

IN THE POTTER'S HANDS

SHORA KUETU

“This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ‘Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message.’

So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

Then the word of the Lord came to me: ‘O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?’ declares the Lord. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.”

Jeremiah 18: 1-6

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INTRODUCTION

This book that you hold between your hands is the fruit of a long work of breaking and transformation suffered by me for 25 years of Christian life. In these last years (1999-2013), God has focused a lot on forming me; He made me undergo an intense reshaping while He cut some of my useless branches. I would like to talk about the majesty of Abraham's God who is also my Lord and whom I serve. I also want to share with you all that I have learnt and am still learning today through personal experience, both in my life and His ministry.

Before talking about Lord's majesty and the way He forms His workers, I'll talk a bit about His works. Because only by looking at the masterpiece of an artist, we notice his ingenuity.

“Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing.” Isaiah 40:26

In the book of Psalms in chap.19, David recounts how the sky's unfolding manifest the glory of the Most High. The hands of the Potter who shapes us have first created the immensity of universe. According to scientific studies, only 10% of the Universe can be observed, leaving the rest (90% of it) unnoticed even with the most powerful telescopes. And from this 10%, we have access to only 4%. Those 96% of 10% observable also include the invisible black matter (molecular gas, dead stars, inferior shaped stars, black or brown stars etc.) So, all these galaxies, around 200 billion seen by us in the sky, are included in this 4%.

Our Galaxy is called the Milky Way and has around 150-400 billion stars. The Sun's speed is of 100 billion light years and crosses our galaxy with the speed of almost 300,000 Km per second. The Earth spins around the Sun with a speed of more than 107,000 km / h and around its own axe of approx.10, 000 km /h. Nevertheless, we never get dizzy! The planets never hit themselves nor get out of their orbits, because they follow the laws of Physics (masse, space, time, movement and gravity) established by God: Jeremiah 33: 20.

*“This is what the Lord says: 'If I have not established my covenant with day and night and **the fixed laws of heaven and earth...**then I will reject”.* Jeremiah 33: 25.

The Potter is more intelligent than all the science people put together, Hallelujah!

God, as a Potter and Architect by Excellency, has foreseen the planet Earth with a natural shield called 'magnetic field' in order to protect the solar winds. The magnetic field is felt up to a high altitude of more than 1,000 km (a region also called magnetosphere).

The Magnetosphere protects the Earth from the solar winds (especially the energetic particles issued by the Sun) because it guides the solar rays along the magnetic terrestrial field.

This is the reason why the solar particles are mostly felt at the Equator and are weak at the poles (thus creating the polar, also named boreal aureoles). Therefore, the magnetic field has the role of a natural shield for the Earth. The hands of the Potter have created the Moon and have placed it at 384000 km from the Earth, a precise distance that plays an important role as a stabiliser for our climatic conditions because it maintains the Earth on its axe of 23, 5°. If the Moon hadn't existed, the Earth's axe would have been inclined from 0° to 90 ° and then the Erath would have been transformed into a crazy roly-poly and all life on it would have disappeared. (Genesis 1:14-19).

The Potter's hands have also created Jupiter, the biggest planet of our solar system, making it as a shield that protects the Earth from comets and asteroids, thus stopping a fatal collision. In the Universe there are billions and billions of stars around which billions and billions of planets turn around. These numbers in themselves can make our head spin, isn't it?

Nevertheless, Isaiah 40: 12 says:” ***Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?***” and in Psalm 147: 4 says that God knows the number of stars and has named them all!

The Universe looks like a pebble of sand compared to the heaven of heavens and our Lord is so great that the heaven of heavens can't contain His glory. (1 Kings 8: 27).

” ***By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.***” Hebrews 11:3.

Galileo, an Italian physicist and astronomer from the 17th century recognised the majesty of the Creator- for instance in his letter to Cristina, the duchess of Lorenzo, he said:” The intention of the Holy Spirit was to teach us how to go to heaven and not how the heaven goes.”

The Man

” ***I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.***” Psalm 139: 14

The man- the most wonderful creature made by God has a brain that contains 100 billion of neurones (cells). Each neurone receives from 1,000 up to 10,000 synoptic connections given by other neurones; so that in total we have around 1 million connections. The information travels with a speed of 100m/s.

The DNA

When writing a letter to someone, unless you apply your signature, your letter has any value; God does the same: because He is the One who made us, He has put into human bodies the DNA, His signature.

” ***Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.***” Psalm 139: 16.

All 'not uniform' mass, meaning 'an embryo or 'a foetus' also has a DNA or a signature, God's writing. The DNA - the deoxyribonuclear acid – is the carrier of the specific genetic information of each human being (the eyes colour, of hair, of skin etc.) If we could spread out and join together all DNA connections inside a human body, we would get the distance of circling the Earth 5 million times and 1,000 times the return distance between the Earth and the Sun. (knowing the Sun is about 150 million km away from us). Each human being has indeed between 50,000 and 100,000 billion cells and each cell has around 2 meters of DNA.

The DNA is like a book that closes all information regarding each human being. This is the Potter's signature, the Master of Heaven and Earth.

The apostle Paul said in Romans 1: 20 that God's greatness is seen with the naked eye from the creation of the world when we stop and see His works.

Imagine that such a great God that the skies can't contain has decided to shape us in order to serve Him!

All persons that served God admirably have passed through a certain, special preparation. This preparation is a compulsory passing through the most powerful and sweetest hands that shaped the Universe itself. But this kind of preparation needs a personal involvement of the worker and a total submission to God.

” ***For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***” Ephesians 2:10

God transform men to accomplish the works prepared by Him long before the creation of the world and made by God Himself to be put into practice.

He shapes us like a potter so we can accomplish the projects prepared by Him from eternity. Nobody can stay inactive, unproductive, after passing through His Hands. The Potter has transformed us not only with the purpose of our ministry, but also to reach sanctification in order to be able to live forever in His house. (John 14:2)

God's House

The Bible starts with presenting God as the Creator of Heaven and Earth: "In the beginning God/Elohim created the heaven and the earth." Genesis 1: 1

The expression "in the beginning" it is said "bereshit" in Hebrew and the word contains several letters of the Hebrew alphabet: especially the second letter 'bet' or house. Several words result from 'bet', such 'betel'=God's house and 'Bethlehem'=the house of bread'.

The Bible starts therefore with the letter Bet; the 2nd one is Aleph which is silent such as 'h' in French. This letter has the shape of a bull, image that represents Christ's sacrifice.

But if it is not pronounced, it doesn't mean that it doesn't exist, no, **such as if Christ is invisible now, it doesn't mean that He doesn't exist!** If God (the Architect and the Potter of Heaven and Earth) has started the Scriptures with the letter Bet (house) means that he reveals to us from the beginning His house, meaning Yeshoua (Yeshohua in Hebrew), which is God's tabernacle (Colossians 2:9) Moses' arch is also a symbol that prefigures the Messiah because through Him (the gate) we are able to enter eternity, symbolized by the 8th day- the beginning of eternity.

Bet also evokes 2 important realities found in all writings of the Bible:

-The 2 Jerusalem cities: The first one is the celestial one and has Melhishedeck as king (Genesis 14); this was the citadel saw by Abraham and whose architect is God (Hebrews 11: 10)

The 2nd one is the terrestrial one, the city of king David (2 Samuel 5: 6-10).

-The 2 Tabernacles. The first one is celestial (Revelation 21, Hebrews 10:11), and the 2nd one terrestrial, that of Moses and which is just an imitation of the celestial tabernacle built by Christ (Hebrews 9: 24). Moses had to build one in the image of God's pattern shown on Zion Mountain. *"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God'.* Revelation 21: 2-3

-The 2 Temples: King Solomon built the first one (2 Chronicles 3 and 4) and the 2nd one is Christ Himself and His Body, which is the veritable Church.

-The 2 Adams. The first one, the carnal man is the symbol of the 2nd one: the spiritual man (Romans 5:14). The first was created in the image of God, of Christ. - Genesis 1: 26, Colossians 1: 14-15, 1 Corinthians 15: 45-49.

"Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." Genesis 1: 26

"So it is written: 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven." 1 Corinthians 15: 45-47

In order to understand the way God forms His workers/servants, we have to get back to the origin of all things and see how God fashioned the first man. From the first day of creation until the 5th day, God hasn't done anything but speak it out and things started to manifest: *"Let the light come and the light came."*(bereshit is 'to come' in Hebrew and not 'to be'.) Genesis 1: 3-4. The Lord

has never abandoned His Throne when He created the sky with all its constellations, the earth, the animals etc. But, on the 6th day, for the creation of man, God said: Genesis 1: 27.

God had to leave the heaven, His throne and come on Earth, dirty His hands with the clay or better said dust, like a potter, in order to create the man into His image. The angels in the sky must have observed this entire exceptional scene with much amazement and admiration. Adam, God's new masterpiece, was absorbing His entire thinking. (Psalm 8)

“The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.” Genesis 2: 7

In this verse, the verb ‘to make, to form’ is said ‘iatzar’ in Hebrew and means ‘to form, to shape’ like a potter. (Jeremiah 18:2). Therefore, the shaping is the passing through the Potter's Hands in order to receive a form. This passing involves suffering connected with trials and breakings of our carnal/natural character.

In other words, this forming can't be done without pressure, because similar to the precious stones shaped under the pressure of water and heat that last for thousands of years, us, the Christians, the living stones we have to suffer, to be submitted to the same kind of process. The raw material used by the Potter to create Adam was nothing else but the clay, the dust, Yeshoua being the model (pattern) for this first man.

All persons called by God into His ministry are kept to reproduce the same celestial realities and that is why God takes interest in the special formation of His workers. That is why; He is very exigent because He wants to accomplish his plans to perfection.

Therefore, each child of God who dreams of a ministry should necessarily pass through a series of formations that have as purpose the transformation of the interior man. Only those men and women who followed this process up to the term are qualified as God's workers.

So, the road is long and sprinkled with traps and many are those tempted to drop their arms and walk on other ways. This book's purpose is to encourage you to stand firm during your shaping, which will certainly be a harsh time, but indispensable shaping.

The making of pottery is one of the earliest crafts of civilisation; one of man's first inventions was the potter's wheel and there are many techniques used by potters to give a desired definitive shape to a material.

The Moulding

Moulding is a sculptural technique made possible on smooth and pliable materials (the symbol of the technique that God uses for the man He wants to use; this man has to submit totally to God); this process shapes things out of moulds. This modelling involves working out or smashing flat a lump of dirt under the pressure of fingers and then remaking it into a shapeless mass again: *“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have set in place”*. Psalm 8: 3

In Hebrew, the word ‘finger’ is said ‘estba’ which gives ‘finger or hand’. God's finger or hand represents His power: *“The magicians said to Pharaoh, ‘This is **the finger of God!**’ But Pharaoh's heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the Lord had said.”* Exodus 8: 19

The Shaping onto a plaque, into a stereotype

The plaques of dirt are made using a wheel, then assembling them all onto a potter's wheel. This technique (‘the bobbing’) is quick and allows only geometrical shapes to be made.

However, you can also obtain geometrical forms by spinning the plaque and then assembling the opposite ends.

The spinning is of course possible by the peddling done by the potter's feet.

The Shaping or the Pouring of Dirt into shapes

"This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 'Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message'. So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel." Jeremiah 18:1-3

The most advanced technique is that of pouring into shape, appeared around 4,000 B.C. The pouring involves a spinning platform named 'jirel'. After placing a paste made out of dust in the middle of the pottering platform, the potter centres the lump of clay and then shapes it continuously while spinning the bobbin (by another person in Jeremiah's time. Only about 200B.C. a better wheel was invented consisting of a larger second wheel on the bottom end of the axle, which allowed the potter to turn the bobbin with his feet and make the upper wheel turn as he moulded the clay-n.tr.).

When the poured out piece takes consistence, the potter looks at all its imperfections (symbol of sins, of human nature) and then, he digs the pot's handles or stands by continuous spinning. This process is later continued by the engraftment of that chosen shape (by adding decorations etc.)

The Form and the Mould used to create a Pot

Usually, the potter uses all kind of stereotypes for pots and he might pour in liquid or thick lump of paste, so that he can conserve the desired shape after the clay's hardening under a high temperature. The clay (symbol of future worker) is put into the divine stereotype: Yeshoua so that he can take the desired shape or character.

"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." Romans 8:29

The model/shape also represents religion, with both its denominations (its 'isms') and also all theological schools that form people that end up, such as clay by keeping the shape of their mould (of their denomination) after their solidification (faith consolidation).

The mould is the symbol of an uncomfortable situation where God closes us to give us the form He wants: *"But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?' Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?"* Romans 9:20-21

Nevertheless, during the process of setting into form/kiln, it is important to know that at the potter's bench, the dust/clay is not a thick paste, but liquid due firstly to the adding of enough water until the clay is just right for moulding (symbol of God's Word) and secondly, due to the trampling of the clay into smithereens of dust (symbol of breaking old sins, bad habits). This fine dust powder is then sifted to remove all impurities and air bubbles – process called bobbing (continuous spinning).

A cooked form of clay is used to define the exterior of the mould/pattern.

The piece is then unglued from its shape/mould (called also kiln) through heat or drying eased/made possible through the evaporation of water from the pottery piece.

The Burning into a Furnace or the Fire Baptism

"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Matthew 3: 11

The potter uses fire to:

Solidify the clay : only through trials is the future worker's character moulded and the front is full of wrinkles to confront unbelievers(Ezekiel 2 and 3)

Purify the clay: the future worker passes through the fire baptism so he can be cleansed of impurities (Numbers 31 :22-23)

Excite the zeal into the future worker's heart (Psalm 104: 4; Jeremiah 20: 9).

Through burning, all different obtained pieces are set into a furnace at a temperature of 850°C and up to 1,000°C, for around 8 hours..

The cooking temperatures go up to 1,150° C depending on the nature of the dirt used. The temperature depends on the metallic oxidants, on alkaline salts or on acids found in the clay and the dirt rich in this kind of substances burns at a lower temperature, it melts quicker.

CHAP. I. THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

WE ARE BUT DUST

*“The Lord God formed the man from the **dust** of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”* Genesis 2: 7

Dust is but clay used by YHWH/God to men. After a long process of breaking, a transformed worker comes out of this clay, ready to serve His Mater with faithfulness. The word” dust” underlines the fragility of the human soul and his ephemeris character.

Clay or dust is but a material that the Potter needs to His workers.

A material is a substance of natural or artificial origin that the potter s to make objects out of it. Therefore, a material is a basic substance selected due to its particular properties (human weaknesses) and transformed into an object for a specific usage.

Before passing through the Potter’s hands, the clay (Adam) had to be stepped on by the snake and the other animals of Garden of Eden. This material represents the despised, low, abominable things of this world. This is the image of our own weakness, of our sins and generally speaking of our incapacity and ignorance. God, on the contrary, He finds pleasure in making His Glory (‘shekinah’ in Hebrew) shine in foolish/laughable things of this world, things used to accomplish His design (1 Corinthians 1: 26-29). Indeed, He doesn’t need those who think of themselves as being great or wise. On the contrary, the Bible is full of examples of people who thought of themselves as incapable to do any good thing. Let’s cite a few of them:

- **Jephthah was the son of a prostitute.** Abandoned and chased by his step brothers that were trying to stop him from inheriting their father, he was raised by God Himself who gave him instructions regarding both their brothers and his country. (Judges 11)

- **Moses couldn’t talk properly:** *“Moses said to the Lord, ‘O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.’”* Exodus 4: 10

- **Gideon was of humble origin:** *“But Lord, Gideon asked, how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.”* Judges 6: 15

- **Peter was a simple fisherman** (as both a job and a condition). *“When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Yeshoua’s knees and said, ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!’”* Luke 5: 8

- **Peter and John were uneducated people:** *“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Yeshoua.”* Acts 4: 13

Dust represents well the foolish (unwise) things, the weak (the incapable) things and the despised (of low origin, of no name or family) ones, those that the world looks down upon.

On the other hand, all great people of God were firstly pulled out of the dust; they used to be useless and incapable to serve God with their won force: *“Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not-to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.”* 1 Corinthians 1: 26-29

“He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of their people.” Psalm 113:7-8

If you find yourself incapable, then you are on the right track to be used by God! The Lord does never use people sure of themselves, proud of their academic or theological instruction, boastful of their intellectual ability or of their social background or family position.

But, the fact that the Lord chooses imperfect and weak/despised persons doesn't mean that He will use them in this state. Of course, God wants holy, perfect workers, totally regenerated, and that is why, for each of His servants, God has established a program of formation accordingly, He has made possible an intense dehumanising in order to eliminate all impurities that might be obstacles in the fulfilment of His divine will. This kind of moulding involves the radical and complete transformation of human body, soul and human spirit.

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord, Yeshoua Ma’shia.”

1 Thessalonians 5: 23

*“But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding. “ Job 32: 8
“The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.” 1 Corinthians 2: 11*

THE RENEWING OF THE SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the One who can help each man become conscientious of his surroundings, especially of the spiritual world. Indeed, through our own spirit, we are able to start a contact with God or to communicate with demons. The spirit is the one confronted with nightmares, but also with visions and thoughts. And of course, through him, we can pray, speak out prophecies and speak in tongues...Those who don't know God are dead spiritually, such as Adam after the fall.

“And the Lord God commanded the man: ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die’.” Genesis 2: 16-17

As you all know, Adam disobeyed God and ended up dying. However, before being touched by the physical death, he first died spiritually. The spiritual death is nothing else but separation from YHWH/Yahweh.

In fact, as soon as he had committed sin, Adam couldn't stand God's presence, (Genesis 3: 8), which constrained him at hiding far away from Him. Thus, sinners are incapable of getting close to The Eternal One because their spirit is veiled by satan so that they don't know God... (2Corinthians 4: 3-5)

All heathens are therefore dead spiritually and can't understand the Lord's language. (Ephesians 4: 17-18)

“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more...” Ephesians 4: 17-19

Soon after the man is born again, his human spirit is totally recreated by God (Ezekiel 36:26). Our physical body remains the same of course, but our spiritual body becomes conscientious. The Holy Spirit comes and lives in us; He awakens our human spirit by confessing that we belong to God's kingdom. –see Romans 8: 16. The man, thus, can understand God's thought sent by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, God desires all people to become spiritual beings.

“The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 2: 15-16

The story about the war of Israel and the Midianites in chap. 7 of Judges is a great illustration of breaking into smithereens that God works in us in order to free our human spirit. Those 300 soldiers that were with Gideon had flames into their jars. They had to smash these vessels in order to let the flames burn, which help them find their enemies, the Midianites. In a similar way, we can't shine if the flesh with all its passions and desires is not totally smashed/destroyed, unless the spirit is freed to let the Holy Spirit shine our life.

In Judges, chap. 7, verse 20, the verb “to smash”, in Hebrew ‘sabar’, means ‘to tear’. What should we tear? We should destroy **the veil** that stops the interior man from receiving guidance from God and thus from bringing the Light to others, too. This verb means also ‘to break, ‘to announce the truth’. Through this smashing, God will lead the future worker to abandon old habits and certain relationships.

God/YHWH is Spirit and all those who adore Him have to do it in spirit and truth. (John 4: 24). The spiritual man is the one who fortifies himself through prayer and daily meditation of the Word. This way, he is capable to understand God's will in his life and in the lives of others. Thus, we can be reduced to nothing physically speaking (for instance through imprisonment or sickness), but we can be totally free and powerful in spirit. You see: the more the world persecutes us, the more our spirit becomes stronger and gets deeper into the Word and into the divine promises: *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”* 2 Corinthians 4: 16. Therefore, only the spiritual men will be able to answer God's call.

THE LORD'S CALLING

God talks and calls all of us in different ways and for different missions (ministries).

The Call to Salvation and the Call to Make Disciples

We have to make a distinction between the call of all people to repentance, salvation and form disciples and the specific calling, for a certain work/service. The first one is launched to the entire humanity and involves: adoration (John 4: 23-24), brotherly fellowship (1 Corinthians 12) and the witnessing of the Good News to unconverted nations (1 Peter 2: 9). There are some to answer this call, but most don't. (Matthew 1: 28)

In Luke chap.5, the disciples have received the calling to salvation and afterwards, they had to follow Yeshoua as true disciples, by abandoning all in order to be consecrated to this mission.

The term “**mission**” in the Greek New Testament is “**diakonia**” which means **to be a servant in ordinary things**. All Christians are involved in the mission of the Lord's house (serving the saints, because they are the true house and not a building). But before going further, we have to let go of the false idea of what mission might mean.

In the primitive church: to lead people to Christ, to pray for sick people and to encourage other Christians were part of works made by each Christian. The work amongst the local assembly/community didn't have a title, a position or a salary, because they all used to work to advance God's kingdom.

In time, these concepts of ‘service/mission’ and ‘servant/missionary’ have lost their original meaning.

Thus, the word ‘mission’ points to a person consecrated to a certain function. It is deplorable that there are some men working ‘God's work’ as a patron or a little god (for instance: they have their Bibles carried, they have their gardens done up etc.), this way their mission becomes a privileged position.

But, in the Bible, the word ‘mission’ point to all believers. It does apply to all of us and not to particular elite, but to active Christians in generally. All believers have to be considered God’s missionaries. The life of each one of them must manifest: sanctification and works prepared by God from the beginning, so that they always witness their Grace.

The Bible teaches us that Yeshoua made all Christians kings and priests (1Peter 2: 9, Revelation 1: 6 and 5: 10). Undoubtedly, the priest is the one who exercises a mission. He is in communion with God; he listens to Him and serves Him faithfully.

In the New Testament, the distinction between the clergy and the laics doesn’t exist. It is therefore anti-biblical to believe that Christ’s missions are only the well-known services of bishops, pastors, prophets, even of apostles or of priests.

Because of the hierarchy set by men- with all the advantages that this one attracts– many Christians are ready for all kind of compromise in order to accede to a position that gives them honour.

Each Christian has a special service and is therefore a servant/missionary of the Lord. But not all Christians are called to lead assemblies or to exercise a pastoral work for instance.

While some Christians are priests (have one of the missions stated by the Word – see Ephesians 4: 11), others have different gifts or services described in Paul’s letter for the Romans and for the people from Corinth. (Romans 12: 3-8, 1 Corinthians 12: 1-30).

Let us not forget that this word ‘mission’ means service. Indeed, we don’t have to copy the world and the way of functioning, its ministries in other words: nowadays, too many assemblies consider highly/privilege these honouring posts and give the position of stars for their won ‘leaders’ , attitude that hastes their fall...

A Specific Calling

Each member of the Body of Christ has received a specific calling. Each of us has a unique calling that, according to our own character, brings with it rewards and satisfactions. Jesus-Christ had to spend an entire night in prayer before choosing his disciples or better said a full hour of prayer for each of them. (Luke 6). These people have indeed received a special calling to serve God as His ambassadors.

The Calling for one of the 5 ministries stated in Ephesians 4: 11

It regards the ministries of those 5 functions related in the Bible in Ephesians chapter 4, verses 11-15. They work essentially in teaching and forming Christians. (James 3:1).

Truly, God has established 5 Word ministries described in Ephesians 4:11-15, in order to allow the growth of the Church’s faith. They are absolutely necessary for the saints’ sanctification James makes us understand that not everybody has been called to teach God’s Word; and those who do it will be more severely judged than others (James 3: 1). In this passage, James tells us that the systematic teaching concerning laying the foundations is a task entrusted only to these 5 ministries of Ephesians.

All Christians can witness Christ, can exercise their gifts and teach others; but laying the foundations in faith is the work/ministry of those called by God to exercise one of these 5 ministries related in this chapter 4.

Thanks to their teachings, Christians can build up their faith. These ministries established by Yeshoua Ma’shia help Christians enter a ministry in the local church and also equip the saints so they can answer their calling. They also encourage saints to use their spiritual gifts (Romans 1: 11 and 2 Timothy 1: 6), increase their Biblical knowledge and make them officially recognise these functions and specific callings. (Tit 1: 5)

*“He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all **the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.**) It was he who gave some to be **apostles**, some to be **prophets**, some to be **evangelists**, and some to be **pastors and teachers**, to **prepare God’s people for works of service**, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the*

knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Ephesians 4: 10-13

The Greek word ”perfect” , found in Ephesians 4:12 is **‘katartismos’** and means ‘ to repair the hearts of new converts badly damaged by sin’ **‘ to prepare and equip’** or ‘ a food entrée ’ or ‘knowledge equipment’.

“Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.” Matthew 4:21-22

Zebedee’s sons were repairing their nets for re-use, such as the way the 5 ministries of Ephesians work, meaning like mechanics to get cars ready to be roadworthy.

