul's ministry persists till the present day. It is imperative to examine the journey that led him to such profound and efficient service.

Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Acts 9:1-5

This was the story that brought Paul to the point where he became a usable and useful instrument in the hands of God. Verse one and two ravels to us Saul's original intention for journeying to Damascus. It was a mission against the Lord and His followers, moving in the opposite direction of God's will. This is a common narrative for all natural men. Each man embarks on this journey initially. Before encountering God, we all first walked in the opposite direction of the path God intended for us to follow. The existence of a man named Paul, an Apostle, can be attributed to a divine intervention and interruption that redirected him to God's intended path for his life. Without this interruption, we would not have known about him or benefited from his ministry.

From this passage, it is evident that he was very close to Damascus, dangerously close to a wrong destination. However, God's mercy found him. I am unaware of what you are pursuing in the opposite direction or how close you are to it. My prayer for you is that the same mercy that found Paul and guided him back onto the right path will also find you.

"...and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven".

It is crucial to acknowledge that every divine interruption occurs abruptly. No man orchestrates his interruption by God. The unexpected divine interruption that Paul experienced was not planned by him; the Lord did not give him prior notice of His arrival. It all transpired suddenly. When the light from heaven surrounded him, he fell from his chariot, effectively halting his journey to Damascus to persecute the brethren. This marked the beginning of his transformation into an effective instrument for the Lord. Without this divine interruption, he would have continued on his path to Damascus, contrary to God's plan for his life. This is the same path that any man who has not experienced God's intervention and interruption is currently following. Let us look into this interruption in Paul's life and pray for a similar experience.

"... and as he journeyed..."

This was the catalyst for God's interruption in Paul's life. If he had not been journeying, the Lord would not have interrupted him. God does not interrupt idle individuals. He only disrupts those who are actively engaged. Being on a journey is a fundamental prerequisite for divine interruption. I have never witnessed God interrupting an idle person. It is evident that Paul was interrupted by the Lord as he traveled. Therefore, it was this journey that prompted God's interruption in his life, transforming him into a viable and valuable vessel in God's hands. It is apparent that being on a journey is a prerequisite for God's interruption in a man's life. I would have requested the Lord to keep you occupied or set you on a journey to qualify for divine interruption, but you are already on a journey. Every individual is on a journey (busy), but the question is: where are you heading to? And what are you occupied with? Are you engaged in kingdom service? Are you spreading the good news by impacting people with the Life of Jesus? Are you labouring for that which endures unto eternal life? Many of us are excessively occupied with church activities. Sadly, most of these activities align with what the world is pursuing. Every natural individual is inclined to pursue the emptiness of worldly things unless interrupted by the Lord. Divine interruption is necessary for redirecting a person towards God's intended path for his life. All individuals who have embraced God's purpose for their lives have encountered this interruption.

May God redirect your life and lead you into the same transformative experience that turned Paul into a suitable servant for the kingdom service.

"...he came near Damascus..."

This is a significant issue. He was close to a wrong destination. Thankfully, he had not reached his destination yet. If he had arrived, the interruption would have been too late. This underscores the urgency of divine intervention and interruption in a person's life. The urgency of divine interruption becomes more apparent when considering that each step taken outside God's purpose brings one closer to the devil's plan. Similarly, every step taken away from God's path brings one nearer to a wrong destination. This was Paul's experience; with each step, he drew closer to Damascus. I am grateful that God intervened and interrupted him before he reached his destination. The interruption would have been late if he had reached his destination. My prayer is that divine intervention and interruption will not delay if you are on the wrong path. God will not interrupt a person who has arrived at his destination. There will be nothing to interrupt once one has reached their destination or completed their task.

It is important to note that divine interruption will never be late in a person's life without a cause. God is always punctual. Any instance of delayed divine interruption was not due to God's lateness but rather because of the obstructions hindering the process. It is essential to plead with God to help eliminate any hindrance impeding the flow of His interruption in your life. The enemy is aware of the necessity of divine interruption in a person's life, thus, they strive to introduce obstacles that delay God's interruption until it is too late. These obstacles may include a lack of willingness to be interrupted by God. When a person resists being interrupted, he will live as though God never sought to interrupt his life. Divine interruption is not an obstruction; God interrupt individuals, not obstructs them. This implies that during divine interruption, one still has the choice to yield or resist. A person is likely to remain on the wrong path until they yield to God's interruption. Frustrating divine interruption can lead one to his end at the wrong destination. The more a person resists God's interruption that could guide them towards God's purpose, the closer they draw to the wrong destination.

