

## **OF INDEPENDENCE, REST AND RISE.**

“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28)

Burdens are exhausting; they wear and tear not just the body, but the spirit and soul. Difficulties are hard to bear yet they could be just for a moment-could be short/lived. In fact the apostle Paul describes them as light and momentary. Godly rewards are eternal.

Independence to a people is like a jubilee. Rightly, its package should be release or freedom, rest from controlled and slave labour and developmental rise and swell. It is the cutting off the chains of colonialism and leaping forward into the sphere and gains of personal initiative and creativity. It is you personally grading your way, paving your way and driving yourself to reaching your goal and thereby your destiny in best and most meet of ways.

Nigeria is 60 today. This is the attainment of no mean age. Attaining 60 passes you from the precious to the more precious; from the golden age to the diamond. Yet the diamond that we are today as a country, rather than embossing and magnifying its luster, appears to be diminishing and waning with every additional year. Sixty years of self-rule and labouring for self, has not produced in preciousness, the commensurate developmental landmarks to stand us out as admirably valued as diamond. Though not under any human colonial master, we seem to have all the years been labouring in the negative-slaving for Satan the devil.

For sixty years we have laboured, are wearied and burdened killing one another unabated. From civil war to Maitasine, land matters and tribally motivated mayhems, religious fundamentalism and the merciless felling of innocent precious lives; political thuggery and hired assassinations of perceived political enemies, the Boko Haram insurgency, the Fulani militia attacks, the unyielding monster of kidnap, arm robbery, banditry, ritual killings, greed which has given rise to an endemic corruption, nepotism and its marginalizing wing clippings in trading ability for mediocrity.

Sixty years ago, we gained our political independence from the colonial master, but for same sixty years down the road, we have not gained our spiritual independence from the Devil-Satan-the most cruel of slave masters and slave drivers.

What did we bid for at independence? Success or failure, growth and development or self-dwarfing and retrogression? Sure, a new born comes into the world a sign of hope. But as growth continues, impediments to proper development may set in and growth gets crippled and one fails. Yet failure is not the end of life so long as there is still life in one. For no man is worthy to succeed until he is willing to fail. And failure for the

learning ignites and propels success. The one who falls and desires to rise, gets determined, gets back up on his feet and moves forward. So when we fail, it is only right that we strive to succeed again. When we fall, life will only meaningfully pick up when we get up back on our feet and progressively positively forge on ahead.

Success is the bride of life. And what a great feat it is when we succeed? And it is said that success has many siblings but failure is an orphan. Yet in both religious and political circles, no man is morally worthy of success until he is willing to cede the honour of success to another if God so wills. In other words, when you succeed, do not hold tenaciously to the honour. Always know that greater honour is ahead. The honour of the moment thins out with the moment and we quickly look forward to another.

Should we then as a nation be paralyzed by the past? No! The past must be the past and cast away with its rightful place in the pit buried and forgotten. Our heart, as a people must not dwell in and be subject to the past. As such, wrongs or mistakes of the past must not paralyze us. In the 1970s were so bright, cheerful and full of genuine life spiritual and political, and then for some reason, we veered off, made some tragic mistakes, let some ill wind infiltrate our psyche, our radar failed and our sail lose its direction. That has left us paralyzed on the high sea of our sojourn helplessly struggling to get our veins, tendons, sinews and muscles back alive and working. And though we may be paralyzed right now, paralysis is not death but a hopeful condition that Jesus can turn around. Did he do it for the paralytic in Mark 2:1-12? Then as an emergency case, taking all risk and placing their lives on the line, with every sense of faithful determination, Nigeria must be rushed to the emergency ward-throne of grace the feet of Christ by none but Nigerians who truly love it. Like the case of the boy with epilepsy, Mark 9:14-29, we need to implore and deploy prayer and fasting and mean it, to revive, rescue and restore Nigeria from its paralysis. To indeed get out of it, we may need to fast, weep and pray our way out. Past wrongs that we have done to ourselves and which have left us wounded, past failures that look irrecoverable, times we thought to have gone close to winning yet never won, or present atrocities and sins against God and ourselves which are real and have left us with practical and complicated implications in wounds and hurt, we must be agreed to take to Jesus for healing. Every dirt of evil, every dirt of wickedness manifesting in the numerous vices that have plagued and bedeviled us must be sponged out of our spirit, sponged out of individual hearts so our ascendancy to the altar and throne of grace with our pleas in penitent cups are not hindered.

At sixty, an excessively laboured, wearied and burdened Nigeria needs to respond to Jesus' call to come and have rest. We need rest from our evil and wickedness, from our bloodletting and unrepentant religious, economic and political corruption, from our greed driven and envious ways, from our unproductive and unprogressive ways. We must rid ourselves of all ills and illicit deals. We must cleanse and sanctify ourselves

from every form of unrighteousness. The sanctuaries-places of worship must be cleanse of every religious manipulation and indecency. The pulpit and pews must be fumigated and continuously consciously sanitized. Heart and not facemasks must be won with regularity and without a ceasing.

Nigeria is potentially one of the greatest nations of the world in the offering ordained by God. Have I, have you been a hindrance to his move through the Nigeria nation? In what way have you constituted such a blocker? Would you, would I let him get me off the way? Would we submit and surrender to God's working out his will-wonders and new things through us individually and collectively? Would we let Him have his way through us? When we do, Jesus will heal and revive our paralyzed state. He will quicken Nigeria again and restore to us all of the years of the locusts (sinful) devastation and all that the cankerworms of evil and wickedness have eaten. Hear what he said in his word, "For as the heavens are far above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so has he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:11-12).

**NIGERIANS-UNDER GOD, BE TRULY INDEPENDENT, REST AND RISE.**

+Jwan.