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"THE WAY OF DISCIPLESHIP"

LESSON 3: TOTAL SEPARATION

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INTRODUCTION

At conversion, two fundamental operations take place in man. Firstly, the Lord Jesus comes to dwell in man. It is for this reason that Paul, the apostle, could say, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). Secondly, as a result of the first operation, the person is born anew, born this time by God. A change of parents takes place. Before the new birth the person had the Devil for father. At the new birth, God becomes the person's Father. He becomes a member of a new family, the family of God. The person also changes nationality, for from the new birth onwards, his true citizenship is of heaven. (Compare lesson 4 on "The Way of Life"). Henceforth, there ought to be separation from all that belongs to Satan. The flesh (the "SELF"), the world and all the things therein (one's natural family, the tribe, the fatherland material possessions, etc). We saw in lesson 1 of this course that the preliminary condition to become and remain a disciple is supreme love for the Lord Jesus and for the brethren in Christ.

In actual fact, we cannot love the Lord and the brethren in a supreme way as long as we are not separated from "SELF", the world, and the things in the world, including the family, tribe, country. In the lesson we shall study the manifestations of a life that knows no separation and present to you the Bible's solution to this problem.

Paul FOKA

I. TOTAL SEPARATION FROM OTHER BONDAGES

The Lord Jesus said, "if any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).

The danger of family ties is hidden by the fact that they are legitimate. Family ties are very strong. They often stand in the way of people following the Lord. One man said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my house" (Luke 9:61). He said to another, "Follow me" But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father" The burial of the father took the first place and Jesus would not permit it.

Family ties are even more dangerous because the right family ties are God's will for His people. What is good and legitimate can easily go wrong. We tend to naturally just consult our family members and their opinions matter to us. There are many people who have turned away from following the Lord because of family ties - a demanding wife or husband or children, and the demands of the Lord have been relegated to a second place or given up entirely.

There are many men who have been hindered from pursuing the hard demands of the cross because of their wives. They ask, "If I leave this position or that, who will supply the needs of my wife and children?" In the African context there are many young men who cannot face the total demands of the way of discipleship because, somehow, the demands of family force them to look for a well-paying job so that the needs of their families can be met.

Knowing these things too well and also having experienced them Himself, the Lord made His austere demands. In other words the passage in Luke 14:26 is saying, "If you are going to be a disciple, your love for me has to be so great that it eclipses all your right of love for your family and you will have to love me so much that in obeying me, you will act as if you hated them, for you will say "no" to their demands and say "yes" to my demands."

For this to be possible, there has to be a separation from your relatives. The Lord Jesus must separate you from these other loves so that you love your relatives only for the Lord's sake. What we mean is that your love for the Lord must be so total that there is no room for any other love except that which the Lord permits you to have for His sake. therefore the disciple gives all his love to the Lord Jesus and loves his relatives with a new love that is not his natural love but which he receives from the Lord Jesus to pour out on them for His sake. In this way, family love will result from Jesus' love and family love will exist only as far as the lord Jesus will allow it.

This means that the disciple must accept the separating knife of God to come between him and all whom he loves. Abraham loved Isaac to the point where that love threatened his love for the Lord. *So* God got into the situation and with a knife separated Isaac from Abraham. Later on Abraham loved Isaac with a God- given love. The relationship deepened and matured but it was not quite the same relationship again. It was a new relationship, deeper and God-centered.

Besides the bondage of family relationships are tribal ties. To some believers who have an inordinate love for their villages, tribes, nations, etc the Lord says, "If any one comes to me and does not

hate his own village, tribe or nation, he cannot be my disciple" Dear brother, do you then pass the discipleship test at that point? Village, tribal or national love may seem normal to you. It may be encouraged under the umbrella of development and care for others but the crucial thing to face is whether or not Jesus is at the center of that care for others. Brethren, think again and re-assess everything in the light of the demands of the Lord and the inescapable judgment seat of Christ.

One of the most shocking things I have had to face is the fact that for many believers, yes, true children of the kingdom, tribal considerations take precedence over the love for the Lord and tribal love impairs a true sense of balance and justice in natural and spiritual things.