‘To edify’ comes from the Greek word: **‘oikodome’** and its meaning is: ’to build’, in other words: ‘the act of the someone who encourages the growth in Christian wisdom, in devotion, in sanctification etc.’ (1 Peter 2: 4-6 and Ephesians 2: 20-22)

Paul often fought in prayer for the saints to have full hearts of knowledge and for him, too, to be enriched with the full intelligence of knowing Christ.

These 5 ministries of Ephesians 4:11 have to work together so that the saints can become like Christ. *“I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”* Colossians 2: 1-3

The Specific Calling that Paul talks in Romans 12

Like I’ve already said, all Christians are called to glorify God, to adore Him, to teach others and to prophecy. However, in Romans 12 there are also mentioned other ministries, distinct of those described Ephesians 4, such as: exulting God, freedom in Christ, the presidency and the compassion.

It is important to know that God is the One who justify the persons He calls (Romans 8: 29-30). People can indeed doubt our calling and can put it under the question mark due to our physic or origin (they look at what hit the eye: sex, build, skin colour, youth); but if you walk with the Lord, He will justify you! Don’t make the mistake of trying to prove that you are called. Let God witness about you: *“Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips.”* Proverbs 27: 2

The Lord knew to justify His servant Aaron before 11 princes of Israel that opposed his calling.

“The Lord said to Moses: ‘Speak to the Israelites and get 12 staffs from them, one from the leader of each of their ancestral tribes. Write the name of each man on his staff. On the staff of Levi write Aaron’s name, for there must be one staff for the head of each ancestral tribe. Place them in the Tent of Meeting in front of the Testimony, where I meet with you. The staff belonging to the man I choose will sprout, and I will rid myself of this constant grumbling against you by the Israelites.’ So Moses spoke to the Israelites, and their leaders gave him twelve staffs, one for the leader of each of their ancestral tribes, and Aaron’s staff was among them. Moses placed the staffs before the Lord in the Tent of the Testimony. The next day Moses entered the Tent of the Testimony and saw that Aaron’s staff, which represented the house of Levi, had not only sprouted but had budded, blossomed and produced almonds.” Numbers 17: 1-8

We’ll be recognised by our fruits (Matthew 7: 17-20). Don’t try to run away from the calling, because the gifts and God’s calling are irrevocable. (Romans 11:29). Let the Lord transform you.

THE TRANSFORMATION

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Romans 12:2

In this passage, apostle Paul teaches us that the will of God is for us to be transformed. The verb ‘to transform’ (in Greek ‘metamorphoo’) gives in English ‘to transfigure’. This term is the same in the Gospel of Matthew 17:2 when it talks about Yeshoua’s transfiguration.

If Paul recommends this to the new converts it was because God was calling them to go forward. Therefore, this verb refers to a permanent state that had to produce a change: it regards the transformation of a body into a different one, of a state into another one to the point that that man became unrecognisable. *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**; the old has gone, **the new has come!**”* 2 Corinthians 5: 17

This transformation corresponds in reality the complete modification of: somebody’s character, form and state. In fact, when we are born again, our spirit is perfected for eternity thanks to the work of the cross (Hebrews 10:14), but our soul will suffer a continuous transformation until the Lord’s return.

*“Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can **save your souls.**”* James 1: 21

Thus, a process of profound purification is necessary in order to be qualified in Lord’s service. A caterpillar’s transformation into a butterfly is the most beautiful example to illustrate this radical change that has to take place into ourselves.

To reach this phase, this insect passes through many stages that we are going to explore.

The Egg Concept: the Calling

It is about seedling; God seeds the calling He addresses us. The person who receive God’s calling is like a pregnant woman:” *But if I say: ‘I will not mention him or speak any more in his name,’ his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot’.*” Jeremiah 20: 9

In the Scripture, the words ‘vocation’ and ‘calling’ come from the Greek term ‘kaleo’ meaning both ‘to call, to make someone come’, and also ‘to call someone loudly on his name.’ Thus, all persons called by the Lord are named by their name in a distinct way. In the entire Bible, Old and New Testament, YHWH calls, or better said: invites His children to follow Him. The general calling which Peter talked about in 1 Peter is addressed to all Christians and means ‘passing through darkness to His wonderful light’ 1 Peter 2:9, with the purposed to ‘announce the virtues’ or God’s power and qualities.

The Lord calls us for His service normally after a meeting face to face with Him. Though this calling might be received in a thought, through a vision or even hearing an audible voice, it always involves that person and the Lord. Therefore, God deposits in the human heart a vision that must turn real in its own time. Similar to a foetus’ growth inside his mother’s womb, the future worker chosen by God will be formed for a while by God Himself in hiding, in the coulisses.

Let’s name this first stage ‘the egg phase’ as it is the conception or the incubation period of the vision received by the future worker.

“Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said: ‘Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.’ He answered: ‘The one who sowed the good seed is the

Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one'.” Matthew 13: 36-38

In the parable of the wheat and the tares, Christians are called ‘seed’ or ‘sperma’ in Greek, which gives the term ‘sperm’ in English.

Although during the intimal relations between a man and his wife, almost 400 million spermatozoids are freed, but one reached the ovule (the egg). Reaching its objective, this spermatozoid must suffer an intense transformation, both intern and extern one, in total secrecy. This cell contains all the necessary organs needed for survival of future child, tough invisible at this stage. Therefore, the ovule, the egg (the calling conception) is the place where the first transformation of the worker takes places which turns him into a viable being.

While the child is still in his mother’s womb, he is connected with her by the umbilical cord which allows him the feeding and the breathing. This cord represents the baby’s total dependence to his mum, the image of dependence that the man has to have vis-à-vis God. In the ovule, the foetus is forced to absorb the same aliments as his mum. Well, the same happens when the Lord keeps you in the shade, His food becomes your food, too.

While receiving God’s calling, you are put into contact with the spiritual ovule which symbolizes the intimacy with God or with the holy places according to Matthew 6:6. Everything takes place in secrecy; nobody knows you are in an egg destined to be transformed.

This gestation period lasted 30 years for our Lord Jesus, 40 years for Moses and 10 years for others and so on. If you rush to get out of this gestation period, you will destroy your calling (like abortion). So, be patient and wait onto the Lord’s time.

Know that your zeal and adoration will never bend God’s will, because He waits only for His time to give you the things you’ve asked for. For instance, a 3 year-old child wants in vain to have moustaches, he can’t have them; but when the time comes, they will naturally grow by themselves. In conclusion, let us not be like Moses who wanted to answer his calling before the gestation time, thing that caused the rejection of his brothers.

“One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labour. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. The next day he went out and saw 2 Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong: ‘Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?’ The man said: ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?’ Then Moses was afraid and thought: ‘What I did must have become known.’ When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well.” Exodus 2: 11-15

The Larva Status: the Birth of a Ministry

Larva **is** the first stage in the developing of a person after birth or after getting out of the egg shell. The ministry born at the level of the heart is being procreated now. Firstly, this phase represents the birth of a specific ministry that the Lord called you for. If you are still young in ministry, you have to know you have still a lot to learn.

Mostly you have to pay attention to your ego/pride because there will be signs that will accompany you (for instance: anointing, miracles, prophecies) which are not synonym with spiritual maturity. It is important to know that the Lord can make you taste a bit of the future miracles and healings from the years about to come even before you have effectively started the ministry.

Remember always that being a larva is but the first stage in an insect’s development; after it gets out of the egg and that the road to maturity is yet long.

The Nymphal Phase: the Process of Transformation

A nymph represents the intermediary phase of developing or, for some insects, a metamorphosis that takes place while being a larva and stops before reaching adulthood. The nymphal state begins indeed with a translucent skin upon the larva's body and finishes with the formation of the cocoon. One of its characteristics is that it doesn't feed during this time, but lives from its reserves. Similarly, this transformation stage is absolutely necessary for God's worker.

The skin of the nymph corresponds with the undressing of the old man in order to be able to 'dress up' as a new man. It allows caterpillars to periodically change their colour, grow wider skin or obtain new organs and also change shape (the metamorphosis). For some crabs (generally crustaceans), when the old carapace becomes too small, the animal abandons it in order to get a bigger one to fit in, which adapts better to his body/needs. (Isaiah 54: 2-3).

Here, on the first hand, it is all about the spiritual growth, because each child of God is called to become mature, to pass the baby stage and become a young man and later a father. (1 John 2:12-14) On the second hand, on the mission aspect, God invites us to adopt a global point of view, to see the whole panorama and not a sectarian one. Therefore, the Lord's ministry has to have the vision of the Body of Christ. God has abolished all cultural, social, racist borders in Christ, so that all people from all corners of the planet have access to the Gospel.

“Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left; your descendants will dispossess” Isaiah 54: 2-3

The Adult Life: The Maturity

All caterpillars reaching maturity have to become butterflies. But for such a huge transformation there has to be a special phase (called nymphosis), during which a caterpillar stays still. During this stage, the insect must close itself for the final transformation. It produces a enormous cocoon of silk where it remains during its metamorphosis.

But this rest period is only an appearance because the whole insect body is on the verge of transformation: some organs are disappearing, some are emerging (for instance the wings and the legs) thanks to some cells remained latent till now. However, the nymphal skin proceeding its short adult life has lived long...

The Heavenly Father has taken 30 years to form His Son (Yeshoua)... sometimes for us 10 years are needed to be shaped in the shadow for only 1 year of public ministry. The worker reaching the maturity in the Lord's service must suffer many transformations to be able to fly.

The cocoon is the image of the intimacy with the Father, with Christ that should never be neglected.

WHAT GOD WANTS FROM US: SANCTIFICATION

“The will of God is our sanctification...” (1 Thessalonians 4: 3)

God is calling us as we are, with all our defects, with our mean characters, with all our sins. But, it is obvious that we can't serve Him in this state.

Many Christians who want to glorify God fall into the trap of human systems and methods in order to obtain freedom or success (often set in place and operated by charlatans), while the Bible simply tells us that to see God we have to be saints. (Hebrews 12: 14)

The Scriptures describe 3 kinds of sanctifications:

The Justification (Romans 5: 1) and Hebrews 10: 10-15.

God has declared us holy thanks to His Son's sacrifice. Indeed the justification comes from Grace. (Tit 3: 4-7)

The Individual Sanctification (Revelation 22: 11)

Each Christian must make an effort, using daily God's Word and prayer, to maintain the sanctification.

The Complete Salvation (1 Corinthians 15:42-57)

It regards a complete incorruptibility: of body, soul and spirit that will always be next to our Lord.

The Sanctification involves the separation from evil and bad companies (2 Corinthians 6:14-18), which can be made, like we have already seen, through numerous sacrifices and plenty of sufferings. (Romans 12:1-3).

Dehumanised!

In the second letter to the Corinthians, chap. 3, verse 18, Paul teaches us that these transformations have the purpose of a progressive resemblance to Christ.

The term 'metamorphosis' means changing a being into another one, a complete transformation of a being to the point that it can't be recognised.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"
2 Corinthians 5: 17

"He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of their people." Psalm 113: 7-8

The word 'rubbish' in this passage is said 'aphar' in Hebrew and literally means 'mineral'. The mineral is a rock containing minerals in sufficient proportions to justify the exploration and which later need a transformation in order to be used by the industry.

Therefore, the dust (the person receiving the calling), is compared to a mineral that must undergo a purification process in order to be correctly used.

To transform a mineral of iron, people make what is called a reduction, which represents the mixing of the mineral with wood carbon at a high temperature of 1350° C. The impurities of this mineral (symbol of sin and flesh) end up being melted and afterwards, they flow in the shape of residues. The iron takes thus its final shape after the cooling.

"Gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, lead and anything else that can withstand fire must be put through the fire, and then it will be clean. But it must also be purified with the water of cleansing. And whatever cannot withstand fire must be put through that water." Numbers 31: 22-23, meaning we have to become pure according to: *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will."* Romans 12: 2.

The transformation is nothing else but the renewing of intelligence and can't be done without the passage through fire. God is the Potter by excellency and in His quality of Maker (He has already a final vision of what we are to become). Let yourself moulded by Him, even smashed and hit such as butter when it gets solid. Remember that you are but dust, so full of imperfections and incompetence; that is why the Most High must dehumanise us in order to be able to serve Him.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." John 15: 1-2

The word 'to dehumanise' (said 'kathairo' in Greek) gives 'to clean' in English. The dehumanising job is a purification work similar to the grafting of a tree or of another object that

involves cutting the useless parts. Let us understand that the work will never finish, its purpose is to make us go from glory to glory. Each time God wants to glorify us or each time He wants to entrust us with a new responsibility, He will dehumanise us so that we become qualified for that ministry.

I remember the period I used to cry a lot about the rebellion of several people that I've formed. Then God gave me a vision in a passage in John (15:1-2) and I fully understood that He allowed that to happen in order to form me.

So, don't be discouraged if the close one will abandon you, but have always your eyes set on the Lord and remain hopeful that you are in full dehumanisation.

“Moab has been at rest from youth, like wine left on its dregs, not poured from one jar to another- she has not gone into exile. So she tastes as she did, and her aroma is unchanged.”
Jeremiah 48: 11

During 'the coming out of the world', God pours us from a jar into another ('trainspotting'), from a character into a new one. The purpose is to empty us of all connection with hidden sin (hidden in the heart of man). Truly, God can't fill a vessel that is already full; the mixture is not possible with the Lord! The process of moulding is a very difficult to live because we lose all that we acquired for years - even the honours given to us by men. In reality, God is purifying us, is cleaning us so that we spread the perfume of Christ. You can never be filled by God without having firstly being emptied by yourselves.

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?”
2 Corinthians 2: 14-16

Sacrificed!

Romans 12: 1” *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship.*” speaks of us as living sacrifice for God. The holocaust is maybe the most typical and the oldest Hebrew sacrifice. In this passage regarding the veritable cult that God takes pleasure in, the word 'sacrifice' (the Greek 'thusia') means 'victim' or 'to strangle'. In reality, it talks about the sacrifice of life (holocaust) = the expression of a complete gift of life offered to God by a believer.

On the contrary, under the law, the holocaust must have obeyed certain criteria, very precise, in order to be accepted by God. According to Leviticus 1, it had to be:

-without fault: each person willing to respond to God's calling has to be separated from sin because God wants us perfect, without fault: *“But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”* 1 Peter 1: 15-16 and *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”* Matthew 5: 48

-aged of 1 year: the Lord wants all His servants to have a childish heart. The childhood is synonym with innocence, with integrity of heart and with faith. *“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked: ‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: “I tell you the truth, unless **you change and become like little children**, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like **this child** is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”* Matthew 18: 1-4

-strangled and having the throat cut: means death to our ego. Hanging is very hard to live; therefore, nobody likes to be put to death.

-its blood had to be spread upon the entire altar: according to Leviticus 17: 11-14, blood is soul or life. The soul or the feelings of the person who truly wants to follow/serve the Lord must be spread onto the altar. Those whose carnal feelings are not sacrificed will always have trouble in responding to their calling. Therefore, the Lord is emptying us in order to give us His own life, His own blood, His vision on things: *“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any*

*double-edged sword, it penetrates even to **dividing soul and spirit**, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”* Hebrews 4: 12

Many Christians have trouble detaching themselves from worldly things. Some are so attached to their families, to their friends, to their wives, to their kids, to their parents or even brothers or sisters in Christ that they find it difficult to serve the Lord. Man or Christian in general is a being created to be connected to their fellow human beings, but this relationship can be so strong that it may stop him from loving God.

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters-yes, even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14: 26 Obviously, God doesn't ask us to detest our families, but to give Him the first place in all things, because the verb 'to hate' in Hebrew means 'to prefer'.

*“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with **all** your heart and with **all** your soul and with **all** your strength.”* Deuteronomy 6: 4-5

-‘undressed’ of skin and cut into pieces after this strapping: it is the symbol of abandoning the old man, the complete and definitive renouncing of our Adamic nature. Similarly, it regards the smashing of our life. It is a delicate stage because when a person lives the self-destruction phase it might fall into a nervous depression and forget to hold on tight on God's promises. The Sword of the Holy Spirit is used to accomplish this spiritual surgery that consists in the undressing of the old man/ nature.

-put upon the altar and consumed by fire: the fire symbolizes both the holy presence of God (Exodus 3: 2; Deuteronomy 4: 24), and His wrath vis-à-vis/towards sin (Isaiah 66: 15), Numbers 31: 22-23 (above, page 21).

To make His workers pure, God let them feel this purifying fire. When a person finds himself/herself into the divine fire, he/she keep calm and continue to trust in Him. This fire can represent: tests, persecutions, critics... All impurities must absolutely disappear to allow the Holy Spirit to work freely. It must be noted that the value of your ministry depends on the intensity of the purifying fire.

-the internal organs had to be washed in water: the word 'intestines' (in Hebrew 'qereb'), can be translated by 'the siege of emotions and feelings'. The interior organs are so fragile that they need the gentleness of water to make them clean. This water, the image of God's Word refreshes and purifies with gentleness our sick hearts.

The altar is the prefiguration of the Cross which is the instrument used by God to reduce man to nothing. The Cross is used to transform our heart, because that is where all evil things get out of. (Marc 7: 14-23) Let us understand that God uses this process because the old man always opposes Him.

“For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.” Galatians 5: 17

Let us not forget that the only person strong enough to deter you from answering God's calling is you alone and not satan. All those who marked their generation with God's power have lived and experienced the cross. Therefore, there is no reason why you can't get rid of your cross, if you are called by God.

Killed!

Remember well that we are the salt of the Earth according to Matthew 5:13. The salt must be dissolved in order to let its savour become effective. It protects the food against putrefaction by slowing the microbes' proliferation. The Hebrew people have used it to fertilise their fields, too. Also all offerings made by the Levites must have been accompanied by salt (Leviticus 2:13). Salt there is no savour unless dissolved.

Our old man/nature has to die in order to allow the fruits of the Holy Spirit to produce in us this savour which gives the taste of divine life to all souls lost in this miserable world.

The old man is the Adamic nature, corrupt since birth, with its disposition for evil – latent disposition in each person.

The old man is also the natural or animal man spoken of by Paul in 1Corinthians 2: 14:
"The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Jesus has crucified this old, animal man (He killed him) on the Cross, according to Romans 6 : 6
"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin." When we benefit of this act of putting to death the old nature, we receive from God the freedom over sin, the major obstacle in God's calling. Truly, the old man loves sin more than God.

It also gives us freedom over the human nature's works denounced by Paul in Galatians 5: 19-21:
"The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."

And finally, the old man is the image of our own will. 'I do what I want; it is my own life 'that's how people talk in this world. Do you know that your will is an instrument very powerful that satan likes to use to fight God? Human will or the free choice given by God can become an extremely dangerous weapon for ourselves and for the people around us. Indeed, each time when we choose to do evil, we hurt ourselves first and then others.

God often asks us to do deeds against our old way of seeing things (Isaiah 55:8-9). The distance that separates the will of the Lord is eternal and unbreakable. Our will might be to get married with a white man/lady if you are white, but God can give you a black spouse because His will is perfect. And God's will is aligned in the plans of peace, happiness and hope that he has foreseen for us. (Jeremiah 29:11). Unfortunately, I know many persons who refuse God's will in their life and who consequently suffer.

How many people have the same heart disposition talked about by Christ?: "*'My food,' said Jesus, 'is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work'.*" John 4:34

Jonah, the prophet, due to his racism or hate against the Ninivets (symbol for the flesh works too) had refused God's will to save this people. He had decided to run far away from God and thus he had known serious problems- for instance when he was about to lose his life and that of his fellow companions on the boat with him (Jonah 1:3-15). Think that you can be a source of problems for the people around you if you refuse to give up your will to the Lord.

Remember the words of the Lord Yeshoua: "*Then Yeshoua said to his disciples: 'If anyone would come after me, he must **deny himself** and take up **his cross** and follow me'.*" Matthew 16: 24

Do you want to see God in your daily life, in your ministries, at work, in your couple, in your family and in all your projects? A single word is enough: "**Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.**" Hebrews 12: 14.

Thus, the solution is not to find a prophet, a pastor or a healer, but the SANCTIFICATION (hate of evil).

CHAP. II. THE SCHOOL OF DESERT

The desert is always associated with the most terrible loneliness, with a complete desolation (Deuteronomy 32: 10; Isaiah 21: 1). When we're there, we meet: snakes, scorpions and all kind of venomous animals; we have to survive the drought and the dryness, we confront the suffocating heat at midday and we resist glacial temperatures at night-time. In addition, our nerves are put to hard trial before all mirages born of false hopes. Well, this is just the place God has chosen to give all His workers a solid formation.

THE DESERT – THE PLACE OF FORMATION AND TRANSFORMATION

To help us detach terrestrial, worldly things, God has isolated us into the desert – the ideal environment for developing both our intimacy with Him and also our dependency to Him, the Master. The main purpose of forming us in this hostile place is the transformation of our character. In this process, our heart or soul is the first element that God stops at.

A New Heart

“The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.” Luke 6:45

“Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said: ‘Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a man can make him unclean’ by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him <unclean>.’ After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. ‘Are you so dull?’ he asked. ‘Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him <unclean>? For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.’ (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods <clean.>) He went on: ‘What comes out of a man is what makes him <unclean.> For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man <unclean.>’.” Mark 7:14-23

The heart of man is evil from birth, the Bible tells us in Jeremiah 17: 9. While man judges according to appearances, God looks into the man's heart. (1 Samuel 16: 6-7). Let nobody deceive us: we might have an important ministry and we might even manifest a great anointing, but unless we have a heart according to God, such as king David, we end up being spit out of the Lord's presence (Matthew 7:21-23). Therefore it is indispensable for the Lord to form our character in the purpose of edifying the interior man.

“And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.” Luke 1: 80

Man is a triparted creature, meaning he possesses a body, a heart and a soul. The heart ('nephech' in Hebrew or 'psuche' in Greek) is the vital principle. It is the siege of both emotions/feelings and will. The spirit ('rouah' in Hebrew and 'pneuma' in Greek) is the spiritual part of a man, the interior man according to 1 Corinthians 2: 11 and 2 Corinthians 4: 16.

Paul, the apostle, established clearly the division in 3 of a man, in 1 Thessalonians 5: 23: *"May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole **spirit, soul and body** be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

The Bible, God's Word, has therefore the vocation of splitting the man's heart (his feelings). This separation is indispensable because our carnal feelings can prevent us from doing God's will.

The word 'the whole measure', 'katartismos' in Greek used in Ephesians 4: 12-13 means literally 'to repair the garbage created by sin in the hearts of the newly converted people'. Although freed from sin and demons at the new birth, the new converts need to be transformed at the heart level. Indeed, since our physical birth, our heart has often been hurt by life circumstances or by primate proposals. And so, these wounds mould the human being's character. For instance, a person who has always been made to believe that he/she is nothing, stupid and incapable of any good thing, will therefore have the tendency to doubt him/her or underestimate and will find it hard to open to others. A heart thus hurt will close itself to others, like in a bubble of bitterness, and that person might always live in: fear, timidity and especially depression.

If our hearts are hurt by: words of condemnation, treason, loss of close friend or recognition, in other words by people's ingratitude and their offences in general, then we need divine healing. **Unless completely healed, we will not be able to serve the Lord correctly.**

In the desert school, the clay of what we are made of will continue to be reshaped and purified in the Potter's Hands.

The Potter's Hand

Yood, the 10th letter in the Hebrew alphabet, comes from yud=hand. Yood and yud find their root in the verb 'yduh' = 'to throw or to launch', role entrusted to the hand. Jeremiah's Lamentations 3: 53 tells us about the evil hands that threw stones to him). The hand is the symbol of fist and spread-out fingers. Through its value, this letter is the symbol of world creation through words.

Though a bit bigger than a dot and thus, the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, yood contains the greatest power. Finally, yood symbolizes the character of action. The Hebrew 'yud' translated 'hand' in English, is the symbol of activity, administration, power and covenant. The Lord's hand expresses His power and the influence of His Spirit. *"Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? Remember that you moulded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again?"* Job 10:8-9

The potter's Hand Mana holds the souls of all living beings. *"In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind."* Job 12: 10. Satan isn't able to kill even a fly without the Potter's permission.

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand." John 10: 27-29. Nobody can pull out God's children from His Hands, what an assurance!

In the book of Revelation (chap 2: vs.1), Yeshoua Ma'shia presents Himself as the One who holds in His hand the 7 stars, which are the 7 messengers. These announcers, true workers had also passed through the forming hand of the All Mighty Creator. The religious people have their formation done in theological schools instituted by men where most teachers haven't met the Lord

, but the veritable people called by God, though they might have passed through these kind of human schools, they are being formed by the Most High's Hand. Paul the apostle describes this fact very well. (Jesus Himself has never been to any of the Hebrew theological schools though there were 2 during His time.)