God, desiring to see us walk in His path and reach His destination for our lives, continuously seeks to intervene and interrupt our lives. However, many of us have not been yielding to these interruptions as we should; we have not allowed it to fully manifest in our lives. This implies that a person can hinder divine interruption. To frustrate God's interruption is to render it ineffectual. It is possible that you have been thwarting God's interruption in your life. Remember, you are on a journey, and every step taken away from God's path brings you closer to the wrong destination. Unless God intervenes, interrupt and guides you onto the right path, you are likely to perish at the wrong destination. Just as Paul came near Damascus, are you also journeying towards your "Damascus"? Do you realize that each step brings you closer to your destination? The devil will never allow a man to perceive or acknowledge how far he has strayed from God, lest he seek to return.

Having clarified this, it is crucial to understand that the issue is not merely knowing how near you are to your "Damascus"; the danger lies in straying from the right path and destination that God has ordained for your life. What is leading you astray from the right path and destination intended for your life? Where is this "Damascus" you are heading towards? Be aware that "Damascus" could symbolize spiritual disconnection resulting in eternal damnation. Those who have turned their backs on God are on the path to destruction. The life of sin leads to eternal damnation; those on this path are dangerously close to the "Damascus" of eternal destruction. Unfortunately, those on this path are speeding towards their destination; unless there is divine intervention, and interruption they will end up in hell. It is my prayer that the Lord will interrupt your life before it is too late. We would not have known about Paul if God's interruption had been delayed. In His mercy, God disrupted him before he reached his destination. I pray that God will extend the same mercy to you and interrupt your life before it is too late in Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

"...and suddenly..."

I am grateful for this phrase; if the verse had ended with information about Paul's closeness to Damascus, it would have been a tragedy. Remember, he had come near Damascus. If that had been the conclusion, we would not have heard about Paul. Thank God for the intervention and interruption that transformed him into a suitable servant for the kingdom service. The journey that led him to becoming a captive of the Lord and a channel for divine life commenced with this phrase; **"...and suddenly..."**

This phrase was about to introduce the intervention and interruption that redirected Paul to God and His purpose for his life. Every divine interruption occurs abruptly. No individual can orchestrate God's interruption on his own. If it were self-arranged, it would be an appointment, not an interruption.

All praise must be given to God, who will not delay in interrupting a man's life. The truth of the matter is that no man will welcome God's interruption if he was given prior information. No man would want to be interrupted; everyone would like to finish what he is pursuing before responding to God. The divine interruption that came upon men of old and brought them into God's purpose for their lives came suddenly. It is my prayer that such interruptions will not elude us in Jesus' name.

"...and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven..."

This is a hallmark of divine interruption. God interrupts with light; that is the beauty of it. Light illuminates a person's path and surroundings. This is one of the benefits of divine interruption. God interrupts with light to reveal a person's spiritual standing and the reality of his life. This light helps one

recognize the perils of sin and the beauty of holiness. Without encountering this light, no one will pursue eternal matters. It is noteworthy that this light did not shine in a single direction. It shone around him.

For a man to emerge from darkness, the light must encompass him entirely. It must be all-encompassing. A person cannot be free from darkness if any aspect of his or her life remains under its control. Darkness is unconcerned about seizing full control of a person's life, as long as it secures a foothold. Darkness understands that Light does not coexist with other forces. Light comes to envelop a person entirely. The term "round about" implies the entirety of a person's life. Every divine interruption aims to rescue a person from darkness, guiding him towards Light and eternal pursuits. However, a person will not pursue eternity until the Light surrounds him, revealing the glory of eternal values. This is why every divine interruption is accompanied by Light. The source of this Light is significant.

"...a light from heaven..." The emphasis on the light's origin signifies that other light sources exist; however, only the heavenly Light can liberate a person from the darkness of Sin and Self. Lights from other sources lack the power to deliver a person from the world's darkness. To break free from the dominion of worldly darkness, one must encounter the Light from heaven. Every divine intervention and interruption provides an opportunity for a person to encounter the Light from heaven, as exemplified in Paul's life. He encountered this Light that transformed his life irreversibly. No one who encounters this Light will remain in darkness. Have you experienced this Light? My prayer is that God will interrupt your life, allowing you to encounter the Light that dispels darkness. Now, let us examine what transpired when this Light enveloped him.

