

Christian Living

*From a sermon delivered by Rev. T. G. Oshokoya
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In the first epistle of Paul to Timothy is contained God's message to us.

15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. 1 Timothy 1:15-16

It was Paul Apostle writing this epistle to Timothy for exhortation. Paul Apostle was first of all known as Saul of Tarsus who was persecuting the Christians not long after the ascension of Jesus Christ. Bible account tells us that after his rebellion and persecution and partaking in the death of Stephen while on his way to Damascus with authority in his hand to persecute other Christians who might come his way, it was there that he met the Lord Jesus. At such a place where he was cornered up, he surrendered unto Jesus Christ the king of the whole world. In a state of blindness he was led to Damascus and he stood before Ananias of whom God had mentioned to him earlier that this man of God would lay hands on him and pray so that his sight might be restored. After Ananias had prayed for Paul, he regained his sight, and furthermore he started witnessing for Christ. For a period of time he was in Arabia where he was being taught about the way of the gospel and after this time he had the opportunity of being under the tutorship of some elderly apostles of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem where he was taught many things about the gospel. It was after this that they laid hands on him and made him an apostle and he went out for the spread of the gospel in the company of Barnabas.

It was during the ministry of Paul the apostle that Paul came in contact with Timothy who had earlier on been taught by his mother and his grandmother about the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Here Paul was talking to Timothy; this is a faithful saying, what is that? That the gospel is true, that sound doctrine is true. Many people do not believe that the word of God is true but Paul wants us to believe that in all the truths of God is yea and amen and it is worthy of acceptation. That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and that Christ Jesus came into this world is the bulwark, the foundation on which the gospel stands. And it is this news that those who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ spread all over. And Paul was telling Timothy here that among those who were saved, he was chief. Not many people can bear witness to the fact that he is one of those who has been saved by Jesus, most especially among the preachers. What they usually tell people is that no one can get saved here but it is heaven that will determine our salvation and it is the belief of many people that it is only when we get to Heaven that those who will be saved will be decided. Paul was very sure and emphatic about his testimony, that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners of whom I am chief. Paul was not talking about something that would happen in the future, he is talking about something that is happening at all times. Well by the time Jesus was on earth saving people, Paul did not believe this doctrine and he was chief among those people who were persecuting those who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it was in this state of mind that he was going to Damascus with authority in his hand that he met the Lord Jesus Christ and without any hesitation well he submitted and subjected himself unto the instruction for the Lord Jesus Christ; he fully surrendered his will unto the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though there was the zeal; there

was the interest in his heart to do the things of God in those days, he was doing it in the wrong way. And God who knows his heart met him and when he met him, he saved him. So his testimony here is from what he too has experienced because about the time that Paul was making this persecution, there were people with false doctrines, false teachings but Paul from his own personal experience, he believes that Jesus Christ has come into this world to save sinners among whom he was chief.

It appears from the testimony of Paul the Apostle here, this man Saul of Tarsus saw and regarded himself as a chief sinner in spite of his position educationally and socially and in spite of the fact that he had studied the law and the tradition of the Jews. Well he perfectly agreed that he was a sinner this is quite unlike what you find in the life of well enlightened educated people of our days who will never agree that they are sinners but not only did he regard himself as a sinner but humbled himself when he met the Lord Jesus Christ, he asked him "who art thou?" and Jesus Christ told him "he was Christ whom he is persecuting". On hearing this statement from the Lord Jesus Christ, he perfectly humbled himself, surrendered himself unto the Lord Jesus Christ no wonder the work of grace that was wrought in his life. Oh if only the educated, the enlightened, the simple people of the world will humble themselves to give honour to the word of God, I know definitely that God would do great wonders in our country.

When we look carefully at the scripture, we noticed that among the rank and file of the Sanhedrin's, they have unanimously agreed that nobody should proclaim Jesus Christ as the son of God. Among the Chief priests also they have decided that they would not acknowledge him as the son of God but Saul of Tarsus who was a member of the Sanhedrin and Pharisee, a chief, one of the educated elites, was apprehended by God, did not take him awhile to fear that if he confess Jesus that he would be kicked out of his positions and social stand in the society, but he had accepted that he would sell all what he had, to surrender and neither did he fear the Chief Priests who he had collected authority from to imprison the disciples that confess Jesus Christ. Well he made up his mind that this acceptance of Christ would lead there he would go. This Jesus Christ had come to this world to save sinners, hence I would partake of the blessings, I would not let these blessings go without receiving mine. This profession I had been professing before would not do, the law that I have learnt in memory would not avail, I have had enough of this, and no more; my enlistment as a member of the Pharisees would end here, I mean that I want Jesus Christ to save me! You know that if we make a decision to meet Jesus, and there is a hunger to meet Him, Jesus always meets us on the way and never linger or delay. It was not long neither were we told that it took days before Jesus met him. This was the man with authority to imprison the disciples, was on the way to Damascus, when Jesus Christ appeared unto him and spoke to him. He was the only one that understood what was said, those who were with him did not know who was talking to him, but Saul of Tarsus knew him. I believe that there are many Saul's in this congregation here this morning whom God had been talking to, may God let them hear, may God let them accept and make a decision for him today.

