

KEY NOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY ELDER ONOH OKWARA ONOH
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PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE ON SATURDAY 19TH OCTOBER, 2019
MCA 2019 THEME: MEN, BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS - Joshua 1:9
CONFERENCE THEME: STRONG AND COURAGEOUS MEN AT THE GATE, Esther 4:2

KEY SCRIPTURE: Joshua 1:1-9

TEXTS:

Joshua 1:9 ~ *Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."*

Esther 4:1, 2 ~ *When Mordecai learned all that had happened, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city. He cried out with a loud and bitter cry. He went as far as the front of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Before Moses died in the land of Moab (Deuteronomy 34:5), he had laid hands on Joshua (vs 9) setting him apart as his successor, as directed by God. Joshua did join the children of Israel to mourn God's quintessential servant - leader, Moses for thirty days (vs. 8).

In spite of the on-going, we see God announcing to Joshua that "Moses my servant is dead" (Joshua 1:2). Why did God need to jolt Joshua to the reality of Moses's passage? The reason could be that Joshua wasn't just following a leader, he was following a legend. Moses had been Israel's security blanket for the forty circuitous years they spent in the wilderness. He literally couldn't imagine himself filling the large and empty shoes of Moses, who was described as the most humble man on earth.

Moses' success as a leader was not based on his ingenuity or creativity. It was the presence of God in his life that was the pivot of his success. No wonder God, three times in the first nine verses of the Book, encouraged Joshua to be strong and courageous, Joshua 1:6,7,9. It was a command and not a suggestion, Joshua 1:9. God further assured Joshua that "No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. In the same manner, it is the presence of God in the lives of God's children that will make them to be bold and courageous.

Joshua is a man like us. He faced uncertainties of the future of his life and that of God's people, Israel, when he considered the enormous challenges ahead - conquering Canaan and distributing the land among the tribes of Israel. Today, we and our families face the same uncertainties considering the level of insecurity, economic meltdown, infrastructural decay, moral decadence in the society and a Church that is largely ceremonial than truly exercising the power that there is in the name of Jesus Christ.

In this address, we shall be engaging us with God's purpose and blueprint for MEN with the hope that as we give up the CHARGE of our lives individually and allow the Lord Jesus Christ to manage our lives we will experience the strength and courage that God has always made available for His children. You can live a victorious Christian life.

When the Holy Spirit takes total charge of our lives, we as men will know the mind of God as well as His plans and purposes for our career and communities. Like Mordecai, we will be able to feel the burden of the Lord and His people and cry, wail and mourn at the strategic gates that the Lord has placed us in. The grand purpose and plan of God for the Church and our Nation shall be established in Jesus name, Amen.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 **Strong:** To be strong means to be able to withstand force, pressure, or wear; secure, well built, indestructible, well-fortified, well defended.
- 2.2 **Courageous:** It means not deterred by danger or pain, brave, plucky, fearless, valiant, valorous, intrepid, heroic.
- 2.3 **The Gate:** It is an opening in a wall or fence; A means of entrance or exit to a city. Gates are entry points, usually strongholds which keep an inheritance secured for its owner against intruders. Gates are very strategic and very important in the life of a community. Important and life transforming decisions are taken at the gates.

3.0 MANHOOD IN GOD'S PURPOSE

Most of us men do not understand God's purpose and plan for us. We have rather lived out our role as men based on the definition of our culture, family, the world and our social circumstances.

