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THE COVENANT OF RESPONSE: THE CALL TO CONSECRATION

In the last editions we looked at several things that combinedly describe the true hopes of the believer. The first resurrection, the blessed hope of being like Jesus in all of His fullness and reigning with Him. The first resurrection belongs to those accounted worthy to be clothed to incorruptibility, immortality and Life.

In this meditation, we are going to examine in practical terms, the price the believer is expected to pay in order to receive the reward of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. There is a price to pay; a cup to drink from if we must share in the highest honours of the Kingdom.

We are to distinguish between the essential character of the grace covenant, a one-sided covenant that is entirely resting upon God for its performance and the response required of the recipients of this grace. God has bound himself with the word of oath to save to the uttermost, the seed of Christ. This is how we are to understand Genesis 22:16-18

¹⁶And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and has not withheld thy son, thy only son: ¹⁷That in blessing will I bless thee and in multiplying will I multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand, which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. ¹⁸And in thy seed shall all the nations of this earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Paul, commenting of this in Hebrews 6:13 ff

¹³For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, ¹⁴Saying, surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. ¹⁵And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise: the immutability of his counsel,

confirmed it by an oath: ¹⁸That by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a string consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hope upon the hope set before us: ¹⁹which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth that within the veil; ²⁰Wither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made and high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

It pleases the Almighty God to fully commit himself and all resources at his disposal to fulfil the promise he made to Abraham and his seed. Redemption is unconditionally provided and unconditionally guaranteed to the SEED. All must on account of this, be strengthened in the inner man with much assurance

On the other hand, we find numerous scriptures that counsel on the Spiritual condition in which grace may be enjoyed to the fullest. The Kingdom of grace crowns those who treasure its riches enough to heed divine counsel.

The Lord Jesus Christ teaches on the necessity of self-denial and aliveness to God as required of those who will be worthy of a place on His throne (Matthew 16:24 ff)

In the same vein, the prophetic finger in psalm 50:5 seems to indicate that God is committed to acknowledging and blessing those who make covenant with Him by "sacrifice.". In between these two passages of scriptures are to be found the main elements of the challenge of consecration.

We may rightly view the covenant of sacrifice as one-sided, voluntarily entered into by those who greatly treasure the riches of divine grace. The goodness of God has provided that those who answer the high calling should be taught the way of consecration.

The believer's call to consecration is contained in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 9:23-26 (see also Matthew 16:22-28; Mark 8:31). It is taught in all scriptures, but these words of our Lord bring out very clearly the fact that all that must come into the estate of glory and honour that he now occupies, all that would become like him and see Him as He is, are required of God to pledge their humanity in a covenant of sacrifice, walking in His footsteps. Luke 9:23-26 reads

²³And he said to them all, if any man would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. ²⁴For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. ²⁵For what is a man advantaged, if he gains the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

"If any man will come after me"; that is if any man will be my disciple indeed, if he will come into the same office, the same glory, the same honour I entered into, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. For what is a man advantaged if he gains the whole world and at the end be a cast away? That reminds us of the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:27. He says, "Lest by any means, after I have preached to others, I myself will be a cast away"

So, it is possible to be a preacher, a servant of God and still miss out of the high calling (i.e. be a reject). The Lord himself says, *Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my father, which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name cast out devils,*

and in thy name done many wonderful works? And I will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matthew 7:21-23)

Notice that in verse 23 of Luke 9, the Lord puts this matter of our call to consecration in three particulars. First, we are to deny ourselves, Secondly we are to take up our cross, and thirdly we are to follow him. In order to sponsor a more practical understanding of this subject however, we will examine seven elements that together constitute our call to consecration. These are

Self denial

The devotions of prayers, praise and worship

The study of God's word

The practice of (habitual obedience to) God's word

The practice of self judgement

Sharing in the labours of love

Developing the Spirit of the Lamb

We shall discuss each of these elements in turn.

Self denial

This occupies a central position in the believer's call to consecration. Yet it is in this point that many fall short of the call. Self is a great enemy to the believer. It is perhaps the last enemy that must be overthrown in the lives of many. The Lord Jesus Christ said *if any man would come after me, let him deny himself*. Self-denial expresses itself in many ways. We can look at it in two broad senses; in relation to things that are illegitimate (which are not allowed a believer called to share in the rulership of heaven); and in relation to things which, though legitimate, are not expedient. (1 Corinthians 6:10; 10:17)

The first part of self-denial has to do with denial of the world. We are required to deny the world and its lusts. A believer that lives in the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh or the pride of life is still very worldly and has not started to run the race set before him. He has actually not seen the Kingdom, as he should. Deliverance from fleshly and worldly lusts is the first proof that a man has

received the knowledge of God. The grace of God that has appeared to us teaches us to deny ungodly and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world (Titus 2:12). Grace teaches and enables

However, world denial means more than fleeing from every appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22). It requires that the believer must separate himself from the world and its systems. A believer that gets himself very involved in partisan politics for example certainly does not know what the high calling enjoins us. The politics of this world is a dirty game. We cannot be actively involved in the Kingdoms of this world in such a manner without defiling our garments (Revelations 16:15). We must wait for the time God has appointed for us to rule and in his own Kingdom.