During the Bible times, the potter had to trample the clay under his feet to turn it into a smooth paste ready for moulding: "*I have stirred up one from the north, and he comes- one from the rising sun who calls on my name. **He treads on rulers as if they were mortar, as if he were a potter treading the clay.***" Isaiah 41: 25.

We have here the image of breaking that we suffer from God before He starts using us. Before He gives us the new shape intended for us by Him, He deforms us. This is the complete undressing of all kind of stuff that prevents us from serving Him. We are trampled by God's feet so that we can reach the next stage of formation: we are made dust, which is the first thing the Lord does with a man He had called.

He removes any human help from our life, so that we, 'the future instrument' can realise our incapacity of producing any good work by ourselves.

*"Then Jesus said to Simon: 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men.'" So they pulled their boats up on shore, **left everything** and followed him."* Luke 5: 11

In order to follow Jesus, the apostles had to abandon everything. We, too, we have to do the same: abandon our mentalities, high positions, intellectual capacities, our formations and everything we have gathered in years in order to be able to continue the formation desired for us by the Master. .

After trampling the clay under his feet, the potter places a horizontal disc in front of where he sits so that through the spinning of clay with both hands and feet (for the bobbin), he is able to mix the clay well, giving it the desired shape- a pot or a glass form consolidated through burning into a blazing furnace.

*" This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 'Go down to **the potter's house**, and there I will give you my message.' So I went down to the potter's house, and **I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the Lord came to me: 'O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?'** declares the Lord . 'Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel'."* Jeremiah 18: 1-6

This is the second stage of formation. God puts us like in a tower, where we have the impression that we spin around as nothing seems to work out well in our life. As a matter of fact, we can't advance anywhere; we have no power over the events. Our future seems uncertain; the beautiful promises of Lord Jesus seem so far away. Unfortunately, many raise a trial for the Lord (like the lawyers) when they are in this situation. Often, we compare ourselves with the heathens and we envy them.

"You are always righteous, O Lord, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease? You have planted them, and they have taken root; they grow and bear fruit. You are always on their lips but far from their hearts." Jeremiah 12:1-2 and Psalm 73, too.

Be careful because the whispers against the Lord can put you under the sword of judgement, the same way the children of Israel were once put. (1 Corinthians 10)

Nevertheless, the Lord is the one who works the pottery wheel; He leads things as He wants. The Potter works the piece under close doors, away from distraction, in secrecy. Therefore, the clay has to be well mixed with water, which is the image of God's Word. The final stage ends with the fire test (different tribulations) and later the pot/vessel is ready for a noble use.

“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.” 1 Peter 4:12.

God’s people and deserts

Reading the Bible, you realise that no God’s servant who marked his time didn’t escape the desert school. Let us take the example of Joseph and that of Moses, these 2 famous models of faith and patience.

Joseph

*“Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them: ‘Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it.’ His brothers said to him, “Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?” And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said. Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. “Listen,” he said: ‘I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and 11 stars were bowing down to me.’ When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said: ‘What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and **bow down to the ground** before you?’ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.” Genesis 37: 5-11*

Joseph’s calling has been manifested through 2 of his dreams which announced his future glory. So, this calling had also marked the beginning of his extremely difficult tribulations which started while he was merely 17 years old. Indeed, both his privileged position in his father’s heart and also God’s grace over his life have caused his own brothers’ jealousy. Unfortunately, a prophet is often rejected by his own people before being accepted in general long after his death.

Like you already know, his brothers undress him of his multi-coloured coat offered by Jacob, coat that was his pride, then they sell him to the Amalekites, the slave merchants, This was a man that God has called and who found himself in the hands of slave traders. What a difficult situation, let’s not call it horrible! Nevertheless, this is the way God had chosen to lead Joseph into the land of his fame.

“For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave.” 1 Corinthians 7: 22

When God gave Joseph these dreams/thoughts, he was but dust, so immature and incapable to lead. He absolutely needed God to form him, in order to be able to assume the governor position in Egypt.

That was why; he had to be dressed in the multi-coloured coat made and then offered by his father Jacob. This tunic represents the things people of this world appreciate and make our pride: diplomas, social background, skin colour, beauty etc. While he was a slave in Potiphar’s house, God wanted to teach him humility: he had to work as a slave before running a country, in other words he had to know first what means to be led. But many people want to serve God without serving others. They make a huge terrible mistake.

“Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Matthew 20: 28

However, in Potiphar’s household, Joseph is far from graduating from the desert school. He had to resist once more the sexual lust by refusing the pass made by his boss’ wife who must have certainly been very seductive. *“Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.” Luke 16:10.* Any man/ woman called to exercise a responsibility must know that through their position, many

women/men might want to offer themselves to them. In order to be able to say ‘no’ to this type of temptation, we have to have a well-formed character and also self-control. Joseph had to learn to administer his master’s house faithfully and with integrity before ruling the entire land of Egypt.

His refuse to soil himself provoked this woman’s anger: she accused him falsely of having abused of her, which caused Joseph’s imprisonment.

“Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favour in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.” Genesis 39: 20-23

How many of us, in a similar situation, would not have cried out against such an injustice? How many would not have rebelled against the Lord or less said would not have got mad at God?

On the contrary, according to God’s plan of forming Joseph, this last one had to study in another school some more precious lessons (Romans 8: 28). And the new land of formation wasn’t other than the prison. This stage lasted 13 long years.

The prison is not only a place of being forgotten and loneliness, but also one of meditation and profound intimacy with the Lord. It allowed Paul to receive great revelations written in his letters and which made the foundation of the New Testament, the basis for the Church. In addition, the apostle John had received the revelations from the book of Revelation while he was imprisoned in the Island of Pathos.

The prison represents also a situation that the Lord traps us into and where we can’t see any way out.

“He has walled me in so I cannot escape; he has weighed me down with chains. Even when I call out or cry for help, he shuts out my prayer. He has barred my way with blocks of stone; he has made my paths crooked.” Jeremiah’s Lamentations 3: 7-9

Joseph couldn’t reach the divine vision without passing through imprisonment, because there he met the cup bearer who, at the right time, talked about him to the Pharaoh. (Genesis 41:9-15) Prison was a crucial phase in Joseph’s formation. There he had to learn to exercise the gift of discernment given by the Lord.

Because, while he was still at his father’s house, this gift wasn’t yet developed and only in the prison was he able to receive it from God. (Genesis 40:5-22) Truly, this gift allowed him to interpret the dreams of the people locked up with him: the cupbearer and the bread maker. Similarly, you, too, you can sometimes have the impression to be trapped in a prison, to be forgotten by all, while God has already new connections for you in that place.

With the entire cup bearer’s promise to mention Joseph at his return to freedom, this first one had forgotten about Joseph who must have felt very lonely. God, on the contrary, didn’t want Joseph to put his trust in men, but only on Him alone. (Genesis 40: 23)

“This is what the Lord says: ‘Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord ‘.’” Jeremiah 17: 5

Only after 13 long years of trials in his formation, was Joseph able to appear before the Pharaoh to explain this king’s dream about the fat and starving cows, thanks to the cupbearer who remembered him at the right time. Joseph was then 30 years old and therefore, qualified or well-equipped to respond the Egyptians’ problems and ready to lead that nation. (Genesis 41)

“ So Pharaoh said to Joseph: ‘I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.’ Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him: ‘Make way!’ Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: ‘I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt.’ Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt. Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh King of Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and travelled throughout Egypt.” Genesis 41: 41-46, in other words he led it as a prime-minister today.

Joseph had thus become the governor of Egypt, the number 2 in the land. Therefore, he had received the emperor's tunic who nobody was able to take it or seal from him. But, he had to lose the tunic given by his natural father in order to receive the one His Heavenly Father had for him at the right time.

The wisdom received through his formation in the desert allowed him to save the Egyptians and his entire family from starvation.

Finally you have to notice that Joseph was able to forgive his brothers of all evil because he understood that all things work together for the good of those who love God. (Romans 8:28)

In conclusion, the results of Joseph's formation confess that:

Joseph was raised to the high rank of governor of Egypt ;

He married the daughter of the Pharaoh's priest;

He saved Egypt and his family from starvation;

His sons: Manasseh and Ephraim, the African metis, were numbered as 2 tribes amongst the Israel's tribes.

God took 13 long years to prepare His servant for the high position of governor. During all those years, Joseph was confronted with all kind of situations, terribly painful, but which did him good. And you, since when are you suffering?

God allows hard circumstances in your life that cause you a lot of sufferings because He loves you and wants to lift you up for the ministry/service He had prepared for you. Never lose heart when you understand that God is testing you. He is the One who changes our prisons in visitation places and divine encounters (Psalm 84: 6). This prison may represent for us loneliness, sickness, unemployment, etc. Remain obedient to the Holy Spirit and keep on trusting Him, because the Lord always finishes the work he has begun in you.

Moses

The story of Moses starts in a difficult context. The Pharaoh, troubled by the multitude of Israelites, ordered then the killing of all Hebrew boys. Thus, Moses' parents had to part from him when he was just a little baby.

Moses knew a desert of 40 years in order to be freed of 40 years of Egyptian intellectual and spiritual formation. Indeed, when Jethro's daughters saw him, they believed they saw an Egyptian that is how impregnated was he in this culture. (Exodus 2: 18-19)

Because of his shepherd calling and his leader of a nation's calling, Moses first had to look after his father-in-law's sheep. After that he was ready to lead people. (Luke 6:10) He learnt the team work because God set him to work with others and especially with his brother Aaron (Exodus 4: 14) Moses had also understood that the fight against the Egyptians is not a natural/carnal one, but a spiritual one. Therefore, he needed God's Spirit to confront the Pharaoh's magicians.

Anyone knows that God revealed Himself to Moses in a burning bush, which is so extraordinary and unheard of. However, despite the miraculous encounter and formidable calling from God, Moses found arguments to refuse his calling.

“But Moses said to YHWH: ‘Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?’”(Exodus 3: 11) The first argument raised by Moses to run away from his calling was his incapacity: ‘Who am I?’ he said.

This was a question put by a former prince. The breaking made by God in him made him lose the pride that comes with this dignity. He saw himself without value, abandoned by his brothers, like an exiled man living far away from his family. He was nothing but a stranger and a shepherd who found refuge at his father-in-law: Jethro. Moses didn’t consider himself a prince of Egypt, but a simple man, as God had completely crushed him in the desert to humble him.

“Moses said to the Lord: ‘O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue.” Exodus 4: 10

His second argument was his incapacity to talk easily. How could he appear before the Pharaoh in this condition? But, in the book of Acts (7:22), we read that Moses was educated in all the Egyptian wisdom. This means that once, in the past, he used to be powerful in words and deeds. But the Lord didn’t want Moses to use the Egyptian wisdom to fight the Pharaoh because it is impossible to serve God with the worldly wisdom. (1Corinthians 1: 19-21, James 3:15)

Moses used all his wisdom for 40 years of Egyptian life to solve a conflict between those 2 Jews, but without any success. Then, he used to be powerful in words and deeds such as the sophists and the Antic and modern theologians. But God had undressed him of Egypt and his deeds; Moses became weak and without confidence. The Lord formed him for 40 years in Midian so that he could be ready to confront the Egyptian witchcraft.

“Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth--men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected.” 2 Timothy 3: 8 see also Exodus 7: 11-12

“From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.” Psalm 8: 2

Moses became a baby again in order to learn God’s language.

“At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said: ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure’.” Luke 10: 21

“But Moses said: ‘O Lord, please send someone else to do it.” Exodus 4: 13

His 3rd argument was nothing else but a manifestation of depression. Moses felt so incapable of answering his call that he wanted someone else to take his place. He thought others were better than him, forgetting that all men have defects and that God’s calling is irrevocable. (Romans 11: 29)

This breaking work suffered by Moses had extraordinary effects. On one hand, he became a man used by God extremely powerfully, used more than any other person in his lifetime and also he had miraculous revelations from God thanks to the intimacy he had developed with the Master.

“Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the Lord sent him to do in Egypt-to Pharaoh and to all his

officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.” Deuteronomy 34: 10-12

God forged Christ’s character into Moses, in other words: patience, humility, love etc. – that are the veritable key for success in any ministry.

“Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.”
Numbers 12:3

Finally, Moses’ ministry brought with it inestimable blessings upon Israel:

The children of Israel had been freed from the Egyptian captivity;
Israel became a nation and inherited the land promised by God;
Moses received the Torah (The Law-the shadow of future things in Christ) and became the most important prophet of Jews. (Deuteronomy 34: 10)

Deserts – the Place to Receive God’s Message

*“In the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar--when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Tracoonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene--during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, **the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.**” Luke 3: 1-3*

Before appearing powerfully before men (especially in front of Pharisees and teachers of Law), God had prepared John the Baptist! You will not be able to exercise a divine public ministry/service and confront the modern pharisees, satanists, heathens, atheists without a solid formation received from God, which will forge your character like in a furnace and which will reveal to you His Word.

Plenty are those who exercise a public ministry without having understood anything about the intimacy with the Lord. For a tree to resist storms/winds, it needs deep roots set powerfully into the soil. The mature palm tree has around 10,000 roots reaching up to 10 m. Such a tree is very difficult to uproot by hurricanes or cyclones – symbol of trials connected to your calling.

*“**What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.**” Matthew 10: 27*

If you have never known the darkness (despair), Christ will never be your light, because He is able to bring light only to the ones who need light, to those who are a deep well, in darkness and trouble. Similarly, you will not be able to climb a roof to proclaim God’s Word unless you have received God’s Word in your ear.

But for a person to speak into your ear, you need what’s called intimacy. The deserts are even those intimacy moments with God. He chooses these difficult times to whisper into our ears, to bring light and equip us for great things. The roof and the day represent the people to whom God sends. The darkness may represent the moments of uncertainty, of doubt, when we can’t see further than today, or the times of complete confusion. Then you have the impression to lose the control on life and the future seems uncertain.

Darkness and ear make the holy places where we meet with God.

*“**But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.**” Matthew 6: 6*

“And the child (Yeshoua) grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.” Luke 1: 80

John the Baptist grew and got stronger in the spirit in the desert, where the Hand of the Lord was moulding him. Before appearing in front of the people and also for a better answering of his calling, he had to become powerful spiritually as his task would be terribly difficult.

John the Baptist received his message after a pretty long time of formation in the desert. His message was but the rewriting of his experience there, of the moments of loneliness he lived with the Father. You will not be able to preach things you have never experienced. A true messenger of God will preach things lived during the intimate moments with the Master.

The message becomes your experience. The power of ministry comes from intimacy built with God in the deserts of formation and not in the schools for Biblical formation. After receiving the revelation of Yeshoua/Jesus, Paul goes to Arabia (surely in the desert) to deepen his formation (see Galatians 1). Paul didn't go to be formed in Jerusalem, where the apostles were or where those 2 theological schools (of Hillel and Shammai) were. No.

THE SPECIFIC DESERT TEMPTATIONS

God didn't turn away from the method of formation not even for His only Son. Yeshoua Ma'shia also had to pass through the desert in order to be the perfect example, by excellency, for the men that were about to follow Him. (Hebrews 5: 7-8) But, the story about Jesus' walk through the desert is rich in teachings about temptations.

Yeshoua's Tempting

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.” Luke 4: 1-2

Truly, deserts are places inhabited by snakes, poisonous scorpions which represent demons. It is both a place of trial and also one of temptation. Each godly man must pass this place in order to be beat temptation.

“ The devil said to him: ‘If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.’

Jesus answered: ‘It is written: <Man does not live on bread alone>.’

II. The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him: ‘I will give you all their authority and splendour, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours.’

Jesus answered: ‘It is written: <Worship the Lord your God and serve him only>.’

III. The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ‘If you are the Son of God,’ he said, ‘throw yourself down from here. For it is written: <He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone>.’

Jesus answered: ‘It says: <Do not put the Lord your God to the test>.’

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.”
(Luke 4: 3-13)

Jesus knew 3 types of temptation into the desert:

‘Between the Potter's Hands’

The food temptation : see above Luke 4: 3

"*The belly is a god*" the bible tells us in Philippians 3: 19 and this god must be fed non-stop. Satan wanted Jesus to transform some stones into breads. These stones may be a symbol for Christians who are the living stones (1 Peter 2:5). Unfortunately, many pastors have fallen into this trap and the Christians have become their milking cows, as they provide them with wages and retiring funds.

The Politics' Temptation: see Luke 4: 5-7.

How many pastors today don't become politicians and want to build a heaven corner on earth? Jesus has told Pilate: 'My kingdom is not of this world.' John 18: 36, in other words, nor is this world a place for God's children.

In my book '*The Spirit of Isabel*', I speak about the involvement of many Christians in politics. This is one of the seductions of the latter times.

The Religious Temptation: see Luke 4: 10-12.

Satan wanted Jesus to become the Pope, the False Prophet and the leader of the Apostate Church. How many pastors haven't yet fallen in this trap of the enemy and seek to claim the paternity of some churches or some young pastors for themselves...?

Others become bishops, arch-bishops, Mon seigniors, reverends, etc. More and more Evangelic leaders form alliances with politicians so that they can be protected and helped financially. Unfortunately, plenty of Evangelic ministries have adopted the methods of the Roman Catholic Church.

To resist temptations, we have to take our force from the Word and from prayer, such as a tree whose deep roots into the soil takes its power from underground water currents.

*"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, **being rooted and established in love**, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge-that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."* Ephesians 3: 14-19

The longer the desert period lasts, the more important your ministry will be. Thus, Jesus Christ was formed by the Father for 30 years for a ministry of only 3 years. But what a ministry! 10 years needed for each of His public mission/service. May this fact make you think hard and encourage you!

How to get out Victorious from the Desert?

Not all deserts come from God's perfect will. The perfect example is the case of the prophet Jonah: he found himself 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of a whale due to his disobedience..

"But Samuel replied: 'Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king."

1 Samuel 15: 22-23

Thus, a person living in the desert must try to find out the reason for this. Disobedience can be caused by any sin (unforgiveness, pride, rebellion...) and without repentance, confession and complete submission to God's Word from that person, the desert will not stop. (2 Samuel 21: 1-14). If you are not living in sin, know that the desert comes out of God's will for you. You must keep quiet and be sensitive at the formation God works into your life.

Christ remains forever the absolute point of reference, our perfect model.

“During the days of Yeshoua's life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered” Hebrews 5: 7-8

Suffering is one of God's instruments so we keep on being obedient and edify ourselves in faith. Remember Daniel's 3 friends: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, they too had to pass the fire test despite their devotion. (Daniel 3).

“In this (in YHWH's power) you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.” 1 Peter 1: 6-7

Like we've noticed, deserts are moments of suffering. Often these times trouble us because we don't understand why God make us live them. The frustration and the incomprehension might bring with them whispers and even rebellion against the Lord. Of course, these are natural, carnal reactions that have to be completely forbidden.

Notice the results of a passed test are: praise, glory and honour given to the Lord. Therefore, we have to arm ourselves with patience and to seek in humility the Lord's face to be able to pass these difficult times.

“Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king. Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.” Hebrews 2: 17-18

The Lord's calling before the jury

Have you ever had the impression of God being far from you, that His judgements seem so unfair, that things were easier before you were a believer or that you had more success in your studies, in your professional life as a heathen then now when you are suffering?

If you don't understand why you are suffering, you risk convoking God in the accusers' box. Many Christians don't understand why they are suffering more than heathens while they are sanctifying themselves. Let you be assured that, in the Bible, the prophets had the same questions as you do:

Asaph, the priest and the prophet said: *“Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity ; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits. They scoff, and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression. Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth. Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. They say, "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" This is what the wicked are like always carefree, they increase in wealth. Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning. If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed your children. When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny. Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed,*

completely swept away by terrors! As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them as fantasies. "Psalm 73: 1-20

Jeremiah the prophet said: *"You are always righteous, O Lord, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease? You have planted them, and they have taken root; they grow and bear fruit. You are always on their lips but far from their hearts."* Jeremiah 12: 1-2

Habakkuk the prophet said: *"The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet received. How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you: 'Violence!' but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. Therefore the law is paralysed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted. 'Look at the nations and watch- and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told'."* Habakkuk 1: 1-5

After the Babylonian captivity, the remaining of the children of Israel, faithful to the Law/Torah, had the same thinking pattern as the prophet Asaph, Jeremiah and Habakkuk.

Indeed, after the return from the Babylonian exile, those fearing the Lord were asking themselves why the idolaters were having success in their businesses while they didn't.: *"You have said: 'It is futile to serve YHWH/Yeshoua. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the Lord Almighty? But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly the evildoers prosper, and even those who challenge God escape.'"* Malachi 3:14-15

Christ the foundation

The desert formation has as purpose our building upon a solid foundation which is Christ Himself. God might take several years to form us so we reassemble His Son. He is the real basis that holds this edifice that is us as individuals.

Matthew 16:18 teaches us many things regarding the foundation of the Church, of Christ's Body, the real Bride of the Lamb. The Word says: *"You are the rock, **Peter** and upon this rock I will build My church."*

This declaration: 'you are the rock (in Greek **petra**= little rolling pebble) and on this Rock (in Greek **Petros**=stone) I will build My Church' is a word game, accentuated in some version of the Bible. In reality, it is not a word game at all, its significance is much more profound and it is regrettable that it has been neglected. Therefore, let's understand perfectly well that the essential meaning of this verse is that: **Jesus Christ Himself has built the Church! He alone, Yeshoua is the ROCK** and not Peter – the instable pebble or stone! See also 1 Corinthians 3: 11 and Acts 4: 11.

This Rock makes the Church's foundation Yeshoua Himself! He is the rock of times (Isaiah 17: 10, Isaiah 26: 4, Acts. 4: 11, 1 Corinthians 10: 4). Moses is the first man who talked about Lord Jesus as the Rock:

"Listen, O heavens, and I will speak; hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants. I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he. They have acted corruptly toward him; to their shame they are no longer his children, but a warped and crooked generation. Is this the way you repay the Lord, O foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you? Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you. When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel.

*For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance. In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions. The Lord alone led him; no foreign god was with him. He made him ride on the heights of the land and fed him with the fruit of the fields. He nourished him with **honey from the rock**, and **with oil from the flinty crag**, with curds and **milk from herd and flock** and with fattened lambs and goats, with choice rams of Bashan and the finest kernels of wheat. You drank the foaming blood of the grape.” Deuteronomy 32: 1-14*

Honey- the image of gentleness- comes out of this Rock (Yeshoua/ the Word). The Lord wants to work profoundly inside our interior being. Therefore, to complete this work, He 'transvessels' (pours) us from a pot into a different pot. He doesn't hesitate to break these dust pots that we are, so that we might reassemble Him more and more. He breaks the stone of our human heart (the heart of stone) so He can get honeycombs out of it.

*“And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be **gentle** to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth” 2 Timothy 2:24-25*

On the other hand, oil comes out of this rock; the oil being the image of God's power and of divine anointing. The Lord wants us to receive a power that transforms our lives. The real power comes from the Rock of Life and without this foundation; there is no real power at all.

Milk, the image of basic food, indispensable for the growth of bone structure (symbol of the interior man) comes also out of this Rock.

“Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation”. 1 Peter 2: 2

Finally, out of this Rock comes water, the image of the Word.

*“The Lord said to Moses: “Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to **that rock** before their eyes and **it will pour out its water**. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink.” Numbers 20: 7-8*

“I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.” Ezekiel 36: 25

These 4 aliments: honey, oil, milk and water are indispensable to life and to a good spiritual growth.

The Church's Foundation is the Word of God. Any ministry that is not founded upon Christ will not last. He is the foundation (Luke 6: 47-48), the Root (Romans 11: 18) and the true Vine. (John 15)

God wants us to be formed in His beloved Son's image: *“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” Romans 8: 29*

Those who exercise their ministries without having as foundation Christ are like the foolish people that build houses upon the sand.. (Matthew 7: 24-27) Looking at the state of most churches/ assemblies today, we notice there is a foundation problem: **“When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do ?”** Psalm 11: 3

Paul said:” *By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. **For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Yeshoua Ma'shia.**”*

1 Corinthians 3: 10-11

“You have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” Ephesians 2: 20-22

Remember that the purpose of formation given to us by God is to become like Jesus Christ, so that people who look at us can see Christ. We are called to be witnesses not of man, ministry, local church or Christian organisation, no, but only of and for Christ.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1: 8

CHAP. III: FORMATION BY MEN

FORMATION BY FATHERS IN FAITH

God can't use us unless we submit to others. The person called by the Lord to lead must firstly be led, must learn at first very well the lesson of well administrating a job/ministry. We have, therefore, in the Bible, a lot of persons formed by God's men and women. For instance: Moses had formed Joshua (Numbers 27: 12-23), then Elijah formed Elisha (2 Kings 2), Samuel had been formed near Eli (1 Samuel), Jesus Christ formed His disciples (see the Gospels), the apostles, on their turn, formed the first Christians (1 Corinthians 4:17) and so on...