3.1 The Challenges of Manhood

- ◇ Concerted effort is being made in the world to reduce to the barest minimum the differences between men and women. Thus, many of us do not have a clear understanding of the purpose, position and performance of both sexes. This confusion has made some men to abdicate their God given function as the male man.
- ◇ Poor Understanding of the Headship Role of Man: We have been brought up to believe that men must be served. All they do is to dish out orders which must be obeyed by our wives and children. Thus, they must be tough hard nuts that their wives cannot easily crack. Such men must not show the emotions of tears. Men on the other hand who cultivate a viable relationship with their wives are seen as weak men whose wives have brought under subjugation.
- ◇ Terrible Worldly Lifestyle: Many of us men have been caught in the stranglehold of terrible worldly lifestyles: barefaced illicit sex, girlfriends and multiple wives, social drinking and outright alcoholic, drugs, smoking, clubbing, cults etc. We were made to believe that a man must have a vice, thus supporting our indulgence. We take pride in doing evil.
- ◇ Lack Of Interest in Godly Things: We don't take the Bible and prayer seriously. Family devotions and prayers are left for our wives to lead in our absence. We arrive late at church services believing that the Minister and Elders should be glad that we even came to church. No wonder when we are boxed into a corner by the vicissitudes of life we start patronising prayer houses and such despicable places. We do not have the power or preparations to handle such matters.
- ◇ Workplace And Business: We have seen the workplace as a veritable platform to engage in bribery and corruption; cheat on our employer's time; oppress and suppress subordinates who refuse to be used for our nefarious activities. Many produce and market fake goods not minding the hazardous effect on the people.
- ◇ Demonic Attacks: Some of us have suffered severally from demonic oppressive attacks. For some, we may have entered into satanic bondages knowingly or unknowingly, or were initiated by our parents or guardians. These demonic activities have taken a toll in our lives, families, businesses, health etc. The fear of repercussion has held a few in greater bondage.

- ◇ Defeated Family Life: For many, family life has been drudgery. We have lost interest and are looking for a way out of the trauma. This has brought about a spiralling effect with the attendant pressure on the family, loss of joy and hope. At the beginning, it was not so.

3.2 GOD'S DIVINE PURPOSE FOR THE MALE MAN.

Matthew 19:4 ~ And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female,"

There is a clear purpose in the mind of our creator for the male and the female. There is a high and hard calling of manhood. When we seek and understand God's purpose for the male man, then we will start living maximised lives with strength and courage. Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, exhibited true characteristics of manhood. He embodied true masculinity, selflessness and sacrifice.

- ◇ **Man Is the Head of the Woman**

1 Corinthians 11:3 - But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

We must throw away ignorance and embrace the knowledge that we were created to establish and achieve certain things for God on earth. This knowledge will bring you to a level of responsibility.

The purpose and plan of God is that the Head of the woman is the man, just as the Head of the man is God. We must be present in the Garden and take charge, less the devil deceive our wives. We cannot afford to be absentee husbands and fathers any more. Even when we are present and refuse to take charge, we give room for the devil to wreak havoc in our homes.

When a man exchanges or outrightly abdicates his role, several things will go wrong. We end up passing the buck as we enter the blame game cycle.

We have God's divine mandate, authority and responsibility as the Head of the woman. This is not a call for primitive male chauvinism. It rather calls for openness as we reject the need to cover up sin and shame in our lives.

- ◇ **Man Is the Image and Glory of God**

Glory speaks of the optimal demonstration of a thing. When the word of God says that we carry the glory of God, we must ensure that we do not live lives that will require us to cover God's glory in our lives. Let's deal with every sin in our character that will tarnish the glory that we carry.

Manhood manifestation is more important than money or any fame that we are willing to die for. Our wives and children will stand properly when we live out the glory of God.

Creation is earnestly waiting for your manifestation as a son of God.

- ◇ **Be in God's Presence**

The primary purpose of God for the male is to be in the presence of God. The plan of Satan is to chase man out of the Garden, the presence of God. He succeeded with Adam and Eve and must not succeed with us. No wonder many men, outside the Garden are searching for God in one way or the other. We must seek to return to the Garden, to God's presence. God's intention is for the Garden, His presence, to move over the earth as far as the waters cover the sea.

The Scriptures abound with examples of men who stood in God's presence and carried the presence of God and made palpable differences. Prophet Elijah, Paul, Moses and our Lord and Master Jesus Christ will readily come to mind.