The same thing applies to the economic (commercial) and religious inclinations of the present world. In as much as we must live and do business in the world, there are things the believer must certainly not be involved in if he is serious with the calling of God upon his life. The believer must separate himself from all religious arrangements (assemblies) that are revealed to be contrary to God and His worship even though they are clothed in Christian garments.

We are shown clearly in scriptures that all who are to be seated with Christ in his throne must be virgins in their heart devotions towards the Lord. They must not be defiled with women (Revelations 14:4); and the denominational church systems are women. Thus deliverance from denominationalism and all the evils associated with that order of things is a must for all who seek to come after Christ. We must go to meet him out of the camp, bearing his reproach (Hebrews 13:13-14).

There is also a level of involvement in the world's affairs that defile the soul. For example, active participation on social-cultural clubs does not build God's Kingdom; (and we are not here talking of professional associations etc). It rather shows that a soul is spiritually sick and does not know what it means to be called out of the world. We are told that *no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this world, that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier.* (2 Timothy 2:4).

We are called to be crucified to the world, and so live in a manner that makes the world itself to be crucified to us! (Galatians 6:14) Paul says, "*Let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus*" (Galatians 6:17). Our lives must be hid in Christ, in God, unavailable for the world to make use of to further its course (Colossians 3:3).

The other aspect of self-denial involves denying oneself of things that are allowed of God, things that are legitimate, the misuse of which nonetheless, could be inimical to attaining to the highest and best in the Kingdom. This constitutes a very difficult aspect for many of the called-out ones.

God has justified the believer in Christ; hence, he is entitled to all the blessings of life. He has the right to enjoy life to the full, as long as sin is not in question; however, at the point of consecration, a man's rights, his desires, longings and aspirations are laid upon the altar in exchange for the Father's will.

What influences a man's choices in life? From where does a man draw his springs (Psalm 87:7): What are his ambitions and goals? Where is his heart? Lot lifted up his eyes and beheld all the plains of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, even as the garden of the Lord (for so it always appears to the carnal minded), like the land of Egypt, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Then Lot chose him all the plains of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east (Genesis 13:10, 11). We know the rest of the story.

Paul says, "*they that strive for mastery, must be temperate in all things*: (2 Timothy 2:5). We can unknowingly hinder ourselves by the choices we make in life. We can be so involved with our jobs and business in a manner that beclouds our primary calling. A believer can gradually lose sight of God's calling because the heart has been taken over by the legitimate cares of this life.

The call of consecration (self-denial) involves a real cost to the believer. We have our Saviour as a worthy example to follow. The Lord Jesus Christ had opportunity to become great in men's reckoning, but he sacrificed all that upon the altar for the joy that was set before him. May the Lord give us understanding. Whenever family (and extended family) demands, economic and social interests that are allowed us, clash with Kingdom demands and interests in our lives, we must know that we are to love him above all.

The hours available to us for leisure must be used to the profit of our souls and of the Kingdom. We are to redeem the time, endeavouring to carve out more and more of the hours of the day to attend to the matter of our calling. Similarly, our material resources are to be available to serve God's interest. A man certainly has not known the love of God, as he should when he holds tenaciously to his resource, straining out only a little to serve the cause of the Kingdom.

The Devotions of Prayers, Praise and Worship

The next point in our call to consecration is the devotions of prayers, praise and worship. We cannot become what God wants us to be in Christ Jesus without attending daily at the altar of devotional prayers, praise and worship. We must be daily supplicants before the Throne of grace from which we obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need (Hebrews 4:16). The Lord commanded us to pray lest we fall into temptation (Luke 2:40, 46). Paul says that one of the greatest resources in our lives as believers is a life of prayers. We are to *pray always with all prayers and supplications in the Spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplications for all saints* (Ephesians 6:18)

We must labour in prayers for ourselves, our homes and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. A believer that does not know the prayer altar intimately cannot overcome the influences of the mystery of iniquity. Such a one cannot amount to anything great in the Kingdom. The anointing flows from a broken life, from the altar of agonising prayers, from a life offered to do the will of God alone. This is the meaning of Gethsemane. In the place of prayer and supplications, we receive, in increasing manner, the supply of the Spirit of Christ (Philippians 1:19).