Many people have received veritable callings from the Lord, but have not been disposed to let themselves be moulded by men with experience in that ministry, such as Gehazi- Elisha's servant (2 Kings 5) Others have refused the formation by men because they had been hurt or deceived by false workers. Know that despite all kinds of deception in your life, these circumstances don't change the Word of God that wants you to be formed by others.

Timothy was a faithful disciple (Acts 16:1-3) that needed a preparation for the apostle ministry. Apostle Paul took him along; he circumcised him and prepared him for the service in the Father's House. Let's note that for the Jews, it was the father of the boy who did the circumcision of his son (Abraham and Isaac, in Genesis cap. 21:4). Timothy was for Paul a true child in faith. This first one has learnt about the ministry only by seeing Paul at work. ***"You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance"*** 2 Timothy 3: 10

Timothy has followed closely his father in faith's teaching, life and sufferings, while sharing both cries, love for God's work, and Paul's fights.

Paul was for Timothy the servant's example, totally consecrated to the Most High. Therefore, Timothy had a point of reference, a guide and an example to follow in serving God better, efficiently. Also despite his youth, he had the sense of responsibility. He didn't try to satisfy his own interest, nor to run after high functions, nor high titles, but always sought the opportunity to serve others with a pastor's heart.

A true leader intends the other person's growth as they endeavour in the work of transforming hearts. He becomes poor for enriching their brothers.

A true pastor looks after his sheep and is always ready to give his life for their protection (John 10: 12-13). Often those without exemplary models lack guiding tools and unfortunately repeat their predecessors' mistakes.

It is important to understand that God is a **God of generations**, because after the calling of the first persons He has in view multiple generations. Thus, 3 rows of visionary generations have determined the Israel's history and their example must be made known to you, too, who have received a calling and a mission from God. These 3 generations are the foundation that needs to be set for a vision can take place.

Abraham's or the Fathers' Generation

It is about the generation of the one who has received God's calling and His vision. The persons called by the Lord as visionaries are established as parents in faith and must work together to form

their sons and daughters who will continue God's given vision. Many leaders destroy their anointing, their calling and the mission because they rush. They want to see God's vision accomplished at all costs. Consequently, they are ready to accept compromise such as establishing alliances with people God doesn't approve. A visionary doesn't belong to the present time. On the contrary, through his deeds, he puts the foundations for future because he sees things before others do. Few leaders work with the purpose of leaving an inheritance to future generations.

The Bible gives us the example of a similar situation where the parents have failed in leaving an inheritance to their children: ***“After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel.”*** see the book of Judges 2: 10. These visionary people must make assure that the future Christian generations, meaning their children in faith will know God YHWH and will serve Him devotedly. The visionary men and women must form persons able to replace them in the divine anointing and in their ministry after their death or depart to heaven.

The Word of God gives us several illustrations of what is 'a father in faith'.

David has received the calling of building a house to the Lord, but it was his son Solomon who did it.(1 Chronicles 28). Joshua helped the people prepared by Moses to reach Canaan. Elijah left Elisha a double portion of his anointing with the Holy Spirit. Paul instructed Timothy, too and this last one, in his turn, has established and prepared entire assemblies. All visionaries have to be such as apostle John: rejoicing by the fact that *“his children are walking in the light.”* (3 John 1: 4)

The parents have to do as David did and discipline their son/daughter so these one have no difficulty in doing God's work. David has well prepared the things so that his son built the Lord's temple with no major difficulty. (1 Chronicles 29)

Although the son in faith must, of course, fight his own battles, both as God's son and servant, his battles are not to be the same as his father's in faith because nothing can prevent him from tasting the victories gained by his father.

In the role of a leader, you have to be an example in accomplishing God's vision for those who work with you in God's ministry. Nowadays, the Church has many apostles, prophets and teachers, but lacks terribly in fathers and mothers. She needs true parents in faith who might love God's people up to the point of sacrificing themselves for the growth of the Church's potential. (Galatians 4:19)

A father in faith recognises his son's capacities and potential; he looks especially at his child's qualities to help him/her grow up in faith. And often he needs to push him harder in order to see his son/daughter reach his/her potential and develop his/her gifts. To succeed in all this, the father has to spend time with his son, to see that he gets the proper formation and education. He has to be present to give encouragement when his son makes mistakes and to help him accept his frustrations without leaving him. The father in faith must rejoice when his son makes progress, not to be jealous or upset or bitter.

During the special moments, the father plants his vision inside his son's heart. This friendship/relationship is as fruitful as his son's humility and respect towards his father's teaching of loving God.

Isaac's or the Sons' Generation

This is the generation that has inherited the vision:” *Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender, and an only child of my mother, he taught*

me and said, "Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live."

Proverbs 4: 1-4

In these verses, the king Solomon addresses to his sons who needed clear instructions of how to become parents for their children. Solomon tells them that he was a son for his father and for his mother. If he hadn't been a son, meaning respectful towards his parents and sensible to their teachings, he would not have been able to be a good father for his own children. Thus, nowadays parents have been the sons and daughters of yesterday and their children will be the parents of tomorrow.

According to God's Word, regarding ministry/service, sons and daughters receive a double portion, such as Elisha from Elijah, but before this, Elijah had to be lift up to heaven. Each work has its own time. Don't try to prove you are more powerful than your father in faith or try to copy the way God uses him, because this will lead you into competition and jealousy. Each ministry of God is unique. You don't have to have copies in the house of God, but just be God's disciples.

There are some examples of some sons in faith who have ended up badly:

Gehazi, Elisha's son in faith was a greedy man: *"Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, "My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him." So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. "Is everything all right?" he asked: 'Everything is all right,' Gehazi answered: 'My master sent me to say: 'Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two sets of clothing.' <By all means, take two talents,>said Naaman. He urged Gehazi to accept them, and then tied up the two talents of silver in two bags, with two sets of clothing. He gave them to two of his servants, and they carried them ahead of Gehazi. When Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house. He sent the men away and they left. Then he went in and stood before his master Elisha. 'Where have you been, Gehazi?' Elisha asked. <Your servant didn't go anywhere,> Gehazi answered. But Elisha said to him: 'Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money, or to accept clothes, olive groves, vineyards, flocks, herds, or menservants and maidservants? Naaman's leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever.' Then Gehazi went from Elisha's presence and he was leprous, as white as snow."* 2 Kings 5: 20-27.

Gehazi, whose name means "the valley of vision", was a man with a terrestrial vision of the ministry. His vision wasn't that of the Kingdom of God, of the mountain, but rather that of a valley (of a terrestrial kingdom). In Isaiah 40: 4, the Lord asks the Jews to increase their valley, or in other words the vision, because it was narrow and terrestrial. Gehazi was serving the man of God and not God Himself. He was preoccupied of material goods: money, clothes, lands, vines, sheep, servants and maids. He dreamed of becoming a patron with servants in his care. Naaman's presents, refused by Elisha because he had knew the fact that the presents blind (according to Deuteronomy 16:19), Gehazi has accepted them.

Nevertheless, this man was near the greatest prophet of his time; but instead of inheriting the anointing of the Holy Spirit, he inherited Naaman's leprosy. And in Moses 'time, leprosy was considered the most revolting disease in Israel. The leprous men were expelled from God's presence and exiled from the camp. (Leviticus 14) Gehazi is the ach-type of all children in faith who are frequenting godly men and women without inheriting anything of their holy life or their message, due to the lack of celestial vision. Indeed, their terrestrial vision (or that 'of the belly') prevents them from keeping on doing their fathers in faith's work.

Judas, the traitor and the thief

“Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.” Psalm 41:9

Judas, the Iscariot was the only apostle not of Galilee (Nazareth was one Galilean village, like the other 11 apostles-n.tr.) but of Kerioth – a village of Judaea. Therefore, he was of the same region as the Lord. (as Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea or the ‘House of Bread’, the city of David, the Gospel tells us-n.tr)

Despite the fact that Judas drove out demons, healed sick, resurrected dead, proclaimed the Gospel, his heart was attached to money. Although he walked with Jesus for 3 ½ years and had a powerful ministry, he was but a thief and a traitor: *“Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected: ‘Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages’. He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.”* John 12: 3-6

Judas betrayed Yeshoua for 30 coins of silver (30 sickles=7,200€according to today estimation) or the price of a slave at that time.

He is the archetype of all Christians working with wrong motivations, in collaboration with fathers in faith called by God. They take advantage of the fame and grace that these ones enjoy to obtain unfair earnings. They use Christians as cautions to ensure they appear legitimate in what they do and also to gain the trust of those whom they extort.

They might have spiritual gifts, make do miracles, exercise important ministries in nations, but they end up by betraying the trust of their fathers in faith for the love of money. Once discovered, many are those who choose to commit spiritual suicide through rebellion, rather than repenting.

“When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. ‘I have sinned,’ he said, ‘for I have betrayed innocent blood.’ <What is that to us?> they replied. <That’s your responsibility.> So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.”

Matthew 27: 3-5

Why are these persons, such as Gehazi (he ended up with leprosy) and Judas (he committed suicide) end up so despicably? The next passage gives us some clues for a better understanding: *“If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.”* 1 Timothy 6: 3-5

This kind of people has a honour problem that pushes them to teach false teachings. They end up being attached to a ministry instead of God of the ministry. Due to the fact that they have an intellectual knowledge of the Word and not of God Himself, they have no spiritual knowledge and make deeds believing God doesn’t see them.

“Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.” 2 Timothy 3:7

Their lack of personal understanding gives access to a spirit of error which pushes them further way in deforming the Lord’s Word. They fall easily in the sin of competing with their fathers in faith because they are not true workers in God’s kingdom (the human nature/ the sin lives in them-n.tr.) and they don’t hesitate to slander and even kill their parents in faith.

“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ.”

Philippians 3: 7-8

The Priest Eli's Sons

“Eli's sons were wicked men; they had no regard for the Lord. Now it was the practice of the priests with the people that whenever anyone offered a sacrifice and while the meat was being boiled, the servant of the priest would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand. He would plunge it into the pan or kettle or caldron or pot, and the priest would take for himself whatever the fork brought up. This is how they treated all the Israelites who came to Shiloh. But even before the fat was burned, the servant of the priest would come and say to the man who was sacrificing, ‘Give the priest some meat to roast; he won't accept boiled meat from you, but only raw.’ If the man said to him: ‘Let the fat be burned up first, and then take whatever you want,’ the servant would then answer: ‘No, hand it over now; if you don't, I'll take it by force.’ This sin of the young men was very great in the Lord's sight; for they were treating the Lord's offering with contempt.” 1 Samuel 2:12-17

“Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.” 1 Samuel 2:22

Eli's sons served the Lord as priests without knowing Him personally. They used to steal offerings meant for YHWH (Yahweh) and also sleep with the women who came into the tabernacle. Instead of continuing their father's ministry, they were hit/destroyed by God: *“17The man who brought the news replied: ‘Israel fled before the Philistines, and the army has suffered heavy losses. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God has been captured.”* 1 Samuel 4:17 Similarly, all the Gehazi and Judas lack in personal and inside revelation (Galatians 1:15-16) and that is why; they consider they have the right to extort money from Christians in a more or less subtle way.

Jacob's or the Grandchildren's Generation

Jacob's and his grandchildren generation is that born of the sons and daughters of fathers in faith. According to God's principle, the sons and daughters shouldn't be sterile, but productive in God's house. Timothy inherited the faith through his mother Eunice – she herself inherited the faith from her own mother Lois (2 Timothy 1:5). The transmission up to at least 3 generations is totally Biblical.

The plain story of Ruth, the Moabite, who decided to follow her mother-in-law in Bethlehem after her husband's death, is an example of homage brought to conversion and faith. It has as a result the creation of David's genealogy because Ruth is one of the ancestors of King David. Ruth's faith deeds come alive in David. God calls us to bring fruits through the teaching we give to future generations.

Sharing God's teaching to future generations needs time and most of all that generation needs to be correctly prepared to receive. On the contrary, many persons believe it necessary to pass through a theological school in order to serve God- false truth according to the above examples.

The Theological School, the Hypocrite School

If you are called to form others, don't be hypocrites like the Pharisees, Yeshoua tells us.

“Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: ‘The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.’” Matthew 23:1-4

The Pharisees form people as the theologians do it today in their theological schools. Many theology professors have never experienced the real conversion, because plenty are those dependent on cigarettes, alcohol, divorced –remarried, living in impudicity, in a word true pagans.

Theology doesn't have a Biblical origin, it's a science invented by Socrates the philosopher to teach philosophy to the Greeks. ***“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”*** Colossians 2: 8

I would like to urge you strongly to receive a calling from God and not a theological formation because this last one is harmful to your calling/anointing.

In the Bible, the Christians' formation was made in local churches by those doing the ministries stated in Ephesians 4: 11. Therefore, the first Christians were formed through the studying of the Gospel and by practising their spiritual gifts and their ministries. The apostles were not teaching theology, but asked their disciples to copy them! (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Sending Christians to a theological school in order to form them is like sending your children to neighbours to be educated. Most of the theology teachers had no personal encounter with Jesus Christ. Some of them even deny His miraculous birth, His resurrection and imminent return. You don't need to go to a theological school in order to be formed or before serving God. Formation is a task that should be performed by your local assembly, it belongs to her.

In advance, the true formation consists in living things and sharing them with others.

*“Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or **seen in me**--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”* Philippians 4: 9

“You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance(constancy in Greek-n.tr.)...” 2 Timothy 3:10

Apostle Paul's exemplary behaviour had been in the same time a formation for his children in faith. He never gave them orders, but he lived in Christ and people copied him.” *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ”* 1 Corinthians 11: 1 or better said: ***Be my imitators like I am one of Christ!!***

You can never efficiently form people if you haven't ever experienced your teachings. You don't have to be a theoretician, but a witness.

Having persevered in the apostles' teachings, in less than 5 years, many cities, (including Samaria), have been won for Christ by the Christians. The elders, such as Steven and Philip, rose up to announce the truth and bring thousands of souls into the Kingdom of God.

It is important to mention that the Hebrew teachers used to sleep, eat and live constantly with their disciples. So, the disciples used to live in a close intimacy with their masters and that is why they used to reproduce whatever they saw their masters do.

Yeshoua, He too, had lived all the time amongst His disciples. Therefore, He has given a practical formation, neither philosophical and nor intellectual.

THE INDIVIDUAL FORMATION

Many Christians don't grow in years after their conversion because they are passive, lazy and haven't well understood that they need to get involved in their own formation. In the same way, a great number of pastors don't want to do their own research in the Bible in order to validate or invalidate the teachings received. This passivity is very dangerous because it allows false doctrines to appear and be enrooted in the hearts of God's children. In fact, it favours: traditions, customs, monotony, or RELIGION.

Therefore, you must endeavour yourselves to perfect your divine calling by making your own research in the Word and by praying to receive revelations from God the Father, through His Holy Spirit.

The apostle Luke, the doctor and the author of the homonym Gospel, followed this path which each Christian should follow.

*“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, **since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning**, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that **you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.**” Luke 1: 1-4*

In this passage, Luke calls the apostles ‘witnesses’ (**“those who saw with their own eyes”**), in Greek ‘autoptes’, which gives in English ‘autopsy’. Therefore, this term tells us that the apostles knew Yeshoua personally, but Luke is not content only to accept the teaching from the apostles without verifying its authenticity, with all the apostles’ pretext of having lived with the Lord. On the contrary, Luke does his own research starting with the ‘origin’ (of Jesus). In Greek, the word ‘origin’ is said ‘anothen’ and means ‘from above, from heaven or from God’.

In other words, Luke went before God to have the confirmation that the apostles’ teachings about: Jesus’ divine nature, His death and resurrection are according to the Father’s Will. He sought in the Scriptures (the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms) to see if they talk about Messiah. (Luke 24:45). Thus, once finishing his study/research, Luke has been able to reinforce the truth to Theophilus about the apostles’ doctrine. Similarly, the Christians of Berea practised the same kind of verification regarding Paul’s teachings.

*“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and **examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.**” Acts 17: 11*

The individual formation is based on the profound daily meditation of God’s Word, on prayers and on brotherly communion.

A good discipline can’t be replaced with anything if you want to get a good knowledge about God’s things.

“For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 1: 5-8

The word 'endeavour' or 'effort' (in Greek 'spude') means 'zealously/willingly', 'with eagerness' or 'seriously interested'. In this passage, the verb 'to add to' or 'epichoregeo' in Greek means 'to provide'. You have to look after your faith as a mother looks non-stop after her baby.

In the first place, you need to be formed yourself before forming others; you need: knowledge, self-control, devotion, brotherly friendship and love to add to your ministry. There are things God can't do for you. Don't be hypocrite playing the Christian full of anointing/divine calling while between brothers and sisters and lukewarm while alone. Live in a constant relationship with God both at work or at school and in your family life, etc.

CHAP. IV: BEING EQUIPPED FOR THE MINISTRY

THE ANOINTING

Under Moses' Law and also under the New Covenant, according to the New Testament, nobody could and is able to answer God's calling without having received a special anointing beforehand.

The 3 Types of Anointing under the Old Covenant

The anointing was divine outfit worn by 3 types of people:

a) Priests. The oil used to anoint these people had a particular composition and couldn't be used for profane usage/service (Exodus 30: 22-25, 30). It used to be spread all over the priest's head and was also pouring upon his garments (Exodus 29:21; Leviticus 8: 12, 30; Psalm 133: 2). The sovereign priest used to receive a totally special oiling that differ the all others priests. (Leviticus 21: 10)

b) Kings. There is no mention regarding the composition used to oil/appoint kings. The consecrated priest or prophet had a horn filled with oil which he used to pour out over the future king's head. (1 Samuel 10: 1; 16: 3,13; 1 Kings 1: 39; 19:15,16; 2 Kings 9: 6; 1: 12).

c) Prophets. These people used to start their ministry as soon as they had received the oiling. They were appointed directly by YHWH (Yahweh/ God) Himself, like it was the case of Elijah or such as other prophets like Elisha (1 Kings 19: 16). All prophets who received the appointing were called 'oiled' (in Hebrew Ma'shia, the equivalent of Christ in Greek). This title was used specially for Saul (1 Samuel 24: 11; 26:9; 2 Samuel 1: 16). In the Psalms, the anointed person was a term used to name both a terrestrial king and also the promised Ma'shia (Psalm 2:2; Psalm 20:7; Psalm 28:8). But, in certain passages, this term points uniquely to the Saviour promised for the end times. (Daniel 9: 25, 26).

In New Testament, naturally, the Lord Jesus Himself is the One with the privilege of oiling/anointing people. (Luke 4: 18; Acts 4: 27; 10: 38; Hebrews 1: 9). This anointing is not material (doesn't involves using a substance: oil-n.tr.), but the direct result of the Holy Spirit's (Acts 10: 38). This kind of anointing has been used to set aside Yeshoua for the triple ministry: that of a priest, king and prophet. The title 'Christ', the Anointed One, which had been used more than 550 in the New Testament, underlines the importance of this (Jesus's) anointing.

Having being set aside for God, as kings and priests (1 Peter 2: 5, 9; Revelation 1: 6; 5: 10) all Christ's disciples have received such a spiritual/oiling (2 Corinthians 1: 21) by the coming of the Holy Spirit into their hearts. This anointing had remained within them and allowed them to discern truth from lies, from mistakes. (1 John 2: 20, 27)

*"The Lord YHWH/God formed the man from the dust of the ground and **breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.**"* Genesis 2: 7

The verb ‘to breath’ in this passage is said ‘naphach’ in Hebrew. This word also means ‘to light’. In fact, being lit is what being equipped means; that’s what the anointing with the Holy Spirit is all about. Without the Spirit, neither life, nor movement, nor revelation are possible. The anointing is the Spirit’s power that comes upon us to make us able to answer the calling.

“ See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of Yahweh, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts—to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship.” Exodus 31: 2-5

For instance, YHWH/ Yeshoua provided Bezalel with artistic aptitudes to allow him to build the tools of the tabernacle.

The anointing also allows us an authority over the powers of darkness and over sickness. (Luke 10: 19)

“But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also. See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us—even eternal life. I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.” 1 John 2: 20-27

The anointing gives us knowledge, too. In fact, a person anointed receives knowledge about God and about sin. It is important to know that God’s ministry is very difficult to do and only the anointing with the Holy Spirit qualifies the worker.

“Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.” 2 Corinthians 3: 5

The anointing allows us to pray (Romans 8: 26), to understand the Bible (Acts 8), to testify (Acts 1: 8) to exercise the gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12), to teach the Word (Mark 13), to form true disciples (2 Timothy 2), to walk as God wants us to (John 16) and to fear the Lord (John 16: 7-8).

2) Our Waiting to be clothed in the Spirit

The apostles were waiting in the upstairs room to be equipped before going out and proclaiming the Gospel. (*“When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.” Acts 1: 13-14*).

In fact, Yeshoua gave us a clear order: ***“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”*** (Luke 24:49).

Make sure you don’t rush into answering your calling because if you are not well prepared, you’ll end up forgotten. Moses made this mistake when he rushed into answering his calling of liberating his people without being formed and well equipped by God.

“The next day he went out and saw 2 Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong: ‘Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?’ The man said: ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?’ Then Moses was afraid and thought: ‘What I did must have become known’.” Exodus 2: 13-14

His brothers asked him: “who made you ruler over us?” because they saw neither the anointing nor the miracles which accompany God’s chosen people. But once formed and equipped with the leading rod, everyone recognised God’s Hand over Moses’ life.

“Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites, and Aaron told them everything the Lord had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, and they believed. And when they heard that the Lord was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.” Exodus 4: 29-31

We could receive an authentic vocation, but if we answer the call before the time, our ministry will be null and without fruits. We can’t serve God with our own qualifications (diplomas, money etc.). We must be equipped by the Lord in order to be able to accomplish the mission He entrusted us with. Let’s not put our trust in our human aptitudes, in our material goods, or in our theological diplomas; satan is not afraid of us, nor of what we can represent, but he trembles because of the One who is in us!

“Then the Lord God provided a vine and made it grow up over Jonah to give shade for his head to ease his discomfort, and Jonah was very happy about the vine. But at dawn the next day God provided a worm, which chewed the vine so that it withered.” Jonah 4: 6-7

Jonah’s vine grew in a night-time and so, had neither root nor depth, fact that made a mere worm destroy it. This worm here can represent the kingdom of darkness. However, when God allowed satan to attack Job, this last one couldn’t be destabilized because Job was built upon the Rock: (Yeshoua Ma’shia-n.tr.).

Many persons expose themselves to the crowd and to the enemy’s onslaughts while God hasn’t yet well-equipped them. How many ministries, assemblies haven’t disappeared over night? They make noise and then, after a little attack (for instance a beautiful woman or a great sum of money), everything falls apart. We saw that God is a God of generations, when He calls a person; He has in mind several generations. Thus, after our death, the vision must go on. We should never be content during lifetime, because only after death, we know for sure if we have succeeded or not. We must always prepare the posterity, meaning the persons able to continue our vision.

THE APOSTOLIC TEAM

*“Paul and his companions travelled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. **During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.**” Acts 16: 6-10*

Vision equals influence, God gives it in the beginning to one person and afterwards, others assimilate it. Despite the fact that God gives the vision to a single man, it is not the property of that person who will not be able to accomplish it by himself/herself. Paul’s apostolic team reached the conclusion that God called them all to preach the Gospel in Macedonia. The verb ‘to conclude’, in Greek ‘sumbibazo’, is ‘to fusion, to form an assembly’. Paul’s vision has built unity and motivation into the hearts of his friends/partners. You need to learn to encourage your apostolic team members because without them your vision will stay in your womb (causing miscarriage-n.tr.) **“The eye cannot say to the hand: ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot say to the feet: ‘I don’t need you!’”** 1 Corinthians 12: 21

If you are blessed financially in your ministry, think of blessing your team members, too. They are inheritants and sons of your vision for future generations. Moses received the vision of building a tabernacle, but it was the people he who had to construct it. God gave Bezalel artistic aptitudes which Moses didn’t have. Everybody had to work to make the work advance, each at his/her post.

“Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.” Exodus 25: 8-9

Moses has received the model of the tabernacle, but the construction was everybody’s business. Paul has received the vision to go into Macedonia, but all his team had to work in this missionary trip. Your vision will be dead unless you know how to work and think of those around you. Share your vision with precision and be the first to set up an example to engage others to follow you! For your vision to be understood you have to live it first and then others will follow. Peter saw how Jesus used to pray for the dead and he did the same Tabitha. (Acts 10)

Vision is defined as influence. God never calls a man to serve Him without revealing him a vision or the desired purposes.