"Then he fell to the ground..."

Upon being surrounded by this Light, he fell to the ground. He could no longer proceed on his journey; he was interrupted. Without this fall, it would not have constituted an interruption, as he would have continued on his path. Every divine interruption brings the Light from heaven that extinguishes personal ambitions and darkness, setting one on the path to pursue God and His vision for his life. Encountering the heavenly Light prompts a loss of interest in worldly pursuits. It is unfortunate that many claim to have seen "light" without experiencing an interruption. They continue pursuing what they sought before encountering Jesus. They lack an appetite for eternal matters, merely using God to attain worldly possessions. Every divine interruption sets a person on the path towards eternal pursuits. This interruption transformed Paul into the Apostle we know



THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. But He needed to go through Samaria. So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from *His* journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give

Me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food... The woman then left her water pot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" Then they went out of the city and came to Him. John 4:3-8; 28-30.

From the narrative of this Samaritan woman, it is evident that divine interruption can lead to a significant transformation. The life of this woman was chaotic. She had been married five times and the man she was currently with was not her husband. One can only imagine the trials she had endured, participating in five traditional marriage ceremonies yet remaining unfulfilled. Although the Bible does not provide specifics, it is clear that she had faced considerable challenges. The multiple failed marriages and her adulterous lifestyle had undoubtedly contaminated her life. The people of Samaria were well aware of her immoral behaviour, having witnessed the consecration of five marriages on her behalf. However, a transformative event occurred in her life that propelled her into becoming a prominent evangelist in the city. This transformation was initiated by an encounter with Jesus that permanently changed her life. It is crucial to examine how this encounter unfolded. It all began with an interruption.

A WOMAN OF SAMARIA CAME TO DRAW WATER…"

This statement summarizes the woman's purpose for visiting the well. She had no intention of engaging in conversation at the well; her sole aim was to draw water. If Jesus had not interrupted her, she would have simply drawn the water she needed and departed, remaining the adulteress woman she was. Carrying her water pot, she proceeded directly to the well with the urgency of fulfilling a pressing need. Perhaps she was in a rush due to other commitments. Fortunately, an interruption awaited her at the heart of her pursuit, the well. Any divine interruption that does not occur at the center of an individual's pursuit will not have a lasting impact. Although she encountered numerous people on her journey to the well, she merely acknowledged them in passing, continuing her journey. She would have greeted Jesus in the same manner and continued on her way had he not been seated at the central point of her quest. Every divine interruption remains inconsequential unless it takes place at the central point of a person's desire. This explains why many individuals live as though they have never been interrupted. When an interruption fails to agree with a person's primary objective, they will invariably seek an alternative route to dodge it.

Jesus directed his conversation with the woman towards her purpose for being there; knowing that any other discourse would be peripheral. He said to her, **"…Give me a drink,"** marking the commencement of the interruption. It is important to note that the woman had not arrived at the well to offer assistance; rather, she sought to obtain water for her own use. Jesus disrupted her pursuit. If Jesus had been waiting for her at the well with water to fill her pot upon her arrival, the matter would have been trivial. She would have expressed gratitude before departing. Therefore, divine interruption is only truly an interruption when it comes between a man and his pursuit to redirect him towards God's plan for his life. In order to redirect this woman towards the pursuit of the true water (the living water), Jesus stated, "**Give me a drink."** This divine interruption in her life's pursuit led to her transformation, enabling her to become a vessel in the hands of God. It is worth noting that she neither provided Jesus with water from the well nor bothered to fetch water for herself.

"The woman then left her water pot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" Then they went out of the city and came to Him"

This was the consequence of the interruption. A significant detail in the passage is the woman abandoning her water pot. What became of the water she had intended to draw? The divine interruption had brought it to an end. She did not make any attempt to draw water before heading to the village to share the news. An interruption that fails to compel an individual to forsake his worldly pursuits in pursuit of God's plan is incomplete. It is noteworthy that the water pot symbolized her pride. When she encountered Jesus, she questioned him,

The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do you get that living water? John 4:11.

Upon being interrupted, she relinquished her water pot and the water she had sought to draw, as the water from Jacob's well lost its significance to her after meeting the provider of living water. No one will embark on the pursuit of eternal matters until he is interrupted from chasing the emptiness of the world. The interruption had a profound impact on the woman's life. Persuading men to come and see Jesus, she traversed the city, urging them to join her. She was no longer preoccupied with the water from Jacob's well.