At the age of 20, I had one passion in my heart -my love for Africa. I wanted Africa to be totally liberated. I dreamed of a free Africa united and prosperous. I believed then that the late President Kwame Nkrumah would lead the continent to that great Day. When he was overthrown, I did not eat any meat or any such thing for three weeks. I was fasting partially in the hope that he would be reinstated and lead us. At 21, I found the Lord or, to be more accurate, He found me, picked me up, changed me and the passion I once had for Africa, is only for Him now. I see Africa, through His eyes - lost and without hope outside of Him. I see Africa, along with the rest of the world under the judgement of God and without a real future. How then can I give my heart to that which has already been crucified and condemned? The apostle Paul said, "But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me. I to the world and the word to me. Yes a twofold crucifixion. Galatians 6: 14).

The Lord looks for people who will confess today saying, "God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of Christ, by that cross the interest of my father, mother, brother, sister, children, village, tribe, etc in me has long since been dead and I have long since been dead to my father, mother, brother, sister, children, village, nation, etc." Only such may become disciples. The others are excluded. They have by misplaced affections excluded themselves. Are you included or excluded? This is a far-reaching question. Its repercussions on you may be eternal. Stop, think, and face the issues squarely. Do not deceive yourself like some believers who, by many acts of compromise maintain unholy links with their parents, children, marriage partners, while claiming that if they are "too hard" towards the latter, they may lead them further away from the gospel. This is not true, it is a lie of the devil. Conversion is a divine operation, and no one can help God by disobeying God. God will never listen to the prayers of those who want to help him by compromising the truth. It is only from a position of total separation that the believer can co-operate with God to bring about the conversion of members of his family. A believer is in a family like an open door leading to salvation. All those who compromise themselves because of unholy sentiments towards their family, block the gate leading to the kingdom of God to themselves and to all their family.

II. SEPARATION FROM SELF

2.1. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF A SELF LIFE

The Lord Jesus said, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). No one can go far with the Lord who does not put an end to his self-seeking life. The self may manifest itself in:

- a. SELF-ADMIRATION . Here you admire your looks or your accomplishments, so that when you look at yourself in the mirror, you nod with approval saying silently to yourself, "I am indeed beautiful or handsome." Or you look at your academic or social accomplishments and just nod with approval as if to say, "Am I not really great?" This is self-admiration. It is the worship of self. No one can go far in the service of the Lord until he is delivered from self- admiration.
- b. SELF-ADVERTISEMENT. This is the whole desire to be seen. Everything is done so that you are seen. There is a burning desire that people may see all that you are doing. Such people may be dirty at the personal level but they will do everything to appear clean in public such that you cannot reconcile the public figure and the true person. They will do everything to create the wrong impressions about their spirituality. They will fast to be seen by others. They will pretend that they do not want anyone to know about their fast, yet they will be so disappointed if no one knew. They will pretend to give to the Lord in secret, yet they will ensure that their "secret" gifts are known and their spirituality reckoned by man. They will compare themselves favorably with others always choosing as "partners" those whom they can outshine

with ease. Such people live to be seen by others and those who ignore them are treated as bitter enemies and the worst is done against them.

- c. **SELF-CONGRATULATIONS.** This is very closely linked with self-advertisement. The one who advertises himself wants to be congratulated. Such people detest the companionship of able people. They may allow one capable person to get close to them but it has to be someone who recognizes them as great and with whom association seems to improve their feeling of important. Other capable people are resisted and sarcastic comments are made about them lest they should get some of the congratulations that self so badly desires to feed on. Such people do everything to win the congratulations of others. If they are not praised, worshipped, ... they feel more like deflated footballs, withdraw into themselves and seek attention through moods.
- d. **SELF-LOVE.** This may manifest itself in an indisciplined life. The person may love his appetite so much that he will feed them generously. If he is proud, he will feed his pride while pretending to say that he is not proud. Such people filled with self-love may give away many things and give the impression of being generous and sacrificial but the root is in themselves. They do it to impress or to satisfy a secret desire in themselves. They really love nobody deeply. They cannot sustain any deep relationship but will establish countless superficial relationships that satisfy their ego but minister nothing deeply to the other person. Such people are master organizers but they run away from doing anything themselves. They will do great harm to anybody or persons who stand in the way of their self being worshipped. Those who criticize them are greatly detested. Those who do not see their works are greatly disliked.

They set themselves as small kings and yearn for a group of admirers to run round them and bow down to them many times a day. Such people prefer to go with people who, for financial, emotional or other reasons are totally dependent on them so that their worship is guaranteed.

Such grave faults cannot help anyone to make spiritual progress. A person is always in the greatest danger when he feels most needed, when he has made some real progress or there is the manifestation of some unusual gift or the operation of some ministry of God that blesses many hearts. It is here that the self-life which was always there but in hiding comes to the surface and desires a king's or a queen's throne.