We were created to carry the full grace of God. All that your wife will be should come out of your fullness of Grace. From the riches of your fullness of grace and spirituality, your wife will tap into it and manifest. It is necessary, therefore that the man must develop himself spiritually.

◇ **Godly Husbands and Fathers**

Genesis 18:18 &19 – *“since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”*

Malachi 2:14-16

¹⁴ *Yet you say, “For what reason?”
Because the Lord has been witness
Between you and the wife of your youth,
With whom you have dealt treacherously;
Yet she is your companion
And your wife by covenant.*

¹⁵ *But did He not make them one,
Having a remnant of the Spirit?
And why one?
He seeks godly offspring.
Therefore take heed to your spirit,
And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.*

¹⁶ *“For the Lord God of Israel says
That He hates divorce,
For it covers one’s garment with violence,”
Says the Lord of hosts.
“Therefore take heed to your spirit,
That you do not deal treacherously.”*

Men are called to exercise authority over their wives and families not out of self-interest. Our love for our family must be with sincere compassion and Godly love bearing in mind that we are carrying out a divine assignment. Thus, we must strip ourselves of all manner of selfishness and everything that massages our ego.

God's command for men to love their wives is not a suggestion (Ephesians 5:25), but a divine requirement if we must fulfil God's calling and purpose. Interestingly, loving our wives also carries the implication of submission. It is deep. We must get to the point where God can trust us to raise a kingdom family, just as He trusted Abraham. You can fully achieve God's plan for your family when you raise a kingdom family for Him, a family that will carry on the plan and purposes of God into future generations.

As the Head of your wife and family, you must be ahead. Your family will gladly follow your leadership when there is something in your head. You must be leading from the front as the Priest, Provider, Protector, Preserver and

nourisher. We are called to bear the burden of our families, show them compassion, correct and discipline them in love, instruct them and set appropriate boundaries in love.

4.0 MAN AT THE GATES

Proverbs 31:23 - Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land.

Genesis 22:16,17 - and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.

God is very interested in gates. God's purpose for manhood is to possess the gates. If a gate is possessed, it's only a matter of time before those within the gates will willingly submit themselves to the conquerors of the gates.

As kingdom ambassadors, we are missionaries in the marketplace. Each of us has been called to be a missionary to the people you do business with and interact with daily. We are men on a divine mission.

God has set before us open doors at the following Seven Gates:

- * Arts, Entertainment and Sports
- * Business and Finance
- * Church and Religion
- * Distribution, Media and Communication
- * Education and Training
- * Family and Community
- * Government and Law

We are God's gatekeepers at the above gates and we must take up our position and occupy for Jesus Christ. We have been complaining for too long. This is the time to take over the gates so that the King of Glory may come in.

As men, God's men, we are the Gatekeepers of our great Church and God has given us the keys to decide what to permit and what to prohibit. We have been appointed to be watchmen over God's heritage. This is a grave responsibility and a call to partner with God to ensure that His purpose for our Church for saving souls and expanding it is fulfilled. We must therefore have the correct hearts and walk in holiness and righteousness.

Mordecai effectively occupied the Gates of Family, Community and Governance. Being in the presence of God, he understood God's divine agenda and purpose. He raised Esther with the understanding that she was a child destined to be used mightily of God. At the most critical moments, he occupied his gate and ensured that Esther took the necessary steps to seek the favour of the King for God's people. When the King finally signed the edict to annihilate the Jews into law, Mordecai wailed, mourned and stood at the gate. At long last his perseverance, faith and courage paid off.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Joshua 1:8 -This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

It is a great privilege to be a male man. This privilege carries with it grave responsibilities and the attendant authority. We must exercise this authority with love, faith and hope. The strength and courage we need to carry on

successfully as men derives directly from our deep fellowship in God's presence. The study and meditation on the Word of God accompanied by prayers of faith will help us to be strong and courageous in the midst of the challenges of our time.

People are earnestly waiting for us to manifest at our specific gates for God!

Thank you and God bless you richly

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