

FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP AT THE END OF AGE

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This little book deals on: *faithful stewardship at the time of the end.*

The *end* in question is relative to the church age.

A very important aspect of the work of the Lord at this time of the end is that of God expressing Himself in the various nooks and crannies of the earth.

I am sure we know that the work of the Lord at this time of the end is not restricted to Nigeria alone, because:

All over the world the Spirit of the Lord is moving,

All over the world, as the prophet said it should be.

All over the world there is a mighty revelation;

Of the glory of the Lord,

As the waters cover the sea. (Hab. 2:4).

There is such an expression of God now; and because God is working His purpose out, the local church, which is the *full expression* of Christ in every locality, is to be a standard, a standard for all to see and to emulate!

God is calling people out of the *religious systems*, scattered all over, and referred to as *churches*; but many of such are spiritually and morally unhealthy to bear God's name or be identified as his expression (Isaiah 4:1).

God is calling faithful saints unto a healthy and spiritual body (Luke 17:37); having expressions all over the face of the earth; with the Lord Jesus Christ as *the hero* and not any man, reverend, bishop or family.

THE LEADERSHIP OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

There is the need to know that God, in His own arrangement, has ensured that for any assembly to be identified as Christ's, there should be persons in positions of spiritual leadership, and ordained by him to play such roles. (Revelations 2:1)

There are two dimensions to our Christian stewardship:

(1) Our general calling as stewards of God and of the manifold grace of God.

The Bible refers to us as the *stewards of the mysteries of God*; and we are also referred to as *stewards of the manifold grace of God*. (1Cor.4:1,1Pet. 4:10).

(2) Our stewardship in being called to provide *specific* and *peculiar* spiritual services and responsibilities (1 Cor. 12:7-11).

We shall consider things the Lord expects and demands of us, and how we can freely offer ourselves to fulfill his purposes in us.

GOD AS A BUSINESS MAN

It is necessary for all Christians to know that God is a businessman. He is not just a businessman; he is a very good business man. This aspect has been coming to me for quite a while, as a truth the Lord would have amplified among his people.

God is a businessman and a very good one at that. Many of you are business men and women; *managing* or having charge over the affairs of an enterprise; be it small trades or high level trades. A characteristic is common to all traders and every business person: *investing for profit*. This is very important mindset, for any business or enterprise to succeed.

When a businessman invests and keeps investing: and year after year declares losses; such cannot be labeled a good business man. He will in due times have to take a decision: either to find a way out or close down the business.

GOD IS A BUSINESSMAN.

It is either he, as God, in collaboration with a chosen vessel fashion out a way to make the unprofitable vessel to be profitable, or he withdraws his grace from the vessel and lays him aside!

In Isaiah chapter 5 and Matthew 25, God reveals himself as an investor, who expects a profit.

As people who are called of God and as stewards of his mysteries and of his grace, there is a measure of divine investment into our lives; and the investments of the Lord could be many sided. We have to know that as the good Lord invests into us,

he is expecting a profit. James 5:7 says *“the husbandman waits patiently for the precious fruit of the earth, and bears long for it; because it must receive the early and the latter rain”*.

God does not sow where he does not expect to reap.

Before God invests or sows into a life or people, he has surveyed, to ascertain they possess all necessary potentials for fruit bearing.

A consciousness we must develop and live with is that of God expecting a good yield from his inputs into us.

Isaiah chapter 5 is a parable of the Lord’s Vineyard, where Isaiah sings a prophetic song to express God’s disappointment in a people he has invested so much into.

Is. 5:1 reads: *“Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vine yard in a very fruitful hill.*

The setting itself was very good.

Is. 5:2 reads: *“And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein, and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes”*.

There was as investment. First of all, the vineyard was planted on a very fruitful hill; and fencing it, gathering out the stones (things that can make for offence or stumbling), he planted it with the choicest vine.

He built a tower (security) in it and then waited for the choicest fruit from it.

But there was a disappointment!

As he looked for it to bring forth grapes, it brought forth *wild grapes*.

Consider this prophet dialogue:

Is.5:3 reads: “*And now, O inhabitant of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard*”.

