

A VETERAN'S ADVICE TO A YOUNG WARRIOR

*preached by Rev Theophilus A. Ogunnaike
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This morning, we want to examine A Veteran's Advice To A Young Warrior. This young warrior was a Christian. We thank God very much for the Holy Scriptures that is made available to us to read. And what we read, God will give us the power to do.

"THOU therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

"Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him' who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

"And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (2 Timothy 2:1-5).

The veteran who wrote this epistle to the young minister was no other person than Paul the Apostle. Paul had been a young man who had a zeal for the things of God. His zeal propelled him to rise against the Church at that time because the Church was going contrary to the traditions of the Jews. Being a zealous young man, he felt there was something to be done. He started going round, arresting the children of God. Some of them he cast into prison, others were wounded. He created a great deal of problems for the Church. On one occasion, he had to go to Damascus in continuation of his persecution of the Church. He was doing all these, thinking he was working for God, not knowing he was actually going contrary to the will of God. On the way, he came in contact with Jesus Christ Himself. He saw a great bright light that shone on his way and accompanying that light was a great Voice from Heaven: 'Saul, Saul why persecutest thou me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.' And he answered, 'Lord who art thou? And what wilt thou have me to do?' That was the turning point in the life of Paul the Apostle. Jesus saw the zeal in him. Jesus knew his heart, even more than he himself knew. Jesus knows the heart of everyone of us. He can decipher the content of each heart. Having exposed the content of the heart of Saul, He then gave him a work to do. He showed him all the things he would suffer. In other words, he unfolded before him the master plan of his life. God has the master plan of our lives. He knew that Paul the Apostle had zeal; but the zeal was not according to knowledge.

It was time for Paul to be exposed to the actual knowledge of God, which would enable him tread the right path and do those things that God would want him to do. On our own part, if we are conscientious and pliable in the hands of God, it is very certain that He will help us to do those things He has assigned us to do. Jesus had already known that Paul was going to be an instrument in His hands. Jesus saved, cleansed and filled him with the desired power and grace to win the gentiles unto Christ.

Paul, who was called of Jesus Christ at that time, was very young. At this time, he had grown old and was subject to Jesus Christ Who had trained him as a soldier for Himself. He was submissive and was doing those things Jesus wanted him to do. In his toil to preach the Gospel, he came across the young man called Timothy who had been fed with the Word of God right from infancy. Timothy was very fortunate to have a grandmother and also a mother who taught him the way of God, groomed him in the things of God and helped him to be grounded in the Word of God. Children who are born in the Gospel are indeed fortunate because they are exposed to the doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is unlike their parents who had been tossed around by every wind of doctrine before they came into the Gospel. These parents lamented why they did not come in contact with the Gospel earlier than they did. We thank God the parents are now in the Gospel. It is now their responsibility to ensure that they teach their children the Word of God, to plant in them the righteousness of God right from infancy. That is why God has given us a provision whereby our children are taught the Word of God from kindergarten. Just like the admonition in the Word of God that

says, "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it." If we teach our children the undying Word of God, anywhere they go that Word will remain. Anywhere they go, they will remember their homes where Bible reading and prayer meetings were compulsory. If they come across any problem or unpleasant situation, they will be very fast to run back home because they know there is peace at home. When they come back, they will still meet the Word of God. They will meet the doctrine of Jesus Christ. There is nothing in this world that can damage the foundation of the doctrine of Jesus Christ.. That is why it is incumbent on parents to ensure that children are taught the way of God.

When Paul the Apostle came in contact with Timothy, it was not difficult for him to discover, that Timothy was quite different from many children. Timothy knew the Word and lived It. He was godly. For many years, Timothy was with Paul the Apostle as a son and coworker in the Vineyard of God. He learnt series of lessons from Paul, which were very useful to him. Paul the Apostle was now aged and in a short while would go back to the One who had called him.

He would hand over the work to Timothy. Timothy was likewise a warrior. Christians are soldiers warring against Satan and sin. They war not against flesh and blood. They use no physical weapons to fight their war. Their manner of warfare is more critical than any physical warfare. As a warrior or a soldier, he must be armed; he must put on the whole armour of God. Paul advised Timothy on what to do when Paul would be no more.

A Christian should endeavour to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Paul told Timothy that a good soldier does not entangle himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier.

In secular life, we need to do our work conscientiously. The demand of God is even greater, because our spiritual duties are higher and greater than our physical duties. If a man strives for mastery, yet he is not crowned except he strives lawfully. Our engagement as soldiers of Christ demands that we do it with all our heart and also play the game according to the rule. In doing the work of God, we need to do it carefully because there are rules guiding the spiritual work, which God has committed to our charge. When we are executing our duties as soldiers of Christ, we must also follow the spiritual rules. We must live within the confines of the law of God, otherwise, if we strive, we will not have any victory.

"The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits.

"Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

"Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:

"Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.

"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

"It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we 104 shall also live with him:

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

"If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (2 Timothy 2:6-13).

The Word says, 'the husbandman is first partaker of the fruit.' In essence, before we can teach others, we must first be partakers of the spiritual experience. What you have not acquired, you cannot give to another person. We must first be partakers of the blessings of God;. otherwise, we will not be able to teach others.

In our ministerial work, no doubt, we are going to have persecutions, afflictions, difficulties and trials. But the reward that is awaiting us far transcends all of these problems. The Word is saying emphatically that if we die with Him, we shall live with Him, we shall reign with Him and where He is, we shall be also. He says, 'If we deny Him, He will deny us.' By the power of God, we will not deny Jesus.

"Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:14,15).

We want to be workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. We want to

divide the Word of God to other people. We want to tell other people about the righteousness of God. In view of this, the Church has a youth wing known as the Association of Visiting Secretaries (AVS). This association comprises of people from all walks of life, who gather to study the Bible with a view to visiting tertiary institutions, vocational centres and workshops with the Word of Life. This is what God has given us here. We know the Word is very powerful. We will not add to it. We will not remove from it. We want to take it in its face value, so the Word will avail for us. It is a legacy, a legacy for all times. It is the inheritance given to us, and we want to keep it.

"But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness" (2 Timothy 2:16).

This verse is talking of crooked or spurious doctrine. It says, we should depart from it completely. We are being taught sound doctrine. We have the Word in tracts, in the HigherWay and other magazines, in Sunday School quarterlies and in other Gospel literature.

"But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

"And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philelus;

"Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that 'the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:16-19).

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure." That is the Word. Nothing can shake it. It is immutable, it is wonderful and it stands like the Rock of Gibraltar. This is the Word which has been handed over to us. It is this Word that is going to take us to Heaven. If we stand on the Word, we will not sink. When we stand on the word, nothing will move us. Certainly we have a sure foundation. Any building that is erected on it can never fall nor crumble. Let the storm rage, let the billows roar, the building will stand sure. By the grace of God, we are going to embrace the Word in its entirety. We thank God very much that we have an inheritance that cannot be burnt, removed, or tampered with. That is the righteousness of God in our hearts.

The Word does not allow sin in any form or shape. It doesn't parley with sin. It is the pathway of holiness. It is just contrary to anything sinful. It is the way of holiness that goes to Heaven. The Word teaches us to have and maintain peaceful homes. It teaches us about marriage, it teaches us our responsibilities one to another. It teaches that when we have problems and difficulties raging as the flood, this Word will put an end to all of them. It is the righteousness of God. If this Word is in the Church, and in the homes, certainly when Jesus Christ comes again, He will find faith in our hearts.

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:14, 15).

Timothy was admonished to continue in the things which he had learnt. We have been taught series of things in the Gospel and God wants us to remain in them.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

"That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

The fact that all Scriptures have the inspiration of God gives us rest of mind. We have many types of Bibles in the world today that have been written and re-written. But this Church recommends the King James' Version. God commissioned His prophets to write the Bible and they were inspired to do so.

"I CHARGE thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

,"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their

***own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;
"And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:1-4).***

"Preach the Word." Our teachers and preachers teach us the Word of God. It is our duty to listen attentively when we are taught the righteousness of God. We want to see that we benefit maximally from what we are taught. The Bible says, 'Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.' Since we came here, the Word of God has reproved and rebuked us. All these have taken place so that we may be perfected, that the dross in our lives may be removed. When a preacher comes behind the pulpit to preach the Word of God, the Word becomes a sword and as it touches us, it reproves and rebukes us. This same Word cuts off all the shortcomings, all the troubles and all the difficulties in our lives. The preacher only talks but God through His Spirit allows the Word to touch us in the expected places. Like a sword, when the Word cuts somebody, he feels the impact. The preacher too is affected because the Word is a two-edged sword; as it pierces the laity so it does the clergy. No one is spared. As the Word cuts us, may we surrender our all to It.

The preacher does not know you but the Word of God knows the intents of your heart. It knows your shortcomings. When the Word comes into your life, it sheds light into your life and reveals sin. It reveals unrighteousness, it reveals iniquity. It will also banish all darkness.

"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Timothy 4:5).

There are teachers who preach spurious doctrines, the doctrines of Satan, who do not make use of the Bible, but their own ideas. They have replaced the Bible with their mental ideas. They do not care whether sin is reprov'd or not. God will continue to reprove sin in The Apostolic Faith. Therefore, gird your loins, for God is prepared to speak to you, to perfect you. The Word will save you, It will sanctify you, and fill you with the power of the Holy Ghost. May God do these for all of us.

***"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.
"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:6, 7).***

For a man to make this type of statement means that God has helped him. This same person was saying sometimes ago that he was only striving, he had not attained it; at this juncture, he said he had fought a good fight. May God help you to fight a good fight. May God help you to keep the faith. He strove a great deal, he did all he could to bring himself to this level and he could say with all confidence that he had fought a good fight, he had finished his course and kept the faith. When our lives will be expiring here, may God open our spiritual eye to see our heavenly Home and be able to proclaim that we have fought a good fight and finished our course.

We thank God very much because God is here in our midst and the Spirit of God is working. The Spirit is going round, distributing the blessings of God, blessing every heart whose door is opened. If you have not received any blessing, may be the door of your heart has not been flung open. But the moment you open the door of your heart, the Spirit of God will enter. May the showers of blessing continue to fall throughout the period of the convention. When we shall have returned to our destinations, may the showers of blessing not cease to fall.

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8).

I am so glad and thrilled that Paul is not saying that the crown of righteousness is preserved only for him. It is unto all those that love His appearing, and that includes you. That is to say that you have a part in what Paul the Apostle was saying here. Apostle Paul had worked tirelessly up to this point, his confidence at this critical time should be a challenge to every one of us. The same crown of righteousness is awaiting us and God will help us to qualify for the reward.

Don't you know that Jesus' second coming is near? It can happen any moment from now. That is why Jesus Christ, the Son of God has gathered' us together, maybe for the very last time.