

LAYING UP A GOOD FOUNDATION AGAINST THE TIME TO COME

AN ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF GOD'S KINGDOM SOCIETY (GKS) –
THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD – BROTHER G. O. IFEACHO TO THE YOUTH FELLOWSHIP
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Dearly beloved Youths in Christ,

HAIL JEHOVAH AND JESUS CHRIST!

May glory, honour and praises be to our heavenly Father, the Creator of the Universe, for His abiding goodness on us whom He has graciously called into His Holy Organisation to learn His righteousness and to get life by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

I am immensely grateful to God for the protection accorded you all that enabled you to arrive here safely by His grace. This is particularly so in view of the growing problems of insecurity in various parts of the world, including Nigeria. The Lord's Ministry heartily welcomes you all to this august occasion, I also commend you for the enthusiasm with which you approach the annual Zonal Youth Assembly and the Combined Assembly held here in Warri once every three years. I pray God to continue to bless you and to use you to project His name by His grace.

My address to you in this year's Youth Assembly is entitled: "Laying up a good foundation against the time to come" The word "foundation" according to the *Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English* means, among other things, "that on which a belief, custom, way of life, etc, is based". But in the context of this message, the word "foundation" means knowledge and lifestyle that affords us a good standing-place and a well-grounded hope of salvation, by the grace of God. The time to come means "the day of final judgment" when God Almighty through Jesus Christ will destroy the devil and all that answers to unrighteousness on earth. With proper grounding in the truth, we should be able to stand firm against error so as to be boldly confident of being hid in the day when the Great Judge will take vengeance against His enemies.

Challenges of today's youth

The youthful age is one of the most challenging periods in the life of a Christian. Apart from the pressures you have from your age mates for you to go against your faith, there is the tendency towards pride, vain confidence, high-mindedness, and wrong placement of priorities. The exposure to the Internet, satellite television and other media of communication, result in the youths getting

mixed messages, resulting, for some youths in a tug-of-war between meeting the incompatible demands from parents, teachers, friends and oneself.

Social scientists tell us that in their eagerness to achieve adult status; young people tend to resent any restrictions placed on them. They invariably believe that their parents are over-anxious and over-protective. This is at times due to a generation gap, a situation whereby parents and teenagers have different preferences as to values and beliefs, about clothes and music, etc. A number of youths value the opinions of their peers, especially their friends, above that of their parents. This usually creates tension between parents and young people. Some youths have even left their homes for days because of this. Some youths even question the significance of the church in view of what is happening in the society generally today, in terms of drugs, unemployment, frustration, and crime, and so on.

A number of youths also face problems of broken homes, which means that they cannot even come home to a safe and nurturing environment provided by father and mother, where they can receive love, safety and discipline, among other things. This could hurt very deeply and could be a source of anger.

A major issue confronting young people today is unemployment. This affects their ability to develop their potentials and actualize their aspirations and meet their needs. Unemployment leads to financial worries, frustration and discouragement.

However, no youth of GKS should be discouraged or frustrated by the stresses of the times, because the Bible had long predicted them. (2 Timothy 3:1-5; Daniel 12:4,8-10) Ordinarily, it is expected that sensible youths would prepare well against the hard times by acquiring vocational and academic skills that would enable them to contribute effectively to the development of the society to which they belong so as not to be tempted to engage in shady practices or businesses in future. This requires the knowledge of God, faith, the practice of righteousness, hard work and so on. The Bible enjoins us to learn from the industry of the ants which provide their food in summer, that is, at the most appropriate time. – Proverbs 6:6-11.

The reference to summer does not mean that we should stop working in winter. Rather we should keep doing what is practicable, right and reasonable at each point in time. We should not ignore godly opportunities for self-sustenance. The Bible enjoins us to “give a portion to seven and also to eight”, adding: “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.” (Ecclesiastes 11:2, 6) Those who are diligent and patient, who use their time well, will no doubt reap the fruits of their labour by God’s grace. - Ephesians 5:15,16; Proverbs 22:29.

Spiritual Qualities

It is by shunning or avoiding the tendencies to sin and cultivating the virtues that make for righteousness that we can build a good foundation against the time to come. Apostle Paul warned: “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” - 2 Timothy 2:22.

Before one could do works of righteousness, one must have faith, and faith comes through knowledge based on honesty and willingness to do the will of God. The Bible says that “for a soul to be without knowledge it is not good”. (Romans 10:17; Proverbs 19:2) It is by the accurate knowledge of God that one is able to know what God wants, how He relates with His people and His power to save. - Psalm 19:7-11.

