**Cross And Crown Christian Outreach**

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**You Need To Add Value To Your Life.**

**The elders of Gilead said to him, “Nevertheless, we are turning to you now; come with us to fight the Ammonites, and you will be head over all of us who live in Gilead.” -** Judges 11:8 NIV

The unfaithfulness of the Israelites to the worship of Jehovah is no longer news to anyone who is familiar with their, as they were never able to sustain it for a continuous period, and similarly, Jehovah also did not hesitate to punish them, on each occasion that they become adulterous towards Him. They had on this occasion, done the usual by not just forsaking the Lord and refusing to serve Him, but had gone ahead to serve the gods of other nations, and Jehovah, in anger, equally sold them to the Phillistines and the Ammonites, who did not hesitate, in shattering and crushing them, thereby putting them and their brethren in Judah, Benjamin and the house of Ephraim under oppression for eighteen years – Judges 11:6-9.

Not being able to bear the oppression of their enemies, and as it is usual with them, they called on Jehovah, confessed and admitted their errors and sought for His forgiveness. Although Jehovah initially rejected their entreaties, wondering why they stopped worshipping Him in the first place, since He had always been there for them, and asking them to go and seek help from the gods that they chose to worship, he eventually yielded to their pleas when they made it clear to Him that they had no intention of giving up on seeking forgiveness and help from any other, but Him, and this they demonstrated by riding themselves of all the foreign gods in their midst – Judges 10:10-16.

Having successfully reconciled with Jehovah, they set out to find a leader amongst them who will be Jehovah’s tool to lead them into battle (Judges 10:17-18), and none was found qualified sufficiently to play this role amongst them than Jephthah the Gileadite. This was a man who was reputed to be a mighty warrior but whose brothers had stigmatized and rejected, questioning his legitimacy as a son to their father and joint heir to their inheritance, simply because his mother was a prostitute – Judges 11:1-5. He had because of that lost respect, relevance and recognition of all his people and so, chose to relocate to Tob, with a group of adventures who decided to follow him, only for the elders of Gilead to approach him to lead them into war.

In the scripture that is the foundation of today’s Devotional, they not only pleaded that he led them to war, but promised to reward him with the leadership of the entire Gilead, should he be victorious. It came as a shock to him as he must have wondered why he of all the so called “legitimate” children, not only of his father, but of other Gileadites, was chosen for such task and potential honour. These were probably the same people who were aware of the treatment meted to him by his brothers but chose to conveniently look the other way, only for them to pleading with him to lead their battle lines. To them, it was no longer about who his mother was but what he had transformed himself into. It was no longer about the value of what his father left behind, but his present value based on what he had transformed himself into. He had succeeded in developing himself despite his supposed handicap, and this he achieved because he refused to allow the judgement of his people, using the condition of his mum at the time of his birth, to weigh him down into the self-pity mode. He eventually got them to make a vow in the name of the Lord, to keep to their promise, once he succeeds in battle, one which both parties also re-confirmed before the Lord at Mizpah – Judges 11:9-11.

Although he initially preferred a peaceful approach to the war and so made entreaties to the king of the Ammonites, the refusal of his overtures in that regard left him with no choice than to go into battle which he won, though victory was achieved in not too pleasant circumstances, due to his decision to pronounce a pledge that he did not give deep consideration to before making – Judges 11:12-40. The rejected stone had eventually become the head cornerstone.

Many people there are today, Christians inclusive, who blame their inability to overcome life challenges and succeed in them, on the foundation of their birth, or the deliberate actions of people. They hold on to straw-like reasons, to justify their failures in life. Such people should be able to learn some lessons from the story of Jephthah, who for no fault of his, came into the world through a path that men have chosen to stigmatise. His step-brothers had conveniently chosen to ignore who his father is, and would rather focus on the circumstances of his mother when he met their father, thereby relegating him to the position of an outcast in the society. He, by that action of theirs, must have suffered so much emotional trauma, with his chances of success in life negatively impacted, especially when he had to go and live far away from his people, yet he never allowed his head to drop, as he continued to develop himself by adding value to his life. Although he was already reputed for his battle prowess, he was still not considered qualified to be part of the family, yet he continued to make himself relevant and his resilience by continuing on the path of personal development eventually paid off.

The path to success will always be littered with people and events that will constitute obstacles but that is not sufficient reason for anyone to fail, as such obstacles are not unique to the one complaining. Never stop acquiring skills or improving on those already possessed, even in that position of rejection, in order to improve your person, and thus be positioned to impact positively on the lives of others, like Joseph did in the life of the cup-bearer to the king whilst in prison – Gen. 40:1-22. Yes! It is true that you experienced all those misfortunes and attacks, but in truth, the reason why you are still down is the attitude that was put up at such times. Rather than seeking to add value that will counter whatever negative, true or false, that is being used against, you chose to go into the self pity, anger or revenge mode.

Every one that is considered a success today encountered one or all those obstacles that you may want to reference but still succeeded, so those obstacles on your path should not be the reason for not succeeding in life. True! There are indeed individuals who are bent on ensuring that you fail, by implementing actions that will not be to your advantage, but it is not unique to you either. It will always be your responsibility to look beyond them and their negative actions and effects, by working out divine plans to overcome them, in order to achieve success. There must always be the deliberate act avoiding going into the self-pity mode and choosing rather continue to devise new ways of overcoming them. Every successful person has a story to tell, but that was after they had become successful. Let your story be similar to that and not one that is told in order to attract sympathy. No sympathy seeking individual will succeed in life as such acts is reserved for failures.

Yes! You need the sympathy, but you cannot set out seeking sympathy as success is not achieved on a platter of gold. Do all that is within your ability to overcome and the only outcome of doing that will be success. You are the only architect of your life. Add value to your life by constantly drawing up divine plans that will lead to your success, especially in the face of adversity, as that remains the best approach to all those challenges. May God grant us all the requisite skill that will add value to our lives in order to achieve relevance and success in Jesus name. Amen.