Associated with prayers, intercession and supplications, is thanksgiving, praise and worship. These as incense must always be mingled with our prayers. (Revelations 8:3). A soul that lives in agonising prayers and does not know the joy of spirit-borne praise and worship may have a short lifespan. In the same vein, worship may be only soulical and empty when it does not come from a heart that has known prayers, intercession and supplications.

A man that does not pray cannot really praise and worship God; for the two are complementary. For a man that lives by the altar of prayers, worship becomes a passionate appeal to the Throne and majesty of God and God cannot withhold his mercies and interventions from such a soul. In worship, we tell God that we love him, we believe in him and we give glory to him. There, we assert our confidence and faith in God and his ability to accomplish what God has shown us to be his will. It is strange, but the Bible shows us that God depends on the prayers, praise and worship of the saints God waits eagerly for it. The spiritual blessing that comes to a soul, as rain is dependent on the measure of grace he has known in the place of prayers and worship. The same is true for a local congregation of God's people; Job 36:27 says, "*for he maketh small the drops of water; they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof*".

Implied in the call to the devotions if prayer is fasting. This is a necessary element in effective prayers. The Lord says, "When ye fast..." (Matthew 6:16) In Isaiah 58, we are shown the benefits a properly used fast brings upon the believer. Fasting is a means to an end not an end in itself. It helps to bring our flesh under, to wait on the Lord in our spirits and sharpen our spiritual senses to be able to relate with God more effectively on issues we have brought before him.

The believer may assign to himself regular days of fasting (even if it is just one day in a week); time separated to commune with and wait upon the Lord. Through fasting, we can know great leaps in our prayer life.

The Study of God's Word

In prayers, praise and worship we talk to God, but for fellowship (communion) to be complete, we must allow God to talk to us. God talks to us through his word (the written word) and the operations of the Holy Spirit, revealing the mind of God. Of these two, the word of God is the supreme means by which God communicates with his people today. In fact, all that God will say through the operations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit will always be in agreement with the written word.

For us to know the plans and purposes for us, His will for our lives and for His church, we must study the word of God. We cannot know Him his ways, thoughts, plans and desires for us and for His people except we come into His Word; and if we do not know Him, we cannot love Him. If we do not know what He has freely given to us in Christ, we cannot enjoy these things. If we do not know His plans and purposes, we cannot serve Him aright. If we do not know His will and mind about a matter, we cannot obey him, neither can we pray, for the Word of God is the fuel of prayers.

God will not have us to be ignorant concerning things that belong to our redemption (1 Corinthians 10:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:13). Neither can the believer afford to be willingly ignorant (2 Peter 3:5); for to be devoid of knowledge is to perish! (Hosea 4:6) We must be enriched in God's word, if we must have a fruitful prayer life and live successful Christian lives. The word of God must dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16). Paul says for us to *study to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (2 Timothy 2:15). Peter says we should be *ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason for the hope that is in us* (1 Peter 3:15)

The word of God has the power to instruct, guide and change us if there is a hunger for it, and a thirst for righteousness. The called must long for the bread that proceeds from the mouth of God. He must daily ask for the heavenly manna that quickeneth. He must create time and learn to wait on the word of God in the reading of the scriptures. (For even the mere reading of God's word brings profit), in the systematic study of God's word and in meditation.

In this regard, there are two environments the believer must regularly place himself in order to hear God's word. The first is personal fellowship; the second is the fellowship of the body of Christ. Personal devotion with God is vital to the Christian life. It is the believer's birthright, but there are many things the believer cannot hear from God and know about him except as he receives these of other members of the body of Christ. It is both unfaithfulness to God and folly on the part of the believer to habitually absent himself from the fellowship of like-minded believers. We are counselled to *forsake not the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some* (Hebrews 10:25).

If the believer is to grow into all that God has planned for him, he must make full and faithful use of his personal fellowship with the Lord and the fellowship of the local expression of the body of Christ to which he belongs.