Beloved, what is this city you need to traverse in pursuit of the salvation of the souls of men? This city may be your pulpit, office, or shop. Are you there to compel others to come to Jesus or to pursue the things of this world? Remember, whoever drinks from worldly wells will thirst again (John 4:13). The water from Jacob's well is not fulfilling. The interruption led to men leaving the city to meet Jesus. When she implored them to come and witness for themselves, she was actively engaging with both men and women throughout the city. Through her efforts, Jesus' message was disseminated in Samaria. She became an instrument in the hands of the Lord to bring the gospel to the city. Praise the Lord for the divine interruption.

Beloved, your effectiveness in serving God commences at the point of interruption. Have you been interrupted by the Lord? If so, do you bear witness to this divine interruption in your life? If not, how do you intend to become a channel of divine life without experiencing such an interruption? No one can be adequately prepared for the kingdom service unless he has been interrupted by God. Will you allow God to disrupt your life? Regardless of your past shortcomings, God can transform you into a vessel of divine life May the Lord interrupt your life at the center of your pursuits. May He intersect with you at a juncture where there are no diversions or alternatives to His path and purpose in Jesus' name. Amen.

to be continued in part 2

VASHTI
AS A SIGNPOST

By: RUTH EZE



Vashti, the esteemed queen of the king of Persia and Media, suffered a tragic downfall from her exalted position of power. Her husband, King Ahasuerus, ruled over a vast empire spanning from India to Ethiopia, encompassing a hundred and twenty-seven provinces. The splendor and prestige associated with the reign of Vashti were truly remarkable, making her sudden fall from glory all the more astounding. Regrettably, Vashti found herself reduced to a status lower than that of a mere slave girl within the palace walls. Her story serves as a warning signpost for those of us who have been graciously granted a place in the royal court of the King of kings as His chosen bride. It is a sobering realization that Vashti did not have the opportunity to learn from the mistakes of another Vashti who had fallen from glory.

However, we are fortunate to have the example of Vashti to instruct and admonish us. While we do not rejoice in her downfall, we must acknowledge the invaluable lesson she provides as a warning signpost, lest we too succumb to the same fate 1Cor 10:11. The experience of Queen Vashti serves as a pathetic reminder of the perils that await those who stray from the path of wisdom and humility. May we be granted the divine guidance and protection needed to avoid the pitfalls that led to Vashti's tragic dethronement and preserve our standing as the cherished bride of the King of kings.

That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace, In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him. Esther 1:2-3

"...he made a feast..."

The circumstances that led to the downfall of Vashti as the queen of Persia and Media were set in motion by this lavish feast. A feast, characterized by its luxury and celebrations, can often be a time of great enjoyment and celebration. However, throughout history, significant losses and tragedies have occurred during such occasions. You will recall the twenty-four thousand Israelites who perished due to a plague during a time of feasting as recorded in Numbers 25:9. This raises the crucial question: what transpired on that fateful day?

While Israel was camped at Acacia, some of the young men began going to wild parties with the local Moabite girls. These girls also invited them to attend the sacrifices to their gods, and soon the men were not only attending the feasts, but also bowing down and worshiping the idols. Num 25:1-2 TLB

From this passage, it is evident that there was a grand celebration with a lavish banquet. When the attempt to curse Israel through prophecy from three separate mountains by Balaam failed, they resorted to the powerful tool of feasting. A feast was hastily organized by the Moabites government. The Israelites were extended an invitation to this feast, which they, unfortunately, accepted. They were enticed by the allure of a feast, abundant food, and drinks, failing to recognize the impending doom hidden within the festivity. They were unaware to the fact that the feast was a trick to strip them of their rightful inheritance. Twenty-four thousand men of Israel who embarked from Egypt with the aspiration of reaching the Promised Land met their end in Moab. Much like Vashti, they too met their downfall at a feast.

It is essential to recall the circumstances that led to the conclusion of the ministry of John the Baptist. It was also during a grand feast that the burning and shining prophet, John the Baptist, met his tragic end.

Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief *men* of Galilee. And came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, "Ask me whatever you want, and I will give *it* to you." He also swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom." So she went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist!" Mk 6:21-24 NKJV.

The passage above marked the conclusion of the ministry of this bold and outspoken prophet. The head of John the Baptist was used as a symbol for that celebration. Countless opportunities and riches have been squandered during the festive period. Numerous promising individuals have also forfeited their future during the festive period.