Love is blind and self-love being the most powerful love is most blind. The people who are most wrapped up in the self-love are those who would be shocked the most if they were told of their condition.

But they must be helped. Someone needs to warn them before tragedy strikes them beyond recovery. This is what actually happened to one man of God and I will just let you read the story for yourself the way it is given to us in the book, *Beyond humiliation*.

The story of John Tauler, who in the fourteenth century was recognized as the greatest preacher of the age, is full of instruction. It was in 1331 that Tauler passed through the great crisis of his life. Had he not known what it was to be utterly rejected, and had he not been willing to drink the cup of humiliation and shame to its last bitter dregs, he would never have known what it was to be fully accepted. The journal of those days is available, having been preserved by one of the select band known as "The Friends of God".

Tauler had announced that he would preach on the highest degree of perfection attainable in this life. The chapel of the famous Strasburg Cathedral was crowded long before the time of service, for multitudes hung upon the lips of Dr. John Tauler. He preached on the necessity of dying utterly to the world, and to our own will, and of being yielded; what he described as "dying-wise" into the hands of God.

While he discoursed eloquently along these lines, there was one man in the congregation who knew that the preacher had but an imperfect personal knowledge of the truths on which he dwelt, and that John Tauler was far from dead. This man was Nicholas of Basle, an eminent "friend of God", well known in the Bernese Oberland as a saint of God possessed of profound spiritual insight and knowledge. As he listened he said: "The Master is a very loving, gentle, good-hearted man, but despite his understanding of Scriptures, he is ignorant of the deep things of God." After hearing Tauler preach six times Nicholas sought an interview with the preacher.

"Master Tauler," he said, "you must die!" "Die," said the popular Strasburg preacher, "What do you mean?" inquired Tauler. The next day Nicholas came again and said "John Tauler, you must die to live." "What do you mean?" Said Tauler. "Get alone with God," said Nicholas, "leave your crowded church, your admiring congregation, your hold on this city. Go aside to your cell, be alone and you will see what I mean." His plain speaking at first offended Tauler, and his resentment only proved how accurate the diagnosis which Nicholas had made was.

Tauler was a long time coming to the end of himself, but in Nicholas he had a loving and patient teacher. The process of "breaking" was slow and painful, but when God is working for eternity He takes

account of no time, nor does He spare servants any Humiliation or suffering if only that they may be made vessels broken and empty, "for the Master's use made meet".

Tauler felt himself obliged to obey the advice of his friend. He left his church, fled from popularity, was accounted crazy by his friends, and, alone with God, fought the greatest of all battles, with the hydra-headed monster, self. Assaulted by Satan, despairing of his own heart overcome with weakness of body, broken-hearted on account of his sins, his wasted time and lost opportunities, he lay in his room weak and stricken with sorrow. Then John Tauler died, and heard a voice speaking to him and saying: "Trust in God and be at peace, and know that when he was on earth as a man, He made the sick, whom He healed in body, sound also in soul."

Then John Tauler rose from the dead. When he came to himself, after not knowing how or where he was, he was filled with a new strength and might in all his being, and the things which for a time were dark to him were now bright and clear. The pathway of dying to his reputation, his strength, his wisdom, his zeal and eloquence, had been a long and painful one. He had been treading the rugged road of complete self-abnegation for two whole years, while everyone who knew him wondered what had become of him, and what was the reason of his long silence.

Tauler sent for Nicholas, who said, when he learned of his friend's experiences: "Sow thou art a partaker of the grace of God. Mow thou wilt understand the Scriptures, and be able to show thy fellow Christians the way to Eternal life. Now one of thy sermons will bring more fruit than a hundred aforetime." (From the book, *Beyond Humiliation* by J. Gregory Mantle).