The Practice of Obedience

The called in Christ must not only put himself in a position where he can hear God's word, he must obediently practice God's word. James 1:22 says, *but be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. We are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ* (1 Peter 1:2)

The Bible teaches that the believer has power to obey God's word. *As many as received him, he has given the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name* (John 1:12). Sin cannot, and should not have dominion over the believer. For him, the Lordship and tyranny of sin has been broken and he is commanded to live in righteousness. 1 Peter 1:14 says *obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.*

To hear the word of God and not seek to obey it (put it into practice) is to be courting divine displeasure; *"for the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God, but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected..."* No matter what a man may claim to be doing or have done for God, if in his own life, he has not learnt to practice obedience to God's word; he will come to a great loss at the end of the day. Such has actually built his house upon the sand (Matthew 7:31-27). We are to practice obedience to God's word in all things, both in little and great things (2 Corinthians 2:9). They come into the same glory with him indeed who have learnt to *follow the lamb whithersoever he goeth* (Revelations 14:4). Whatsoever God reveals to us in His will, we must do, if we are to be found approved in His sight. This touches on all aspects of our lives.

It is in learning to walk in the light of God that we have, that we are able to sustain real fellowship with God and to continually hear his voice (1 John 1:7). God will stop speaking to us if he sees we have a habit of disobedience. Obedience to God's word is also the only proof that we love God. The Lord Jesus Christ said *if ye love me; keep my commandments* (John 14:15). It is as we cultivate habitual obedience to the voice of God that He builds his life into us.

God exercises a lot of patience towards his people in this regard, giving the necessary assistance and help (rain) needed for us to bear fruits. We also are called to be patient with ourselves. It is by patient continuance that we inherit the promises. James 5:7 says *be patient therefore brethren, unto the coming of the Lord; Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receives the early and latter rain.*

The Practice of Self Judgement

Associated with the practice of obedience is the practice of self-judgement. The scriptures enjoins us to *judge ourselves that we may not be judged* (1 Corinthians 11:13). We are to examine ourselves daily in relation to our calling and how we are faring on the path that God has called us unto. (2 Corinthians 13:5)

At the end of the day's activities (at least) a believer should be able to sit before God in the quietness of his spirit and look over the day, how it has been. Has he lived in the consciousness of God's presence? Has he brought any profit to the Kingdom, assisting another to come into a better knowledge of God? Are things beginning to spring up in his life that are injurious to his spiritual aspirations?

All the above questions and more the believer ought to consider daily. Where he finds shortcomings, he is to cry out unto God and receive grace from the throne to live a better life. In addition, he is to make the necessary self-adjustments that the light of God's word and wisdom would indicate.

The practice of self-judgement is a vital element in consecration. It helps to keep a soul focused on the heavenly calling, looking unto Jesus. Through self-judgement, a man is able to see failings in his life, and deal with them before they take root and become an embarrassment both to him and to his Lord. The journey to failure and apostasy (such as make a believer unfit for the Kingdom) is actually a very long one. A man does not fall in a day. It takes a long time of wilful disobedience and rebellion for a soul to come to that point. God often speaks, corrects, strives and seeks to intervene in a man's life long before he becomes a reprobate (2 Corinthians 13:5).

When a man has learnt to judge himself, examining himself daily, with a heart ready to make any necessary self-adjustments, such a man cannot fail (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Somebody has said that given the covenant of grace, and God's commitment to fulfilling His promises towards the seed of Christ, a believer must really be determined to fail, for him to fail. May the Lord give us grace to understand this.

The practice of self-judgement is closely linked with watching. The porter is commanded to watch (Mark 13:34). The Lord Jesus Christ commanded us *to both watch and pray, lest we fall into temptation*. We are to watch over our lives, our homes, and our ministries.

We are also to watch over the church (the local expression of the body of Christ with which we are associated), and watch events around us to hear, through any of these, the voice of the Lord unto us on any particular issue.

We are also to watch men, individuals that God may indicate something about to us. By that, we are able to follow the Lord's mind and leading. May the Lord enable us to be faithful in this aspect of our consecration.

Sharing In the Labours Of Love

The labours of love concern services that are carried out with a view to bringing an increase of God's rule, government and redemptive blessings to others. Our lives are to be laid down for the blessing of our brethren. We are told that *greater love had no man than this, than a man lay down his life for his friends* (John 15:13)

Our participation in the labours of love should stem from the understanding of Christ's love for us. He loved us and gave himself for us. In appreciation of that love, we give ourselves to serve the purpose for which he died. Paul says, *the love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them* (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15)

One of the characteristics to be developed in the seed of Abraham (which we all are; Galatians 3:29) is that the seed is to be a blessing. Through the seed, the nations of the earth are to be blessed. Thus, each of the called must learn how to bring blessings to men through the gospel.

There are three spheres in which we can share in the labours of love, apart from the offering of our natural resources to serve the cause of the Kingdom.