The narrative of King Belshazzar, son of King Nebuchadnezzar, serves as another cautionary story of the perils of indulgence during festive occasions.

Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which *had been* in Jerusalem that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which *had been* in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone. Dan 5:1-4 NKJV

It is imperative to look into the entire chapter to grasp the full context of these

events. Belshazzar felled victim to the allure of the festive atmosphere, resulting in the loss of not only his kingdom but also his life. The intoxicating mood of the feast clouded his judgment, leading him to overstep his boundaries and disregard God. In his intoxicated state, he failed to heed the lessons from his father's past experiences. The celebrations of the feast hindered him remembering how God humbled his father, Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar's fatal mistake of desecrating the sacred vessels sealed his tragic fate, as he succumbed to the destructive pull of the feast.

" **While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them".**

This was an exceedingly disastrous and costly error committed by Belshazzar. Sadly, he did not survive to rectify it. Upon tasting the wine, he took a fateful step that led to his irreversible downfall. Consequently, he too fall victim to the indulgence of unguided feasting.

Though feasting in itself is not wrong, but biblical records have shown that great men have made great errors during lavish feasting, as we see in Vashti's case. It is important for us to be on our guard when the height of emotional excitement meets reasonable judgment in the midst of feasting; feasting emotions have scarcely helped men make good judgments.

Similar to Belshazzar, Queen Vashti succumbed to temptation that distorted her sense of boundaries. Look at the passage:

kingdom, which *was* in Shushan* the citadel Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus* (this *was* the Ahasuerus who reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India to Ethiopia), in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his, *that* in the third year of his reign he made a feast for all his officials and servants — the powers of Persia and Media, the nobles, and the princes of the provinces *being* before him — when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty for many days, one hundred and eighty days *in all.*

And when these days were completed, the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small, in the court of the garden of the king's palace. Est. 1:1-5

From this passage, the splendor of King Ahasuerus is evident. The lavish feast he hosted was inclusive of all, even the lowest ranking servants. **"...the king made a feast lasting seven days for all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small..."** This passage clearly illustrates the king's all-encompassing generosity. The queen, her attendants, and all the women partook in the festivities. Notably, the initial feast hosted by the king spanned an astounding 180 days. This duration is truly remarkable. Undoubtedly, both high-ranking officials and commoners feasted to their heart's content. Upon the conclusion of the 180-day

celebration, the king initiated another seven-day feast for all residents of Shushan the citadel, regardless of status. King Ahasuerus must have been an exceedingly wealthy monarch.

VASHTI ALSO MADE A FEAST

Considering the extensive duration of the feasting and the king's magnanimous inclusion of various individuals, **("...all the people who were present in Shushan the citadel, from great to small..."),** one may ponder the motivation behind Vashti's actions. Noteworthy is the introduction of verse 9, **"Queen Vashti also made a feast..."**The use of 'also' in this context is quite telling. What prompted Vashti to organize a feast for individuals who had been taking pleasure in eating and drinking for the past 187 days? The women she entertained were among those previously hosted by the king. What led to Queen Vashti's deviation from contentment with her husband's feast? This verse serves as a central moment that ultimately led to Vashti's dethronement. **"Queen Vashti also made a feast..."**upon reflection on this phrase, one is left to ponder the reasons behind her decision to host a separate celebration. What caused her discontentment with her husband's feast? Why did she feel compelled to showcase her own event? Her lack of submission proved to be her undoing. Desiring recognition, she sought to establish her own feast, despite the attendees already being satisfied with the king's hospitality. Vashti's downfall was her lack of submission. She sought to have her name included among the feast organizers, no longer content with merely being associated with her husband.

This same transgression, exemplified by Vashti, has been the undoing of countless women. Many have lost their position in their marriages due to lack of submission. The prevalent issue in numerous marriages today is the struggle of women to assert their own "feast" as well. This predicament has reduced many women, intended by God to be helpmeets to their husbands, to mere roommates. How are you asserting your "feast"? What is this "feast" that you are determined to present? The "feast" jeopardizing your marriage could be the desire for a personal bank account, a yearning for financial independence, or a strong inclination to have your own voice heard in every marital decision. Nothing undermines a woman's position in marriage as swiftly as a lack of submission. A woman cannot sustain her marriage without complete submission to her husband. The day a woman withholds submission from her husband is the day she loses her marriage. Many women coexist with their husbands as mere roommates rather than helpmeets. Dear sister, the day you wed was the day you relinquished your autonomy. It was also the day your husband became your head. Any attempt to assert your autonomy (organize your own feast, EST 1:9) will result in the loss of your marriage. To uphold your marriage, you must avoid the error of Vashti which is lack of submission.