The Bible is remarkable due to its stories about the the lives of men and women called by God and to whom He had communicated His thought or His vision about things. Vision is a seed or a task deposited by God in us that doesn’t leave us in peace until having brought the desired fruits.

Generally speaking, a visionary is rejected before being accepted by people. Sometimes, people acknowledge him at his death. He/she has to place himself/herself in the perspective of future generations and must not hope for a personal gain for his/her ministry. His/her vision must go on after his/her death too, reaching thus souls and glorifying God. The most famous examples are: Moses who took the Israelites out of Egypt and Paul who received great revelations regarding the Christian doctrine.

The visionary people must help their companions by passing on their talents, gifts and strength in order to succeed in the mission God entrusted them with. Each member of the apostolic team has to work for the benefit of the global vision and forget his own personal interests.

Let's take the example of a soccer team: despite the fact that each player has his own numbered T-shirt, he must put all his effort in and keep his position so that the team wins the game. It doesn't matter whose goal is because when the team wins, all players are praised. The team's success depends on each player's self-control and knowledge.

The Bible gives us the beautiful example of the prophet Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch: Jeremiah 36: 1-6 *" In the 4th year of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 'Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you in the reign of Josiah till now. Perhaps when the people of Judah hear about every disaster I plan to inflict on them, each of them will turn from his wicked way; then I will forgive their wickedness and their sin.' So Jeremiah called Baruch son of Neriah, and while Jeremiah dictated all the words the Lord had spoken to him Baruch wrote them on the scroll. Then Jeremiah told Baruch: 'I am restricted; I cannot go to the Lord's temple. So you go to the house of the Lord on a day of fasting and read to the people from the scroll the words of the Lord that you wrote as I dictated. Read them to all the people of Judah who come in from their towns.'"*

Jeremiah was a great prophet and despite his great calling, he wasn't able to write properly, needing, thus, Baruch to serve him as:

- Hands – to write for him,
- Legs, to take the scroll of the Old Testament into the Temple,
- Mouth, to share this word to his people.

Baruch wasn't able to pretend to replace Jeremiah and vice-versa. God unified them in a common ministry. And due to the fact that Baruch remained faithful to his job despite all threats and persecutions, God blessed him by sparing his life. (Jeremiah 45)

CHAP. V: TRAPS AND OBSTACLES IN THE MINISTRY

Never make the mistake to believe that ministry in itself is a purpose and also that once anointed by God, life becomes suddenly easy, as smooth as the river flow.

On the contrary, reality is totally different. Soon you'll start to realise that the past battles are nothing compared to the future ones, because traps, obstacles and persecutions come to rise against us like unsurmountable mountains.

Regarding this subject, I remember once I had this vision: I was driving and trying my best to reach the top of a hill. The land was so hostile and abrupt that my car kept spinning around. I wasn't scared of death, but I was afraid I wasn't going to make it to the top of that hill. But a supernatural force helped me and I finally got there in the end where I saw God's glory. Then, Lord appeared to me and showed me another layer of mountains straight ahead of me, telling me I had to pass those ones, too. I replied to Him that I hardly was able to conquer this one and that I had no more strength in me to climb. He then replied that if I refuse, He would keep going without me.

As I had no choice, I told Him I'll keep on following Him.

These mountains represent diverse battles we lead against evil spirits, especially that of Jezebel. I speak mostly of this spirit because we live in the end times when the Lord raises more and more people with the Elijah's Spirit (the Spirit of Truth or the Holy Spirit) in them in order to prepare His Bride for the Lamb's Wedding. The spirit of Jezebel fights tenaciously against ministries such as Elijah's.

JEZEBEL

Origin and Way of Operation

“Omri rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. And Ahab his son succeeded him as king. In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria over Israel twenty-two years. Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him. He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him. He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him.” 1 Kings 16: 28-33

Jezebel, Ahab's wife was a princess of Sidonian origin, a great worshipper of Baal, the god of rain. Sidon, the founder of the city which took his name, was the eldest son of Canaan, Noah's son. But, Noah had cursed Canaan and thus curse fell upon Sidon, who was Canaan's first born or Noah's grandson. *“Canaan was the father of Sidon his first born, and of Het “(the father of the Hittites). 1 Chronicles 1: 13*

Therefore, Jezebel originated from a country whose ancestor had been cursed by Noah. So, despite her condemnation to be a slave for Shem's descendants, according to Noah's prophecy, she managed to become their princess and their leader.

She took the power and ruled completely over her husband. But she is known especially for:

- having abolished the cult of Yahweh in order to replace it officially with that of Baal and Astraea;
- having killed the prophets of the Most High;
- having fought Elijah the prophet;
- having taken the direction/rule of the entire country of Israel;
- having organised Naboth's killing in order to receive a favour from Ahab (1 Kings 2:1-22)

“And also concerning Jezebel the Lord says: ‘Dogs will devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.’”
 This was God's judgement against this woman because of all her evils and the violation of the moral law. (1 Kings 21: 23)

A Spirit of Prostitution

When the Bible speaks of the spirit of Jezebel, it firstly denounces the spirit of prostitution: *‘When Joram saw Jehu he asked: ‘Have you come in peace, Jehu?’ ‘How can there be peace,’ Jehu replied: ‘as long as all **debaucheries** and witchcraft of your mother Jezebel abound?’* 2 Kings 9: 22

This prostitution is firstly spiritual because of the idolatry. But the Lord had forbidden the Israelites to have other gods. (Exodus 20) On the contrary, Jezebel loves the cult of personality, she makes people focus on her person and depend on her. Idolatry is characterised by the consummation of meat sacrificed to idols. (Revelation 2: 20)

This prostitution can also be physical. The service in high places in Canaan, Babylonian and Greek temples was provided by ‘sacred’ women prostitutes. The cult for: Baal, Astraea and Dionysus was indecent at the extreme (2 Kings 23: 7). Notice that nowadays, these religions of the past have gained the same rise in popularity in our modern societies.

I know a pastor who fell due to his sexual relationship with a woman animated by Jezebel spirit sent by the enemy into his local assembly. His life was so bound to extra conjugal affairs that he had connections with more than 50 women from that assembly during a period of 10 years. Unfortunately, this example is not isolated. Many Christians practice the cult of debauchery in the eyes and under the ears of the whole world.

Jezebel was also associated with her bed where she commits her physical adulteries with her seduced victims.

Revelation 2: 22: *“So **I will cast her on a bed of suffering**, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways.”*

“I have covered my bed with coloured linens from Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. Come, let's drink deep of love till morning; let's enjoy ourselves with love! My husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey. Proverbs 7: 16-19

A Spirit of Witchcraft

*“‘When Joram saw Jehu he asked: ‘Have you come in peace, Jehu?’ ‘How can there be peace,’ Jehu replied: ‘as long as all debaucheries and **witchcrafts** of your mother Jezebel abound?’”* 2 Kings 9: 22

The word ‘sacrilege’ is synonym with ‘magic incantation’, or ‘divinisation’ and of course, ‘witchcraft’. Thus, she transforms her victims into marionettes using her witchcraft to control them spiritually. She can cause false thoughts/ false dreams and false visions in order to manipulate God's servants. She works with the spirit of Piton so that she can pass as a great prophetess. (Revelation 2: 20)

Generally speaking, this spirit of witchcraft and control is more common in women than in men. Satan knows that man is the woman's leader, such as Christ is the head of man and God the head of Christ (1 Corinthians 11: 1) That is why, he tries through all means to replace God's order and

the Spirit He uses (The Holy Spirit) in order to break both the Lord's authority and that of man and most times, the best way to do it is through this spirit of Jezebel.

A False Prophetess

Jezebel from the New Testament is a prophetess and a demonic Gospel teacher who uses the tongue to destroy the Lord's ministries. A prophet is a gate- God's word, meaning the Lord's mouth, but Jezebel uses prophecy to control people. Men need to hear God talking, like to know their future. Using these false prophecies and false visions, Jezebel is able to give men false hopes. This way, she can destroy a church, a marriage, a ministry.

A Spirit of Control

Wonderful actress, she uses all her talents to reach her purposes. Jezebel builds up soul connections between her victims; she hovers around them as a real snake and suffocates them without these persons even noticing it. To create these soul connections, she uses human feelings so easily to manipulate. O woman possessed by the spirit of Jezebel will do everything to draw you closer and to form with you a filial or matrimonial relationship. Of course, this thing is also applicable for a man possessed by this demonic spirit. Remember that Ahab married Jezebel because his soul had been firstly conquered. Samson (Judges 16: 4-22) is another example of a victim who felt under the devastating charms of Delilah- another type of Jezebel. Indeed, Jezebel is an expert in using sweet, flattery words, full of honey and sugar.

*“My son, keep my words and store up my commands within you. Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call understanding your kinsman; **they will keep you from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words.**”*

Proverbs 7: 1-5

Many servants had fallen because of women working with them in the ministry due to soul connections. Some go that far that they share intimal things, terribly personal matters with women which they call ‘spiritual daughters, collaborators, secretaries..’ They become thus their confidants in the detriment of their real wives who are delegated on the second layer and hid in the closet. Some, too, in order to justify this kind of relationships, no more nor less adulterous, go that far that they invoke the relationship David and Jonathan, forgetting that these were 2 men fearing God and not a man and a woman. The soul connection might become so strong that it could start a dependency, even a complete servitude of that godly servant to Jezebel. These soul links can push God's worker to separate and even divorce his legal wife to be able to remarry easily.

They also can cause this servant's isolation and separation of his long time team collaborators. For a better control over him and to destroy him completely, Jezebel might even diabolise his entourage, his wife, his kids. Once she succeeded in making her prey fell, she controls him by threatening him with divulging his sin. In addition, completely dependent on her (both physically and spiritually dependence), she later threatens him at ease with abandoning him in a state of complete ruin.

How the Spirit of Jezebel works in Churches

Jezebel finds her power in 2 major deities: Baal and Astraea.

Baal, whose name means master or lord, knight of clouds and master of thunder, was a god of Canaan origin. But, you have to remember that Canaan was Noah's cursed grandchild. When Elijah appeared in Israel, he made the rain stop for 3 ½ years. (1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17) Being an agricultural people, The Israel was completely dependent upon the 2 seasons of rain (Jeremiah 5:24). Firstly, the rain of the last season 'megosh' in Hebrew (meaning the spring rain) was formed of heavy adverse, well appreciated because it fell right before harvest and after long periods of drought during the summer months. In the 2nd place, the rain of the first season, 'moresh' in Hebrew, (at the end of October, so in autumn), means torrential. On one hand, this rain opened the agricultural year by softening the soil hardened by summer and secondly, it also prepared the cultivable land for seedling.

Jezebel made all the children of Israel believe that these 2 seasons of rain came from Baal. Thus, we can easily understand her anger when Elijah turned up decreeing drought over the entire country. Not only was Jezebel humiliated, but she had also to face the famine that deprived of food the people and those 850 prophets of hers.

Rain being the image of blessing, (Deuteronomy 28:12), Baal was therefore a god of prosperity. It is the same nowadays when, despite having received authentic callings, thousands of pastors adhere later to a gospel of prosperity inspired by Jezebel (1 Timothy 4: 1-2). They end up compromising themselves by making an alliance with the Babylon, for instance this world's authorities, in order to get subsidies.

The god Baal is also associated with Balaam, whose name means 'the one who devours' (Revelation 2:14; Jude 1:11). Balaam is the image of being lost. It is better to say that: the lost, having a hermetic heart are deaf to all warnings and all calls to repentance made by the Holy Spirit. It is known for sure that despite all received warnings, Balaam prefers the Lord's richness/money. (Numbers 22)

Balaam is therefore a spirit who loves honours and wages (not only a financial remuneration, but this could be the case too) and who doesn't hesitate in replacing God's Grace with the goods and the pleasures of this world. To reach his/her purpose, a person animated by this spirit doesn't think twice in misinterpreting the Gospel and using theft and manipulation to suit him/her. (Revelation 2:14); but *"Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into Balaam's error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion."* Jude vs.11

"Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous." 1 John 3: 12

Balaam's spirit is naturally linked to that of Cain's and Korah's. Genesis 4 tells us the story of Abel who killed his brother Cain. It is interesting to notice that both of them served and prayed to the same God and had the same idea of making Him an offering (the image of adoration for the Lord). Abel, knowing his Lord's heart, offered his first born of his herds, the image of holocaust made by Yeshoua. On the contrary, Cain offered Him the fruits of the earth; and since we know that YHWH/Yahweh cursed the soil after Adam's fall, its fruits are but cursed, too, because of the sin. In addition, offering must not be the work of someone's own hands. Founding himself repudiated, Cain has killed his brother instead of repenting himself and seeking God's face. The spirit of Cain is therefore one of jealousy, of persecution, of revenge and murder. Thus, people animated by this spirit can seem jealous of the grace you have upon your life and will make all possible to kill your ministry.

Korah is a spirit of rebellion who doesn't stand the ministries with leading role put in place by God in the church. Like Korah in the Old Testament (who used to complot against Moses – see

Numbers 16), the rebellious persons will contest both the place of the visionary man/woman and also the order set by the Lord. Therefore, they will endeavour to rally people to their cause in order to rebel which will have as purpose the replacement of those servants called by God/Yeshoua.

Astraea, also named Asherah or Asher, used to be a great deity of Canaan origin. She was the goddess of fecundity whose cult of sexual nature had been a source of decadent immorality due to the fact that her priestesses were devoted to a 'sacred prostitution'. (Judges 2: 13; 1 Kings 11: 5; 2 Kings 21: 7; 23: 13).

"He (Josiah) also tore down the quarters of the male shrine prostitutes, which were in the temple of the Lord and where women did weaving for Asherah." 2 Kings 23:7

Associated with Ishtar, the morning star, in other words the planet Venus, 'the goddess of love and beauty' for the Greeks, she represents the earth fecundated by rain (Baal).

Nowadays, like yesterday, Astraea is the personification of sexual promiscuity who reigns today in many of our assemblies (see divorce practiced by many Christians, especially pastors.)

Jezebel in the Church of Thyatira

"To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead.

Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): Only hold on to what you have until I come. To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations-'He will rule them with an iron sceptre; he will dash them to pieces like pottery' - just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star. He, who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Revelation 2: 18-29.

Thyatira used to be a small city of little significance that had been conquered by Rome. Nevertheless, John's letter (addressed to the Christians of this locality) has the longest message given of those of 7 Asian churches.

"Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols." Revelation 2: 20.

In this letter, the name 'Jezebel' is very significant. It is about the spirit of control which has been and is nowadays being introduced in the saints' churches to break them. Some exegetes believe she was an influenced believer, maybe the wife of an elder of the church of Thyatira, a woman that exercised a despotic activity over the Christians. She would have risen to teach and seduce them as prophetess though she was living in debauchery. Through her teaching, this Jezebel would have opened the way to false prophetesses teaching and causing divisions amongst the church.

By denouncing Jezebel of Thyatira as an imposture and her scheme, the Lord was looking above local circumstances of that church. Such as Jezebel of Thyatira who called herself prophetess, today another Jezebel is rising up as an infallible authority.

The spirit of Jezebel leads and controls many ministries at present. I recommend you read the parable of wheat and tares of Matthew 13: 24-30 and 36-43. You will notice that the tares had been seeded between the wheat; but while the wheat sheaves grew, the herb did too. This means that the 2 plants cross themselves. There is so much resemblance between them that only at the harvest/maturity they can be told apart. Thus, while a ministry starts producing fruits, the tar (the spirit of Jezebel) acts too. Let's understand therefore that we are sheep sent amongst wolves and we can't escape Jezebel's spirit.

Jezebel – the Mystery of Inequity

“For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.” 2 Thessalonians 2: 7

According to this passage, inequity is a mystery and we already know that only God alone can reveal to us the mysteries of the Kingdom. (Matthew 13). Paul tells us that this mystery had been already at work amongst the primitive churches.

Zachariah, the prophet, in chapter 5 of his book, had also seen it in the form of a vision: he saw ‘2 women with stork wings’ removing the cup of inequity that belonged to the children of Israel. The woman sitting upon that cup was nobody else than the personification of inequity. These women with stork wings went to build him a house in the land of Shinar (Babel/Babylon according to Genesis 10: 10 and 11: 2).

Therefore, the mystery of inequity is nothing else but the religious Babylon. Even the apostle John had been charmed by this woman, to the point that the angel called out to him:” *When I saw her, I was greatly astonished. Then the angel said to me: ‘Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the 7 heads and 10 horns.’ Revelation 17: 7*

It is said that this woman is drunk with the blood of the saints, Revelation 17: 6, such as Jezebel was drunk with the blood of all the prophets she had killed. The same way that the Church is the Bride of Christ, Jezebel is the Antichrist's wife.

The stork is the symbol of fecundity and maternity. It is qualified as an unclean animal by Leviticus 11: 19. Let's note that it is said ‘hazida’ in Hebrew and means ‘the loving one, the devout, the faithful’ which is a paradox that underlines the subtlety of this image. Such a fake devotion for such a demonic manifestation! Some of the Biblical women had incarnated the spirit of Jezebel, such as the stubborn and tenacious wife of Potiphar, to whose insistent demands Joseph had resisted- thing that made him to be falsely accused and jailed.(Genesis 39: 6-20). Or Heroiade, the adulterous and manipulatory wife of Herod, the one who obtained John the Baptist's death sentence thanks to her daughter's charms(she danced for her uncle Herod -Matthew 6: 11)

Seduction through Music

This spirit works a lot by using the music as a way of seduction; that is why often, we find him amongst the praise and worship clique (exclusive group) of assemblies. It is important to understand that the spirit of Jezebel seeks desperately to destroy all assemblies who know a real revival. This spirit mixes very easily in God's ministry and amongst God's children so he can destroy them better.

Jezebel can always be assimilated to: **the Heaven's Queen** (Jeremiah 7:18), **the woman from Revelation 17** (the Babylon) and **The Mermaid**. In the Greek mythology, mermaid had a specific characteristic: she was a prophetess of the kingdom of Hades, the god of dead and also an excellent musician who used to devour the shipwrecked sailors. According to Revelation 12:7-12,

some of the devils fell into the sea and surely, the mermaid belongs to this kind of demons and has indeed a beautiful voice, like the mermaids in the Greek mythology. Her musical talents charm people, mesmerize and totally captivate God's children. She takes the appearance of devotion, but denies its power: *"having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them."* 2 Timothy 3:5.

Remember that the musical instruments have been especially created for **Lucifer, the bright star of Isaiah 14: 12**, which, according to the Bible, was a perfect being-see Ezekiel 28: 12 *"The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created."* **Ezekiel 28:13b**

Amongst the demons who followed Lucifer in his rebellion (thus become Satan), plenty were those who used to play a musical instrument. It is no surprise that most of the so-called 'Christian musicians' are libertine and live in sexual promiscuity.

The first man who invented musical instruments was Jubal and he was Cain's descendant. (Genesis 4:21). Satan has inspired his posterity with musical aptitudes in order to deter people from worshipping God and for attacking God's children with a seductive and corrupt music such as rap, rock, disco ... Could you seriously imagine angels playing rap before the God of glory?

The first mention of the verb 'to adore' is made in Gen. 22: 5, when Abraham was ready to sacrifice his son Isaac. Let us understand that for God, real adoration/worship is synonym with holocaust or the sacrifice of our life and is not similar with vocal techniques.

"But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! 'Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings 40 years in the desert, O house of Israel?'" Amos 5: 23-24

Music is but an expression of worship, between many others, and is translated by sacrifice, by the holocaust of our sanctified life. (Romans 12: 1-2) We sing songs of praise to Yeshoua because of our lives consecrated to Him and not the other way around.

The subtlety consists in the fact that the persons animated by this spirit, though lacking beauty or musical abilities, keep on being very attractive and popular.

Jezebel, the Murderer of Prophets

Jezebel tends to mean "lacking co-habitation, "Baal is her husband" or in addition: "impudicity". Like you've already seen, the Scripture tells us about 2 women called Jezebel who have had a great influence upon people.

The first was Ahab's wife (the king of Israel's wife) and the 2nd one was the member of Thyatira church. The study of the first Jezebel's personality allows us to understand the 2nd Jezebel (the one of the New Testament) and her inequity imposed over Thyatira Church.

Jezebel, Ethbaal's daughter, (Ethbaal was the king of Sidonia) has pushed Israel into a monstrous idolatry. (1 Kings 17.18 and 19)

Thus, the Bible relates that under king Ahab, 400 prophets of Astraea and 450 of Baal were eating at Jezebel's table. While Ahab had a weak character, Jezebel was of authoritarian nature. She made as she pleased, she commanded at will, knowing that her husband couldn't have resisted her wishes at all. Her evilness was so great that she didn't hesitate to use the royal sceptre to order the execution of an innocent man. (1 Kings 21) According to this story, we understand that Jezebel is a spirit of murder who seeks to dispossess people of their inheritance, such as Jezebel did with Naboth.

Despite the fact that on Carmel Mountain, Elijah has confronted alone those 450 prophets of Baal and the entire people of Israel, at Jezebel's the first threat to take his life, he ran away in disarray simply because that woman completely petrified him.

In fact, this last one hasn't hesitated to send to death all the prophets of the Most High YHWH/Yeshoua and certainly she wanted to do the same with Elijah the prophet. (1 Kings 18: 4 and 19: 2)

Nowadays, the spirit of Jezebel uses a redoubtable weapon to kill all prophetic ministries:

Her tongue.

The Slander

Speaking falsely against someone or defaming him/her is nothing else but slander. It is important to know that the Greek word for 'devil' is 'diabolos', meaning 'the slanderer.'

"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour." Exodus 20: 16

False witnessing against someone is in fact defaming him/her and also false; in other words falsely accusing that person of something terrible, (covering him/her in lies-n.tr.) Slander, such as curse, comes out of a man's heart. *"For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly."* Mark 7: 22

Forbidden by the law of the Old Testament (Leviticus 19: 16), slander comes from a man's heart and must be banned within the Christian community. (2 Corinthians 12: 20; Ephesians 4: 3, Colossians 3: 8, 1 Peter 2: 1).

"They said: 'Come, let's make plans against Jeremiah; for the teaching of the law by the priest will not be lost, nor will counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophets. So come, let's kill him with our tongues and pay no attention to anything he says.'"

Jeremiah 18: 18

The tongue is a little body part, but it is capable of doing more harm than a sword, says James in chapter 3 of his epistle.

All those who will answer The Lord's call have to be prepared to suffer all kind of slander from their closest people. If the devil doesn't manage to destroy you through sex, love of money or pride, he will use the men's tongues to destroy you.

The purpose of slander is triple:

- **To destroy your testimony:** the devil knows that ministry goes hand in hand with both testimony and reputation, which are like perfume attracting people *"A good name is better than fine perfume..."* Ecclesiast 7:1a. In destroying your reputation through slander, the enemy believes many people won't be able to benefit your grace. But, fortunately for you and me, the Lord Yeshoua confirms all ministries appointed by Him!

- **To produce depression and discouragement:** you surely know the story of prophet Elijah. Jezebel's evil proposals Elijah greatly, to the point that he even suffered a nervous breakdown which could have led to death: *"So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say: 'May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die and said: "It is enough, Lord. Take my life for I am no better than my fathers!"'* 1 Kings 19: 2-4

After such a great victory gained before Baal's prophets, Elijah fell into total despair due to Jezebel's malicious tongue!

- **To give up:**” *There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the Lord came to him: ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’”* 1 Kings 19: 9. Elijah abandoned his post due to Jezebel’s slander and threats.

Plenty are God’s servants who abandon their ministries as a result of other Christians’ slander and intimidations.

Let’s understand that behind slander there is always the spirit of Jezebel who works to destroy the true prophets who confront him sooner or later.

*“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trail which is to try you, as though something strange happened to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. **If you are insulted** because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”*

1 Peter 4: 12-14

Peter uses the word ‘insulted’ with a profound meaning. Indeed, insults/ abusive words represent an extremely serious offence that discredits a man, clouds his/her dignity or brings dishonour to him/her. This crime might be done through: a word, a gesture, a threat, a written word, a drawing or even a delivered object which shows disrespect for a person established in a public ministry.

Therefore, as God’s workers, you will certainly endure many sufferings/trials due to your calling. In the past, I have suffered many threats, some from women I used to work in ministry with. One of them used to send me insulting letters each week for 2 months. She threw at me all kind of insults with racist connotations, arguing that all black people are cursed because they are Canaan’s descendants (Canaan was the son of Hem). She didn’t know in fact that this curse of Noah doesn’t involve black people (who are the descendants of Cush and not of Canaan, the ancestor of Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, Arvadites, Zemarites and Hamathites.(Gen 10: 6-18). All these nations used to live in the regions of nowadays: Iraq, Lebanon and Israel.