Praying for the prosperity of the gospel of the Kingdom in the lives of men and women in the local assembly to which we belong and also in other fields of Kingdom work.

Labouring in the midst of the local church by means of the measure of the gift of Christ that has been given unto us (Romans 12:3; Ephesians 4:7). Each believer is expected to be a blessing in the local church in which God has placed him or her. Through a faithful and dedicated use of the gift of grace, the believer is to grow into a steady ministry within the local church. If he continues in faithfulness, the believer is eventually raised up into the estate of the five-fold ministry (Ephesians 4:11) and he becomes a ministry gift in the body of Christ everywhere.

Looking up unto God for direction and guidance to share the gospel of the Kingdom with others of the Lord's people who have not come to the proper understanding of God's purpose for us in Christ Jesus i.e. our brethren that are still in the denominational church systems, as well as ministering to the unsaved.

Every believer ought to be involved in all of these three divisions of the labours of love in an increasing manner. God will require of us what we have done with the knowledge and graces he has given us (Matthew 25:14-30). We must love truth enough as to make ourselves servants of truth. God is to come to profit and great increase on account of our lives.

In relation to the labours of love, we are called not to love our lives unto the death, (Revelations 12:11). Even if the labours of the Kingdom will cost a man his life, he must be ready to give it up if he is to be accounted worthy of Christ. In Matthew 10:32,33 and 39, we are told, *whosoever therefore shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that looseth his life for my sake shall find it.* The Lord spoke these words on the occasion of the sending forth of the disciples to share the good news of the Kingdom with their brethren (the lost sheep of the house of Israel)

Developing The Spirit Of The Lamb In The Face Of Oppositions And Persecution

The general environment in which all the called-out ones are to be tested is unfavourable to righteousness. The present world lieth in wickedness. The world is opposed to God and to His rule. Thus, every effort at righteousness, every advance of the Kingdom, is strongly contested by the world.

The implication of this is that in our participation in the labours of the Kingdom, (especially in the last sphere mentioned above), we are bound to meet with opposition. Hence, the Lord says in Matthew 10:16-18, *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues* (many times, scourging is done with the

tongues of men); *and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the gentiles.*

Enduring in a loving disposition, persecution, contradiction and opposition that come one's way in the course of doing the Father's will is part of the calling of the believer. The Passover (Christ) must be eaten with bitter herbs (Exodus 12:8). Paul says, you and all they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12)

We can only escape opposition of men when we are not faithful. If we are faithful in our consecration vows and do the things we ought to be doing, men will persecute us. They will call us odd names; they will mock us, spite us. We will be seen as infectious disease and many will shut doors of opportunities against us, just for his sake. We are told in Matthew 10:24,25 that *the disciple is not above his master, or the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciples that he is as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?*

We will encounter pain as we seek to share the message of the Kingdom with our brethren. There is just no other way to it. Men will growingly persecute you; and quite often these will be your own brethren; men and women who claim to love the Lord Jesus Christ and to be serving Him.

This has always been so in the history of the church, right from the days of the apostles and right through the dark ages. The Lord says in Matthew 10:21, 22 and in John 16:2 *and the brother shall deliver up the brother to death; and the Father the child, and children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be out to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. They shall put you out of the synagogues, yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.*

The persecutions, tribulations, trials and pains that come a believer's way in the course of serving truth, may however increase or diminish him. If the persecutions and tribulations are taken in a wrong spirit, (that is the believer develops hatred against the persons persecuting him, and rather than praying for them, begins to curse them or speak evil against them; or develop hatred or cold-heartedness towards God), then the believer has not learnt right the way of the LAMB of life. Unless that condition in him is corrected, he may lose what he could have gained on account of his faithfulness in following the Lord.

For sufferings for the gospel's sake to add credit to us, we must maintain a sweet and loving disposition in the face of opposition. We are not to lose our savour (Matthew 5:13). We must not return cursing for cursing or railing for railing. We must not develop hatred for our brethren or our fellow men or murmur against God. Rather, we must take everything in the Spirit of Jesus and even increase in our labours for the Kingdom. Matthew 5:11, 12 says, *blessed are ye when men revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake, Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven for so persecuted them falsely the prophets which were before you.*

Tribulations ought not to separate us from the love of Christ, nor distress, nor persecutions, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword (Rom 8:35). Philippians 1:29 says, "For unto us it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake". When we have learnt to endure persecutions and afflictions for the gospel's sake, then are we walking in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then will we as lambs; be found with the principal Lamb upon the mount Zion (Revelations 14:1). What a joy that will be.