

THE FUTURE AND YOU

Keynote Address at the One-Day Youth Empowerment and Skill Acquisition Programme, Caleb International Schools, Kayode Odusola Crescent, G.R.A., Ikosi, Ketu, Lagos, February 24, 2012.

By

Professor Ayodeji OLUKOJU

Fellow, Nigerian Academy of Letters

Vice-Chancellor, Caleb University, Imota, Lagos State

My Lords Spiritual and Temporal, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I thank the organizers of this programme for inviting me to chair this great gathering. My brief remarks on “The Future and You,” the theme of this one-day programme, centre on how young adults, whose best lies in the future, should **perceive**, **prepare** for and **possess** the future – a future of greatness and fulfilled dreams. In the ordinary usage of the English Language, the word “future” can be used in at least two ways with slightly different connotations, the difference being the addition or omission of the article “the.” First, to say, “You should be more circumspect in future” means you should be more careful from now on. Second, to say, “You will achieve success in the future” means that, given some pre-conditions, success is guaranteed at a particular future date. The rest of my remarks will be woven around three pillars: the perception and pursuit of greatness in the future; the preparation for a glorious future; and possession of a God-guaranteed future.

Perceiving and Pursuing Greatness in the Future

It is imperative that we perceive the future in terms of (a) a time frame - a set time different from and subsequent to the present (now) when we expect certain things to happen – and (b) certain aspirations. It is believed in some quarters that perception is everything, that you can hardly appreciate or desire what you cannot perceive or envision. It is a matter of the spirit, of the inner man. The Jews commented: “Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone

after Him?” The Lord Jesus asked Simon “How readest thou?” (**Luke 10:26**)- what is your take or understanding. Hence, we are challenged to “redeem the time, because the days are evil.” (**Eph. 5:16**) However, what determines our perceptions of the future could range from our family background, level or standard of education, attitude to life, aptitude or innate ability, motivation (or, lack of it) and worldview to spiritual experience. The future we envision is a function of what we know through teaching, reading or experience. The point is that you can hardly rise higher than your dream or vision of the future. While others saw the cloudy skies, Stephen saw through to heaven; Caleb and Joshua saw the good of the land and believed they were well able to take the land, but others saw themselves as grasshoppers against giants. You must dream big, equip yourself and plan for a great future. It is dangerous to have a limited or short-term view of the future. To limit oneself to the present only is to be an Esau, who lost his future to the present craving for food. Many youth today have mortgaged their future to drugs, immorality, deviant behaviour and all manner of misconduct. Young Joseph thought of the future by refusing to sin against God and his master, whose adulterous wife wanted him to yield his body to her lustful desires. If he had yielded, he would have lost his glorious future and ended up as a fat slave in Egypt. Daniel knew he had a glorious future and refused to engage in self-indulgence (**Dan 1:8**) so he could focus on serious matters of life. The same trait was manifest in Ruth and Esther – virtuous women who were driven by a glorious vision to attain great heights.

The right perception of the future is to think of it in two contexts - time and eternity. The former refers to our stay here on earth, when we can aspire to human greatness by dint of hard work, discipline and divine favour while the latter is the hereafter, what the Bible calls “the latter end.” (**Deut 32: 29**)

Preparing for a Glorious Future

If, as I expect, we are all interested in a glorious future, the way forward is to prepare for it. Life is like an examination: only the sensible and focused students prepare for it at the right time. Now is the time to consider the latter end and consciously prepare for it. Your preparation is many-sided: you have to play your part – commit your life and soul to the Lord, develop the right mental attitude for success, assess your strength and weakness, and work on them, associate with people who will add value to your life, look up to the right role models, acquire skills, set

targets – and allow God to have His way in your life. In short, to achieve a glorious future, you must go into partnership with God. It begins by reconciling with the Lord to be a child of God with your name in the Book of Life. The key to glory is divine-human partnership. This makes one a total person, a six-o'clock personality - accomplished in your earthly calling while being spiritually connected with heaven. You must determine to make a difference, add value and leave an enduring legacy. You should live everyday fully conscious that you will account to God one day. There is no other/better way.

Possessing Your God-guaranteed Future

There is no doubt that God has spoken good concerning the future of His children. His thoughts toward us are thoughts of good to give us an expected end (**Jeremiah 29:11**) – that is our God-given/guaranteed future. It is a personal possession that can only be appropriated by personal resolve, endeavour and faith. People like Abraham, Joseph, Daniel and young Timothy made a choice and possessed their possession. You must work as if your success depended only on it and pray as if that is all that matters. You will need holiness to possess it (**Obadiah 17**). You will need grace – saving, sustaining, sufficient and superabundant – as you journey along. Don't join the evil multitude, avoid the company of corrupters. Hone your skills, develop your Christian character. Reflect, refrain. Ponder, pray and possess.

If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

Now is decision time: He has shown thee O man ... (**Micah 6:8**) Who is on the Lord's side?
(**Exod. 32:26**)