But it is one thing to have the knowledge of God and another to put it into practice. For the fact that it is dangerous to know what to do and fail to do it, (James 4:17) we should always strive to be practical Christians. The Scriptures are not written in vain but to be believed and reflected in our daily lives. The prophet David stated: “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” - Psalm 119:9-11.

I therefore exhort you my beloved youths in Christ to explore to the fullest every opportunity to grow in the knowledge of God. Attend your Bible Study Meetings, Divine Services, tribal Group meetings, Sunday School Classes and so on. The Bible says we should not forsake “the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:25) Ensure that you read your Daily Devotional Guide. Constantly reading God's word is an excellent way to avoid the pitfalls or wiles of the devil by the grace of God. That way you practicalise the injunction of King Solomon, to wit: “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” - Ecclesiastes 12:1

Above all, it is the true knowledge of God that gives life. Hence Jesus Christ prayed: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” - John 17:3.

Another quality I wish to highlight is faith. Faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Romans 10:17) Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews 11:6) It is when one's prayers are based on faith that God will answer them. (Matthew 21:21, 22; James 1: 5-8) Faith is known by works and when maintained under trying conditions, yields such qualities as patience, temperance, tolerance, godliness, charity; etc.

When as Christian youths, you are determined to practise your faith; you should not allow people of the world to determine how you dress. You should dress as those professing godliness and not in a way that people will mistake your identity. – 1 Timothy 2:9, 10; Matthew 5:27, 28.

I also enjoin you in the Lord to avoid friends who would want to lure you from the upright ways of the Lord. (Proverbs 1:10; 19:27) Do not allow them to make you feel inferior. You are on a high level spiritually. The Bible says: “The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them.” (Proverbs 12:26) Always remember the case of Rehoboam who listened to the advice of his

misguided colleagues as against that of well-meaning elders, and the disaster that resulted therefrom. - 1 Kings 12.

Sinful Lusts

Some youths in the world are easily lured by the prospect of instant wealth which impels them to indulge in all manner of evils. GKS youths should not allow themselves to be misled by a situation in which dubious characters who are rich are accorded honour while persons who labour or who are honest and hard working are ignored. Those who do not merit such honours will in due time find out that they had given themselves to vanity and vexation of spirit. – Psalm 73: 1-22.

In this connexion, I wish to refer to a publication in *The Guardian* of Thursday August 4, 2011, which stated that the Delta State government had, allegedly, foiled a scheme by some students already benefitting from its bursary programme to defraud the government of over N80 million by enlisting the names of 33,000 fake students in the scheme. A particular student was alleged to have registered 77 times with various names but with the same bank account! The culprits would soon be prosecuted, according to the newspaper report.

Recently, a bizarre story has started making the rounds that several young girls, because of money accept to be part of baby factories set up by some unscrupulous businessmen and women, who lure girls to be producing babies for them for a fee. The *Vanguard* newspaper of July 30, 2011, at pages 12 and 13, quoted the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) as saying that “several young women, driven by deep poverty, lease out their wombs and volunteer themselves as regularly as biologically possible to produce babies for sale in a number of centres masquerading as maternity clinics, foster homes, orphanages or shelters for homeless pregnant girls”. The babies are sold for N150,000,- N450,000. The girls are paid between N20,000 to N30,000. We must condemn this practice in strong terms as prostitution; deceit and trafficking in human beings are debasing, immoral, exploitative and sinful and violate the laws of God. - Leviticus 19:29; Deuteronomy 24:7.

We should run away from everything that answers to unrighteousness. The Bible says: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” - 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. See also Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-5.

It is those who practise what they know as demonstration of their faith that will be protected by God against the tribulations of this age and be saved in His Kingdom. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ declared: “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And

every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it." - Matthew 7:24-27.

Reward and Punishment

From the declaration of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, it is clear that those who make the mistake of confusing personal righteousness or the traditions and opinions of men with the righteousness of God; who deliberately do their own will and not that of God, will not be saved. Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Saviour stated: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." (Matthew 16:27) Also talking of the justice of God in rewarding each person according to his deeds, St. Paul asserted: "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." - Romans 2:6-9.

St. Peter in his general epistle highlighted such qualities as diligence, faith, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, charity as virtues which must be in every Christian and abound lest they be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. He added: "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth." - 2 Peter 1:5-12.

Now that we have the opportunity we must do our utmost to cultivate Christian qualities and do works that will stand us in good stead for salvation by God's grace. God Almighty declared through His prophet Zephaniah: "Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD'S anger come upon you. Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger." - Zephaniah 2:1-3; see also Ezekiel 9:5, 6.

May God Almighty, Who has helped His children, the youths to gather for the Youth Assembly, continue to guard and guide you all in all the activities of the Assembly and enable you to do His will at all times so as to have life in the end by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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