

# The Torch

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# PERSEVERE TILL THE END

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; - 1Pet. 1:13 KJV

The devotional today is a follow up to the devotional titled "He Earned Your Praise" where the true Christian was made aware of the grace that for granted through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This includes the sufficient empowerment of the Christian to overcome the challenges of the devil and the preservation of a great reward in heaven for the Christian that successfully perseveres and overcomes all the trials and temptations in the world – 1Pet. 1:2-6. Today's devotional further emphasises the need for the

Christian to ensure that he/she remains firm in faith such that when Jesus returns, which he will surely do, the faith of such will bring praise, honour and glory to the Lord. Simon Peter is of no doubt that such Christians, for believing with joy unspeakable in someone that they did not meet physically, they will definitely be rewarded with salvation of their souls on the day of judgement – 1Pet. 1:7-9. Simon Peter went further to reveal that the grace that the Christian was enjoying today was one that the prophets of old, having being prompted by the Holy Spirit earnestly sought and desired but were told that their awareness was just for the purpose of creating a foundation for those who will receive the grace and not for them – 1Pet. 1:10-12. What a great love the Almighty

demonstrated for the Christian today and for which the grateful Christian will be expected to reciprocate by remaining faithful through all trials and temptations till the return of Christ. The truth remains that every thing that the Christian requires to withstand these trials and temptations have been provided by the Lord and all that remains is for the Christian to play his/her own party by remaining determined to persevere, fully aware that all that the Lord has promised to reward with, He will surely do.

It is with this in mind that Simon Peter in the scripture that is the foundation of today's devotional and verses fourteen to seventeen of the same chapter of this his first letter, gave the following advises to help the Christian remain standing till the end.

1. The Christian should have a mind that is alert and fully sober. The devil who is the only enemy of the Christian is constantly on the prowl and the Christian must never be caught unawares. He is always scheming, coming up with new devices which we are advised never to be unaware of. In order to be on top of one's game as a Christian with regards to this tricks of the devil, the Christian needs to have a sober mind always. To be of sober mind here means to not take things lightly, especially things related to the spirit. A very playful person cannot be classified as a sober mind as such will not have the temperament under such emotional state to view things in all its ramifications, a major characteristic of a sober mind. A sober mind is able to subject all issues to spiritual analysis and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is able to see the tricks of the devil when they exist. Such will be successful in attempts to remain standing spiritually till the coming of the saviour.

2. The Christian should set his/her mind on the expected goal that Jesus is coming with when he returns. Just as the one that desires to be successful in a race focuses on the finishing line, likewise the Christian is expected to focus on the goal of the heavenly race which is salvation. The one that is salvation-minded at all times will see the greatness of the reward if he/she achieves the objective and this will always serve as the motivation for persevering through all the difficult times that trials and temptations bring. In all things the advise in the Bible that the Christian should focus on the author and finisher of his faith must be taken to heart.

3. The Christian should avoid evil desires that characterised life before being born again. Jesus Christ himself in his advise to Christians revealed that focusing on all these desires which he classified as evil is the nature of pagans and should not be found in the Christian. He expects that the Christian will focus on heavenly goals with assurance that all those earthly desires will follow. It is the intention to make this earthly desires the priority that break the resolve of the Christian to retain his/her faith during trials and

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temptations and that will make them evil.

4. The Christian should aim for the Almighty God's standard of holiness. There is no doubt that the one that has as the major objective, the attainment of God's standard for holiness will never be enticed or fall for the temptations that earthly possessions can be, especially if they are prioritised. Such people continue to make the Almighty God's view on every step they intend to take as the determinant. With this as the rule for their lives, they will only live godly lives which with no doubt will lead to them being rewarded with salvation in the end.

5. The Christian should always remember that he/she is a foreigner in this world and so must live a life governed by reverent fear. Beyond the fact that worldly acquisitions lose all their relevance as soon as the owner dies, is the fact that there is another stage after this life that will determine how man spends a more permanent existence known as eternity. Not only will all those acquisitions have no value after leaving these existence, the manner of their acquisition may just be the reason why such an individual will spend eternity in hell. Heaven and Hell are permanent destinations of human soul and the choice of where the soul goes after departure from this realm is dependent on how well an individual is able to withstand all the pains and discomforts of the trials and temptations in this world. The one who is able to remember that everything in this world is temporary and the only certain event in this world is death will rather prepare to have a more comfortable living in the more permanent destination rather than have all the comfort in this very temporary world. No matter how long an individual lives, he/she is certain to die and so all must be concerned about the fate of his/her soul after life in this realm.

There is no doubt that success will be achieved in attempts to live a Christian life worthy of salvation reward if these advise of Simon Peter is adhered to. There is simply nothing in this world to make the Christian consider or want to swap all the great promises in the life after life for. All in this world according to the wisest man that has lived and will ever live is vanity upon vanity. True wealth and riches exist with him and that is what He has prepared for all those who persevere and remain faithful to Him till the end. May our God grant us the Grace to remain standing through all life's trials and temptations in Jesus name. Amen.



# IT IS SERVICE, NOT A SHOW

All over the world, Christians like several people with common interests, often come together for several purposes ranging from religious to social. This coming together no doubt helps to strengthen the faith of the individual Christian and fosters stronger ties amongst the brethren. The writer of the book of Hebrews, in calling on Christians to persevere, advised that they should not give up meeting with fellow brethren (Heb. 10:25) just as the wise king in the biblical book of Proverbs emphasized the point further with the simple phrase of “iron sharpens iron” – Prov. 27:17. By this it is implied that the coming together of Christians allows for the faith of one Christian to rub off positively on the other and vice-versa.