Not long after his conversion, he stood by his promise and covenant with God and by the oath he has made with God that he will remain faithful to him. Because not long after his conversion he was in open confrontation with members of his former group, the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin and they were accusing him of belonging to them, why should he go and accept Jesus Christ. He told them publicly that he was no longer a member of their group, hence they stoned him and beat him and persecuted him. But he had made a decision in his heart, and he would not go back and God helped him and we read in his book that Saul was a mighty man of valour, a mighty man of grace, as a mighty man of power and he stood by that which he had promised God at the point of salvation.

16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. 1 Timothy 1:16

There is something to which Paul is trying to emphasise in this verse in which I have read and which was in the life Paul and which must be in everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and that is godliness. Godliness with contentment is a great gain. This is very important for every child of Christ. Paul the apostle was telling Timothy here, that so that it may be possible to live a godly life with contentment that is why God has set him up and that is why he is bearing all that he was made to go through. There are many people who feel that now that they have accepted the gospel they will try all they could to make sure they can stand for God. Well in a way it is true, but we need to understand that God has brought us and has established us not for our own benefit alone but for the benefit of thousands and thousands of souls who are being taken advantage of by Satan, who are being tortured by the evil one, who do not know anything about the saving grace of Jesus Christ. He has established us

and he has made us that they may see in us his loving-kindness, his long suffering, his patience, his stand in the truth of the word of God to be exemplified in our lives for the salvation of the generality of people.

What Paul is telling Timothy here is what was manifested in the lives of people who accepted Christianity many generations ago, upon whom the gentile nations were looking as being different people entirely because they could see godly virtue in their lives, they could see the fruits of the spirit: love, peace, longsuffering, meekness, temperance in their lives. These so called Christians did not go to the house of idols, neither were they idolatry. They could see that these people are entirely different from the worldly minded people, and that they did not pervert themselves with the styles and fashion of the world, but they were different, that they were not thieves, armed robbers, murderers, adulterers, fornicators and their love was exceptional among the people of those days. This was their profession which does not exist in our present day, to such an extent that those who steep up in the act of greediness, drunkards, armed robbers and those that are corrupt are now pointing accusing finger to the Christians to go and repair the churches and bring forth converted souls that would be good examples to the whole world and make sure they bring about a great revival and revelation in such a way that people will learn and see godliness in the lives of those people who adhere to their teachings.

This godliness was noticed in the life of the Christians in Antioch, to such an extent that peradventure they were abused, they did not reply, they beat them, they did not say anything, they were slapped, they did not respond or retaliate. They loved the people, those that persecuted them were prayed for, hence the people said their behavior was like the disciples of Jesus, it seemed that these people have lived with Christ. It is this godliness that the world is expecting from the Christians of today, which they do not find, instead the Christians mingle with them in their corruption, join their secret cults, they join them in drinking, dance as it were a idolatrous dance and now wear the same worldly fashionable clothes as the world, to such an extent that the government has made a degree that civil servants should not be in secret cults hence many pastors are fetish priests, perhaps the bishops are also members of the fetish priests, they are now the same, there is no one who is a good example for the other to look. As the idol worshipper is lying, so also is Emmanuel lying, as idol worshipper is stealing, so also is Emmanuel stealing, as the idol worshipper is smuggling, so also is Ezekiel smuggling, to such an extent that the society is totally corrupt and there is no difference between any again.

But Paul said that God wanted to exemplify through him the life of godliness. Godliness must be found in Christians – love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. Among Christians we must find godliness at home, public, and workplace. Among Christians, we must not find cheating, corruption, false stories, drunkenness, revellings, fashion of the world but we must find among Christians things laid down as God had specified.