2.2. THE ANSWER TO THE SELF LIFE

The cross of Christ. The never-changing and final answer to the "self" life is the cross of Christ. The Bible says, "We know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the sinful body might be destroyed and we might no longer be enslaved to sin" (Romans 6:6). The old self was crucified. That is God's fact. But you soon realize that this monster called "SELF" still manifests itself and powerfully especially when it is fed. It could also become weak and die out if we deprive it of food. "Self" is fed by actions that exalt it, while actions that humiliate it are a mortal poison. To weaken the "SELF" and cause it to waste away, it must be denied food. To hasten its death, we must feed it with its poison. The fact of God stated in Romans 6:6 can only become a reality in your life, that is, you can only obtain deliverance from "SELF" by co-operating with the Holy Spirit. You will obtain it by pursuing the following exercises:

- a- Proclaim the crucifixion of yourself on the cross of Christ.
- b- In one decisive act of renunciation, renounce the self-life you have hitherto been living. Say, "In the name of Jesus I renounce the root of the self-life in me and I renounce all its manifestations."
- c- Daily renounce the self-life in all the forms it manifests itself.
- d- Check your motives for everything you want to do with God. Allow the light of His Word to shine on all that you want to do and so expose any evidence of self- seeking.

- e- Hide a lot of the good things you do. Do not expose anything you do for God or for man. Conceal your good works. Conceal your spiritual achievements. Allow the God who sees in secret to be the sole recorder of your spiritual accomplishments since He is the one who will reward you on that day.
- f- Expose your faults and failures to others. Do not attempt in any way to hide them and thus give a false image of yourself. Decide that you will not do anything to help people think of you as good. Decide that you will not defend your name or your reputation. Let people drag your name into mud if they want. Do not try to get it out of mud. All that matters to you is God's opinion of you. Your ministry does not depend on men's opinions but on God's opinion.
- g- Confess the corruption of your heart to God and to man daily and ask pardon for all the manifestations of the self-life. God bless you. If you are willing, God will do it. Are you willing that He should deliver you from the self-life at any cost?

III. THE FINAL STATE OF SEPARATION FROM SELF: SUFFERING

(THE PERSONAL CROSS)

3.1. Jesus has mapped out the way of suffering

The Lord Jesus said, "Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?" (Luke 14:27-28).

Cross bearing is the pathway of suffering. This is suffering for Christ and suffering for the

Gospel.

The Lord Jesus who invites disciples to cross bearing himself bore the master cross and died on it. He was committed to suffering. He knew that there was no way out of it. After His disciples had recognized whom He was, He began to tell them in an increasing way about His suffering. He was born to suffer. Before His birth, He was forenamed, "a man of sorrows" (Isaiah 53:3). Every step that Jesus took from the day He left the glory of heaven for dark Gethsemane was paved with suffering. He suffered the agony of leaving the glory of heaven with His "rainbow circled throne", for the degradation of being born in a stable and He, the one whom all heaven worshipped was eclipsed for thirty lonely years in obscurity. He suffered the pain of seeing those who needed his message reject it; of being falsely accused of using the devil's power; of being betrayed by one who was once his disciple, of being denied by Peter; of being deserted by all his disciples in a time of deep stress, of finding no one to watch and pray with Him, and finally of being abandoned to die alone on the cross, forsaken by His own father.

But His suffering was not only spiritual. It was physical as well. He suffered as He engaged in deep conflict in prayer and His sweat became as drops of blood. He suffered as He was scourged and beaten; He suffered pain as He wore the crown of thorns, carried the heavy cross; and finally, He suffered as they drove the nails through Him and God left Him to die alone like a notorious criminal.

Jesus suffered as an example. The Bible says, "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (Peter 2:21).

3.2.JESUS' REACTION TO SUFFERING, PERSECUTION, TRIAL AND PUNISHMENT

The Lord reacted very victoriously in the face of suffering. First of all He had no sin to repent of. He was not suffering for sin. The Bible says, "He committed no sin; no guile was found on his lips" (Peter 2:22).

Secondly, He did not defend Himself. "When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten" (Peter 2:23). On trial before Herod, the Bible says, "So He questioned Him at some length; but He made no answer" (Luke 23:9). Before the high priest He said nothing to defend himself and the high priest said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" But Jesus was silent." (Matthew 26:62-63).

Thirdly, Jesus bore witness under trial and persecution. Before the high priest, even though He would say nothing to defend himself, He spoke when an opportunity arose to witness. The Bible says, "And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:63-64). Before Pilate, He was asked, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Bo you say this on your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me; what have you done?" Jesus answered, "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world." Pilate said to Him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears ray voice." (John 18:33-37)

Fourthly, Jesus was in perfect control under trial. Pilate said to Him, "You will not speak to me? Bo you not know that I have power to release you and power to crucify you? Jesus answered him, "you would have no power over me unless It had been given you from above; therefore he who delivered me to you has the greater sin" (John 19:10-11). He did not tremble under trial. He knew that He was there in the center of His Father's will, that the power that they had to try Him was delegated to them by His Father and that the Father knew best. He did not resist arrest. He submitted to it. He accepted suffering, persecution, trial and punishment as part of His life.