If you suffer verbal threats, slander that is, due to your calling and keep on fearing God, know that this proves that the Lord is with you.

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Matthew 5: 11-12

The Bible tells us, in 1 Chronicles 14, that king David was anointed over all Israel and that the Philistines went up in full force to search for him. Let’s notice that while David was not yet oiled king, the Philistines hadn’t fought him. The calling which was upon him was the source of plenty of battles and attacks directed against him as a person. (against his life-n.tr.)

The Philistines reached and spread across Rephaim Valley (The Valley of Giants according to Deuteronomy 2: 9-14). Because of your anointing you will face giants. After David’s victory, this valley was called the Valley of Baal-Peratsim, meaning ‘The Lord of openings’ as indeed, in this place, the Philistines had abandoned their gods – and then burnt by king David’s order. David’s fame spread in all countries and God made him redoubtable. God allows you to be accused, attacked, even hit because of your anointing, in order to make paths that will open the way for thousands of people.

Don’t let place to anger if people insult you, but endure patiently as there is no fame without proves. Without even realising, by falsely accusing you, your adversaries make you free publicity. If you weren’t important, people wouldn’t spend all this time slandering you, insulting you. Your anointing disturbs lots of people and that is why you’re suffering now. .

The best way not to be destroyed by slander is to stay calm before God and keep on blessing and praying for those who curse you. (Luke 6: 26-28). Remember this word of the Lord: *“A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!”* Matthew 10: 24-25

The paroxysm of slander is mockery. The prophet Jeremiah was completely abandoned by his own brothers and daily made the object of people’s mockery. *“I became the laughingstock of all my people; they mock me in song all day long.”* Lamentations 3: 14

Like Jeremiah, you will be the object of discussion of your adversaries and songs will be made even by people close to you.

“Whenever one comes to see me, he speaks falsely, while his heart gathers slander; then he goes out and spreads it abroad. All my enemies whisper together against me; they imagine the worst for me, saying: ‘A vile disease has beset him; he will never get up from the place where he lies.’ Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me. But you, O Lord, have mercy on me; raise me up, that I may repay them.” Psalm 41: 6-10

“As for you, son of man, your countrymen are talking together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, saying to each other: ‘Come and hear the message that has come from the LORD.’ My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice. ‘When all this comes true-and it surely will-then they will know that a prophet has been among them’.” Ezekiel 33: 30-33

“O Lord, you deceived me, and I was deceived; you overpowered me and prevailed. I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me. Whenever I speak, I cry out proclaiming violence and destruction. So the word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long. But if I say, ‘I will not mention him or speak any more in his name,’ his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot. I hear many whispering: ‘Terror on every side! Report him! Let’s report him!’ All my friends are waiting for me to slip, saying: ‘Perhaps he will be deceived; then we will prevail over him and take our revenge on him.’ But the Lord is with me like a mighty warrior; so my persecutors will stumble and not prevail. They will fail and be thoroughly disgraced; their dishonour will never be forgotten.” Jeremiah 20: 7-11

Nevertheless, there could be persons who will fast and make prayers with the single purpose of destroying you. *“The next morning the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound them with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. More than forty men were involved in this plot. They went to the chief priests and elders and said: ‘We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul.’”* Acts 23: 12-14

Your worst enemies will become friends; will ally against you and against your ministry. (Psalm 2: 1-3; Luke 23: 12; Acts 4: 25-28). Due to your calling, you’ll be the object of critics, threats, gossips and mockeries from both religious people and jealous men envying the grace given you by the Lord.

Remember that the calling addressed to you by God is a call for suffering. (Romani 8: 18; 2 Timothy 2: 3; John 15: 18-23; 1 Peter 4: 12-13) *”So that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them.”* 1Thessalonians 3:3

Pain (suffering) keeps us in humility and submission to God and to brothers and sisters in Christ.

YOU

Many Christians like to point out the demons' and witches' attacks in order to justify themselves when they fall or when they fail in the work God has entrusted them with. Surely, this thing is real because the enemy uses all his energy to destroy us. However, he has a reduced field of action because the limits are imposed by God Himself. The devil is an opportunist, he only can conquer the territory you let go to, and he can't enter unless you open him the door. Indeed, the only person able to deprive you of the divine plans set by God for your life is YOU. (Plans like: ministry, salvation, different blessings...)

The Sifting

Know that with YHWH/Yeshoua, formation is permanent because we have always something to learn. Also, to prevent our soul from becoming a stumbling block, the Lord allows us to be sifted regularly, in order to keep us in humility and especially to create in us a solid character able to resist the devil. (James 4: 7).

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat." Luke 22:31.

The sifting is a process that involves filtering a certain substance through a sieve. It is possible for instance to sift sand in order to separate and remove it from within the stones. This term is used also for touching a thing or a human body in many different places through stabbing or by making holes into it. Spiritually speaking, it is also a complex of simultaneous attacks coming from all over and led by the enemy. These onslaughts can be: hurting words, threats, intimidations, diseases, losing someone dear or any other situation that might affect us negatively.

Those people sifted by the enemy should not drop their arms because Satan fights only the ones who cause devastations in his camp. In fact he wanted to break Peter's faith into pieces because he knew what a great calling his disciple had and that thousands of people will be freed of death through him. Notice that the Lord didn't stop Satan to sift Peter; on the contrary He rather prayed that his disciple's faith doesn't fail.

"But I have prayed for you, Simon that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." Luke 22: 32

Peter's faith has been put to test because he had been too confident in himself. With much certainty, he claimed that even if Jesus had become a source of fall for the other 11 disciples, this would never happen to him. He believed he was ready to die for the Lord when, in fact, he was the first to deny Him 3 times. (Matthew 26: 33-35 and 26: 69-75). Full of himself, instead of relying on the faith of following Christ, Peter was overconfident in his own resources.

After having been sifted, he had finally understood the lesson: *"And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."* 1 Peter 5: 10

Therefore, although hard to understand, the sifting has as purpose our perfection, our validation, our fortification and especially you strengthening in Christ. This kind of sifting made in your hearts does many things- most importantly: **the fear of God and the repentance** *"My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."* Job 42: 5-6

The fear of God has disappeared amongst the evangelic people, most Christians fearing people rather than the Lord. *"The Lord says: 'These people come near to me with their mouth and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by me'."* Isaiah 29:13

In fact, the fear of God is not at all fear, but a holy respect towards the Lord and His Word.

Job's Sifting

God has allowed Satan to sift Job to prove his faithfulness. Thus, one day, Job's life has been completely turned upside down through several attacks.

- his donkeys, cattle and camels have been stolen and his servants have been killed (Job 1: 13-17);
- his small livestock and servants guarding them were consumed by fire from the sky (Job 1: 16);
- his 10 children found their death when the house collapsed on top of them (Job 1: 9);
- his wife turned her back on him advising him to curse God and die (Job 2: 9);
- his 3 friends have overwhelmed him with false accusations when he needed the most support and comfort. (Job 2: 11-13)

This sifting was needed to give Job a new revelation about the Lord. In fact, not only did God give him all that he had lost, by blessing him even more than before, but in addition, at the end of his sufferings, he will say: "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you." Job 42: 5

If you are sifted when you are not in disobedience, then know that your ministry disturbs the demonic kingdom. Keep calm because the Lord will give you many victories. Remember that sifting is needed to set firm your faith in God.

The Splinter

"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 3 times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me: 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10

The splinter, 'skolops' in Greek describes a sharp stake, the torment of a pole, a thorn or a needle. It may represent especially:

- Your enemies (Numbers 33: 55; Ezekiel 28:24). The Lord allows some persons to raise against your ministry to criticize you and to oppose you powerfully: "!" 2 Timothy 4:14-16
- A physical disease (2 Corinthians 12: 7).

Regarding Paul, the splinter that was in his flesh was a physical infirmity which annoyed him and made his ministry harder to accomplish. He saw so 'an angel of Satan' torturing him, thus keeping him humble. After having prayed 3 times to the Lord to have it removed, nevertheless, he kept this handicap and received the power to stand it and even to be proud of it. (2 Corinthians 12: 8-10)

Some Bible commentators suggested Paul had malaria or maybe leprosy. The most probable version seems to be ophthalmic fever. In fact, when he had been arrested, Paul didn't recognise the great priest whom he used to meet many times in the past. (Acts 23: 5) In addition, the Bible mentions that the Galatians would have poured out their eyes to give them to the apostle. (Galatians 4: 13-15) Finally, we know that the apostle used to dictate his letters or he used to trace big characters while writing alone. (Galatians 6: 11) All points to an ophthalmic disease.

Do you realise? Paul had prayed for others and the Lord had healed them, while him, too, he had a health problem. The splinter keeps us in the necessary humility to see God's glory/Shekinah. Truly, His power is seen in weakness. (2 Corinthians 12: 9)

God allows for all His great men to have a splinter to deter them from falling into the pride sin. (2 Corinthians 12:7) It is of course essential for the Lord's worker to realise that he/she needs

God's grace (His Holy Spirit) more than anything else. Remember always that the great things you live and those about to be lived in your ministry don't come from you, but from Yahweh/Yeshoua!
"So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say: 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'." Luke 17:10

The one who wants to experience God's Shekinah must also accept adversity and sufferance imposed by the Lord because these mould us so that we have Christ's character. Maybe now, when you read these lines, you feel a splinter annoying you (it might be a chronicle/incurable disease, a situation that surpasses you, adversity etc.) while you fear the Lord. But rest assured, stay at His feet, trying to understand, in prayer and in meditation of His Word, what He tries to teach you. If you become agitated, you risk not understanding what He is doing and thus, bitterness -soon transformed into rebellion- might develop in you.

The Bitterness

"See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. ." Hebrews 12: 15

Bitterness is a resentment (a memory causing sourness and wish of revenge) which has as cause: regret or deception. A person's state affected by bitterness degrades progressively. That person will start to close himself/herself into a cocoon and will refuse any brotherly communion. Then, he/she will neglect personal prayer and daily meditation of God's Word, thus depriving himself/herself little by little of His Grace. In time, if the problem rests unsolved, this situation might turn into apostasy.

In the ministry work, the roots of bitterness will grow shoots such as: debauchery / all kinds of frivolity, impurity, mental diseases, idolatry, witchcraft, trivialities, fights, jealousies, animosities, hate, divisions, greed, drunkenness and all kind of food excess, etc. according to Galatians 5: 19-22.

They can also develop a profane character such as Esau's, the man who preferred the things of this world instead of the divine (Hebrews 12: 16-17).

"Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them." Colossians 3: 19

Bitterness inside conjugal relationships can break marriages-even a Christian marriage.

Once bitterness has been installed into our hearts, we are often betrayed by our own words.

"Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water. Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice." James 3: 5-16.

The apostle James uses in this passage the adjective 'bitter', in Greek 'pikros'. In vs. 11 it is used firstly with its proper meaning which speaks of a non-drinkable, bad tasted or sea salted water.

However in vs. 14 and 16, this term is used to translate the zeal inspired by a spirit of jealousy and of competition.

Some of the causes of bitterness are:

The lack of gratitude from those persons you have helped. Many persons, who have received enormous services from you, will disappoint you surely through their lack of recognition. Remember that the Lord Himself has lived this kind of disappointment: He had healed 10 leprosy men, but only one returned to give thanks, to offer Him the well-deserved honour/glory. (Luke 17: 11-19). You will be therefore disappointed by the closest persons to you. Nevertheless, keep on doing good to people and never expect gratitude from anyone. The Lord will give it to you at the right moment.

False accusations. If you are not vigilant over your heart, you risk developing hate towards those who calumniate you.

Your own sufferings. Therefore, it might be that you are bitter against God because He allows a disease or the death for someone dear to you.

“His wife said to him: ‘Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!’ He replied: ‘You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?’ In all this, Job did not sin in what he said. “Job 2: 9-10

A not-abandoned sin or an unhealed wound because of your refuse to forgive.

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Ephesians 4: 31-32

Forgiveness is therefore the best remedy against bitterness. The bible asks us to forgive our enemies, to pray for those who maltreat us and to bless those who curse us. (Luke 6: 27-36) refusing to forgive those who slander you, destroys both your calling and your life. You will plant confusion and disorder everywhere you go and will have difficulties in living a rich relationship with others. In fact, you must ask the Lord the strength to forgive your enemies full heartedly.

The Forgiveness

“Then Peter came to Yeshoua and asked: ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to 7 times?’ Yeshoua answered: ‘I tell you, not 7 times, but 77 times.’” Matthew 18: 21-22

“So watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you 7 times in a day, and 7 times comes back to you and says: ‘I repent,’ forgive him.” The apostles said to the Lord: ‘Increase our faith!’ “Luke 17:3-5

Forgiving is an order given by the Lord; a transformed heart forgives easily. The first word pronounced on the cross by the Lord was: *“Father, forgive them as they don’t know what they do.”* (Luke 23: 34) Even while losing His entire blood, He has forgiven us.

Of course, forgiveness doesn’t exclude the consequences, but we must forgive.

For instance, in 2003, a woman, whom I used to work with, while rebelling against me, and leaving in rebellion with other persons, she called me all names and kept saying that my ministry would be made pieces in 10 days.

But, after several days, the Lord asked me to go and see this person at her place and ask for forgiveness; it had been a hard thing to do, but I had obeyed.

Our Character

The moral impurity has always caused the fall of spiritual Christian leaders.

Nowadays, we live difficult times when the family cell must face large scale attacks. On one hand, the world warns people about debauchery, but, on the other hand, it also encourages towards: adultery, homosexuality, frivolities..., which expose, daily, Christians to great temptations.

a) The Sexual Immorality

Samson's sexual immorality and disobedience towards The Eternal One (due to his lack of character) ruined forever his mission and also compromised the future of the Israel people whom he was leading. (Judges 16) Despite the fact that man had received a strong calling from his mother's womb, he didn't live in a fear of God. His weakness was that he sought endlessly new carnal relationships. Firstly, he married a woman of a tribe that was one of Israel's enemies then he frequented a prostitute, which was totally forbidden and finally, he was charmed by Delilah who then thought of all means to penetrate his power secret. She insisted/sought until he gave up at her insistence. After falling asleep, this Philistine lady cut his 7 braids of hair where his entire power resided.

Thus, due to lack of discernment, Samson lost all the blessings offered to him by the Lord:

-The Sanctification: These 7 braids were representing God's holiness, number 7 being a holy number (Genesis 2: 1-2) *"When Delilah saw that he had told her everything, she sent word to the rulers of the Philistines, "Come back once more; he has told me everything." So the rulers of the Philistines returned with put him to sleep on her lap, she called a man to **shave off the 7 braids of his hair**, and so began to subdue him. And his strength left him."*

Judges 16: 18-19

-The Power or the Anointing: Any man called by God who falls into sin loses his anointing: *"Then she called: 'Samson, the Philistines are upon you!' He awoke from his sleep and thought, 'I'll go out as before and shake myself free.' But he did not know that the LORD YHWH had left him. ..."* Judges 16: 20 Yeshoua doesn't walk with those who live in sin and disobey His Word. Samson's power came out of his anointing with the Holy Spirit. Once he disobeyed God/sinned, His force was gone despite the fact that he kept his physical abilities and intellectual capacities.

- The Vision: *"Then the Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding in the prison."* Judges 16: vs. 21.

Samson's lost eyes symbolize the loss of his initial vision (or objectives) entrusted to him by YHWH. Samson's story must serve each of us as warning. When there is no more vision, people are without rein (Proverbs 29: 18). Vision is like lamp, it is the engine of our ministry, the one that creates the motivation and the unity in a ministerial team. If we lose it, then our mission/job fades away (becomes stationary and pale): *"Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness."*

Luke 11:34

-The Freedom: Samson has been made prisoner in Gaza by the Philistines and thus became the slave of his enemies. (2 Peter 2:19). *"They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity- -for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him."*

"Who, then, is the man that fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him. He will spend his days in prosperity, and his descendants will inherit the land. "

Psalms 25: 12-13

Anyone living in sin will first lose his/her vision entrusted to him/her by Yeshoua/Yahweh and then knows spiritual and physical death, in other words the eternal separation from God. (Romans

6: 23; Revelation 3: 1) Samson's imprisonment represents all our dissimulated/hidden vices and sins which are used by the devil to control because of our lack of repentance. (Judges 16:21) Truly, his sexual weakness came from his uncircumscribed heart: *"For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'* "Mark 7: 21-22

However, debauchery/decadence is not the only trap set by the enemy! Impurity or money might cause our fall, too.

b) Greed

Money is needed to accomplish God's vision. They are a great blessing in the Lord's ministry. But they must serve us in the ministry and not the other way around. We must not become their slaves, because the love for money is the root of all evils. (1 Timothy 6:10)

"The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful." Matthew 13: 22

The Lord has promised to look after His children: by offering them food and clothes as they work for His Kingdom. (Matthew 6:31-32) Therefore, Yeshoua look after us and supports those ministries set out to exist for His glory, for He is always faithful, including in the minor things.

All money received for the ministry must be used only for this unique purpose, in other words helping brothers and sisters in need or actively accomplishing God's projects which involve the entire assembly.

The Christian who doesn't gyrate/use correctly the Lord's finances might, him too, meet difficulties in this field. It is the Lord Himself He who touches people's hearts so they make gifts and offerings to advance His work; it is also Him He who punishes any detour from this (using the money correctly-n.tr.).

The Lord's servant must not be let himself/herself be led, ordered around or dictated in the message he/she preaches, for a lump of money. Let's serve God and not Mammon (Matthew 6: 24)! Me, personally, I have been offered big money for my silence, then they tried to make me change the vision and the calling received from God. Of course, I have refused these proposals. May we listen to God and receive His instructions so we can avoid any compromise. Let's understand that, financially, we don't depend on people, but on God Himself.

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Matthew 6: 33

Most Hebrew kings had fallen at the peak of their reign. They have departed from God when material blessings came into place (when their life was easy). Of course, if the Christian doesn't live in God's fear, his/her human sinful nature rises up once the financial blessings are received. He/she risks therefore departing from sanctification through the corruption of his ministry and of close people put next to him/her by God. *"Though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them. One thing God has spoken, 2 things have I heard: that you, O God, are strong, and that you, O Lord, are loving."* "Psalm 62: 11-12a

That is why; seeking true sanctification is essential. That is why, the Word of God invites us: *"to pray non-stop"* (1 Thessalonians 5: 17) *"because the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak"*. Matthew 26: 41.

The love of money and of all thing/person which takes a higher place in our life than God is nothing else but idolatry - major obstacle that must be avoided absolutely, at all cost.

Idolatry

Contrary to primate ideas, idolatry is not only the worship of statues under the effigy of heathen deities. Nowadays, idolatry is most time invisible because it is hidden in men's hearts. It can manifest in different ways.

-Self-love: loving you more than loving God is idolatry. In fact, there are persons who bring a cult to their social status, to their diplomas, their physical appearance... But, we don't have to be like this. Let's rather be like Paul who loved the Lord so much that he considered all his past fame as rubbish: *"What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ."* Philippians 3: 8

- Love of money: it translates itself into the troubles of life, into all the worries for the future and also into the fear of lacking stuff. Christ asks us not to worry about tomorrow because He is the One who foresees all our needs. Matthew 6:25-32 and *"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry."* Colossians 3: 5

- Love of world: the old man loves mundane/worldly things such as: the profane music, the discos, the night clubs, clothes, houses, sciences and modern technologies, TV etc..."*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever."*

1 John 2: 15-17

The verb 'to love' used by John in this passage is 'agapao' and represents the kind of love we must show towards God. Thus, the fact that we replace God with the world is nothing else but idolatry. You can appreciate beautiful cars or clothes without them taking the place ought to be reserved to God Himself in your life. Each thing at its place, let's not let all this ephemeral and superficial nonsense deprive us of God's grace. These beautiful things are all but rubbish.

-People: our beloved ones can become true idols if they take the place ought to God: for instance a man who refuses God's calling for fear of losing his wife is nothing else but an idolater. *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple."* Luke 14: 26

(the verb 'to love' in Hebrew is in fact 'to prefer' and not 'to hate'-n.tr.).

Of course, Jesus doesn't ask us to hate our beloved ones; He wants us to say that we owe Him, that we give Him an infinite greater love than that for our dear ones. Remember that He loved us so much that He sacrificed for us. (John 3: 16). Therefore, we have to be able to do the same for Him by loving Him more than anything or anyone: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."* Mark 12: 30.

-The Stomach: *"Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things."* Philippians 3: 19. Those who eat too much will not inherit the Lord's Kingdom. (Galatians 5: 19-21). We need to be disciplined regarding food so that we can be able to fast each time the Lord puts it on our hearts to do it.

In conclusion, if you can't help living without any of these things an idolater. (Deuteronomy ch.6) It is vital to re-establish urgently a holy and just priority of things and to repent before God.

Maria and Martha

“As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" 'Martha, Martha,' the Lord answered, 'you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.'” Luke 10:38-42

Martha means ‘the mistress of the house’. This woman wanted to touch the Lord’s heart with service. She was more preoccupied with service than with worship. She was agitated and worried of many things. She represents those Christians who believe they are going to win the Lord’s heart through service. They want to build huge buildings, to have full churches, to travel into the world, organise seminaries, conferences etc...Martha had no consecrated time for the Lord Yeshoua.

Redeeming the Time

“Making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” Ephesians 5: 16.

Time is much more precious nowadays than in the past, because everything happens faster and faster.

The day has only 24 hours in which: 8 for sleep, 8 for school or work, 2 for transport, 1 for cooking and eating, 1 for internet (MSN, Skype, Facebook, etc.), for TV and 2 for talking on the phone. You see, if we use the daily hours like this, there is almost no time for God, I mean for prayer and for meditating the Word. There is no time for family, for your spouse or for your children.

Martha (‘the mistress of the house’) didn’t understand that she needed to make room for the Master of Masters. She wanted to impress the Lord with her work. Many persons such as Martha want to reach God’s heart with their service for Him: programmes, seminaries, missions, trips etc. These people don’t give the Lord enough time.

Mary/Miriam means ‘rebellion’ (Numbers 12). Mary chose the best part, Yeshoua’s company. She sat at the Lord’s feet to hear Him/the Word *“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"* Isaiah 52: 7. She was in full adoration, while Martha seeks to please the Lord through service/ministry.

Mary knew that only the Lord’s presence could free her from rebellion.

Chapter VI: TESTIMONIES

Through these testimonies, I would like to encourage all those who pass through sufferings linked to their calling to hold on fast. What God does in my life today is the result of many years of cries and terrible sufferings lived in secret.

MY TESTIMONY

I come from a family of 10 children. My parents were Protestants and that was why they used to go to the Pentecostal churches “CADEZA”-“The Community of Churches ‘Assemblies of God’ of Congo”.

From birth, I realised that there was a calling upon my life, because I was told that at my birth, the nuns in the maternity ward had even offered money to my parents to let me go with them at Rome. Of course, they refused and I was raised in my family, always living amongst this Christian Protestant community.

Aged only 5, the prophetic gift has already been manifested, so that my parents always took into consideration my words. For instance, one day after my father punished me, unhappy, I’ve declared to him that he would not be paid for that month and

In the years ’80, a wave of revival accompanied by numerous miracles and healings blew over my country. It gave birth to lots of prayer groups that used to meet each Sunday in the traditional churches and then, during the week, in people’s houses. Those who led these kinds of groups were called humbly ‘shepherds’. Concerning me, I used to go to both these home reunions animated by these shepherds and also to the A.D.D. which I joined spiritually. With 4 other I used to frequent this home group led by a man called: Tuku Cadet. This brother, whom I consider my father in faith, lent us Christian moral values and showed us through his consecrated life what is truly the fear of God.

Therefore, he resigned from his position to join the Baptist Church belonging to the Community of Baptist Evangelical Churches of Congo or for short ‘CEBEZO’. Thus, I and the other 4 brothers he formed, we all followed him. I integrated myself into the assembly’s choir and to my surprise, the leaders of this church were living in sin: some were satanist, some drunkards, some adulterous... But, our arrival had caused such a revival that revealed all the works of darkness. This fact attracted many battles and threats with excommunication from the religious clergy.

My Personal Encounter with Lord Yeshoua

When I was 8, some European missionaries visited our Pentecostal assembly where my family used to go and on a big projector they screened the movie « Jesus of Nazareth ». I was deeply moved by the scene of crucifixion which made me cry for a lot of days. I realised then how much the Lord has suffered for me.

At 12, I used to go into hospitals with other brothers to preach the Gospel and to pray for sick people. Because God was working, this caused the jealousy of the group’s shepherd in whose home we used to meet during the week. This last one, seeing with evil eyes that all lights were not on him anymore, but on me, simply forbade us to go into hospitals. This situation hurt me to the point I decided to leave their group, after sharing my frustration. ,

After a couple of days, the Lord visited me around 3 am while I was asleep. He came down from heaven dressed in a long white robe of pure in, with His face shining as sun. His presence released

both a great power and a special kindness. And in a very gentle voice, He told me: “I am Jesus of Nazareth. The place I have called you to serve Me is the prayer group you’re in.” Then He disappeared.