What was the Lord saying? Put yourself in my position: if you were me, as I have invested so much, and have incurred losses, what would you do? Judge!

Is.5:4 reads: *What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wilt grapes?*

Judgement now follows:

“*And now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof: it shall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof: and it shall be trodden down.*”-**Is. 5:5**

We did say that anyone who invests and keeps declaring losses will either close down the business or take a serious decision to salvage it. So, what the Lord was saying here is that: Look, I am going to take a decision to vindicate myself and also salvage what I have invested; so there can be a turning around, for good! He would take away the hedge (the protection from destructive forces) and it will be eaten up: I would take down the wall thereof (which prevented intrusion) and it shall be trodden down. He shall lay it waste, it shall not be pruned, *meaning*, there shall not be any further investments into it, but instead, briars and thorns (natural forces of destructions shall have a field day with it).

Is. 5:6b: “...*I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it*”-Divine forces that bring good and increase shall avoid it!

“For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but beholds oppression: for righteousness, but behold a cry”-Is. 5:7

The parable, at the first level of interpretations, speaks of the *natural* nation of Israel, but it applies in the fullness of interpretations to us, *spiritual* Israel, God’s vineyard.

In **Is. 5:8**, God expressed the fact that the interest he had was not the same with the people. This is very significant. We must ensure that the interest that the Lord has, the Lord of the vineyard, is the same with ours. There must be no conflict of

interest. Some had the interest of amassing earthly property and wealth; only for selfish and self centered reasons, and not to serve divine purpose. Such is what we have now, widespread among God's people. "...*Joining house to house and field to field; so as to be placed alone in the midst of the earth*" Whenever there is a business, no matter how small, there must be direction, and an interest. If there happens to be someone or persons employed or associated with the business, working at cross or counter purposes to the interest of the business, then a decision must be taken to remove such negative interests.

This is exactly what the Lord is doing in his church at this time of the end.

The church was planted on a very fruitful hill. The starting out of the church was on a note of glory. Every provision needed to make the church to excel, be exemplary and impact the world was made available by God-His word, the blood and spiritual gifts. God, as we see in the scriptures expects a fruit from his church, precious fruit, and commensurate with divine labour and investments. But over and over again there have been disappointments. As a good investor, the Lord will not allow his works to lie fallow. He will do something about it.

He has begun to do something about it.

One of the things the Lord is doing *to rescue* his investments in the church, is his calling sincere and faithful children of his, out of *church* or *denominational* or

religious settings that do not serve his purposes. This is the judgment on Babylon that John saw on Patmos (Rev.18:4).

Remember that in Is. 5:6, God says: “*And I will lay it waste...*”

It is necessary for us to know the mind of the Lord concerning his church; where we have fallen, what he will do to rescue his investments, and where he is also taking us to.

We should not look at unfaithfulness in stewardship, relative to big denominations and religious empires; which have veered from the true way, and from “the faith that was once delivered unto the saints” alone. I believe every (individual) child of God ought to look inwards, at the investments of the Lord into us, as stewards of his mysteries and grace; and also the investments of the Lord into us as those in spiritual responsibilities, measuring ourselves with the yardstick of the Lord to know the extent of our faithfulness unto Him.

- Do we devour God’s flock?
- Are we masters or lords over God’s heritage?
- Do we make merchandise of spiritual graces?
- Do we sell God’s anointing upon us for a fee?

All the above questions demand serious and honest answers from every serious minded steward of God.

BRINGING FORTH FRUIT

In **John 15:2**, the Lord addresses the branches of his vine of the expectations of the husbandman for *fruitfulness*, saying: “*Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he **taketh away**: and every branch that beareth fruit he **purgeth it**, that he may bring forth more fruit*”. He makes sure that he carries out some processes to make sure that the branch that bears fruit brings forth more fruit; but the unfruitful branch, he will sever from the vine.

Now *to sever* a branch from the life of the vine is a very serious thing. It simply means, *to be set aside from divine programme*. Such vessels may not necessarily die physically. Some, after being set aside by God from his programme, may still be active in the church, providing services; or even preach from nation to nation; *compassing land and sea* for God; nevertheless, the anointing is gone and what remains are good feelings and ministering from human experience and charisma.