Fifthly, Jesus did not complain when He was persecuted or punished lot even once did he complain of this treatment from those who knew better.

Justice was distorted in His trial time and again but He accepted it as normal. He was fulfilling His own words when He said to Peter, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?" The Father had given Him the cup and not the Enemy. He was in the Father's hands and not in the hands of the Enemy. Therefore, He could rest under the most difficult circumstances.

3.3. THE SUFFERING OF THE EARLY DISCIPLES AND THEIR REACTION TO IT

Let us look a bit at the suffering of Stephen. What was his crime? It was this:

- a- He was full of grace and power and did great wonders and signs among the people.
- b- His opponents who disputed with him could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke.
- c- They stirred up the elders and the people against him and bore false witness against him.
- d- They gazed at him and saw that his face was like that of an angel.
- e- He preached Christ and called the people by what they were saying, "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you

have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it" (Acts 7:51- 53).

How did he react to persecution? The Bible says, "So when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth against him. But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him. . . and as they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And he knelt down and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:54-60).

He did not defend himself. He did not resist. He did not blame them. He did not wish them the worst for their actions. He asked that God might forgive them. He was in all this very much like his Lord and Savior.

- What of Paul?

From the very beginning of his Christian life the Lord said about him, "For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." (Acts 9:16). And suffer he did! He summarized his sufferings as follows, "Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my people, danger from Gentiles, danger in

the city, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pleasure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall and I am not indignant?" (II Corinthians 11:24-29).

He did not only suffer. He wanted to suffer. One of his prime ambitions was to have fellowship with the Lord in His suffering. He considered it a privilege to suffer for Christ and finally sealed his testimony with his blood.

- WHAT OF PETER?

He was beaten, threatened and imprisoned and finally he too paid the supreme price - the death penalty.

Yes, the early disciples all suffered. It was to them an integral part of belonging to the Lord. To them the Lord and the cross were one. They did not try to separate the two. James was martyred. They lost everything and accepted it gladly for their Lord.

3.4. THE SUFFERING OF THE DISCIPLE TODAY

a) Suffering was promised

Jesus said, "A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you (John 15:20). "You will be hated by all for my name's sake." (Matthew 10:22). "They will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and

prisons and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will be a time for you to bear testimony. Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and kinsmen and friends, and some of you they will put to death; you will be hated by all for my name's sake" (Luke 21:12-17).

The apostle Paul, after many years in the school of suffering, wrote, "Indeed all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (II Timothy 3:12), and, "It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake." (Philippians 1:29).

b) Suffering is a blessing

The Lord said, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12).

A servant of the Lord Jesus, James, wrote, "Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4).

c) Suffering has to be experienced

All disciples experience suffering but it is not something imposed upon them. The moment they reject Christ or compromise, their suffering will end. It may be just a nickname. It may be insults; it may be false accusations, it may be the withdrawal of financial support, it may be that the disciple is thrown out of home or disowned. He may be thrown out of his job; he may be demoted or refused promotion. His property may be confiscated. He will leave in constant uncertainty not knowing what will be the next step to be taken against him. He may be beaten, imprisoned or killed. These are hard realities and all disciples experience these to some extent.

If you are going to become a disciple, your attitude to suffering should be settled. You should have a mind to suffer. You should be prepared to accept the suffering that comes day by day so that in a real way you die daily. Then when the supreme physical death comes it will not be a new thing to you.

All would-be disciples must ask themselves the following question: "Is my heart's attitude to suffering settled? Do I have a mind to suffer? Will I be faithful to Christ even if it means death or some other punishment? Am I prepared to suffer with joy for the Lord?" Think carefully about these questions and ask the Lord to reveal your real heart's attitude to you. Avoid superficial and hasty "yes" because God will allow persecution to test your sincerity. You may as well ask yourself one question, "What have I already suffered for Him? He asks you, "What have you suffered for me who gave my all in death for you"?

It is possible to resign to suffering and say, "Well, I suppose I have no choice. What else can I do?" This however was not the attitude of the Lord Jesus to it. He accepted God's will which included suffering

with gladness. One day before He died for you. He said, "Now is the Son of man glorified and in Him a God is glorified" (John 13:31).