As earlier stated, the purpose of this gathering may not always be religious as it may also be social, either for reasons of celebrating achievements and milestones or commiserating with one another over unfortunate incidences that is not unusual for anyone who resides in this realm, being a Christian or not. However, the primary objective for gathering as Christians should be for the worship of the Almighty God and whatever may be the purposes for Christian gathering, the common interests that is bringing the individuals together must always be topmost in the mind of all, which is that the Almighty God must be honoured. This is because of the expectation that the people gathering as Christians are bound by their common decision to worship Yahweh as the only true God and have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. They have accepted all Christian principles and are bound by the decision to live by them. In most cases, they identify themselves with a name that people who do not belong to this group know and may be unaware that a standard, based on the one with whom they are associated, in this case, Jesus Christ and the Almighty God, has been set by these people who are

constantly monitoring their actions. This external people who are already well schooled in what the two foundational characters of the Christian faith stand for, are quick to constantly want to measure compliance of Christians to these standards. Obviously this is not because they love both foundational characters, but because they constantly seek a way to ridicule the Christian and his faith and thus bring the name of both foundational characters into disrepute.

With the constant monitoring of Christians by this negatively minded people who are agents of Satan, it becomes very important that Christians conduct themselves in a manner that does not to give these negative intentioned people the opportunity to ridicule the Church. They will need to watch their conduct, especially when they are gathered under circumstances that relate to their faith, be it social or religious.

Unfortunately, this consciousness seems to be missing amongst Christians today as several Christians who gather today do not seem to caution themselves sufficiently during such gatherings. Several actions are on display that are completely opposite to what is expected of people who belong to a Christian group. There is hardly any difference in modern times between the group of Christians and that of non-Christians during social gatherings, as Christians throw all caution to the wind. Christians behave like people who should only be Christians in church and no where else. Even our homes are not excluded in this discriminating approach to living the Christian lifestyle as family members and neighbours begin to wonder whether indeed we or our group are truly and genuinely guided by Christian principles and doctrines. We completely ignore the advise of Jesus Christ to us, to allow our light to shine so that the world may see our good works and

thereby glorify our father in heaven – Matt. 5:16.

It is not that they consider their own lifestyle as bad but see us as hypocritical and deceitful when we increasingly become thirsty for their lifestyle and even sometimes outshine them in some of these activities. They are in doubt about the genuineness of the foundational characters of the Christian faith, that is the Almighty God and Jesus Christ, but they cannot understand how we will be able to explain our hunger for their own lifestyle when they clearly know that their lifestyle is purely out of tune with what the foundational characters prescribe for the Christian.

Christians at social gatherings deliberately go out of their way to prove to non-Christians that they can beat them in their game rather than attempt to showcase the virtues of the Christian life so as to use the platform as a soul harvesting opportunity. The challenge is not only with the songs rendered and manner of response to such songs, as much as the conduct of Christians at such gathering which completely contrasts what is expected of us as Christians.

Worse is the modern trends of importing this activities into gatherings that are solely for religious purposes. In a bid to show that Christians too are up-to-date with modern trends, activities that are completely against biblical doctrines are freely introduced, all in a bid to be a little like the world in what is termed an attempt to win more souls. The Bible says a little yeast corrupts the dough – Gal. 5:9. It will usually start with an innocuous action supposedly aimed at encouraging more people to freely identify with the Church and gradually eats into the entire fabric of the Church. Very soon it becomes the norm as the normal becomes abnormal.

The gathering of Christians for religious purposes, which really should be a rendering of service to the Lord has gradually turned into a show off session where everyone try to outshine one another in activities that seem to be in honour of the Lord. We are eager to spot the speck in the eyes of others in order to project us as very spiritual but we are actually growing the log that is in our eyes, which is the increasing appetite for worldly activities. Christians for example, are more critical of the manner of dancing of a brother or a sister, which no doubt must be done in a very decent manner, without giving consideration for the intention for which the dancing is being done in the first place. The truth is that the intention behind every dance step, whether considered decent or not by all standards is very important to the Lord. Who are you really trying to impress? This situation runs across all activities in the church today. From Ministration on the pulpit, to our dressing, to the use of our spiritual gifts, to our singing and basically all human activities as there is hardly any

aspect of our activities during our religious gatherings that can be exempted. No wonder, our services have become nothing but a platform that provides us opportunities to practice what we think we are missing or have been missing, when we took the decision to be Christians. This no doubt has reduced our services to a show, mainly done to impress man as the Almighty God and His son Jesus Christ will not be impressed by such carnal minded actions – 1Sam. 16:7.

We must do all we can to restore the sanity of service and avoid the shows that we are constantly engaged in as we cannot afford to be spiritually tepid. We have to be either hot or cold – Rev. 3:15-17. We must learn to give what is Caesar's unto Caesar and render to the Almighty God what belongs to Him – Matt. 22:20-22.

The Christian life is a life of Service to the Almighty God and not a supremacy Show or competition amongst men. We must take a decision on whom we want to serve as we cannot belong to God and the world at the same time – Jms. 4:4. As much as Christianity should not mean social isolation, the expectation is that we will do all that we have to do, social or religious in a manner that will glorify the Almighty God and His son Jesus Christ rather than bring them into disrepute – Eccl. 7:16. May God help us to live a life worthy of being called Christians in Jesus name. Amen.



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