The Bible says in Hebrews 6:7: “*The earth that drinketh of the rain that cometh oft upon it and...beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing: whose end is to be burned*”

So, the Lord expects us brethren, to bring forth fruit in our spiritual stewardships.

As we look inwards, and we discover that we have enjoyed the investments of the Lord in our lives materially, we must know that we owe it a duty to God not to

deny him his due in this regard also. As the Lord invests into us spiritually, so he may also invest into us materially.

There are diverse aspects of the Lord's investments into us.

There are some of God's children that the Lord invests material things into their hands, manifesting in great wealth. It is not that such know how to *turn things around*.

"It is he (the Lord thy God) that giveth thee power to get wealth"-Deut.8:18

And again;

"For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?"-1 Cor. 4:7

It is necessary for us to know, each time we receive of the goodness of the Lord; each time the Lord adds unto us; each time we recognize and notice certain manifestations of the Spirit in our lives; that we are accountable to Him.

In **1 Cor 4:2**, Paul wrote: *"Moreover, it is required in stewards that a man is found faithful"* In **1 Cor. 4:1**, it says: *"Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God"*

Stewards of the hidden things of God!

The things of God that is not popular.

They are not common and are not picked up in the streets. He has given us the privilege to know and partake of them. We are accountable to Him.

But we have this important dimension to our stewardship: The Lord is investing into us so that we can be productive, and thereby fulfilling His purpose. He requires faithfulness from us.

As we consider Matthew 25, and from verse 14, the Lord speaks to us about the parable of the talents. Many of us read it from time to time; and it is easy to just read it, laugh and blame the servant who received the one talent and did not get something good from his own talent.

Three servants were called. One was given five talents; one was given two talents, and one was given one talent. The one with five talents traded and got five more talents, making ten. The one with two got two more talents. The servant with one talent decided to bury his Lord's investment in a napkin and hid it in the earth, expecting that, what was given him, would be found where it belonged...buried; because he misjudged his lord to be a *hard man*. The Lord gave his judgement on the unprofitable servant: "Bind him hands and feet and cast him into outer darkness. He was not faithful in that which was committed unto him.

May the Lord help us to be faithful; May he help us to apply ourselves unto the fact that the Lord our God is a wise investor.

Each time the Lord adds unto us physically, materially or spiritually, let's develop a mindset and consciousness that we are not going to receive the rain of heaven in vain.

Those in spiritual leadership and stewards of the mysteries of God must always remember that the things of God are not popular, and as such, the secrets of God are revealed to them that fear him (Ps. 25:14). He opens himself up to those that come to him. And because we come to him, he shall be faithful.

He has opened himself to us; we must be faithful also unto Him.

As we partake of the truths of the Lord for this last hour, we must be conscious of the fact that there is a great responsibility upon us. We are destined by God as people who shall round up His work at this time of the end.

We are men upon whom the ends of the ages are come.

The Kingdom race of the church age may be likened to the popular *relay* race.

In a relay race, there are four legs; and the most important of all the stages happen to be the first leg and the last leg. If the first leg is fine and the last leg is very good, it is very likely that such a team will win the race. And we have seen that

many of these mistakes of the second and the third legs are often made up for by the last leg.

Beloved brethren, we need to shudder as we consider the starting out of this work of grace and the Lord bringing us in at a time such as this!

In **John 4:38**, we are made to know that we are reaping (**entering**) the labour of other people.

The truth is that some of us are enjoying the fruits of the labours of others. We are not responsible for it.

There are people that have prayed and prayed into being, what some of us are now enjoying. We have to understand this.

People sowed into us and we have been reaping.

We must also now sow and labour in the kingdom of God, so that others also may reap!

OUR RESPONSE

In Revelations chapter 10, we see one of the revelations shown to John on the island of Patmos, speaking of an aspect of the summary of the Lord's work at this end time. There are two aspects to what John saw in Revelation 10:

(1) Verses 1 to 7: The vision of the mighty angel.

(2) Verses 8 to 11: The response of John to what was revealed by the mighty angel on the prophetic ministry, coming forth at this time of the end.