The next day, I ran to the group’s shepherd to tell him about this vision and made peace with him. I kept on serving the Lord, especially in hospitals and the Lord’s grace was made manifest.

Nevertheless, there were other jealous people who began to discredit me saying that the anointing upon my life is not a reality, but magic. Of course, I was deeply affected, especially because I was mere a teenager.

Retrograde

Due to immaturity, lack of character and also because I had been charmed by the worldly life and by the desire of climbing into ranks (so I wouldn’t be singled out by accusing fingers), I gave it all up not after a long time. I had been so angry with God because of the battles I suffered, that my speech changed to the point I started to defend the Darwinist theories that say that man evolved from a monkey.

Despite the fact that I had been taught holiness, I lacked the capital teaching about the subject of the cross, that of trials, of battles and of rejection –things perfectly normal according to the Bible. In fact, it is written that all those who want to live in devotion to Jesus Christ will be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3: 12)

My parents desired me to follow my studies and sent me to France in high school. The atmosphere I found myself in there pushed me more and more into apostasy. I became a great hip-hop dancer and a fan of 2Pac, Black Street, TLC, Public Enemy and many others. Imagine me with curls, earrings, trying to please girls... I became a bad student as I was never interested in learning; instead I preferred to have fun and fight.

In that period, after a love disappointment, a French friend introduced me to her best friend, a certain Estelle. The first time I saw her I knew she was going to be my wife. And actually we got married in 1996.

My Return to the Lord

In 1999, I heard a voice telling me: 'I will show you someone who stabs you.' And then I saw satan, dressed ridiculously with his goat head, while he was observing me animated by an unimaginable hate. Nevertheless, there was like a spiritual barrier that stopped him from touching me. It is futile to try to explain how much this vision terrified me; thus, I realised (I was fully conscience) of the sin I was living in and of the great necessity of turning back to the Lord.

Little time afterwards, I had another vision where satan was fighting directly with me and ordered me not to answer the Lord's calling. Suddenly the sky broke open and I saw a great angel descending to protect me. I told satan: 'Look! It's the archangel Michael!' and the devil ran away. The next day, he came back to attack me and the archangel Michael appeared again.

After several days, another angel appeared before me saying: "Hold my hand and I'll show you heaven!" Soon, I was out of my body and right in heaven where I saw multitudes of angels so brightly and so smiling, dressed in long white robes. I told to myself: 'This is not possible! Heaven doesn't exist!' Then, the angel took me back and gave me a contract I needed to sign. It was a new work the Lord was about to entrust me with.

Another time, the Lord appeared to me holding the terrestrial globe in His Hand. He put His hands upon me and said: "Receive the anointing for the job I called you for.' Then, He showed me a big house: 'You will lead the church of nations. You will free my people,' Yeshoua told me.

During another vision, I saw a rain of scrolls that was falling from the heaven. I was given a thick one where I read things I didn't understand. (Only after 7 years, I finally understood it was linked to the message of reforming churches.) Then a voice was heard in heaven: "My servant, you must fear Me."

I also had other terrible visions about hell. I was taken in the spirit and led into a cave where there was boiling water running down over souls in suffering. Darkness was so deep, so palpable; to the point the sun's light could neither break through nor reach this great tenebrism.

Once, also taken in the spirit, I went to the place of dead which resembles to an unending ditch. I saw souls in pain closed in very, very tight containers. The more I descended in the depths of this place, the more the scale of suffering grew. At the bottom of this hole/ ditch I saw a Metis young girl who implored me to pull her out. She revealed to me that she had been a priestess on earth who had never repented. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to do anything for her.

In another vision, I saw a place full of dirt with human skulls so thick as tree trunks. They were on the soil burning and had no choice but to breathe in the air filled with sulphurous. It made me think of Mark 9: 48-49, when Jesus speaks of the worms that never die and of the fire that is never quenched (put out).

All these visions gave me the fear of God and helped me leave the world, pray and seek the Lord's face.

Afterwards, I have started to go to an assembly at Palaiseau for 5 months. But, the Lord showed me that he never called the pastor of that church as a leader for that assembly. I sought the Lord's face alone at home until my brother in law led me to an assembly in Juvisy-sur-Orge. Once again, I went despite the fact that the Lord warned me twice, in a dream not to join that man.

So, I have collaborated with him for 6 months as responsible for intercession/prayer. The Lord used me a lot giving me prophecies, words of knowledge, and healings. This grace upon my life

attracted many persons in that assembly; it started to grow numerically and spiritually. In the same time, apart from doing the work I used to do in the assembly, my help was also asked by the families who used to invite me in their homes for deliverances and teachings. Even there, the leading pastor appeared jealous.

One day, on a Sunday morning, when he entrusted me with the church meeting, I started to cry in adoration because of the great anointing that came upon me. Then, this pastor came next to me on the stage and madly pulled the microphone out of my hands, giving me the order to sit down. You can imagine the humiliation I felt in front of those hundreds of people. The humiliation was so terrible that I felt like disappearing.

That day, the Lord asked me to leave that assembly for good and to start the work He has called me to. When I gave the news to the pastor, this one, instead of being happy I would not overshadow him anymore, he opposed it strongly. I left with all his disapproval, warning him that the Lord invites him to repentance as He is displeased with the life he leads.

My Personal Battles

All this time, I was going through a very hard period in my life as a couple. My wife used to be an atheist and met me as unbeliever. When I turned back to the Lord, she lived it as a betrayal, especially because she couldn't recognise the man she got married with. For her, God and the Church were her competitors and they had to be eradicated from my life. Therefore, bit by bit, she started a work of persecution and discouragement.

She didn't want to see me praying, or listening to Christian music and especially going to church. She used to cry a lot, she used to get mad at me and scream; tensions were so high between us. I wasn't free to do anything in my own house, I was forced to hide in the bathroom in order to be able to pray and meditate the Word.

One day, she took the knife and put it to her veins and asked me who did I loved more: her or Jesus? When I answered Jesus, this answer hurt her deeply that I had to stop her from hurting herself. I felt myself so useless, prisoner, humiliated, alone, trapped in a situation that I was not able to master and I saw no exit. Many times, the idea of divorce crossed my mind, but I refused to adopt this solution because I knew it was against God's will and I was risking compromising my calling.

Of course, in those moments, the enemy came to propose solutions. Many very beautiful women, Christians too, made a pass to me. Especially there was one who stated that she received a prophecy according to which I was to be her husband. In the same time, brothers and sisters, especially one pastor, were simply and purely pushing me to divorce, despite all the formal interdiction of the Bible. Despite all these things, I didn't give up because the Lord's love and presence were stronger than these trials.

After a year, God heard my prayers and saw my suffering, my wife decided to give her life to the Lord in the simplest way. She got up one morning and told me: 'Go and buy me a Bible because your God is alive.' Indeed, God opened her eyes regarding the spiritual realities. From that evening one, Estelle is a faithful support and an indescribable element for my balance.

This situation allowed me to understand that a man of God can't free others unless he first succeeds in winning his own battles, with the Lord's help of course. This trial moulded me, formed my character and allowed me to learn great lessons about the Lord's vision regarding my family and the need to persevere in trials. Many leaders, unfortunately, get divorced due to their conjugal problems and are not able to finance well their family; therefore, how could they administer a church? (1 Timothy 3: 1-5 and 5: 8).

The Birth of the Local Church

After this time of moulding/breaking of my spouse, the Lord asked me to start the work in the nations to which He has called me from my mother's womb. I talked to my friends the pastors about it, but they thought I was too young. One, as a matter of fact, he gave me 6 months of existence in the ministry before the complete failure. His words hurt me a lot because I was expecting to be encouraged and helped, but I've realised I could not count on them. I felt completely condemned. Despite these words of discouragement and intimidation, I started a church in the 9th of Feb. 1999 in a brother's house. There were about 10 people meeting in that apartment. The church didn't have more than a month of existence when one Sunday morning we found the door closed. No explication given, only a word through the closed door that informed us that we are not welcome. That was but a giant slap to suffer one more time... Fortunately, I was sure of what the Lord had told me; otherwise the prophecy of the jealous pastor would have come true.

We came back to our place, in our little apartment with 2 rooms. The Lord's grace attracted many people in a short time, so in 6 months we had to move in a hall of 100 sits. In 6 more months, this place became too small, too. All this time, the enemy was sending many persons to make me get out of the Lord's vision, especially 2 friend pastors that I used to respect greatly. But, because I held firm, they started to criticise me which hurt me a lot, of course. After several months, another hall was needed for 200 people and we found one in the city of Evry, one of the suburbs of Paris (this place costed around 2,000€per month, meaning 6,500 francs). But after a year, the hall became too small. God manifested Himself through healings, conversions and miracles of all sorts. In summer, we used to get the chairs out because there were many those who came to our meetings of revival.

After months of searching the right place, we came across the buildings from Draveil, where almost 700 people would fit in, paying 4,750€monthly.

Draveil

We were renting this huge immobile and we were very proud of it. In 3 years, the mission entrusted by the Lord took a considerable jump. We have started in a 2 bedroom apartment, me and my wife, a brother and 3 sisters and now we were having more than 500 members in this building, without counting the assemblies planted in other cities. We were confident in God's help. Nevertheless, the city authorities were leading a terrible persecution to displace us, pretending the building are not conform with the French standards, which was not true.

There was a period of about 3 weeks of clear exposure, while the town hall agents used to come to see me at home to forbid me to use the building. They used to summon me to come to the local police station at Evry to answer all kind of questions regarding the church activity. Once, I was summoned to the police office from Montgeron, due to a Muslim lady's plaint; she was accusing me of extorting money from her daughter who used to come and pray with us.

Many legal proceedings had been instituted against me by the town hall from Draviel which accused us of committing an infraction against the Urbanism Code. A great part of finances for the Lord's work had to be used to pay the justice. This affair was talked about in the article which appeared in the French newspaper 'Le Parisien' of 27-09-2002. Nevertheless, God was on my side and we won 5 court trials.

The town hall lost all complaints against us and the administrative justice went that far that declared invalid the municipal/city interdiction that forbade us to receive the public. What great joy to see the Lord fighting our enemies in this way!

We were sure of the final victory because we have received the vision of unifying numerous nations for Christ! The number of believers didn't stop from growing; new seats were added each Sunday and many were those who had to stand up during the cult. Deliveries, miracles and healings were multiplying.

On the contrary, one day, God gave me the vision in which Lord Yeshoua recommended me to place churches into people's homes. I listened and tried to comprehend what this task was about.

The Start of the Calling for Nations

On the 3rd of Dec. 2003, in the morning, when I was alone with God in my room, I was led by the Spirit to open the letters that contained one with a juridical verdict according to which we had to leave the buildings in 8 days! This legal decision had been confirmed later that afternoon by a court usher who came expressly for that.

That day I had the feeling that everything was collapsing around me. I had the sensation that for 4 years of service, my work was in vain. For me, that was the end, because I was connecting the church with the service and the service with the possession of that building. I believed that God had abandoned me, that He wasn't faithful to His Calling and to His promises. That hall was like an idol for me and my heart was so torn apart, the more brutal this separation was. My pride was at stake, the physical proof or my personal success, of my pay back for all those pastors who didn't believe in me. I didn't understand anything anymore; despite winning 5 court trial, we were doomed, condemned.

I wonder if you can understand how terrible is to suffer the pressure of town hall officials, to be interrogated in commissariats and police stations or even more to be dragged before the court into the accusing bar? You try to imagine what I felt to lose everything in one day. Well, I know it all, because The Lord made me lived this.

I locked myself into my little room and cried bitterly for a long time. I was so upset with the Lord who seemed to take pleasure in remaining silent. I was far from imagining that the Potter's Hands was moulding me. And however, I had a dream, several years before all this when I saw myself on a cross, in the mud, then lifted up into the sky and surrounded by stars.

After I understood the importance of that vision, I began to ask myself real questions about the authenticity of my calling. Everything was spinning into my head. You see, where could I find a hall able to fit 700 people in 8 days and this in full winter? Fasting, prayers, trails, negotiations, nothing worked. We had to leave and there was no other place to have us. The jealous people were already rejoicing of our fall. I had thus to resist desperation, to support the team that worked with me and to explain the brothers and sisters the situation. Plenty were those who began to mumble against me, to accuse me of being the cause of this battle. I was angry with God; I started to doubt His love and was questioning the authenticity of my personal calling. The pressure and the looks upon me caused me great heart palpitations.

Thanks be to God that we urgently were able to hire a hall in a LSC complex in the city of Saint-Denis, for 4 hours, each Sunday, for a price of 5,000 €monthly. We were far from the comfort we had in Draveil because the building had 40 rooms rented by different religious movements and sects. We had to share the place/building with Muslims and hear this: with 'the celestial Christians'! We had to get there early in the morning to clean all the mess left by the previous night's worldly concerts. During teachings/sermons, we had to make a great effort in ignoring the noise of profane music/sonorities that crossed the walls easily. At the end of the cult, we had to pack quickly, military style to make room for the next rental users. Due to all this, the brotherly communion was impossible.

Right during this period, God began to speak to me about the religious forming of which object I was and especially to open my eyes regarding the Biblical truths neglected by some Christian assemblies. The Lord asked me to divide our assembly into many little home groups. I had to establish quickly which persons lived close by to others in each suburb and thus to organise them each Sunday; we freed the persons who lived close to others in order for them to meet by themselves and give a cult to God by themselves. An amazing thing happened: these people were quickly replaced by others, newly arrived that day. We could thus established churches in many cities of France. This multiplication of ministries allowed many of brothers and sisters (who were not able to encourage others before) to do it now and to discover their many hidden talents. The

reason is that in these little churches, each one of them had the opportunity to share his/her own testimony, to exercise his/.her gifts, etc...

I have then started to teach my brothers about the necessity to return to the apostolic fundamentals/doctrines (denouncing: tithing, pastoral/ priesthood supremacy, paganised Christian cult all over the planet, etc.) The Lord has changed radically the way I saw the Church and the teaching of His Word.

In the same time, plenty were the persons who have asked me what this brutal turning meant. Some have decided to leave me altogether saying I was completely lost

In this trial, I turned to Yeshoua who Alone is good and faithful. This situation allowed us to learn to be attached of the Most Holy's commandments and not of our normal usual ways of living. The Lord wanted to teach me the Word in a different way; so that I can see the way I am to function. I was formed by religion and most things I thought to be Biblical are not. Satan tried many times to make me doubt the Lord, to believe He has abandoned me, but I held on firmly through His mercy and thanks to Him. The devil sent many beautiful ladies to seduce me, but I have never given in.

The False Accusation of My Adultery

In 2006, when I was in mission in Cote d'Ivoire, a brother from Paris rang me up to let me that, in Paris, there was a rumour saying I left a married lady pregnant. At birth, her husband realised that the baby looked like me and summoned me before the court. Also, according to the same source, my wife informed of this apparent adultery is asking for divorce. This lie had been spread by a lady who sued to pray with us and who wanted to divorce her husband. But, because the elders kept saying to her that, according to the Bible, she wasn't able to repudiate her husband, she got terribly mad at them and decided to leave the assembly outraging my name. Plenty were those who believed her and began to see me as a sinner. Some pastors even made fun of me and rejoiced of this self-claimed real news.

May glory be given to God for this woman came back and asked for forgiveness publically for her lie! But the damage has been done and her calumny/slander hurt many persons.

The False Accusation of Witchcraft

The enemy gives often false visions to instable Christians about people called by God in order to destroy them. Thus, a person came into the ministry to be formed so that he could serve the Lord. Sometime after, she became distant from brothers and sisters because she met a pastoral couple which started a home church. Between the believers of that prayer cell there was also a woman who claimed to have visions about my collaborators and about me, too. According to her visions, my team and I were satanist who worked to destroy souls.

Many time after this, this sister realised that she had been deceived by the enemy and came to apologise to us. Unfortunately, then, too, may people have been destroyed due to these false accusations.

The Separation

“On hearing it, many of his disciples said: ‘This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?’ Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Yeshoua said to them: ‘Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.’ For Yeshoua had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say: ‘This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.’ From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. ‘You do not want to leave too, do you?’” Yeshoua asked the 12. Simon Peter answered him: ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life’.” John 6: 60-68.

After receiving the word regarding the return to the Scripture, to the apostolic fundaments according to Ephesians 2: 20, I have lived many painful separations. Firstly, I knew the separation from my friends the pastors with whom I used to work for many years and even the complete abandon from some of them. Before I used to be respected by them, they used to invite me to their assemblies to preach and pray as a preacher. I used to travel a lot by plane so that the Lord can animate the assemblies with healings through me here and there. But they found out that I was preaching the return to God, that I denounce: the tithing, the supremacy of both pastors and priests over churches and also the manipulation God’s children are expose to, these friendly pastors, who at first accepted the message, have all abandoned me, treating me as buffoon, illuminate and antichrist. I woke up completely alone with all my collaborators gone.

The 2nd separation was that in regard of most of my own collaborators (them men I’ve formed) abandoning me, too. In Dec. 2006, the Lord called me to fast for a year without telling me the reason. In fact, many persons formed through me had to leave me. Firstly it was the brother sent to Rouen and who took over the assembly I set up there. The Lord, in His infinite wisdom, asked me to let it go. Then, another brother also formed by us and sent to Martinique to lead an assembly that had more than 150 people, treated me as magician and took over the assembly which he thus later destroyed.

Many persons have started to leave the ministry without any valid reason, treating me of all names: magician/marabou, adulterous and even claiming that I made them broke...

With all the hate manifestation coming from these people formed to launch the Lord’s work/ministry, I knew the treason Lord Jesus talks about, I knew deception and desperation: *“But you, O Lord, have mercy on me; raise me up, that I may repay them.”* Psalm 41:10.

While I was working in ministry in my country of birth, right on the day I lost my father, an elder, a man formed and helped by me, he called me to inform me that he was leaving. At my return in France, he came to put a letter in my postal box expressing his sorrows in what regards me. The next day, he called the brothers and sisters to try to convince them to get out of the assembly, too and to leave me.

God made me keep quite despite the pain. Truly, everything comes from the Lord He who wants to dehumanise us, so we can bring more fruits.

After these rebellions, the ministry took an international dimension, entire countries began to be reached by the message due to the radio and Tv2 vie (TV channel on the internet and via satellite-n.tr.). Souls have been touched, encouraged and follow the teachings in their families. Others receive healing and are set free from sin, from the world and from the devil in their own homes, while listening and thus, they give their life to the Lord.

Many persons have been formed and keep on being formed for ministry that God called them to. There is a free centre of forming/equipping saints to be able to answer their calling: www.centre-didasko.org Other people are sent overseas in the nations to spread the Gospel and to form in their turn new workers. In Gabon, the Lord has made this work start 5 years ago. Many cities have been reached and more than 200 ministries of the Word have been set up there; true Christians multiply day by day there. Sometime ago, I found out that the pastors, seeing their churches emptying, have summoned the president Omar Bongo who based on their accusations have arrested me and locked me up in a military camp when I went there to visit the churches. They interrogated me. Notice that they had plenty of reasons to be nervous as in a single day we baptised more than 300 persons. May glory be given to God!

Many countries have been touched: in **Europe**, starting with France, then Belgium, Holland, Norway, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Great Britain, Ireland, Romania, but also the Islands, beginning with Martinique, Guadalupe, The Reunion Island, The Mauritius Islands, Seychelles, Madagascar, Rodrigues, and Daliga- an island of 250 inhabitants, of whom 50 have been reached by the Scripture. In **Africa**: Tunis, Morocco, Senegal, The Ivory Coast, Congo, Angola, Gabon, Togo, Benin, Ghana, **America** with Canada, U.S.A., Brazil, Mexic, the French Guyana, then even people from Russia and **Australia**, at the edge of the Earth!

In all these countries, there are home churches set up by the missionaries sent in these territories or by local people listening to radiovie, reading the Dokimos newspaper, the T.V. tv2vie (seen on the internet in Asia too(www.tv2vie.org), or the books published by our ministry. Many persons living in these countries have been touched by the Gospel, including countries of Muslim culture.

Yeshoua/YHWH has given us a strategy to spread these truths communicated by Him. We buy big loads of trucks with dvds, cds, dvx and we duplicate these audio-video support which we then distribute freely, everywhere where the Lord send us. During the seminaries and evangelising campaigns we send entire teams into these countries to give for free Biblical materials. Thus, plenty are those Christians who are waking up and realise/take full knowledge of the dramatic state of many of their assemblies. .

I have noticed that it is important for some people to leave us so that we can advance at God's speed. Nevertheless, I don't regret the time spent with my friends - the pastors, who used to invite me to animate their session of forming Christians in their assemblies.

Separation is Biblical; therefore, we must always be ready and expect people to leave us. Yeshoua Ma'shia / Jesus Christ Himself has been abandoned by disciples due to the message He was preaching. Paul was too: *"You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes."* 2 Timothy 1: 15.

I would like you to understand that some of the people working with you in the ministry could become brakes stabbing you; that is why the Lord forces them to separate from you, such as He did it with Abraham and Lot.

Abraham and Lot

When YHWH asked Abraham to sort out of his country, Abraham committed one mistake: that of having taking Lot with him. Very quickly the problems began to appear: Abraham and Lot's shepherds of their troops began to fight. Therefore, the father in faith decided to separate from his nephew. Only, after this separation, YHWH/Yeshoua showed him the country of Canaan which had been put aside by the Lord for him and his descendants.

"The Lord said to Abram after Lot had parted from him: 'Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever'." Genesis 13: 14-15

As long as Lot was with him, Abraham had been veiled ('Lot' means 'veil') and couldn't step into his blessing. (each of us has to lift up the eyes towards the Mountain that symbolizes the New Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God, Jesus Christ Himself –the corner stone and get out of all human traditions, finish with religiosity / traditional churches that are Babylon in His eyes; as Jesus is not there where ecumenism reigns, nor where pastors sell their message or make money out of their DVDs etc. We need to prepare His return and save ourselves, don't wait for others to join you, don't look back (Lot wasn't into the feelings, he never looked back unlike his wife) - see Hebrews 12; 2 Peter 2:4 and Romans 14:17-n.tr.

Never choose the persons you work with, because you risk to be delayed and to create troubles for yourself in vain. Let God choose in your place, he alone knows the secrets of all hearts.

Some people you fellowship with can become brakes through their lack of faith regarding the vision and calling God has given you. I have learnt this during this trial; I know it is better to pray before choosing my collaborators. God is faithful, he never lets anyone prevent you from accomplishing the thing He has called you to do, if you have a just heart before Him. It is more than necessary to ask God to reveal the state of those people's hearts, of the ones who want to work with you. Some have only one ambition: that of making you fall into a sexual sin.

Temptations

I had many opportunities to choose other women who offered themselves freely to me. I knew that if I fall into sin, I will lose the power of the Holy Spirit and the trust in the Lord; therefore I have decided to resist temptations. One day, a very pretty woman came to see me to propose me to go with her stating that the Lord had told her that I would become her husband! Another one came twice to tell me that she had feelings for me. Another one prayed to God to have a husband like me! All these temptations could have shaken me, but the Lord guarded me.

At the beginning of my ministry, on one hand, I met plenty of people who wanted, through money, to make me change the message and the vision that the Lord had given me. On the other hand, others kept coming only to be invested on a spiritual function/position. Of course, I haven't given in to any of these demonic proposals.

So far, I keep firm hanging with all my force to the Lord's grace. I prefer to die rather than compromise and be separated from my beloved Lord Yeshoua Ma'shia.

The Death of My Parents

I have been serving my Lord for many years now and since I first started, I have been witnessing so many healings; however my own mother had been sick for 22 years! Without being healed. I have already implored my Lord many times during these long years to heal her, but He answered that I should go on with my work. In Dec. 2007, my father died while I was on a conference; I had to keep on teaching late in the night that day and only later I was able to support my mother. In 2011, my mother died too when I had a teaching scheduled in Liege (France) that I couldn't postpone. In the day of her funeral, I had another programme that was impossible to cancel, too. I was in the same position as that disciple from Luke 9: 59-60: "*He said to another man: 'Follow me.' But the man replied: 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.'* Yeshoua said to him: *'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.'*"

Let's love our Lord and Master to the point of living patiently all sufferings, of course even those regarding sickness and even death of our parents, without making any reproach to Him. However, my heart rejoiced in that trial and was filled with peace knowing that my parents being Christians, (according to 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-17-about the dead in Christ resurrecting) will wake up to life!