If you accept suffering with gladness, you will not complain or be bitter. You will rejoice. You will not hate your tormentors but thank God for them.

d) Suffering is for a while

The disciple's suffering is for a while. The apostle Peter says, "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials" (I Peter 1:6). "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, establish and strengthen you" (I Peter 5:10)

POINTS TO REMEMBER

The Lord Jesus is the creator of the universe and all it contains. Man was created by Him and for Him. As a result of the fall, man became the old creation, a corrupt creation, separated from God, fully belonging to this accursed system, that the Bible calls the world, of which Satan is the Prince. But God in his love has sent Jesus Christ, his son that whoever believes in him should not perish in their sins but have eternal life. Jesus Christ has come into the world. He died for the sins of men, thus providing man with a means of reconciliation with God; he who is reconciled with God is justified and will not taste the second death. However, reconciliation with God is not the goal for which God created man. The need for reconciliation arose because of the fall. It is a pity that many children of God are contented with and stop at reconciliation as if it were the peak achievement. In course I we saw that God created man to live in fellowship with him in order to exercise dominion over creation. The fall is a vexing event that frustrated God's purpose for a time. However, God continued to pursue his purpose by providing man with the way of salvation with the aim of taking man out of the old creation and bringing him to a position where communication and fellowship with him is possible. In the process of re-instating man to this position, there is the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, a working of God on the one hand and man's experience on the other. This working of God constitutes the divine provision to solve the problem of man. nevertheless, man can experience what God has accomplished only by rendering to him total obedience. In other words, the deeds of God can only be experienced if man responds to the demands of God.

On the natural plane the newly born is called upon to grow into an adolescent, then into an adult. In the same way, after the new birth, the believer is called upon to become a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. The first condition to be met by those who want to become disciples, as we saw earlier, is to have supreme love for the Lord Jesus and for the brethren. But in reality, one can love Jesus and the brethren in a supreme way only if one is cut off from all natural ties. In other words, supreme love for the Lord and for the brethren is only possible from a position of separation from the world (the family, the tribe, the nation, etc) and from "SELF". This separation is a prelude to suffering for the world very rapidly realizes that the believer has betrayed it and so persecutes him. It does not matter! No persecution comes our way without God's permission, for God has chosen suffering as a way of perfecting his beloved ones in order to made them resemble Jesus Christ his Son who inaugurated the way of suffering for his own to follow. Suffering has been promised us. It is a blessing. It must be experienced.

We shall study a third condition for becoming and abiding as a disciple in lesson 4 titled "Renunciation".

QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION 1 : Read John 18 : 36

- 1- When can one describe a family relationship as unholy?
- 2- Under what pretext do some people maintain unholy links with members of their family?
- 3- What example does Jesus leave for us in his relationship with his own family? (Give bible reference).

Mention five examples in the bible (with their reference) which show that family can constitute a danger in one's relationship with God.

- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9- What is the true kingdom of the children of God? (John 18:36)
- 10- When can a person's love for his family, his tribe, his nation, be considered holy?
- 11- Are you separated from your family? If yes, since when?
- 12- Is your love for your tribe holy? If yes, since when?
- 13- Say when and how you got separated from your family.

SECTION 2

- 14- What are the manifestations of a life centred on SELF?
 - a)
 - b)

- c)
- d)
- 15- What lesson do you learn from the story about Tauler?
- 16- How is the "SELF" manifested in your life?
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)
 - e)
 - f)
- 17- What solution have you envisaged to deal with the manifestation of "SELF" in your own life?
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)
 - e)
 - f)

SECTION 3

- 18- What does carrying one's cross mean?
- 19- Is sickness a cross? Justify your answer.
- 20- Mention six occasions or events when Jesus suffered.
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)
 - e)
- 21- How did the Lord behave in the face of suffering?
- 22- Mention four disciples of the Lord who suffered and how they suffered.
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)

- d)
- 23- Have you already suffered because of the Lord? If yes, say where and how?
- a) The first time you suffered:
How did you react?
- b) The second time you suffered:
How did you react?
- c) The third time you suffered:
How did you react?
- d) The fourth time you suffered:
How did you react?
- 24- Why did the Lord not rebel in the face of suffering?

SECTION 4

- 25- How did Jews treat false prophets?
- 26- How did they treat genuine prophets?
- 27- Should the believer
- a) look for suffering?
- b) wait for suffering?
- c) run away from suffering?
- 28- In what way is suffering a blessing?
- 29- What is the first condition to become and remain a disciple?
- 30- What else do you have to say about this lesson?