Paul the Apostle was not mindful of himself alone, he was not saying that he should be an example of holy living and all the Christian attributes, but he wanted these things to be exemplified by the body of believers as we see in verse 18:

***18 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;
1 Timothy 1:18***

Many people say that God does not force us to worship him and he doesn't require anything from us. No! but God gives us instruction on what we ought to do and what we ought not to do. God commands a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ to exemplify godliness in his life, to have Christ in his life, to be a true follower of Christ. That was why Jesus Christ told those who wanted to follow him, "that all who want to follow me must deny themselves". Deny ourselves means that we should separate from the world, do away with our own way, our own plan and follow Jesus Christ everyday. Do you want to be a follower of Jesus? You must be able to deny yourself, forsake the world and humbly follow God. Because anyone who loves the world, the love of the father is not in him. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. That is what one of the apostles says. The order is that we must follow the command and instruction of Jesus Christ if really we want to be his disciples.

Paul impresses upon Timothy that he should learn how to be godly, learn how to be holy, learn how to take his stand on those things which he is convinced about sound doctrine that are true. He should stand by it, live by it, exemplify all these virtues in his life meaning that swearing by...(215). Paul was compelling Timothy to stand by this

as he was taught and to know that a christian stands on the whole sound doctrine, he lives by it, wears it, makes it a place of abode, and will always have a conscience that does not have a double mind about it and does not go back. Hence this is the life of a Christian.

In Titus 2:11-15.

- 11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,**
12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;
13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;
14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.
15 These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee. Titus 2:11-15

In 1 Timothy 4:11-13:

- 11 These things command and teach.**
12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.
13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 1 Timothy 4:11-13

These two references are similar, one to Titus the other to Timothy and these two references are proving to us that all those who want to live a godly life must follow all these teachings. We are made to understand that the grace of God that bringeth salvation has been made manifest to all people. Though some people may be doubting the possibility of the saving grace of God, the experience in the life of people today, but our scripture reading this morning, in Isaiah 49 we have seen the prophecy concerning the work of grace which Jesus Christ was going to work in the life of people. When you come across professing Christians who say it is not possible to live a life above sin, it is because they don't have good leaders who live up to that expectation. The attitude of many of these people is follow my words not my character. Even students, bible students under such group often complain that "well we cannot do it or live the life above sin because we don't see our teachers do it, after all we meet with our teachers at the drinking bar, we meet at the hospital, and when they quarrel, I go and settle the quarrel between the husband and the wife, hence if it was possible to live the life above sin why did they not do it? Oh may God save us from falsehood, corruption. Well the blame is for the leaders – their teachers, because the leaders are no good example, they cannot expect their followers to have anything.

Paul was telling Titus here that the grace of God that bringeth salvation has been made known to all people, that he had manifested himself, that he had come to the world, and his testimony is available everywhere. We have seen many people that have lived with Christ, told us that – that person the truth, holiness, godliness, the love of God that changeth not, they had seen him, they had eaten with him, had seen these graces exemplified in his life so it is not a question of theory, it was an experience in which the apostles of Jesus Christ has gone through. And we on this side of life, Africa, we are living witnesses of the fact that God has been saving souls, has been changing hearts. Wicked and very corrupt and vile hearts have been turned and made humble, God changes the hearts of the liar, deceiver, and those who cheats and drunkards, and giveth such hearts godline ss, longsuffering, faith, obedience, holy living and we are witnesses to this. Glory be to his name. Amen. We can therefore say that the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all people hath appeared and made known to all.

We can say like John that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the father and his son Jesus Christ. Concerning godliness and holy living, this is the pattern of the life of a Christian. Severing connection with the world this is an attitude and the life of a Christian. This is what this assembly is about and this is the main thing we shall be doing during these three weeks of our convention. Paul gave Timothy a specific instruction that he should not allow anyone to reproach his youth but he should be an example unto them that believe through word, conversation, charity, in spirit, in faith and in purity.

Let us examine ourselves and our lives in light of this standard. What example are we setting? Are we

example of people who practice stealing? Are we examples of adultery? Are we examples of people who hold malice? What examples are we setting as Christians? Are you an example of a Christian or an example of an herbalist or a physician? Are you a holy people or an example of a sinner? Are you an example of people who spread spurious doctrines or people who hold to the sound doctrine? Are you an example of people who are truthful or those who are not truthful? God has called us to an assembly this morning. He wants us to be example unto sinners in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith and in purity. What an opportunity the Lord is offering you. God wants us to be holy; he wants us to be holy! This is God's call! You want to be after this, if you have never heard it, God has made you to realise that today. This is what makes us a Christian. Christians are those who have been redeemed from their sins, those whose sins have been washed away, who have been regenerated, have been redeemed, who are clean within, those who are clean within and without. You have an opportunity before you this morning, Jesus is pleading on your behalf. Sinners receive your blessings today.