The Silent Pitfall

The error of Vashti serves as a silent pitfall. Her refusal to appear before the king was merely a symptom of this silent pitfall.

The guests could drink as much as they liked — king's orders! — with waiters at their elbows to refill the drinks.

Meanwhile, Queen Vashti was throwing a separate party for women inside King Xerxes' royal palace. Esther 1:8-9 Msg

Did you observe the term "separate" in that verse? Vashti, the queen, hosted a separate gathering for women. The Bible said that she was throwing a **separate** party for women. Separatism is a pitfall to avoid in marriage. It has actually ruined many marriages.

The word separate also means *independent; not united or joint, standing apart; not attached to*.

The yearning for autonomy is a subtle trap that has led to the downfall of many relationships. Often, when faced with marital discord, individuals tend to address the symptoms rather than the root cause. A significant portion of marital strife stems from a craving for independence. The essence of independence poses an underground threat to marital bonds. Many couples, despite cohabiting, exist in a state of individual autonomy. A marriage cannot flourish in an environment characterized by independence. Marriage, as intended by God, is not designed to withstand such disconnection.

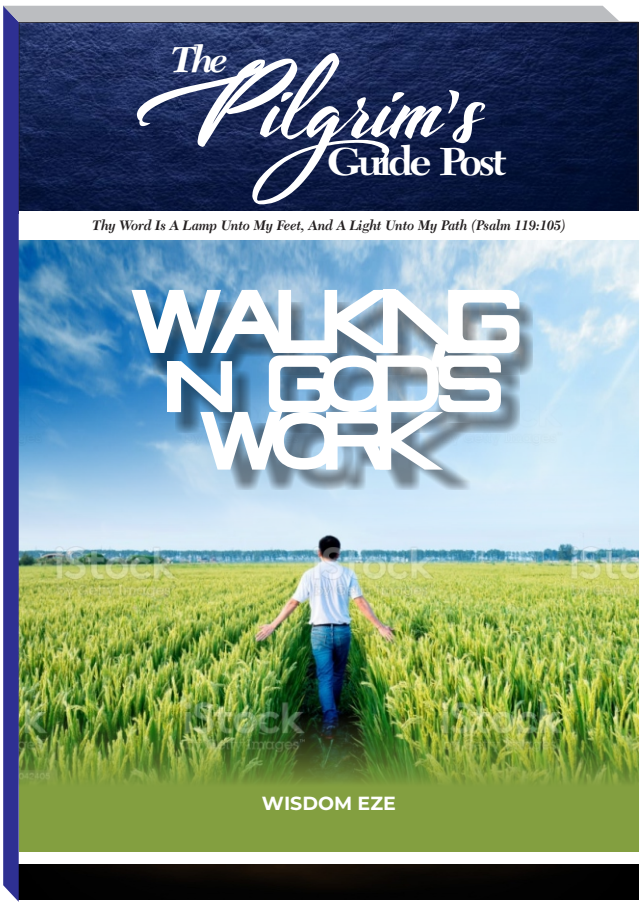
Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh Gen 2:24.

A man and woman in matrimony are meant to unite, become interdependent, and rely on each other. This is the divine directive Vashti should have followed to maintain her position in the palace. Regrettably, she opted for a different path, as evidenced by the statement, **"...Queen Vashti was throwing a separate party..."** The spirit of separatism poses a threat to marital harmony.

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord Eph 5:22. This is the divine verdict on the relationship of a wife to her husband. Sister, to what extent do you adhere to this directive? Are there areas where submission proves challenging in your life? Accepting a man's proposal entails agreeing to submit to him entirely, including your body, finances, future plans, and things involving your parents and siblings. Avoid the pitfalls of separatism at all costs, as it poses a silent threat to marital bonds. May you not suffer the fate of Vashti and lose your standing in Jesus' name. Amen.

There is a necessity for us to investigate the reasons behind Vashti's decision to host a separate feast.

to be continued in the volume 4


The Pilgrim's Guide Post
Thy Word Is A Lamp Unto My Feet, And A Light Unto My Path (Psalm 119:105)
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