



MEN OF CHARACTER, CONSCIENCE OF THE SOCIETY

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First, to Almighty God be the glory. There is beauty in character only when there is righteousness in mind. Neither academic brilliance nor being genius or gifted in any human endeavor can replace the position of good morals in our life. The greatest virtue is “degree” of our self-discipline which depends on the love and fear we have for God. So important that the scripture strongly warn: “take hold on discipline; do not let go. Safeguard it, for it itself is your life” (Proverb 4:3). The Kingdom of God is not the matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness.... Jesus Christ enjoins us to seek God’s Kingdom and His righteousness FIRST. He equally enjoins that the doing of good is vitally important. Neither the flesh of Muslim rams nor their blood reaches Allah, but their righteous that reaches Him. Furnishing ourselves with necessary provision is normal and allowed but surely the best provision is still righteousness [Ref 1,2].

But in society today, it entails a lot of courage, determination; self-discipline through the fear of God to keep to righteousness which dividends is second to none. And the best measure of a man’s character is what he will do if he knew he cannot be found out. That is why I agree with Aristotle who “counts him braver who overcomes his desires than him who conquers his enemies. For that hardest victory, is the victory over self”. Character building actually goes beyond the classroom. Even society. The individuality matter most. After all “as all parents know teaching character...” according to former U.S. Secretary of Education, William J. Bennett (from a speech delivered to the National Press Club, Washington D.C. March 17, 1985) “... is a difficult task because we want all our children to be not only healthy, happy and successful but decent, strong and good. But none of this happens automatically, there is no genetic transmission of virtue. It takes conscious committed effort... ”.

This “Conscious committed effort” is a measure of individual self-control. This virtue is highly essential to live a purposeful life. An Ibadan based Physician, Wale Okediran, summarizes self-discipline as “the root of all virtues and the fount of wisdom, without which man cannot excel” [3]. He equally traced the world problem to the lack of this greatest virtue. Hear him: “In the high-tech world of today, we have all kinds of invention with which to overcome the oceans and wilds, yet we have not been able to find cure to man’s greatest problem which is lack of self-control”. Had Mankind learnt a little art of self-restraint as I strongly agree with this Physician, the 1991 Gulf war and other several communal, tribal & global conflicts would not have been. But out of our craze for material acquisition in the form of war machinery as well as other modern age gadgets have given us false confidence that the path to a good life is through acquiring more and more property. Yet man’s greatest crucial need is not arsenal of war or luxury, but the capacity to discipline himself.

When that capacity is insignificant or relegated to the background, the victim is character. And when character is humiliated everything is lost. This elucidate the reason for unkempt and barbaric behavior of average student on campus today; society indecency; lack of objectivity in our attitude to life which consequently kill simplicity and humanism among many of us thus resulting in the given premium to vanity of life. In any society where it’s average member’s urge towards life vagaries, predominates simple manners, simple habits, simple deeds, simple humanism, simple kindness, simple smile, simple faith, simple love..., then character is not only lost in such society but satan is also at work. Any wonder then for man inhumanity against man without qualms? Or the enthusiasm people show shamefully in displaying the emptiness and nothingness in all forms of life vagaries that even defy imagination and comprehension often.

“The power of self-control is one of the greatest qualities that differentiate man from the lower animals. He is the only animal capable of moral struggle or a moral conquest.... At each moment of man’s life he is either a king or a slave. As he surrenders to a wrong appetite, to any human weakness; as he falls prostrate in hopeless subjection to any condition, to any environment, to any failure, he is a slave. As he day to day crushes out

human weakness, master opposing elements within him, and by day re-creates a new self from the sin and folly of his past, then he is a KING. He is a king ruling with wisdom over himself" [4].

Surely, men of character are men of God and because of their righteous indignation are always inclined toward God and subsequently naturally at ease and unassuming in their sense of responsibility. They have seen the folly nothingness of those things that make the sum of the life of others. As a result can not have any room in their minds for the pettiness of personal vanity. They can't sentimentally or blindly follow crowd, talkless of befriending ambassadors of satan. Ironically, the well being and any progress in any society depend on them, after all the "person who is responsible and loving to other human beings has in turn extended loves and derives a sense of personal self-worth. That is the only way our own lives and in turn our society can function properly". (Apology to Paul Kroll) Interestingly, President Kwame Nkrumah agreed in totality in his "Africa Must Unite" which has seen many decades and more relevant today than ever before [5].

Still on responsibility, I mean our natural responsibility. God created us in His image (Genesis 1:26). Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us "(Malachi 2:10). No wonder, "Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20). Our different tribe, color and tongues are not the yardstick for superiority or source of conflicts, rather it is simply to enable us to recognize ourselves and reflect on the wonderful works of God. The yardstick is righteousness (Holy Quran 49:13). Interestingly, the World community also unequivocally endorses and even enforces the God's injunctions. The Article 1 and 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as proclaimed at the 183rd U.N. General Assembly Session on December 10, 1948 is the most vocal on this.

Any surprise then to have seen that all regions that is having terrible suffering as the aftermath of their various sacrilegious crimes against humanity (themselves) are those that have little or insignificant capacity to discipline themselves toward their natural responsibility. Crisis all over the globe! Any wonder? From ethnic conflicts between the Turks and the Greeks in Cyprus; to the war in Balkans. From the war in Lebanon, El Salvador and Western Sahara to the carnage in Angola. Israel has been alert and fighting since 1948, intensified at Golan Heights in 1974. War in Cambodia to a latent face-off between India and Pakistan since 1949. Arab brothers at fierce loggerhead (Iraq-Kuwait). Mass rape and 'ethnic cleansing' of Bosnia muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina. From battle to finish in Somalia, Liberia, Sudan... to total self-dominated ethnic and religious carnage as well as all time our-own-making infiltrated suffering here in Nigeria a blessed nation that have more than enough for everyone's need though not for everyone's greed.

Good deeds which is an essential component of righteousness is actually more than just going to mosque or church or shrine (as we do in Nigeria). If actually this is so, Nigeria ought to have been a paradise on earth more so when one considers the noise we make ranging from vandalization of properties to killing all in the name of RELIGION –for love of God? If we desire to do good in the world let us begin to love humanity. Every one of us is a shepherd and every shepherd will be asked to give account of his stewardship. Holy is God, the most merciful, who made Man His vicegerent on Earth. Really we can't thank God enough and the greatest first principle in life and enjoin on all mankind is "to have the love and fear of god"

REFERENCES

1. Holy Bible: Roman 14:17; Matt 6:28-34
2. Holy Quran: Hajj 22:37; Baqara 2:197
3. Hunger as Discipline by Wale Okediran;
The Guardian Feb., 27th 1991
4. The Kingship of Self-Control
by William George Jordan
5. "Africa needs a new type of citizen, a dedicated, modest, honest, informed man. A man who abhors greed and detest vanity. A new type of man whose humility is his strength and whose integrity is his greatness."

-Africa Must Unite