The Autonomy or Assemblies and Ministries

I have worked as a pastor from 1999 until 2005, and then the Lord asked me to leave this function and answer the missionary calling from 2005 until the 21st of March 2012. From the 2nd half of the year 2009, the Lord has put on my heart to offer autonomy officially to assemblies and ministries implanted and formed, in order to be able to concentrate completely to the new mission He entrusted me with: that of announcing His Imminent Return through radio, TV and books, in other words: to blow His Trumpet. He entrusted me with the care of forming the persons He has chosen, without having them dependant on me, but through the free school DIDASKO ('student' in Greek) amongst many other ways.

It is important for the Christians to understand that the assemblies don't belong to pastors or that the traditional churches don't belong to the Catholic and Orthodox priests (Matthew 16: 18), but to the Lord! As in a family, when a child reaches the age of maturity ' that of founding his own family, his parents must encourage him/her and put at his/her disposal all the necessary means to be able to succeed.

In Acts 20: 17-34, Paul set up a meeting with all the elders of the church of Ephesus to let them know that he wouldn't be able to see them again and that from then on, they had to lead/ to take control over the Lord's flock. In vs. 38, he says that the elders accompanied him to the ship. They didn't hold him back, but helped him to answer his new calling.

The same way has happened to the Ethiopian eunuch, in Acts chapter 8: after walking some way with Philip, he then continued his walk without him and kept on doing his work/ministry where he had to go. Philip didn't try to be his 'spiritual cover', nor did he try to control this man's life. On the contrary, after teaching him what he had to communicate to him, Phillip let him go. *Vs 39: "When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing."*

Autonomy is no division, but rather a larger spectrum of the vision. In fact, it is the responsibility of all local assemblies/churches which can't hide anymore behind the back of one man, but are responsible of their own acts before God the Father. They can't hide (such as a criminal who gets out on bail) in order to validate their own ambitions, but are directly responsible of their works and of their consequences / of the fruits they produce.

The autonomy has been offered on the 21st of March 2012 to all assemblies in order to make them deeply involved in their city life; because I haven't been called to create a denomination, with all its cortege of yearly pastoral reunions and with their siege in Paris.

These churches will work in cooperation, if they desire to, without 'the hat' or the protection of a servant whatever name this last one might have: apostle, prophet etc.

Nevertheless, I will be able to give them advice if they ask for it. Let's understand that autonomy is also a mark of trust, because it allows all the ministries to establish themselves and to enter fully into the different callings made by God. The way Paul did it before me; I, too, have presented these assemblies as a perfume of pleasant fragrance before the Lord. (Romans 15: 16)

I remember again what the Lord has told me when I was before His throne:

"Plenty of pastors, after having presented the souls they have won for Me, leave with them."
This word resounds in my heart still and I don't want to do the same with these assemblies.

2) DIFFERENT TESTIMONIES FOR GOD'S GLORY

SEVERIN, HEALED OF H.I.V.

Born in Gabon, I have lived the first part of my life in my country. I used to be surrounded by friends and when I was in high school, I put up a band with some other 5 or 6 mates with the purpose of having as many girlfriends as possible. We had a terrible success, we used to organise parties and get drunk most of the evenings. Between 2001 and 2008, I lived in debauchery, I had bad friendships and the mentality 'I saw you, I liked you'. In all this time, at home I used to be a good and respectful kid who gave the change back to his parents. I used to go to an assembly where I avoided seducing girls. I was a Christian only by name. I was aspiring to a life of holiness, but my carnal inclinations took the first place systematically in my life. Women were too strong for me!

One week before leaving for Paris, for studies, I had been asked to do some medical, blood tests and despite my way of living, I went hopeful. What a horror to find out that the test of spotting HIV was POSITIV! I was shocked, shaken. I had been surely contaminated by the virus during those years of frivolities. Unfortunately, I didn't know when this happened and whose fault it was.

In that day, returning home, I confessed my double life and also my HIV positivity to my sister. She didn't judge me; she didn't discourage me, but prayed for me. She even encouraged me to travel to Paris for studies. I arrived then in France; I was renting in the university campus and felt so alone despite the fact that my sister and a brother in Christ were calling me from time to time from Gabon.

I was afraid of people finding out that I was sick. I took all precautions not to contaminate anyone. For instance I used to hide my shaving machine or I didn't use to shave often to avoid lending it to my friends. Then, my nose started to bleed and other symptoms began to appear which made me believe that the disease started to manifest itself. I went to take other tests and the result came like a death sentence: 'unprotected antibody', meaning I passed the stage of positivity to that of sydeen. It was awful; I considered myself as a ambulant corpse because any simple flu could have finished me off.

I don't hide that those moments were extremely hard to live. In the evenings, alone, facing the disease, I used to torment myself and cry because I was so scared. I drank blackness and I even gave up to death. At 27 years, I was completely lost! Only the prayer and the Biblical messages allowed me to sleep around 30 minutes or an hour per night.

My sister, who supported me always, advised me to frequent a Christian assembly so I don't have a nervous breakdown due to sickness. The Lord made things so well that I ended up meeting a student at university who invited me to a cult. I went there and I listened to the sermon. After some time, while I was tormenting myself in bed to make me sleep, an idea crossed my mind to make an appointment to see that Lord's worker whose sermon I listened to so that he could pray for me. That man received me, prayed for me and then convinced me to go and do another blood test, which I did...

When I received the test results, I didn't dare open the envelope with its frightening content. Therefore, I gathered all my courage and with both hands, I've decided to put my faith into action and I've opened the envelope. After I bowed my head, my look glanced to a tiny piece of paper that decided my future: I read 'NEGATIV TEST'.

These 2 words regave me the taste for life. I have seen God's glory and all His power. My miraculous healing is not a theory for me, but a reality. I have met the Eternal One who heals and when I have realised what had happened I started to evangelise people, to cry loud on streets that Jesus healed me of H.I.V.!

I have understood that all happens towards the good of those who love God and that we are called according to His design. The Lord has allowed me to be touched by this incurable disease for my salvation. I give all the glory to Him for this healing, because without this disease I wouldn't have stopped my frivolous and sinful life I led. Without it, I wouldn't have truly walked in the fear of God.

Now, my life has changed and though I have ups and downs, I hang on strongly to His promises. The Christian life is sometimes difficult when you are young. There are so many temptations to surpass! But I choose to persevere in holiness. I understood that the most important thing is to put God's Word into practice. *"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."* James 1: 22

We shouldn't foul ourselves, what we seed, we harvest. There are consequences of our deeds, but God, in His great kindness, freed me of this mortal disease. That is why; I encourage each one of you, who read these lines, to make Jesus Christ the foundation of your life!

MOSES, HEALED BY EPILEPSY AND STERILITY

I am 41 years old; I am married and a family father. Converted in 1998, I have lived a long time with an incurable and debilitating disease. I suffered epilepsy like some in my family and due to which lost a brother in 2011. The doctors had prescribed me 21 pills daily to help me deal with this sickness. The treatment was very strict and the doctor advised me that a simple forgetfulness of taking the pills could cause a relapse. In addition, I was forced to sleep before mid-night to avoid a seizure. A real bondage!

In 2001, I met an authentic servant of the Lord to whom I have exposed my health problem. He invited me to participate to an awakening prayer meeting. Braving myself and despite the doctor's advice not to stay awake before mid-night I went in faith. During the prayer meeting, the servant prayed for me. To my surprise, the night had passed without any incidents and without those manifestations foreseen by my doctor. In the morning, I had the profound conviction to stop taking the pills and from that day on I had no epileptic seizure, not a single attack. The Lord has healed me of epilepsy!

I am so happy that I can join the prayer meetings without sleeping before mid-night, that I have started to go regularly so that I can pray for others, too. Only then, I have understood the calling the Lord Jesus has given me. Since then, the enemy can't prevent me from bringing fruits for God's glory, to know the gift of praying for others (of intercession). This freedom, this divine healing was for me a double blessing because not only was my body freed from disease, but I was also able to answer the Lord's calling and enter the ministry God had for me! What grace and what fulfilment!

In 2004, God has blessed me and I got married. We wanted children and my wife had many miscarriages for a period of 3 years. After endless tests, the results have shown that everything was normal on what concerned her. She had 3 false still births (she lost the baby at 5 months, at 3 months and then at 2 months) because they were all births without foetus. In fact, the ovule was empty, without the embryo. It was a rare case and alarming. My wife's gynaecologist understood that the problem came from me and asked me to take the tests.

The verdict fell as the guillotine: I was sterile.

They propose me to follow quite a constrictive treatment whose circumstances proved to be difficult to live through, so I couldn't stand it. During this time, I was sad, depressed, discouraged and run down. Plenty of bad thoughts crossed my mind because I saw no future without kids. We had made so many plans, everything was falling apart!

My family made so much pressure on me to divorce my wife. For them, a woman incapable of bearing children wasn't a good one. Of course, they had no idea that the problem was mine. I was so ashamed that I haven't told them anything. Nevertheless, we haven't followed their advice, but in my heart, I was shaken, I started to doubt and I was scared...

After the last miscarriage of the foetus, when my wife was lying on the hospital bed and we were so desperate and hopeless, we cried out to God. So, we received a Word from the Bible that encouraged us enormously: *"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."* Matthew 6: 33.

We have commonly decided not to pity ourselves, but to put our faith in Christ and start to pray with conviction and perseverance.

During this time, another word from God helped us through and pushed us to keep on going: *“I lift up my eyes to the hills- where does my help come from? **My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.** He will not let your foot slip- he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord watches over you- the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all harm he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”* Psalm 121.

This word strengthen our faith and made us understand that the help can't come but from the Him, the Eternal One. 3 years of trials were already passed by and then another one, but this time we were not discouraged, but we kept on persevering in prayer, believing that the One who made the heavens and the earth will not allow our feet to be shaken. Due to this strong belief we were expecting a miracle...

Without any treatment, without any pill taken neither by me, nor by my wife..., we simply let God glorify Himself and He did!

On the 13th of Aug 2007 our first little baby boy was born. What great joy we felt then! My spouse's gynaecologist didn't believe it knowing he didn't heal us of sterility and even under his treatment, it had usually no guarantee.

18 months after the miraculous birth of our son, the Lord overwhelmed us with the birth of twins: a boy and a girl.

I who was condemned by medicine, it was but the Lord's grace that made me a family father today with 3 beautiful children. When people declare you sterile, God Himself declares you fertile. Don't let words of curse close you in a destiny that is not yours.

“Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun. **Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;** do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.” Psalm 37: 4-7

ABDON, HEALED OF H.I.V.

I give my testimony with full thanksgiving and gratitude to God for what He has done in my life. I have met The El Rafa, God the Healer and this encounter has turned my life upside down.

I have lived a dark period that lasted for 2 years between 2008 and 2010. It was a time when I used to be both full of myself and in anonymity, too. Alone, I have suffered in my heart and died under slow fire.

For 15 years I was working as a lab technician and from the month of April 2007, I suffered a work accident, in short very banal. When I took a blood sample for a patient that was under observation due to the HIV virus, I negligently stabbed myself with the used needle. To minimise the risks of infection, I have undergone an anti-retroviral treatment, then a HIV test which proved negative. I breathed easily and thanked God for His grace and His protection.

Overwhelmed by misfortune, in June, same year, another incident occurred like before. Then I had another treatment and even the second HIV test proved negative.

But at the end of Sep. 2008, during a routine check-up my serologic status changed dramatically. I then have taken 2 consecutive tests that proved to be positive. I didn't understand anything; torment and fear overwhelmed my heart then. Very quickly, some obvious signs of the disease began to appear. I have lost 7 kilos, the abscesses were developing normally and I had wounds that hardly healed. My white globules were diminishing and this thing left me without protection before a full invasion of infections. My antibodies were starting to reduce considerably and I entered the immune phase. The general state was deteriorating rapidly both physically and also mentally/psychologically.

In August 2010, I used to hurt myself, but then I've decided to break the silence I trapped myself into. I opened my heart to one of the Lord's servant who was then ministering in Kinshasa. He prayed for me and anointed me with oil. Despite the fact that he told me God healed me, I didn't believe him and doubted inside me.

Then, several years passed and then the word 'healing' resounded in my heart. Thus, I went to have the tests again and this time, the test was negative. I was completely astonished!

I did another 2nd test, then a 3rd one, all came out negative. I was like an unbeliever only this time God's power overwhelmed me, He left me truly stupefied!

I also did the tests concerning Hepatitis C and B, because I thought HIV has mutated itself in another place. Unbelief pushes man to think anything... All the blood tests came back normal and I put on weight.

What grace when I came to realise the intervention of the Divine Hand in my life! I have met the El Rafa. The Word of God is true and that was exactly what I was experiencing:

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

How to thank God for His majesty? To He who takes care of us and watches over us with His benevolent looks?

*"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. **You will not fear the terror of death at night-time, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.***

A 1,000 may fall at your side, 10,000 at your right hand, but it {the destruction}will not come near you. You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you make the Most High your dwelling- even the Lord, who is my refuge- then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation"."
Psalm 91

FELICIA, HEALED FROM A MALIGN BREAST TUMOUR

I am a woman aged 50, born again in 2009. Of Catholic tradition, I started to frequent the revival churches in 2006.

From some time, I had a growth in my breast that was causing me pain that went into my back too. I saw a doctor and he did a mammogram which showed a patch that looked like a growth.

Hearing of the conference "Holding the Gospel Captive" which took place in Saint Denis; I went there on the 20th of Dec. 2009. Getting there, I asked the Lord to heal me. During the conference, the servant that was preaching said that there was a woman in the room with pain in the left breast. In that moment, when the man said those words, the pain had completely gone. I was so happy and completely in shock!

Getting home, I made an appointment with the doctor to check it up. There was nothing left! Not even a single dot of that lump!

Since this miraculous healing, I have realised that my spiritual life has changed. Faith has come! I had therefore the assurance that God, Yeshoua, he who heals s alive, real and that He does miracles.

From that day onwards I am born again. I noticed then that I was living a religious, intellectual, sentimental life, which had nothing to do with true encounter with God. Then, I have met God who truly heals. He is not a dead god who is unable to answer our prayers, but a LIVING GOD!

In conclusion, this miraculous healing has changed my life and I give glory to Jesus Christ for this.

CONCLUSION

Before passing through the Potter's hands, all great men and women of God were evil vessels, of shameful usage, of unfit use by the Lord, unable to do anything well. The story of great apostles Paul and Peter must be an encouragement for all those who dream of a divine ministry/service. Like us all, they were imperfect, full of defects, anti-heroes through excellency. Nevertheless, the Lord's transformation brought miracles into their lives.

PAUL, the Violent Theologian

Paul was an Israelite from the tribe of Benjamin. (Philippians 3: 5-6) Born in Tars, in Cilicia, an ancient Roman province, he had been raised in Jerusalem and educated by a teacher of the law: Gamaliel (Acts. 22: 3). As a Pharisee, he was convinced that tradition, in other words: the result of a correct application of law had come from Moses. (Mark 7: 3) The Pharisees were asking vigorously for tithing and they were, ethically speaking, without doubt above most Jews. Their condemnation by Yeshoua, who reproaches their unbelief, is to be considered under this point of view (meaning regarding their strict observation of Moses' law / the carnal law-n.tr.). The Pharisees loved the first places, the titles, and the offerings and didn't hesitate to execute those who were opposing the way they interpreted the law. In fact, they formed the most rigid sect in Judaism during Yeshoua Christ. (see Acts 26: 4-5)

Paul was for many years a great persecutor of Yeshoua Christ's disciples whom he used to catch and throw in jail. In fact, he proved his zeal for the law when he approved and assisted to Stephen's death. (Acts 9: 54-60)

His Calling

Paul was a very zealous theologian regarding his parents' traditions. He trusted the formation received by Gamaliel who had been like a father in faith for him. He is the example of the theologians whom we advise not to listen, not to put their trust in their theologian diplomas. This man defended the law with the weapons of the flesh. He was convinced that he had the approval of Yahweh/YHWH in fighting the Christians

While he was on the way to persecute the Christians of Damascus, he received a vision from the Lord (Acts 9). Paul had then the revelation of God's Son put to death for our sins and later resurrected. (Galatians 1: 15-17). Paul had received one of the most wonderful callings in Biblical history which will completely transform his life.

His Breaking

After this divine encounter, Paul lost his sight –the image of death to his own ego. God wanted to make him understand that, despite the knowledge of the law, he was a blind man. In addition, he had to receive deliverance from the hands of Ananias, an unknown disciple. He understood then

that his theological formation, his ethnical belonging and the knowledge of Torah (the Law) were mere rubbish. “Philippians 3: 8-9.

After Paul’s conversion, he stayed in Arabia for a while, to be formed by God, far away from the rabbinic schools. (Galatians 1: 15-17). This formation had the purpose of breaking this vessel of violence, of pride, of unbelief and of blasphemy. (1 Timothy 1: 13) God wanted him to be undressed of all things received by men.

Paul, the Servant of God

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2: 20

To answer efficiently his divine calling, Paul had to pass from Gamaliel’s hands into the Hands of the Lord and he had to work more than any other disciples of God. (2 Corinthians 11: 21-33) Certainly, he wouldn’t have been used so powerfully by God if he didn’t know the death to himself beforehand.

*“As for those who seemed to be important--whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance--those men added nothing to my message. **On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews.**”* Galatians 2: 6-9

The Results of His Formation

27 years after his conversion, he had been recognised as a true apostle, such as Peter, John and James. In addition, most revelations regarding the saint doctrine have been communicated to him by God Himself.

The entire Asia Minor had been shaken profoundly by Paul’s ministry (Acts 17: 6).

The constructions for idol temples have stopped, entire cities have been shaken, magicians have closed their doors. (Acts 19: 23-40 and 13). Through his ministry, thousands of people (kings, deputies, soldiers, Jews and Gentiles) have been delivered of demons, healed and brought back to Christ. Everywhere he went, he had caused such a stirring, indeed real spiritual tornadoes; the kingdom of darkness had been shaken.

You and me, we are the fruits of the service Yeshoua entrusted to Paul and to other apostles. Paul is an example for all persons who knew violence and who felt condemned. If this is your case, hold hope because God doesn’t make any exception, He calls us all to salvation.

PETER, the Impetuous

Identity: Jew

Job: Fisherman (Luke 5)

Civil Status: married

Studies taken: without diploma (Acts 5: 13)

Character: Impetuous, violent, and thirsty for power.

There is a little impressive resume. From the start, Peter had followed Christ from interest. He dreamed of course of the most important place in God's Kingdom. Peter refuses the Lord's death because he saw all his dreams finished regarding glory. (Matthew 16) He wasn't a man weak in words. Remember that he had promised to follow Yeshoua and never to abandon Him ever before denying Him 3 times. See Matthew 26: 31-34.

Peter's triple Denial

Some hours after Yeshoua' arrest, Peter was shaking in front of a maid which was telling him that she saw him with Yeshoua. Filled with panic, he denies categorically 3 times of being one of the Lord's disciples

"Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him: 'You also were with Yeshoua of Galilee,' she said. But he denied it before them all. 'I don't know what you're talking about,' he said. Then he went out to the gateway, where another girl saw him and said to the people there: 'This fellow was with Yeshoua of Nazareth.' He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!" After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said: 'Surely you are one of them, for your accent gives you away.' Then he began to call down curses on himself and he swore to them: 'I don't know the man!' Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Yeshoua had spoken: 'Before the rooster crows, you will disown me 3 times.' And he went outside and wept bitterly."

Matthew 26: 69-75.

(There is a Biblical symbol of fire / of coals here and in John 18: 25 that were next to peter when he denied him? You see: these same the burning coals in John 21: 9 when Yeshoua is resurrected and prepares a lunch for Peter. Surely, those colas must have reminded Peter that Yeshoua can change regrets into happiness and gives us a chance to redeem ourselves if we are sorry.-n.tr)

Peter's story encourages us those who feel incapable of answering the calling due to our character. Yes, even a person that denied the Lord 3 times can be used by God to open a door for the Gospel for the nations.

PETER, the Retrograde

After the Lord's death, Peter fell into despair forgetting all the Master's promises. He turned back to fishing, taking with him many of the disciples. He was so depressed that he used to fish completely naked.

"Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. 'I'm going out to fish' Simon Peter told them, and they said: 'We'll go with you.' So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

'Between the Potter's Hands'

Early in the morning, Yeshoua stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Yeshoua. He called out to them: 'Friends haven't you any fish?' 'No,' they answered. He said: 'Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.' When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. Then the disciple whom Yeshoua loved said to Peter: 'It is the Lord!' As soon as Simon Peter heard him say: 'It is the Lord,' he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water." John 21:2-7

(This time **the net** wasn't broken, didn't need mending like the first time Yeshoua met Peter –see Matthew 4: 20 the net=symbol for their and our work of salvation of souls in Yeshoua's Name amongst the nations.)

Despite his improper behaviour, the Master takes him back into His team. In fact, God doesn't see us as we are, with our defects and weaknesses, but the way we are about to become in the future.

The Results of His Formation

After 3 years of formation and difficult trials, Peter was qualified to look after the Lord's sheep. God has trusted him despite his past mistakes. At Pentecost, Peter has received the Holy Spirit, thus becoming the first man to preach the Gospel before nations.

"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles: 'Brothers, what shall we do?' Peter replied: 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Yeshoua Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call.' With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them: 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.' Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about 3,000 were added to their number that day."

Acts 2: 37-41

Peter had lived countless miracles that testify God is real and able to transform us the way He transformed a simple fisherman into a great man of God (Acts 10). Peter is also the author of 2 beautiful letters that encourage us to persevere in the Christian faith despite persecutions.

My beloved, if God can use a man like Peter, with all his faults, lack of patience, impulsivity, a man ready to deny Him, how much more isn't He going to use you? Don't let the enemy discourage you because of your imperfections, your defaults and defects, but trust in the Lord, because he is the Potter who transforms the clay vessels into honour ones.

We don't always understand the way God operates in us; nor did the apostles. In John 13:2-17, Yeshoua told peter what he was doing and despite the fact that this last one didn't understand at that moment, he did very well later (John 13:2-17). You have to grasp/hold onto what God is about to do with you, not to run away, but wait patiently and you will persevere, because you will understand later.

A Last Word

As a Potter, God moulds vessels of honour to use them for His kingdom. These pots of honour must but contain food that the world needs.

“In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.” 2 Timothy 2: 20-21

This passage talks to us of more vessels that are in the world (the house). In the first place, there are wooden vessels that can catch fire easily due to the composition, their material. And secondly, there are clay vessels, meaning the heathens/the unbelievers, those who think only of earthly things. In the end, there are honour vessels that represent God’s people whom He has broken, moulded and prepared for the ministry. This work of the Potter which transforms us in vessels of honour has as main purpose our filling with the capital imperative: sanctification. Of course, nobody will see God without it. (Hebrews 12:14)

God is the Potter by Excellency

” This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ‘Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.’ So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the Lord came to me: ‘O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?’ declares the Lord. ‘Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel!’” Jeremiah 18:1-6

The Potter is the One who works the clay to give it its desired shape. Like the Potter, God has all the rights over the vessels He moulds. He decides not only the form they take, but also their usage.

Truly, these decisions belong to the potter and not to the clay.

“Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?” Romans 9: 21

God is the One who decides the place where we exercise our ministry and Him, too, the One who chooses the persons we are going to work with. Therefore, let’s accept simply the form given to us by God the Father and the mission entrusted to us in order to keep firm until the end.

“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Yeshoua has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.” Acts 20: 24

The Vessels were useful for the wedding at Cana

*“On the 3rd day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Yeshoua' mother was there, and Yeshoua and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Yeshoua' mother said to him: ‘They have no more wine.’ ‘Dear woman, why do you involve me?’ Yeshoua replied: ‘My time has not yet come.’ His mother said to the servants: ‘Do whatever he tells you.’ Nearby stood 6 stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from 20 to 30 gallons. Yeshoua said to the servants: **‘Fill the jars with water’** ; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them: ‘Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.’ They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said: ‘Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.’ This, the first of his miraculous signs, Yeshoua performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory.”*

John 2:1-11.

The first miracle of the Lord was taken place at a wedding celebration. On the contrary, the objects used were vessels used for the Jews’ purification (for washing their bodies).

If we want to see God’s glory coming into our lives, we have to be a useful vessel in the Lord’s hands, to live in sanctification: **“Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.”** Hebrews 12: 14

In conclusion, sanctification serves to make us more and more like Yeshoua, the One who should be the example by excellency.

“And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.’ Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” Philipians 2: 5-11

May all the glory be given to the Potter, He who loves us and perfects us, **Yeshoua Ma'shia of Nazareth!**

Let us not forget especially that the Groom is coming!

The Lord is about to purify His Church for the wedding! Hallelujah! Maranatha!

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