There is a prophetic word and ministry coming forth from the Lord for our time and for the times to come. It is a ministry with a message to the nations and to the people of God, especially God's people living in apostasy.

Rev. 10 verse 7 reads: *“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets”*.

In this discourse, we are more concerned with the response of John to what the Lord showed to him, rather than the body of the vision.

John, having been privileged to partake of this mystery in a vision, in verse 8, heard a voice giving him counsel as to divinely expected response. He was obedient to the voice.

Verses 8 to 11 show the response of John to that which he was privileged to encounter and to behold. I believe that there is a response expected of us, who are receiving and partaking of the mystery of the Lord at this hour.

Rev.10:8-11 reads: *“And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, **Go and take the little book** which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.*

And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

*And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and **ate it up**; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.*

And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings”.

The *little book* in Revelations 10 is the same book revealed in Revelations 5. It speaks of the mystery of full redemption which God promised the redeemed man, which only Christ could, unfold-Rev. 5:1-5.

John was told to go take the little book from the angel's hand, meaning: **Go and identify with what the little book represents** (The message, contents, instructions,etc).

John, not only obeyed in identifying with the little book, but also **ate it up**, as he was commanded.

What did he do by ***eating it up***, as he was commanded?

“...eat the whole of it”-(New Testament in modern speech by R.F.Weymouth)

“...eat all of it”-(The New Testament in the language of today by W.F.Beck)

There is a revelation of the glory of God in our time and the instruction is the same: (1) Identify with this revelation.

(2) Partake of it completely (Not partially or in half measure)

There is this sense of responsibility that must manifest in lives partaking of the visions God's glory!

Identifying with the Lord's prophetic word of the hour has implications: "*it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey*"-Rev. 10:9.

It shall make thy belly bitter: *meaning,*

"*It will be bitter to digest*"-(Moffatt)

"*It will give you great pain when you have eaten it*"-(W.F.Beck)

Those who partake of the visions and revelations of his glory, especially in prophetic unveilings, need to prepare for the many sided implications of such a privilege!

Digesting it may not be easy.

Living it out may even be more challenging.

But praise the Lord. Partaking whole heartedly of the Lord's prophetic truths, will prepare us for other phases of ministries, as revealed in **Rev. 10:11**;

"*And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.*"

Thou must prophesy again:

The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy!

You have testified of me before encountering me in the revelations of the present truth: You will yet testify of me; howbeit, in a new way and with better understanding, in a wider scope and in greater dimension!

It is not just sufficient to be in a church setting or fellowship, where God is unfolding his mind and saying many *deep things* and we can reel out all the deep things. The questions to ask ourselves are:

- Do we really believe these revelations?
- Am we really identifying with it?
- Am we eating the little book being presented to us?

There is tendency for excitements, whenever God unfolds new truths to his people. But the responsibilities that go with being custodians of divine truths go beyond excitements: “...*the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth...*”James 5:7

Excitements with divine revelations are not out of place. It is a stage, when the little book is in the mouth, sweet as honey. But it has, with time, to give way to the stage when that which is eaten enters the belly. No one eats food and leaves it in the mouth, to enjoy the taste forever. It is either swallowed and digested or

spewed out. And that is the stage of bitterness, “...*living by every word proceeding from God’s mouth-Matt.4:4.*”

It is one thing to have encounters in the visions and revelations of the mysteries of God; it is yet another thing to fully identify with it and also live by it!

Our calling as stewards of God’s mystery and grace is not an official one, associated with diverse bureaucracies as we see among many in the spiritual leadership of the present visible church. Let us remember that in the days of our Lord Jesus Christ, there was so much *officialdoms* in ministry.

In Matthew 9, Jesus Christ saw the multitude in Israel that “*they fainted, and were as sheep without shepherd*” (having travelled in preaching through all the towns and villages, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, in ministry and healing).

The more he labored, the more he had much to do.

But the question that should be asked is:

“Were there no shepherds or ministries in the land?”

The Pharisees and scribes were meant to be shepherds, having oversight over the people; but in the eyes of the Lord, there were no shepherds in the land. Why? Because there was so much of officialdom in their shepherding. This is similar to what we have today. Everything is done to precision and to give a good impression

of the assembly, but you know, not spiritual precision... so much physical things taking the place of the spiritual!

Let us play a scenario of what obtains in our present day church settings:

An assembly rents a hall and holds four services between 7am and 1pm.

First service: 7am-8.15am;

Second service: 8:30am-9.45am;

Third service: 10am-11.15;

Fourth service: 11.30-12.45pm.

Now, in such a rigid arrangement, can there be submission to the Holy Ghost?

I'm trying to explain what I mean by officialdom.

In the setting described above, everything is *Pam-Pam-Pam*. And you can not afford to be led by the Spirit beyond the time allotted you to function.

Everyone is already briefed on his schedule, and the whole atmosphere is so cosmetic: The man who is starting the service has been briefed that starting prayer is 7.00am-7.10am, and he cannot exceed the time! Even if the Spirit is moving, indicating otherwise, he can not afford to continue because the next person is waiting to carry out his own function...and according to specifications.

It's officialdom. By 7:15am, the choir must take over and sing till 7:45am. They cannot exceed 7:45am because at 7:45am, the man who is to take offering is waiting; and he does his own from 7:45am to 7:55am.

At 7:55am, the person who is to introduce the *man of God* must introduce him for five minutes and very well too!

It is the ministry of God's word that suffers the greatest set-back. There is always *shortage of time* when it comes to the ministry of the word. You hear things like:

"Let's just look at something briefly from the word of God before we depart. I promise, it won't take your much of your time, as I know many of you are busy people..."

So apologetic!

By 8.10am, the man of God rounds up the *word of advice*. He also can not afford to go beyond the time because the people are already looking at their wrist watches. Some are going to play golf. Some are going to watch home video; some are going back to the office, etc, etc. So... at the dot of 8.12am, they are singing the last song of the service. The people are now going... and the next set is coming in.

This is the situation we find in many *churches* today.

There is so much of officialdom in everything. You have the headquarters, where a large chunk of the percentage of the offering must be remitted. Even if there are

pressing needs in the local assembly, it makes no difference. You have to remit the money. If *the man of God* is not doing fine there, i.e., his branch is financially unviable, there can be a message from the headquarters posting him to another place, a rural place of some sort. It is even common place in some of the places to *induce* some of the administrative pastors at the headquarters.

In the days of Jesus Christ, these settings were there.

He looked at them and they were like sheep having no shepherd. They fainted.

The Pharisees were there, binding themselves everywhere with phylacteries, but no life.

We must watch out.

That which has begun in the Spirit must terminate in the Spirit!

We can not afford to allow officialdom to cripple our stewardships.

There are certain things that the prophetic spirit is speaking against in the church... and we must identify with it.

Go, take the little book. Agree with it.

Don't choose the portion you will eat, and the portion you will not eat. We cannot choose which to agree with, while we say regarding the seeming *tough* areas: I beg to disagree!

We have to eat everything in the book.

We must identify with it totally: Meditating upon it and making it a part of us; believing and agreeing with all God is saying, even if such indicts us!

We should examine the demands of our stewardship calling again and again

There are definite demands of the Lord on the people called into spiritual stewardship. We must ensure that we are not *officious* about the calling.

We must ensure that we practice the things God shows us from our encounters with him. This is how we can be faithful stewards of the mysteries and grace of God.

WE CANNOT RECEIVE THE MYSTERIES OF GOD IN VAIN, BECAUSE WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE UNTO HIM.

We cannot afford to allow in our lives the things that God condemns in his people.

We cannot afford to allow in our assemblies the things the Lord is rebuking or else we shall be found to be false witnesses.

We thank God we are not called to be false witnesses.

We must be ready to minister out of SINCERITY and also hold tenaciously and in trepidation, the mysteries of the Lord committed unto us.

God is a good businessman.

God has given us the privilege to know he expects a profit from his investments into us.

We cannot afford to be false prophets.

We must witness to the truth that we see and believe!

We must identify with the revelations of his truth and make it a part of us.

We must live it out, even if it will be bitter in our belly; because therein shall the strength lie to *prophesy* unto many nations and *tongues* and *peoples*-Rev. 10: