

**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES**

**SUFFERING AND DISCIPLESHIP:
READING MARK 14:32 – 15:41 FROM A CHARISMATIC PERSPECTIVE**



BY

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD
OF M.PHIL FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS**

DEPARTMENT FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

JULY 2018

DECLARATION

This is to certify that this thesis is the result of research undertaken by Godson Mensah Kwaku Eworyi under the supervision of Rev. Dr Bradford Yeboah and Rev. Dr George Ossom-Batsa towards the award of M. Phil Degree in Study of Religions, University of Ghana, Legon.

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DEDICATION

To my wife Nayram and daughters: Debora and God's gift, Edudzi.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am first of all grateful to God for life and the opportunity to pursue this course to the end. Secondly, I thank my supervisors, Rev. Dr. George Ossom-Batsa and Dr. Bradford Yeboah, who both doubled as my supervisors and lecturers for their patience for me during these two years of writing this paper. I am much indebted to Dr. Nicoletta Gatti for her enormous support and encouragement without which this work would have stalled.

I am also grateful to all my siblings especially Mawuko, Worlanyo and Edem for supporting me both financially and morally through the course. In addition, I want to specially thank two groups of people. First is Rev. Tom Bright- Davies, my pastor, and spiritual father, and his wife, Cece Bright-Davies for your prayers and unflinching support. Secondly, I am grateful to my pastor friend Rev. John Deyegbe and his wife Mattie, for your love and company.

I appreciate the support of my course mates and friends; Abraham, Magnus, Godibert and Rachel for your support and encouragement. I enjoyed studying with you. My friend, David Dosoo, thank you for being there with me in the 'valleys.' Thank you very much, Mr. Evans Tamke of PRESEC Legon for proofreading this work. My sincere appreciation also goes to my parents of blessed memory. Your labour is yielding results.

ABSTRACT

Many Charismatic leaders, Dag Heward Mills, Enoch Aminu, Duncan-Williams amongst others, preach that suffering in all forms — sickness, death, poverty — is not the will of God in the life of believers. However, suffering is a reality that should be honestly addressed. Moreover, the New Testament stresses that the Christian journey and suffering are not mutually exclusive: Jesus Christ himself indicated cross bearing as an unavoidable experience in the life of disciples. Against this background, the research analyses the relationship between suffering and discipleship in the passion narrative of the Gospel according to Mark (Mk 14:32 – 15:41) and its relevance to contemporary Ghanaian Charismatic Churches.

The researcher used Ossom-Batsa's Communicative approach as theoretical framework. The author proposes three stages in this approach, namely: the exegesis of the text, the call to action, and the engagement of the text and the culture. To study the text the narrative criticism proposed by Marguerat and Bourquin was employed. Empirical data from two selected Charismatic churches, Lighthouse Chapel International (LCI) and Action Chapel International (ACI) were used as 'reality' for engaging the biblical text.

The study discovered that from the biblical point of view, not only is suffering part of the human situation, but it also helps in the building up of the disciple. The preaching of Charismatic churches focused on success and prosperity — even if sometimes it motivates people to work hard to relieve themselves out of poverty, and other kinds of unfortunate situations — budges from the theology of the cross, and it is contrary to the principles of God. The fact is that recognition of God in His Glory and Majesty can only come after first appreciating Him in His meekness and humiliation.

Charismatic churches should, therefore, accept the fact that a life may be deemed successful in spite of human failures. Although God does not wish that His children suffer pain and suffering, these are part of human life and can become an instrument of growth in faith and solidarity.

The research concludes with recommendations for a comprehensive study on Suffering and Discipleship from a Charismatic Perspective. Besides, there should be an enquiry into the scriptures Charismatic Church Leaders use in support of their argument in favour of a Christianity without suffering. Furthermore, preaching should take into consideration the “cross” through which Christ himself, although was abused by human standards, gained victory and brought us salvation. Finally, members of the church should be informed that material gains are good and not bad in themselves, but they are not a proof of God’s reward for faithfulness.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY ISSUES

1.1 Background of Study

One of the greatest challenges to the Christian faith is suffering. It has no preference or boundary as to whether one is a priest/pastor or a lay member. It comes in one form or the other, either early in one's life or later. It can also be a lifelong issue. Suffering comes in varied forms such as deprivation, sickness, disability, poverty, persecution, bereavement and many others. This phenomenon inevitably raises the question about the justice and love of God.¹

In most Charismatic churches suffering is viewed in the light of consequence of sin or lack of faith. Members are asked to confess their sins, pray for deliverance from whatever problem they found themselves in and have a positive confession of God's goodness and blessings. They are made to believe that Christ came to deliver all from sin and suffering and for that matter a Christian is to enjoy in the blessings rather than suffering.²

¹According to Browning, justice and love are not necessarily averse to each other. They reflect God's nature and character. Biblical concept of justice is not only fairness and equal treatment but begins and ends with God. Thus, in Jesus, on the cross, was a convergence of God's hatred for sin and his love for humanity. Therefore, the resurrection is a proof that suffering and pain are not ends in themselves but only means to restoration and life. See Robert L Browning and Roy A. Reed. *Forgiveness, Reconciliation and Moral Courage: Motives and Designs for Ministry in Troubled World* (Grand Rapids, Willian B Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2004). Suffering is a requirement for seeking justice and love through the blood of Jesus. Further, both Justice and love serve the well-being of people because they are in the nature and purpose of God. "Where Love and Justice Meet" *Centre for Justice International, Prison Fellowship International*, Washington DC, 2007, accessed on March 5, 2018, <http://restorativejustice.org/rj-library/what-is-restorative-justice/9032/#sthash.Q8yZjnZr.dpbs>.

² Christian Action Faith Ministries (CAFMI)'s theology is the "Faith Gospel of success, health and wealth" In Archbishop Duncan Williams's book *You are destined to succeed*, the author refers to Gen. 1:29-30 as God's destiny for man is to be physically sound without sickness, fear, and be bold and successful in all areas of life. Similarly, Aminu, founder of the Pure Fire Miracles Ministries International (PFMI) asserts that prosperity and good life are promises of God to everyone and for that matter one must pray concerning them. "Pray your Way into your Promised Land" *Daily Graphic* July 18 2016, p. 8. In addition, Otabil posits that blessings are covenantal truths as in the case of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Consequently, anyone living in line with this truth cannot remain poor (Gen 22:13-14; 26 12-24; Deut. 28 15-22 and Gal. 3 13-14).

However, suffering is located at the centre of Christianity. The New Testament writings, especially the letters of Paul, focus on the cross (1 Cor. 1:13-18; cf. Acts 4:1-22; Rom 5:3; 1 Pet. 4:13; 5:9; 2 Cor. 12:9). In fact, the cross and resurrection of Jesus was the kerygma, the first ‘good news’ proclaimed by the apostolic community: “For what I received I pass on to you as of first importance, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

Moreover, the message preached by Christ to his disciples seems to refute Charismatic conviction on suffering. For example, in a response to a question from the disciples concerning the cost of discipleship, Jesus answered them “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). Reacting to the comment of Peter about the reward due to those who had left everything to follow Him, Jesus answers:

Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions and in the age to come eternal life (Mark 10:29-30).

Jesus, in the evening of his death, told the disciples, “Remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecute me, they will persecute you; if they keep my word they will keep yours also” (John 15:20). Indeed, one of the ‘rewards’ for following Jesus is persecution.

The apostolic community transformed the teaching of Jesus into a lifestyle characterised by service and faithfulness even in the face of pain and persecution. That is why they were ready to suffer beatings and imprisonment for the name of Jesus (Acts 5:41;

2Cor. 6:4-5); they embraced a life of poverty and precariousness trusting the loving care of the Father (Mark 6:7-13), and the strength of the community.

Comparing the message of many Charismatic churches with the gospel, it is clear that discipleship as cross-bearing and suffering is not part of their teachings and set of beliefs. On the contrary, their theology is centred on success, power and acquisition of wealth. Poverty, sickness, calamities and misfortune are linked to sin and lack of faith.³ For instance, Ashimolowo links misfortune, lack, affliction and poverty to lack of faithfulness in giving. According to him, faithfulness in tithing prevents the ‘devourer’ such as witches, wizards, demons and envious relatives fighting your finances and progress of life in general.⁴

Aminu reiterates that irrespective of the circumstances of setbacks hardships and attacks one faces, it should be noted that God did not create any person to suffer.⁵ That is why a Christian must always seek God in prayer to be able “to get to one’s Promised Land.” He emphasises a Christian life of comfort, opportunities and admiration rather than one with suffering. For this reason, he posits that to enjoy these blessings one must be ‘born again.’⁶ He uses scripture to demonstrate that God’s will is not for anyone to be poor and therefore does not intend anyone to suffer because He has good plans for everybody. As it were, getting rich is God’s will and for that matter outward proof of His blessings are riches and prosperity Deut. 8:18, Mal. 3:10, Jn. 10:10.⁷

³ Kwabena Asamoah- Gyadu “Did Jesus Wear Designer Clothing?” *The Global Conversation* 20 (2009): 30-40.

⁴ Matthew Ashimolowo, *The Coming Wealth Transfer* (London: Mattyson Media, 2006), 193-94.

⁵ Aminu, “Pray your Way,” 8.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Lovemore Togarasei, “The Prosperity Gospel in African Christianity,” *Anthology of African Christianity* 127 (2016): 1006.

This theology, therefore, attracted many to their meetings that led to the springing up of different charismatic churches in the country.

The advent of the Charismatic movement in Ghana, therefore, led to the establishment of many churches. According to Bediako, their emergence was as a result of their transition as evangelical fellowships from the mainline churches and a subsequent spread into charismatic ministries.⁸ He adds that the reason for the numerical growth and subsequent springing up of small and large edifices in both the rural and urban areas is the opportunity given to the 'laity' to also play an important role in the churches' affairs .

Their leaders preach that it is God's will for each member to live in divine health, riches, honour and prosperity as a proof of holistic salvation.⁹ For this reason, they entreat their members to pray and sometimes undergo deliverances to be free from misfortune and any form of suffering. In their view, riches, honour and good health are the sure promises of God for the believer and s/he must do everything possible through prayer to receive them.¹⁰ They teach that suffering in all forms (sickness, death, poverty) is not the will of God in the life of believers.¹¹

However, the reality of suffering in the lives of these members is an issue that should be honestly addressed because suffering is part of life and everyone experiences it in one way or the other. It could be through sickness, misfortune, economic challenges and calamities leading even to death. Secondly, all New Testament writings relate salvation with the suffering of Jesus (Mark 10:17, 21; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 2:5) and by

⁸ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of Non-Western Religion* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 1995), 66.

⁹ Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: It's Public Role* (London: C Hurst & Co, 1998), 32.

¹⁰ Samuel K. Bonsu and Belk W. Russell. "Marketing a New African God: Pentecostalism and Material Salvation in Ghana," *International Journal of Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 15 (2010): 305-323.

¹¹ Aminu, "Pray your Way," 8.

extension, discipleship with participation in the suffering of Jesus (Matt. 10:38; 16:24; Mark 13:13; Luke 14:27; 2 Cor. 1:6), persecution (Mark 10:30; Acts 11:19; 2 Cor. 12:10), poverty (2 Cor. 8:2) and even death (Matt. 24:9; Mark 13:12, Lk 11:49; John 18:32; Rom. 8:36).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Against this background, the research analyses the relationship between suffering and discipleship in the passion narrative of the Gospel according to Mark (Mark 14:32 – 15:41) and its relevance to charismatic theology. Although the Gospels of Matthew and Luke also relate discipleship to the cross (Matt. 10:38; 16:24; Luke 9:23; 14:27), Mark's narrative is more elaborate. For instance, Jesus' invitation to His followers was on condition that they must deny themselves, carry their cross, in order to follow Him (Mark 8:34). Some key words in Mark's Gospel such as ἀκολουθεω and ἐν τῇ οδῷ lay more emphasis on discipleship, reiterating the essence of discipleship (Mark 10:38; 16:24; cf. Luke 9:23; 14:27).

The choice of Mark's Gospel is motivated by the centrality of the cross in the life of Jesus and his disciples. In fact, discipleship and cross-bearing are major issues addressed by Mark in his gospel. It begins with a disciple, John the Baptist, who prepares the way for Jesus Christ and at the same time training disciples for Him. Christ Himself in ministry chooses twelve disciples (Matt 10:2; Mark 3:14; Luke 6:13; Jn 6:70) who walk with Him together with a host of followers. These disciples and followers were to follow Jesus on 'the way', the way of the cross (Mark. 8:34). He did not promise them a mission of happiness, wealth or fame but rather persecution and self-sacrifice (9:35). Mark's theology, therefore, is that of discipleship through cross-bearing, a situation

Jesus' disciples did not comprehend (Matt 15:16; 16: 9; Mark 4:13; 6:52; 7:18; 8:21; Luke 9:45) and, at the same time, not in line with Charismatic belief.

Furthermore, in the awareness that the interpretation of the text is complete only with its contextualization in a specific life-situation, the research explores the relevance of Mark 'theology of the cross,' to the teaching of Charismatic churches.

1.3 Research Questions

The main research question is "How does Mark's Passion Narrative present the suffering of Jesus?"

The sub-questions include:

1. How does Mark relate the teaching of the cross to discipleship?
2. What challenge does Mark's account offer to the contemporary Charismatic theology?

1.4 Literature Review

This section is divided into two parts. The first presents the debate about Charismatic perspective on suffering and the second, literature on suffering and discipleship in Mark's Gospel.

1.4.1 Charismatic Theology of Suffering

The word 'charismatic' has its root in the Greek term *charismata* (spiritual gifts). The Charismatic movement, therefore, can be defined as "a late twentieth-century religious movement whose participants believe that spectacular gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as healing, prophecy and glossolalia/ speaking in tongues have been restored to the church,

usually with end-time significance.”¹² According to Asamoah-Gyedu, ‘Charismatic’ is an expression of extraordinary abilities endowed through grace by the Holy Spirit. He defines it basically as a revival and restoration of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church.¹³

The Charismatic churches, in general terms, are associated with emphasis on success, achievement and wealth here and now.¹⁴ Gifford cites the Christian Action Faith Ministries (CAFM), whose theology is the “Faith Gospel of success, health and wealth.”¹⁵ In the founder’s book, *You are Destined to Succeed*, Gen. 1:29-30 is read as promise from God that man’s destiny is to be ‘physically sound,’ without sickness, fear, and ‘bold and successful’ in all areas of life.¹⁶ In fact, the belief that riches are part of salvation is preached using 3 John 2 as supporting scripture: “Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well.”

Likewise, this assertion is also shared in African Indigenous religions where salvation is also regarded as holistic. For this reason deliverance from evil forces is sought with subsequent quest for prosperity.¹⁷ According to Asante, among the Akans, suffering is a result of anger of the gods and that those who do well are rewarded with blessings by God while the evil suffer pain and misery.¹⁸ Thus in his view, suffering is associated with sinful people while those perceived to be good are those that are blessed.

¹² Peter Day, *A Dictionary of Christian Denominations* (London: Peter Day, 2003), 93.

¹³ Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity: Interpretation from an African Context* (Oxford: Regnum Africa, 2013), 6.

¹⁴ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 78.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 78.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 78.

¹⁷ J.D.K. Ekem, *New Testament Concepts of Atonement in an African Pluralistic Setting* (Accra: Sonlife, 2005).

¹⁸ Emmanuel Asante, *Toward an African Christian Theology of the Kingdom of God: The Kingship of Onyame* (Queenston, TE: Mellen University, 1995).

The fact is that charismatic emphasis on material goods and happiness and this promotes elevation that brings people to a state of euphoria and allows them to keep thinking all is well. Consequently, Asamoah-Gyedu notices that the quest for a total victorious Christian life has led to much disregard for real challenges of life. Thus, Charismatic preachers seem to find themselves in a state of denial with unanswered prayers and also biblical passages that put suffering and failure in a positive light are overlooked, even if they promote the love of God.¹⁹

Besides, the outcome of a study by Bonsu and Russell led to the belief that material success is rooted in religious salvation, suggesting that the LCI's approach to Christian living rekindles an ethic of material well-being with religion as its source.²⁰ Meaning and hope in Charismatic churches, therefore, come from the search for prosperity on earth, without course to eternal salvation. The success of this pursuit for material gains within these believer's worldview relies in significant part on "faith gospel" principles. Bonsu and Russel reiterate that it is a principle which holds that God owns all wealth and to accept it believers need to make financial contributions to the Church as a demonstration of faith.

In the view of Bonsu and Russell, an outcome based on a belief that stresses believers to show their wealth conspicuously to the world as an indication of God's reward is not in line with scripture.²¹ One of the sayings targeted at new converts is that "they should come to Jesus and everything will work for them."

In effect, the writers quote Peel: "The new consumer defines herself more on the basis of her divine right of access to local religiosity and material wealth than by her religious

¹⁹ Kahl Werner, "Prosperity Preaching"

²⁰ Bonsu and Russell, "Pentecostalism," 305-323.

²¹ Ibid.

piety and the pursuit of eternal salvation”.²² The poor are seen as a product of their own devices; they perceived affliction as consequence of laziness and failure to accept the Charismatic ‘truths’. Thus, the poor may be stigmatized as second-rate citizens in the Charismatic discourse. Okyerefo also points out that ‘Faith Gospel’ considers a pastor who gains great wealth through his ministry as one who is enjoying God’s blessings.²³

Daswani also observed that the Charismatic Churches are seen as introducing a ‘new gospel’. In his opinion, the emphasis of their preaching is on selfish individualism, sensationalists prayer performance, and expectation of miracles and immediate results goes against their own focus on the Christian virtues of holiness, moral discipline, patience, and evangelism in anticipation of the second coming of Jesus.²⁴

To sum up, the Charismatic theology centres on the belief in the work of the Holy Spirit, liberating and delivering the believer from any form of suffering. Emphasis is laid on success, achievements and wealth as proof of God’s blessing on the believer. Consequently, biblical passages concerning suffering and failure as part of the life of a disciple are overlooked. On the other hand, texts on prosperity, good health and success are used out of their contexts to support the belief in God’s disapproval of suffering. In conclusion, the theology of the Charismatic church does not recognise the reality of suffering as part of discipleship.

1.4.2 Suffering and Discipleship in Mark 14:32 – 15:41

Mark’s gospel, according to Hurtado, was written during or a little after the war between the Jews and the Romans (66-74 CE). This was the time Jerusalem was destroyed

²² Bonsu and Russell, “Pentecostalism,” 305-323.

²³ Michael Okyerefo, “The Role of Pentecostal Churches as an influential Arm of Civil Society in Ghana” *Ghana Social Science Journal* 11, no. 2 (2014), 77-101.

²⁴ Girish Daswani, “Christianity and Ethics: Rapture as Ethical Practice in Ghanaian Pentecostalism,” *Journal of the American Ethnological Society* 40, no. 3 (2013): 46-47.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 46-47.

and the Temple burnt (70 CE).²⁵ As a result, both Christians and Jews were negatively affected, and morale was very low. There was, therefore, the need to assure the readers and encourage them in their faith.

Consequently, the ‘characters’ - disciples were used in Markan narrative as a means to achieve this purpose. They were called and trained by Jesus, the ‘rabbi’ (9:5; 10:51; 11:21); given authority (3:14-19) and sent out (6:7-13). Notwithstanding, the disciples struggled with failure throughout the story. They were accused to harden their hearts (6:52; 8:17), fail to understand each of the three passion predictions (8:31-33; 9:34; 10:37) and the failure of the three in Gethsemane to keep watch with their master (14:37, 40-41). One of them betrayed Jesus (14:10) while another denied Him (14:66-72) and later all deserted him. In view of these facts most scholars, therefore, have agreed that discipleship is a key theme in Mark’s gospel.²⁶

Notwithstanding, other scholars share different views about what occasioned Mark’s narrative. In his commentary, Gundry argues that Mark’s gospel was an apology for the cross. In his view, the whole gospel in general, and the passion narrative in particular, was to defend the ‘shameful way’ the Christian faith was founded.²⁷ For him, Mark’s gospel pitches the success of Jesus against his suffering and death. Thus, Mark makes the glory of Jesus the pervasive message of the gospel, presenting the passion narrative in such a way that even Jesus’ death was a success story. He also states that Mark wrote

²⁵ Larry W. Hurtado, *Mark’s Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 31.

²⁶ Cf. M.C. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: A & C Black, 1991); C. R. A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark’s Gospel*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001; M. W. Meyer, “Taking up the Cross and Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 37, n. 2 (2002): 230-238.

²⁷ Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 1.

for unbelievers who needed to see that the shame of Jesus' crucifixion was covered over with glory.²⁸

Williams objects that Mark wrote for believers who needed to be reminded that Jesus himself came to suffer and that those who follow him must also be prepared for persecution and difficulty.²⁹ He further explains that the passion narrative does not make Jesus' suffering and death less scandalous. Rather, Mark's passion narrative allows the supernatural life of Jesus on one hand and the natural, in the form of distress, weakness and agony on the other hand to stand side by side.³⁰ In other words the divine nature of Christ allowed the physical person to play his natural role in accomplishing His mission.

On the side of the disciples, he emphasized the suffering of would-be disciples reiterating what Jesus earlier told them concerning the cost of discipleship (8:34). Mark then compares the twelve with some minor characters (7:25-30 14:3-9; 15:21, 43) who exhibited positive signs of true discipleship. After successfully making the reader identified with the positive side of the twelve disciples, the evangelist shifts to present their failures.³¹

Mark distinguishes between the twelve (2:15; 9:28) and the larger group (6:41; 1:18; 6:1) depending on the roles they play and their reaction in the narrative. Best refers to the two groups in general as followers of Jesus.³² On the other hand, Tolbert posits that

²⁸ Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary*, 1.

²⁹ Joel F. Williams, "Discipleship and Minor Characters in Mark's Gospel," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 153 (1996): 332-43.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ According to Malbon, the evangelist presents the twelve in both weak and strong light. In his view the issue is one of a real-life situations which will encourage both of Mark's hearers and readers to identify with the disciples. E. S. Malbon, "Disciples/Crowds/Whoever: Markan Characters and Readers," *Novum Testamentum* 28 no.4 (1986), 104-130.

³² E. Best, *Following Jesus: Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark*. (Sheffield: Sheffield University, 1981).

reference to the twelve by Mark is premised on their lack of faith and misunderstanding of the concept of discipleship as compared to the others.

Matera's presentation, however, appears orderly as he puts the failure of the disciples in a series of three boat scenes incidences, three passion predictions, arrest, trial and crucifixion.³³

Apart from witnessing the many healing scenes of Jesus, the first boat scene (4:35-41) shows the disciples still entertaining fear on the sea when the storm tossed their boat and they were near drowning. Jesus, then sleeping at the stern of the boat was woken up and rebuked the storm and it was still. To the utter amazement of the disciples, they exclaimed "Who then is this that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (4:41). Kelber wondered how hitherto the disciples were slow in acknowledging the supernatural prowess and for that matter the divinity of their master. According to him, this marks the beginning of the failure of the disciples.³⁴

The engagement between Jesus and the disciples in the second boat scene (6:45-52) depicts that the disciples even by then did not recognise the one they were walking with and for this reason Mark said they were of a hardened heart. It was the same phrase used to describe the Pharisees (3:5). In fact, Williams supports this by stating that the fear and amazement exhibited by the disciples is as a result of their sheer lack of understanding of whom Jesus is and hardness of heart.³⁵ Hurtado further observed that the phrase Jesus used, "I am," is a sign of divinity and for that matter the disciples' failure to acknowledge it was of a great concern.³⁶

³³ Frank Matera, *What are they Saying about Mark?* (New York: Paulist, 1987), 47.

³⁴ Werner H. Kelber, *Mark's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 31.

³⁵ Williams, *Discipleship*, 332-43.

³⁶ Hurtado, *Mark*, 102-03, 107.

In the third boat scene episode (8:14-21), the disciples were yet again worried about not having enough bread (6:14) but Jesus warns them of the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod. Thus, they had soon forgotten the miracles of the feeding of both the 5000 and the 4000 men. By this Jesus expects them, based on His earlier deeds, to believe that it is also possible to feed the crowd and therefore becomes dismayed when he realises that his own have become blind like the authorities which He earlier made reference to (4:11-12).

On the other hand, Tannehill's view is that the three boat scenes were confirmations of fear, lack of trust and selfishness on the part of the disciples.³⁷ He argues that Mark's introduction of Jesus in 1:1 was clear with regards to His identity and based on that they acknowledge Him as such. However, the three scenes leave them in a dilemma as to whether to still maintain such a position or have a change of mind.³⁸

In the same way, as it were the first prediction came after Peter's confession of Christ (8:29). At this point the assumption was that the disciples now comprehend the identity of Jesus Christ. However, his rebuke of Jesus concerning His suffering, death and resurrection prediction (8:31) gave credence to the fact that these disciples still didn't understand Jesus' person and mission. Hurtado agrees with this assertion and explains that Peters' confession of Christ (8:29) was not complete because he did not appreciate Jesus' full mission.³⁹ Consequently, Jesus' response is to explain to them that discipleship is a matter of taking one's own cross to follow Him on the way of suffering and persecution.

³⁷ Robert C. Tannehill, "The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role," *In the Interpretation of Mark*, ed. William Telford (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 134-157.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Hurtado, *Mark*, 135- 38.

The second passion prediction (9:33-34) also exposes the disciples lack of understanding of Jesus' mission. Even after the two predictions the disciples could still not associate with what Jesus was teaching. They were only concerned about an earlier view of the messiah coming with power and glory in his kingdom.

Similarly, the third passion prediction (10:33-34) is followed by same trend of thought by the disciples. James and John request that they sit at the right and left sides of the master in glory. As Kelber suggests, the request was both selfish and blindly asked. Sitting on Jesus' right and left must the least be through suffering and death on the cross.⁴⁰ It was not a surprise when Jesus by answering them made reference to His death and how one can only become great by first becoming a servant.

Consequently, through one of His disciples (Judas Iscariot), He is betrayed in a deal with the chief priests (14:10, 43-45). In chapter 14:10, 20, and 43 Mark refers to Judas as one of the twelve. According to Kerlber, this was to show how close he was to Christ and hence the gravity of his action.⁴¹

The Gethsemane scene was a climax of the dejection of Jesus' by His three closest friends. They were sleeping when Jesus was alone facing the reality of His impending death (14:32-41). At the time of His arrest, when He needed them most, they all fled (14:50). Lastly, Peter denies Him before a maid servant and some bystanders (14:66-72). According to Kerlber, the irony here is that as Jesus' confession leads Him to death, Peter rejects Jesus in order to save his life.⁴²

In effect, the narrator tries to show how the disciples struggle to follow Jesus faithfully. While they did well by leaving occupation, people and thrived in becoming fishers of

⁴⁰ Kelber, *Mark*, 51.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 76-77.

men, they woefully fail to measure up to the standards Jesus set for discipleship. When Jesus started talking about rejection and death, their focus was on glory and power.

To contrast the negative portray of the twelve, Mark introduces in his narrative some ‘minor characters,’ as guide for his readers to understand what true discipleship is.

1.4.3 Minor Characters as True Disciples

Many scholars including Hutardo⁴³, Rhoades and Michie⁴⁴ portray the minor disciples as good examples to emulate. These are less significant and unknown characters in the gospel but are presented in specific context as examples of authentic discipleship.

Williams observes three different stages of Mark’s classification of these “minor characters.”⁴⁵ In the first place, he notices they are the ones who approached Jesus for help (1:1—10:45). Thereafter, Mark presents these characters in a good light in contrast with the twelve after they followed Jesus (10:46—16:7). Even though they know failure (16:8), they are not enduring the full revelation of Jesus’ identity.

The argument is that for Rhoads and Michie, these minor ones are highlighted in their positive reactions to Jesus’ call and teachings in contrast with the twelve in order to differentiate between who a true disciple should be and the opposite.⁴⁶ The women are Peter’s mother in-law (healed by the master in 1:30-31), the Syrophenician woman (7:25-30) and the woman at Bethany (14:3-9). The men are Simon the Cyrene (15:21) the centurion at the cross and Joseph of Arimathea (15:43). Besides we remember the blind man who followed Jesus on the way (10:52). According to Harington, these ones

⁴³ L.W. Hutardo, *Mark*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Serie (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989), 229.

⁴⁴ David Rhoades and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress), 1982.

⁴⁵ Williams, *Mark*, 1996.

⁴⁶ Rhoades and Michie, *Mark as Story*.

had faith in Jesus and responded appropriately and were willing to listen to him by obeying His words, actions and healings.⁴⁷ It is important therefore to observe the engagement between Jesus and these minor characters in the narrative.

In the first place, the healing of Peter's mother in-law, according to Kee, suggests that preparing a dinner for Jesus after the healing as narrated by Mark is very significant. According to him, the same hand that cured her also strengthened her to serve.⁴⁸ Selvidge concurs by explaining that Mark's usage of the verb *διακονέω* compared to other usages in the narrative shows the important role it plays here with respect to both the mission of Jesus and that of His followers.⁴⁹ The difference is that, in Mark, *διακονέω* is never used in reference to the twelve and for that matter Peter's mother in-law seems to do something different, a gesture Jesus requires of a true disciple, as stated in His second and third passion predictions.⁵⁰ The Syrophenician woman lowered herself to the state of 'a dog' just to draw Jesus' attention to her plight, a challenge to Jesus so He can heal her daughter (7:25-30).

In Hutardo's view, the woman at Bethany exhibited a character of authentic discipleship by an act of absolute devotion to Jesus.⁵¹ The centurion's confession at the cross (15:43) compared to that of Peter (8:29) and his subsequent denial (14:66-72) is a demonstration of the differences between the two groups of disciples.

In the case of Simon the Cyrene (15:21), his willingness to carry the cross of Jesus fulfils Jesus' command in 8:34, portraying him as a true disciple. Similarly, Joseph of

⁴⁷ W. Harington, "Mark as Story" *Priests and People*, 8 (1994), 243-247.

⁴⁸ H.C. Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: PA. Westminster, 1997).

⁴⁹ M.J.S Selvidge, "And those who Followed Feared (Mark 10:32)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (1996), 296-400.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Hutardo, *Mark*, 229.

Arimathea's courage to have the body of Jesus buried was a bold step. According to Williams, he was able to do what the twelve could not do.⁵² They were nowhere to be found when the Lord needed them most.

These minor disciples, according to Rhoads and Michie, have in common the following character traits: They are persistent; they possess child-like faith, they lay less emphasis on personal status and power and they are ready to offer service of sacrifice.⁵³ This reiterates the point that the kingdom of God is not a reserve for a selected few but for those who are ready to have faith in Jesus, to obey and follow Him by carrying their cross on the way.

From 8:27 to 10:45, Mark introduces some negative sides of the 'minor characters.'⁵⁴ For instance, the father of the demon – possessed boy is seen to be struggling with his faith and asked for help when Jesus urged him to believe (9: 23-24). Besides, think of the rich man who came to Jesus for help but could not measure up to the demands of a disciple (9:17-31). According to Williams, he expresses no lack of need but lacks faith and understanding to appreciate his real position of need. Consequently, he failed to receive from Jesus and demonstrates the unwillingness to follow Jesus on the way.⁵⁵ Williams' position, nevertheless, takes nothing away from the important roles and contributions these minor characters play in the narrative.

1.4.4 Conclusion

The gospels have all treated the subject of discipleship in many ways and degrees. According to Hanson, each of the four gospels focuses on a peculiar aspect of discipleship

⁵² Williams, *Discipleship*, 332-43.

⁵³ Rhoades and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 130.

⁵⁴ In Williams' view, this coincides with Jesus' teaching about readiness to deny oneself, take up his/her cross and follow Him on the way of suffering. Williams, *Discipleship*, 339.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 339.

in a way that enables one to appreciate Jesus' purpose for calling and training them.⁵⁶

Thus each of the gospels gives account of a historical relationship between Jesus and those who followed Him in a way that addresses the needs of the real audience.

In Mark's narrative in particular, discipleship, no doubt plays a very important role and has been an area of studies over the years. The evangelist presents the disciples in two categories: the twelve and the others refer to as the minor characters. The twelve are portrayed in a 'harsher manner' compared to the other gospels' narrative. By this, he tries to enforce his purpose by presenting to his readers the marks of a true disciple. In fact, from the beginning, he sets the tone for his audience to examine the 'mistakes and successes' of his characters, and in this case, the disciples. Unfortunately, the twelve fall short of the standard of being disciples of Jesus. In most of His teachings, they would either not understand their master or misunderstand Him.

Despite all these, the narrative continues to teach the community what is expected from a disciple. Mark then portrays the twelve as unwilling to follow Jesus in times of difficulty and for that matter cross-bearing becomes a major issue. In the three passion predictions, they fail to embrace the reality of cross-bearing as proof of a true disciple. Some find themselves seeking power and prominence (James and John) rather than showing acts of servanthood. Through Jesus' trial and crucifixion, members of the twelve find themselves in either betraying (Judas) or denying (Peter) and finally abandon Him (the rest).

In contrast, the minor characters demonstrate obedience, faith and service. For this reason, Mark holds them as successful and hence good examples of disciples. Unlike the

⁵⁶ P.D. Hanson, *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible* (New York: NY Harper Row, 1996).

twelve, they were not called by “Rabbi” (Jesus) but approach Him for healing or deliverance from a problem. In the case of Peters’ mother-in-law, immediately after her healing, she began to serve them. This is a demonstration that after an encounter with the Lord, one has to serve Him and others. No doubt, their actions and responses to Jesus earn them a place in history.

Although Mark’s audience was the early community, the contemporary church, and for the purpose of the research, the Charismatic church stands to benefit by learning from the minor characters and most importantly Jesus who although divine, accepts the challenge to humble Himself, suffer and be obedient to the Father even unto death.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The researcher uses the communicative approach proposed by Ossom-Batsa as theoretical framework. According to the Ghanaian scholar, the culture of the people is paramount in the interpretation of the message of Christ, to make it relevant, to be able to address their needs and influence their life choices.⁵⁷

His proposal is in a tripartite form: adherence to the biblical text, exegesis of reality and engagement between the text and the culture.⁵⁸ First of all, adherence to the text means that attention should be given to both linguistic and non-linguistic elements in the text that the author deliberately makes available to the reader.

To reach the aim, the interpreter employs the exegetical tools available. For example, besides the original language, other translations are compared and contrasted to reach an in-deep understanding of the pericope. By this, the organisation, semantic and

⁵⁷ George Ossom-Batsa, “African Interpretation of the Bible in Communicative Perspective,” *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 2 (2007): 93-94.

⁵⁸ George Ossom-Batsa, “Biblical Exegesis in the African Context: A Communicative Approach” in *Unpacking the Sense of the Sacred: A Reader in the Study of Religions*, eds. Abanfo Atiemo, Ben-Willie K. Golo and Lawrence K. Boakye (Banbury, OX: Ayeiba Clerke Publishing 2014): 128.

communicative force of the text is unearthed. Consequently, the understanding that comes as a result of respecting the text and the journey of the implied reader become a call to action for real readers.⁵⁹

In addition, the interpreter's context is the *locus* where the communication between God and humans takes place.⁶⁰ The relevance of the context is based on the understanding of the call to action in the text in the context of the real readers.⁶¹

The second step is the exegesis of reality. The reader now sees his/her life within the context of the text as a starting journey of personal and social transformation.

Lastly, there is a communication between God and the human community as a result of engagement between the text and the culture. In other words, before one engages the text, he/she must respect it and ascertain the call to action, which is the understanding that comes as a result of respecting the text and the journey of the implied reader. Finally, one engages the text in his/her context by understanding its communicative force deliberately put there by the author to help the audience on their journey of reading.

In applying the communicative approach, the narrative criticism proposed by Marguerat and Bourquin was used for the initial step, i.e. adhering to the biblical text. According to the scholars, narrative criticism is “a method of reading the text which explores and analyses how the narrative is made concrete in a particular text”⁶² This approach centres on axis of communication. In other words, it is the process through which the author communicates his message to the reader.⁶³

⁵⁹ Ibid., 129.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 130.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories: An Introduction to Narrative Criticism*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1999), 3.

⁶³ Ibid., 5.

In line with this, Osborne proposes two dimensions the reader must consider: ‘poetics’ which investigates the artistic dimensions of the text; and ‘meaning,’ which reconstructs the message which the author communicates.⁶⁴ The poetics deals with the study of the artistic aspect - how the author constructed the text and meaning – recreation of the message the author is communicating.

This method was selected because Mark is a biblical narrative. Narrative analysis, therefore, helps in doing an appropriate structural and literary exegetical analysis.⁶⁵

Finally, the call to action in the text ascertained through narrative analysis of the text was situated within the interpreter’s context; thereby using the intercultural reading espoused by Loba-Mkole to assist in engaging the text and reality. The African scholar affirms that the Bible is a living example of intercultural Hermeneutics between the word of God and human cultures.⁶⁶ To reach the aim, two realities were engaged: the reality of the text (Mark 14:32- 15:41) and the reality of the contemporary context (the Charismatic church).

1.6 Methodology

The researcher undertakes an exegetical study of Mark 14:32 – 15:41 and engages the call to action of the text with the theology of suffering of two selected churches i.e. Lighthouse Chapel International and Action Chapel International. The exegesis of the text unearths how the narrative guides the reader to understand the reality of suffering in the life of Christians as part of discipleship.

⁶⁴ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 203.

⁶⁵ Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 18.

⁶⁶ Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole, “Intercultural Biblical Exegesis in Africa” *HTS* 64 3(2008): 1354.

The work uses a synchronic approach. It employs narrative criticism in order to find out how the author used ‘narrative’ to relate his message of discipleship and suffering and to influence his readers.

Finally, the reality of the text is engaged with the context of the two selected Charismatic churches, Lighthouse Chapel International (LCI), and Christian Action Faith Ministries (CAFM). Data were collected from recorded sermons and books written by the leaders of the two selected churches. Personal observations and interviews were employed to verify the information.

1.7 Organization of Chapters

The work is organised into five chapters. Chapter one deals with introductory issues namely: background of study, statement of problem, research question, literature review, theoretical framework, methodology and organisation of chapters. Chapter two proposes an exegetical analysis of the text, Mark 14:32 – 15:41. It presents the journey of the reader, narrative analysis and theological synthesis.

The third chapter entails the theological position of Charismatic churches on suffering i.e. ‘exegesis of reality.’ Chapter four engages the two realities, i.e. the text and charismatic position on suffering, to discover the relevance of the text for contemporary Charismatic churches. The final chapter deals with summary of findings, draws a conclusion and proposes some recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF MARK 14:32 — 15:41

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of Mark's passion narrative, i.e. the account of the suffering and death of Jesus, the Christ. The narrative analysis begins with the journey of the reader followed by the delimitation of the narrative unit. The next step looks at a proposal of an appropriate structure to guide the analysis before the exegesis of the text itself. The chapter ends with a theological synthesis of the pericope.

2.2 The Journey of the Reader (Mark 1:1—14:31)

The relationship between Jesus and the disciples is a motif running through the narrative of the second gospel. According to Robbins, in Greco-Roman history, stories of teachers who gather disciples were very common. These teachers were ready to die because of their integrity leaving behind their disciples to continue with their teachings.⁶⁷ In line with this, the Evangelist presents the disciples in a good light which according to Matera was for easy identification.⁶⁸ Later, Mark narrated the failures of these disciples.

2.2.1 The Positive side of the Disciples

In 1:16-20 the disciples were called to follow Jesus and, by extension, readers are to embrace the same decision as they identify with them. By calling the disciples early in his ministry, Mark shows how qualified they are as witnesses of Jesus.⁶⁹ Brooks further

⁶⁷ Vernon K. Robbins, "Summons and Outline in Mark: The Three Step Progression," *Novum Testamentum* 22, no. 2 (1981): 97-114.

⁶⁸ Matera, *What are they Saying about Mark?*, 47.

⁶⁹ James A. Brooks, *Mark, The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 64.

stresses how important it was for a disciple to respond to Jesus' summons thus demonstrating a strong relationship between discipleship and Christology.⁷⁰

Gundry suggest that Jesus' call was a command to follow him which is different from both rabbinic and prophetic calls. Thus, the latter calls were to proclaim the word of God but that of Jesus was to follow him.⁷¹ In support, Guelich argues that the call was different from the rabbinic one. Thus, while in the case of the rabbis the disciples chose their teacher, Jesus authoritatively ordered his disciples to follow him, to share in his life and ministry.⁷²

The second theme is Jesus' predictions of his suffering and sacrificial death which also feature prominently in the narrative. It starts in 2:20, when his death was referred to for the first time. The context was a question posed by the people on why Jesus' disciples were not fasting. In an indirect response to the question, the Markan Jesus compared the present time of rejoicing with a future time of mourning.

The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they do not fast. But the days are coming when the bridegroom will be taken from (ἀπαρθῆ) them, and at that time they will fast (Mark 2:19-20).

According to Brooks, the statement is allegorical, referring to Jesus as the bridegroom and the disciples as the wedding guests.⁷³ However, it is uncertain to know whether the disciples understood the import of the statement when it was made.⁷⁴ Collins on her side posits that there is no indication of who will take the bridegroom away or any

⁷⁰ Brooks, *Mark*, 48.

⁷¹ Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary*, 70.

⁷² Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 50.

⁷³ Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary*, 50.

⁷⁴ Brooks, *Mark*, 64.

reason given for him to be taken.⁷⁵ Hooker also adds that it is an allegorical expansion comparing the time of joy with the period ahead of them when Jesus will be absent.⁷⁶

The evangelist begins the pericope with the issue of death, a prelude to what awaits the reader from the beginning through to the end. According to Guelich, the account of series of conflict stories preceding Jesus' opening ministry is a clue to the direction and end of the story.⁷⁷ The plot to kill Jesus came very early in Jesus' ministry as narrated by Mark. Hooker posits that the Jewish leaders' problem with Jesus was not the healing of the man with the withered hand but about the fact that it was done on the Sabbath.⁷⁸

Gundry also adds that the Pharisees used the very Sabbath in which Jesus saved life to plot the destruction of his life. Thus, this was a concocted theological accusation to support the idea of Sabbath-breaking.⁷⁹ Painter agrees and further states that this was an important development in Markan plot because the scene was a climax of conflict with the Jewish authority that began in 2:1-12.⁸⁰

In 3:13-19, the twelve were appointed, an indication of the special role they were going to play, which also reiterates their positive portrayal. Jesus himself promised them the kingdom of God (4:11) and later in 6:7-13, they were sent out to preach and were said to be successful in healing and casting out demons.

⁷⁵ Adela Y. Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2007), 101.

⁷⁶ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*.

⁷⁷ Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26*, 141.

⁷⁸ The scholars emphasize how strong the opposition of official Judaism to Jesus was throughout his ministry: Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 92. Cf. Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 102.

⁷⁹ Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary*, 1993.

⁸⁰ John Painter, *Mark's Gospel: Worlds in Conflict* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 60.

2.2.2 The Weaknesses of the Disciples

After the evangelist succeeded in making his readers identify with the disciples in the second part of the Gospel, from 8:27, he begins to expose their failures. He did this by using three boat scenes, three passion predictions; the arrest, trial and crucifixion.⁸¹

One of the most well-known features of Mark is the three-fold repetition of the prediction of the passion by Jesus in 8:31, 9:31, and 10:33-34. The division of 8:27—10:52 can be set along three related instances of verbal paradox in the gospel: 8:35 (whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it” and “whoever loses his life . . . shall save it”); 9:35 (“If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all”); and 10:43-44 (“whoever wishes to become great . . . shall be your servant” and “whoever wishes to be first . . . shall be slave of all”). These statements occur within the context of Jesus’ three passion predictions (8:31; 9:30-31; 10:32-34), the disciples’ misunderstanding (8:32; 9:32; 10:35-41), and the ensuing teaching about discipleship (8:34-9:1; 9:35-50; 10:42-45).⁸²

Elaborating this pattern, Reedy asserts that there is a fixed passion prediction content, followed by sayings on discipleship motivated by either the misunderstanding or fear of the disciples and immediately followed by another section that alludes to the messianic *exousia* of Jesus.⁸³

The verse 8:27 creates a break in the gospel narrative, and ushers in a series of discourses and teachings (8:27-34) about the cost of discipleship. He first explains His

⁸¹ Matera, *What are they Saying about Mark?*, 47.

⁸² Cf. F. Neirynck, *Duality in Mark: Contributions to the study of the Markan Redaction* (Leuven: Leuven University, 1972); V. K. Robbins, “Summons and Outline in Mark: The Three-step Progression, *Novum Testamentum* 22, no. 2 (1981): 97-114.

⁸³ C.J. Reedy, “Mark 8:31—11:10 and the Gospel Ending: A Reduction Study,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (1972): 192-194.

own fate when He tells the twelve that He must suffer many things and be rejected (8:31).

The writer of the second gospel also shows the twelve's incomprehension of their master. In one instance, Jesus rebukes Peter, a disciple whom his master describes as 'Satan' being a stumbling block to Jesus' mission (8:33). Peter, up till now, is unaware that becoming a disciple of Jesus is thus accepting the challenge to follow the master on the way to the cross.

In Mark 8:34, the statement, εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἀκολουθεῖν, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἁράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθείτω μοι, does not suggest an imitation of the example of Jesus but exclusively a fellowship of life and suffering with the Messiah, which arises only in the fellowship of his salvation.⁸⁴

Mark illustrates in his narrative that Jesus' first prediction of His passion with its accompanying rebuke from Peter led to His teachings on discipleship. But this time, He does not speak to the twelve alone. He calls the multitudes (8:34), to show that the trade of discipleship is not the exclusive of the twelve, but of all who are willing to follow Him. In His teachings, Jesus explains the task of would be followers: they must deny themselves, carry their cross, and follow Him.

These three conditions for discipleship are interconnected. Mark's readers are enjoined to know that a disciple cannot follow Jesus if he holds on to his own 'self' (Mark 8:34; 10:28-30). His will, desires and thoughts must be subjected to Christ's. The disciple must, therefore, choose the cross of Christ and make it his own. By following Christ,

⁸⁴ R. L. Humphrey, *Narrative Structure and Message in Mark: A Historical Analysis* (Lewiston, NY: Mellon, 2003), 54-57.

the disciple must exhibit faith and demonstrate a servant-like life. Mark indicates that these two attributes are essential for the journey of discipleship.

The second passion prediction is preceded by the narratives of the transfiguration and the healing of a boy with an unclean spirit. The account of the transfiguration reveals that the disciples are still in a state of fear and incomprehension. Their fear and lack of understanding is evidenced in their reaction to the prediction of the passion of Jesus: οἱ δὲ ἠγνόουν τὸ ῥῆμα, καὶ ἐφοβοῦντο αὐτὸν ἐπερωτῆσαι (9:32). Here, Mark uses the faith of the boy's father to contrast the faithlessness of the twelve disciples who are numbered among the γενεὰ ἄπιστος (v. 19).

Mark continues to show how the disciples do not understand their calling as followers of Christ when, after the second prediction of Christ's death, they argue about who should be the greatest (9:33-34). By this discussion, the disciples had invariably chosen the path of self-centeredness; the path to save their lives and not lose it. In so doing, they were swaying from the path of true discipleship (8:34-35).

Using the analogy of a child, Jesus teaches that true discipleship is a life of lowliness and service (9:36-37). Again, the analogy of the eye and foot portrays the intensity of the sacrifice that one ought to endure in order to save himself and enter into life. This sacrifice, if it means suffering and death, should be embraced by the disciple, because he suffers for the sake of the kingdom as Jesus does (Matt. 24:9; Acts 5:41).

Mark has shown that Jesus is trying to focus the attention of the disciples towards Jerusalem where they would endure major confrontations with the authorities. For Mark's readers, the hermeneutical motif of chapter 9 is significant in the light of Jesus' final journey into the holy city. The call to action is for all disciples to first acknowledge the divine source of faith, as coming from God. In reverence, they must ask God to help

their unbelief. They are also admonished to embrace the attitude of service and servanthood as true followers of Christ. Mark wants his readers to understand that true greatness has a pattern of call, following, service, and even death. Therefore, in order to achieve their desired greatness, they must follow Jesus ἐν τῇ ὁδοῦ.⁸⁵

In chapter 10, not only does Mark emphasise Jesus' passion prediction but shows Jesus' interactions with 'outsiders' who stand in sharp contrast to the 'insiders' (the twelve). The chapter calls to attention the fact that even though certain persons like the children were considered as marginalised and insignificant in society, they were important enough to interrupt Jesus' agenda (10:13-16, 47-52).

Jesus is interrupted repeatedly in Mark: By Peter when He is at prayer (1:35-39); by a leper when He is teaching in the synagogue (1:40-45); by a paralytic when He is speaking the word (2:2); and by a sick woman while on His way to heal Jairus' daughter (5:21-43). It is important to notice that while many rebuked Bartimaeus and tried to silence him, Jesus, though journeying steadfastly up to Jerusalem (10:32), took time to interact with him. Prior to that, He had taken time off to bless the little children (vv. 13-16) and to have a conversation with a rich young man who sought eternal life (17-31). Jesus, by these, shows that He came for everybody and therefore does not discriminate irrespective of the status of a person. One of the themes in this chapter, therefore, seems to be the emphasis on disciples' receptivity and concern for the marginalised in society.

⁸⁵ Hooker however discovers that 'the road' on which Jesus and his followers travelled is also 'the way' a term for discipleship (Acts 9:2). He finds it very significant that each of the three passion prediction journeys were made while Jesus and the disciples are 'on the road' (Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 245). In Painter's view, Mark's careful use of 'on the way' is to describe the teaching that occurred on the journey: 8:27, 9:9, 12, 9:30 and 10:32. Thus the journey motif, he says, expresses the acceptance of suffering and death as the fulfilment of the will and purpose of God (Painter, *Mark's Gospel*, 142).

More importantly, Mark has taught that the reason for Jesus' coming is to serve and give His life as a ransom for many (v. 45). In Mark, this is the only text in which Jesus explains the reason of His coming. Thus, the reader is entreated to appreciate that Jesus' radical service is the aim of the Son of God's incarnation and the style of the Christ's mission. Therefore, all the previous teachings on discipleship — to follow, renouncing one's self to make Christ's will yours (8:34); to serve and be the last (9:35-36) — find their summary and climax in 10:45.

Finally, reaching Jerusalem (11:1), the readers understand that following Jesus is not a no-risk offer. Mark offers a jolting challenge to any simplistic, self-centred understanding of discipleship. He argues that discipleship means giving one's life for the other. Those who follow Jesus are called to pour out their lives for others as Jesus did. The evangelist challenges his readers to accept that true discipleship is characterised by a costly pouring out of one's life for another, including the ostracised and minority in society.

The hermeneutical motif is for all disciples, and for that matter all the hearers of the gospel, to demand for service and not prestige, for in service comes true prestige. The reader is called upon to detach himself from the so-called glory of the world and seek after true glory which is in the service of God and one another.⁸⁶

Finally, the urgency with which blind Bartimaeus followed Jesus "on the way," even though he was not specifically asked to (v. 52), showed his readiness to endure the sufferings and hardships of discipleship. Unlike the twelve who were planning for glory, Mark showed his readers that Bartimaeus, in contrast, was ready to follow Jesus.

⁸⁶ Lamar Williamson, *Mark: Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox 1973),73.

His action is reminiscent of the reason for discipleship: ἵνα ᾗσιν μετ' αὐτοῦ (3:14). At the end of this journey, the Markan reader is now ready to read the passion narrative

2.3 Delimitation

There is almost unanimity on scholars' delimitation of Mark's pericope concerning the passion narrative: the accounts of Jesus' suffering begins in the garden of Gethsemane (14:32) and ends on the Calvary, when he gave up his spirit (15: 37).⁸⁷ However some scholars, for example Lane, Hooker and Evans, add 15:38-41 because of the significance of the following events: the tearing of the veil in the temple (v. 38); the confession of the centurion (v. 39); and the presence of the women disciples (vv. 40-41).

Furthermore, Lane extends the narrative to 15:47. His reason is based on the 'original' confession of faith recorded in 1Cor. 15:3-5, with its focus on Jesus' death, burial and resurrection.⁸⁸ In his view, the briefer narrative (14:32—15:41) was a kerygmatic account of events prophesied about Him that was replaced by a longer narrative recounting the events leading up to the arrest as well.⁸⁹ The development was necessary because the primitive community, and for that matter Judaism, was unprepared for a suffering and crucified messiah.⁹⁰ Lane's other reason for the post-death account is that the events of the passion narrative owe their interest and meaning to the resurrection. Thus, the evangelist invites the audience to believe in a victory beyond that death.⁹¹

⁸⁷ The only issue is that the phrase "passion narrative" is not widely used but it can be inferred in their submissions.

⁸⁸ William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 486.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 486.

⁹⁰ Lane, *Mark*, 486.

⁹¹ Lane, *Mark*, 487.

Kelber, on his part argued that the “kerygmatic force” of the passage is a discipleship theology and in particular the incorrigible blindness of the disciples and for that matter the narrative ends with Jesus’ death”⁹²

In support, Collins adds that Mark’s author makes the failure of the disciples an important issue. She argues that the narrative has two foci: first is Jesus’ plea to be excused from the passion. According to her, it raises the argument about Jesus’ resolve to fulfil the good news about the kingdom which can only come through His suffering and death. Second is the disciples’ display of lack of understanding, an issue that Jesus had to address many times on different occasions. ⁹³ Collins finally suggests that the test Jesus undergoes in readiness for the passion is one side of the story. The Evangelist puts Jesus in a position of near forfeiting His mission due to the fact that he was dealing with a community of Christians who were unwilling to identify with the suffering Messiah.⁹⁴ The end of the pericope (v. 41) focuses on a category of Jesus’ followers, the women, present at the ‘climax of the gospel:’ his death. These are not part of the twelve but are ready to follow their Rabbi up to the cross, a distinct feature of a real disciple should be.

The researcher, after analysing the various arguments on the delimitation, agrees on considering 14:32—15:41 a literary unit. This is because not only does the theme centre on the teachings of Christ about discipleship but conspicuously, elaborated the practical experiences and demonstrations of same that form a literary unit.

⁹² W.H. Kelber, “Recit et Revelation: Voiler, Devoiler et Revoiler,” *RHPR* 69 (1989): 389-410.

⁹³ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 235.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

2.4 Structure of Mark 14:32—15:41.

Most scholars who admit that 14:32—15:41 form a literary unit have offered different structures for their pericope. The following are the various structures of some selected ones.

Evans structure is as follows⁹⁵:

The Prayer in Gethsemane – 14:32-42

The Betrayal and Arrest – 14:43-52

The Trial of Jesus and (Peter) – 14:53-65

Peter's Denial of Jesus – 14:66-72

Jesus before Pilate – 15:1-15

Roman Soldiers Mock Jesus – 15: 16-20a

The Crucifixion of Jesus – 15:20b – 41.

The structure of Collins⁹⁶:

The Agony in Gethsemane – 14:32-42

The Arrest – 14:43-52

The Trial before The Judean council and the Denial of Peter 14:53-72

The Trial before Pilate – 15:1-15

Soldiers Mock Jesus – 15:16-20

The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus – 15:21-39

Hooker's structure⁹⁷:

Gethsemane – 14:32-42

The Arrest – 14:43-52

Jesus Before the Sanhedrin – 14:53-65

Peter Disowns Jesus – 14:66-72

⁹⁵ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 97.

⁹⁶ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 98.

⁹⁷ Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 348.

Jesus before Pilate – 15:1-15

The King is Mocked – 15:16-20a

The Crucifixion – 15:20b – 32

The Death of Jesus 15: 33-41

Lane, in his Commentary organises the structure on the passion account as 14:1 – 15:47⁹⁸. This is as follows:

The Plot to seize Jesus – 14:1-2

The Anointing in Bethany – 14:3-9

The Betrayal by Judas – 14:10-11

The preparation of the meal – 14:12-16

The Announcement of the Betrayal – 14:17-21

The Institution of the Lord's Supper – 14:22-26

The Prophecy of Failure and Denial – 14:27-31

Gethsemane – 14:32-42

The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus – 14:43-52

The Proceedings of the Sanhedrin – 14:53-65

Peter's Denial of Jesus – 14:66-72

The Trial of Jesus before Pilate's Tribunal – 15:1-15

The Mocking of Jesus – 15:-20

The Crucifixion of Jesus – 15:21-32

The Death of Jesus – 15:33-41

The Burial of Jesus – 15:42-47

These structures proposed by the various authors appear to be similar. The researcher, therefore, proposes a structure in line with the above authors. This is because the concept of discipleship and suffering is germane to the research topic which takes into

⁹⁸ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 231.

consideration Jesus' suffering and dialogue with His followers on same; a theme running through. Hence the proposed structure is as follows:

1. The Gethsemane Narrative (14: 32-42)
2. The betrayal and Arrest (14:43-52)
3. The Trial before the Judean Council (14:53-72)
4. The Trial before Pilate (15:1 – 15)
5. Roman Soldiers Mock Jesus (15:16-20)
6. The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus (15:21–41)

2.5 The Gethsemane Narrative (14:32-42)

³²Καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς χωρίον οὗ τὸ ὄνομα Γεθσημανὶ καὶ λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· καθίσατε ὧδε ἕως προσεύξωμαι. ³³ καὶ παραλαμβάνει τὸν Πέτρον καὶ [τὸν] Ἰάκωβον καὶ [τὸν] Ἰωάννην μετ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἤρξατο ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδημονεῖν ³⁴ καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· περίλυπός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἕως θανάτου· μείνατε ὧδε καὶ γρηγορεῖτε. ³⁵ καὶ προελθὼν μικρὸν ἔπιπτεν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ προσήχετο ἵνα εἰ δυνατόν ἐστιν παρέλθῃ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἡ ὥρα, ³⁶ καὶ ἔλεγεν· αββα ὁ πατήρ, πάντα δυνατὰ σοι· παρένεγκε τὸ ποτήριον τοῦτο ἀπ' ἐμοῦ· ἀλλ' οὐ τί ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλὰ τί σύ. ³⁷ καὶ ἔρχεται καὶ εὗρίσκει αὐτοὺς καθεύδοντας, καὶ λέγει τῷ Πέτρῳ· Σίμων, καθεύδεις; οὐκ ἴσχυσας μίαν ὥραν γρηγορῆσαι; ³⁸ γρηγορεῖτε καὶ προσεύχεσθε, ἵνα μὴ ἔλθῃτε εἰς πειρασμόν· τὸ μὲν πνεῦμα πρόθυμον ἡ δὲ σὰρξ ἀσθενής. ³⁹ καὶ πάλιν ἀπελθὼν προσήχετο τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον εἰπών. ⁴⁰ καὶ πάλιν ἐλθὼν εὗρεν αὐτοὺς καθεύδοντας, ἦσαν γὰρ αὐτῶν οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ καταβαρυνόμενοι, καὶ οὐκ ᾔδεισαν τί ἀποκριθῶσιν αὐτῷ. ⁴¹καὶ ἔρχεται τὸ τρίτον καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· καθεύδετε τὸ λοιπὸν καὶ ἀναπαύεσθε· ἀπέχει· ἦλθεν ἡ ὥρα, ἰδοὺ παραδίδοται ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου εἰς τὰς χεῖρας τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν. ⁴² ἐγείρεσθε ἄγωμεν· ἰδοὺ ὁ παραδιδούς με ἤγγικεν.

³² And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." ³³ And he took with him Peter and James and John and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. ³⁴ And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch." ³⁵ And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will." ³⁷ And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? ³⁸ Watch and

pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." ³⁹ And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. ⁴¹ And he came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴² Rise let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.

The passion narrative begins in the garden of Gethsemane with His close confidants. It is a journey of misery and agony. It was not forced on Him but an involuntary task of self-sacrifice. It marks the beginning of the climax of His mission on earth as Christ, the Messiah.

The Lord Jesus is portrayed in his ordinary humanity and weakness by Mark as against his previous miracle working power. In Cranfield's view it is inconceivable that the early church would create a scene that makes Jesus panic and pleads for God to cancel his mission on the cross.⁹⁹ Bultmann also argues that the story was originally an independent one with a legendary character. Thus, the story was shaped at a later stage by Christian faith expressing in the narrative form the Christ-myth, in that the sorrow and agony he is going through was not forced on Him but He Himself accepted it, "having become obedient unto death" (Phil 2:8).¹⁰⁰

Evans again explains that the Gethsemane story has an artificial link although it does not bear witness to disillusionment; if that was the case, it would not have been accepted into the Gospels.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 121.

¹⁰⁰ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London: Etr, 1955), 46.

¹⁰¹ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 408.

For the first time in Mark, the link of Gethsemane to Mt. of Olives (14:32) is mentioned and that the venue is an unpopulated place (χωρίον) which has an olive press since the name ‘Gethsemane’ probably means ‘oil press.’¹⁰²

Evans adds that the Mt. of Olives was traditionally a place of prayer (Ezek. 11:23; 2Sam. 15:32) and a place where God was going to appear in judgment (Zech 14:4).¹⁰³ According to him, the place is called κήπος “garden” (Jn 18:1), where Jesus often gathered with his disciples (Jn 18:2).

In reference to v. 32b, “sit here while I pray” (καὶ λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ· καθίσατε ὧδε ἕως προσεύξωμαι), is as usual Jesus’ custom to retire to pray or rise early for prayer, a habit that shows the importance of prayer (1:35; 6:46, 9:29 and 11:17). Jesus praying alone is a sign that beyond corporate prayer individual prayer has its own place (Mark 1:35; Matt 6:6). Collins argued that the v. 33a is likely to be a Markan addition since Markan theme contains the special role of these three disciples and that the other passages where the three are mentioned (5:37; 9:2; 3:3) are probably Markan compositions.¹⁰⁴

Evans on the other hand associates the presence of the three disciples to sharing with His company and besides to still instructs them to the very end of His ministry.¹⁰⁵ In addition, he says Jesus needed their presence as witnesses “two or three” (Deut. 17:6, 19:15), in view of impending situation.

Lane, on the other hand sees the presence of the three as a peculiar responsibility of them to share in Jesus’ destiny.¹⁰⁶ He explains that sharing in Jesus’ destiny means

¹⁰² Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 112.

¹⁰³ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 408.

¹⁰⁴ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 114.

¹⁰⁵ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 408.

¹⁰⁶ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 515.

identifying with his suffering which they fail to understand and were found wanting when they were needed most.¹⁰⁷

In v. 33b, “and he began to be distressed and troubled” (καὶ ἤρξατο ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδημονεῖν) the word ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι together with ἀδημονεῖν show the emotional state of Jesus. Evans notices that this is the only time where the word ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι “distress” is used of Jesus in the New Testament. According to him, the word describes great emotions and that the choice of this word is probably an inspiration of the next verse.

Thus, Jesus’ comment (v. 34) only adds to the element of distress and sorrow (περίλυπός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἕως θανάτου): “My soul is grieved to the point of death.”¹⁰⁸ As a result Jesus’ expression that his soul is grieved “to the point of death” was a re-echoing of biblical language.¹⁰⁹ This, Evans explains is as a result of Jesus’ foreknowledge of Judas’ eminent betrayal.¹¹⁰

Grundy observes that the ‘watching’ Jesus asked the disciples to “remain here and keep watch” because of Judas’ coming. Thus, both verbs μέννατε and γρηγορεῖτε are imperative.¹¹¹ Contrary to this, Brooks was of the view that to watch here means to be spiritually alert. Specifically, he said it was a caution against the temptation of indifference.¹¹²

In the phrase ἐπιπτεν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, “fell on his face,” Evans argues that normally Jews pray standing and looking up to heaven, as He did earlier (Mark 6:41; Jn 17:1; Luke

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 515.

¹⁰⁸ The word περίλυπός “grieved” according to Evans appeared only once in Mark (6:26) where Herod Antipas “was grieved” (exceedingly sorry) that his offer to his stepdaughter would result in the beheading of John the Baptist.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 410.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Grundy, *Mark: A Commentary*, 854.

¹¹² Brooks, *Mark*, 234.

18:11), but falling to the ground on one's face may sound exceptional.¹¹³ Brooks disagrees and explains that prostration was rather a sign of extreme urgency and that Middle Eastern custom in antiquity together with biblical history reflects this (Gen. 17:1–3).¹¹⁴ Similarly, in many instances, according to Evans, i.e. in Numbers, Moses, Aaron and the people of Israel fall on their faces, either in great religious distress or as reverence to the presence of God (Num. 14:5, 16:4, 22, 45; 20:6).¹¹⁵ Hence Jesus' falling on the ground with face down could only be as a result of distress about the impending death and a solemn request for the Father to spare Him. By this example of Jesus, a Christian who undergoes suffering should still acknowledge God as a father of all including the sufferer.

Praying that if it is possible the hour might pass from him, is an indication that Mark's summary of the prayer anticipates Jesus' actual words, which the next verse reports.¹¹⁶ Jesus' plea "if it is possible" is a reminder of his earlier teachings to the disciples "All things are possible for the one who has faith" (9:23); or the time of warning the disciples about false messiahs and false prophets (13:22). Contrary, Brooks observes that the prayer only shows the real humanity of Jesus, a part of his nature as also concerning His deity.¹¹⁷ Lane rather sees it as a tension between an expression of grace and judgment. Thus, it was a prayer of confessing God's ability "all things are possible" (10:27) against a firm resolve to submit to the will of the father.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 410.

¹¹⁴ Brooks, *Mark*, 234.

¹¹⁵ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 411.

¹¹⁶ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 114.

¹¹⁷ Brooks, *Mark*, 234.

¹¹⁸ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 517.

In a similar view, Ossom-Batsa argues that Jesus' anguish was not only caused by his eminent death but also the prior-knowledge of series of suffering he was to go through on behalf of many (10:45).¹¹⁹

The "hour" according to Evans, is the time the son of man will be delivered into the hands of sinners (14:41), who will then abuse and execute him, just as Jesus had predicted earlier.¹²⁰ Lane agrees that the 'hour' refers to Jesus' betrayal and arrest with future consequences of execution as a condemned criminal.¹²¹ On the other hand, Ossom-Batsa argues that the 'hour' does not mean the material moment but is connected with the time of fulfilment and for that matter has Christological import.¹²² For this reason every Christian should believe that Christ death was divine and happened at the time God ordained and for that matter nothing happens in the life of a Christian by chance not excluding suffering.

Most scholars argue that v. 33b is redactional since the construction ἀρχομαι with an infinitive (to begin to do something) is found of Mark's rendition rather than the unusual word, ἐχθαμβεῖσθαι (to be amazed). On the other hand, as suggested by Collins, the latter verb in its simple form θαμβεῖσθαι (to be amazed) fits other contexts well as used elsewhere in Mark, but does not fit the present context.¹²³

¹¹⁹ George Ossom-Batsa, *The Institution of the Eucharist in the Gospel of Mark: A Study of the Function of Mark 14:22-25 within the Gospel Narrative* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Publishing, 2001).

¹²⁰ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 114.

¹²¹ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 517.

¹²² Ossom-Batsa, *The Institution of the Eucharist*, 123.

¹²³ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 114.

Further, ἐκθαμβήσει in Sir 30:9 is synonymously used in parallelism with λυπεῖν (to grieve or to vex). The former verb means ‘to distress’ and fits well in the context of v.33b since it agrees with ἀδημονεῖν (to be anxious).¹²⁴

Verse 34a gives a direct speech “my soul is exceedingly sorrowful to the point of death.” In Collins’ view, it is an evocation of Ps 6:3–4 “why are you exceedingly sorrowful, O my soul, and why do you disturb me?”¹²⁵ She notices that the first two lines of this Psalm are similar to Jesus’ lament (v. 34a) and the second two lines can be linked to the summary of Jesus’ prayer in v. 35 and for that matter the direct expression in v. 36.¹²⁶ Hooker, on the other hand, makes reference to Heb. 5:7 — “my heart is overwhelmed with grief...” — an echo of the lament in Ps. 42-3 similar to Jesus’ anguish and expression of strong emotions.¹²⁷ Further, Collins points that the expression ἕως θανάτου (to the point of death) can also be found twice in the LXX.¹²⁸

She reiterates that earlier, the Markan Jesus was linked indirectly to David (2:25-26) alluding to his messianic title. Collins again notices a contrast between the evoked text in Jonah and that of Mark. In the former, God initiates the dialogue with Jonah and both engaged in the discourse while in Mark, Jesus initiates the discourse, but God was silent.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ In addition, the use of the two words, anxious and distress are recorded here in Mark for the first time. Ibid., 115.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 116.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 116.

¹²⁷ Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 348.

¹²⁸ “Is it not a sorrow to the point of death when a friend turns to enmity?” (Sir. 37:2). Similarly, reference can also be found in Jonah: And God said to Jonah, “Have you become extremely sorrowful because of the (gourd) vine?” and he said “I have become extremely sorrowful to the point of death” καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Ἰωναν εἰ σφόδρα λελύπησαι σὺ ἐπὶ τῇ κολοκύνθῃ καὶ εἶπεν σφόδρα λελύπημαι ἐγὼ ἕως θανάτου. (Jonah 4:9 LXX).¹²⁸ He then asserts that the evocation of Ps. 41 – 42 LXX makes Jesus highly probable the speaker of the traditional lament. Thus, Jesus was imitating David as the suffering Messiah since the Jews of the second Temple believed in David’s authorship of the Psalms.¹²⁸

¹²⁹ Ibid, 6.

In a similar view expressed by Gundry, the perfective περί in περίλυπός (exceedingly sad) and the first position of its predicate adjective emphasises the state of sadness. Thus, the omniscient narrator uses Jesus' inner feeling to make his audience sympathize for him.¹³⁰ In vv. 34b – 35, Jesus asks the three disciples to keep wake with him. In the view of Collins, the sentence, “Remain here and stay awake” (14:34b), portrays Jesus in all His humanity, distress and anxiety. He wanted the three friends to stay awake nearby in order to provide him company and emotional support.¹³¹

In contrast, Lane sees this as an act of responsibility: Jesus asks the three to share in his destiny. Unfortunately, they failed miserably because they did not understand most of the things Jesus was teaching them.¹³² The import being that a disciple is not only that who is always with Jesus and listens but the one who is able to share in His destiny. The one who denies self, take up his/her own cross and follow Jesus on the way, the way of suffering even unto death.

Gundry observes that Jesus' falling on the ground and praying that if possible the “hour” might pass over him shows that he had foreknowledge of his death and for that matter serves the apologetic purpose of Mark (10:38-39, 14:23-24).¹³³

In further explanation, Collins observed that Jesus' going a little distance from his disciples is because he presumably needed some privacy although the disciples' presence was important. Collins had the view that it was only the omniscient narrator who was able to hear what Jesus said in prayer. On the contrary, Evans refers to the phrase τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον εἰπὼν (“And he was saying”), which means that the prayer was repetitive,

¹³⁰ Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary*, 854.

¹³¹ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 116.

¹³² Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 515.

¹³³ Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary*.

and to the fact that Jesus had only gone on ahead “a little further” (v.35) to imply that the disciples were still within earshot.¹³⁴ Besides, he reiterates that prayer in antiquity was normally spoken aloud, that silent prayer was rather the exception (1Sam. 1:12–16, that is why Eli the priest mistakes the silent prayer of Hannah as drunkenness).¹³⁵ In any case the prayer shows how Mark reminds his audience that Jesus’s prayer reveals His total reliance and obedience to the father.

Brooks concurs and adds that Jews often prayed standing and with uplifted hands and that prostration was rather a sign of extreme urgency.¹³⁶ This posture in which Jesus prays is therefore that of agony and intense distress, an indication of what He was going through and finally would embrace. It tells the disciple and for that matter the readers that silence prayer, depending on its focus can be very intense: loud prayer does not necessarily show its effectiveness.

In v. 36, Jesus’ prayer is reported in a direct speech: “Abba! Father! All things are possible for you; remove this cup from me. But [let] not what I want [be], but what you want.” Collins points out that the term “Abba! Father!” was not used in contemporary Jewish text of prayers.¹³⁷ Brooks agrees that the word was used by children but went on to state that there is, however, no evidence to show that Jews used the word in addressing God.¹³⁸ The use would breed familiarity and for that matter irreverence. He then agrees with Collins that by using the word, Jesus affirms his intimate relationship with God.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 412.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 412.

¹³⁶ Brooks, *Mark*, 234.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 234.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 234.

The last portion of Jesus' prayer — ἀλλ' οὐ τί ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλὰ τί σὺ — shows a kind of resignation that is different from the healing of the epileptic boy in chapter 9 and the principle of prayer in chapter 11. With reference to ancient Jewish context, Collins suggests that the last statement may mean an expression of an absolute obedience. She, therefore, compares this to a passage in the Damascus Document: "For having walked in the stubbornness of their hearts the Watchers of the heavens fell; ... Abraham did not walk in it and was counted as a friend for keeping God's precepts and not following the desire of his spirit (CD 2:17 – 18; 3:2 – 3)."¹⁴⁰

The plead, "Remove this cup from me," echoes the question Jesus posed to the sons of Zebedee (10:38), when they requested to be allowed to sit in his (Jesus') right and left in glory; the answer was: "Are you able to drink the cup which I am about to drink?" It is clear here that the cup He was referring to was that of His suffering and finally crucifixion and death. Unfortunately, they could not pray even an hour with Him let alone be willing to drink from His cup (suffering), an indication of what is expected of a disciple.

Garrett comments that the Gethsemane narrative portrays Jesus undergoing a severe test expressed by the emotive language: Jesus was undergoing a great endurance when his natural feeling was to let the cup pass.¹⁴¹ Collins' contemplation is whether the 'cup' used here is symbolic to the cup of wrath in 10:38 or a new symbol of suffering in 14:36. Goppelt supports the latter by associating it with the theme of the judgment of the nations. Thus, the symbolism of the drinking cup in v. 36 represents the idea of Jesus taking upon himself the wrath to be meted out on others who deserved it.¹⁴² This,

¹⁴⁰ Brooks, *Mark*, 234.

¹⁴¹ S. Garrett, *The Temptation of Jesus in Mark's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 89.

¹⁴² Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 115.

therefore, is what He was teaching the disciples concerning carrying their cross, a willingness to suffer for others no matter the cost. He, therefore, concludes that such an attitude in Hellenistic philosophical context is important in overcoming fear.¹⁴³

In vv. 37-38, the attention is now drawn from Jesus to the sleeping disciples. According to Collins Jesus' address to Peter was indeed not to Peter alone but to the three who accompanied him (v. 32). The first part; "Simon, are you sleeping?" was an expression of disappointment in the failure of Peter and the other two to support him in that critical moment of need.¹⁴⁴ Collins further argues that the use of the old name 'Simon' instead of Peter is an ironic expression of not living up to the new name: 'Rock.' This refers to warriors with their resoluteness in battle. It thus suggests a rather opposite and ironic meaning; the seed falling on a rocky ground (Mk 4:5).¹⁴⁵

Collins observes that the second question put to Peter — "were you not strong enough to keep awake for one hour?" — supports such assertion. Therefore, the use of the verb ἰσχυρω (to be strong) was a hint to the proverbial saying in v. 38b. However, Evans holds the view that the question was directed to Peter alone who he refers to as the chief disciple. By this he says the narrator hopes to prepare the minds of his readers that the chief disciple will deny the master three times.¹⁴⁶

The verbs in the two questions to Peter in v. 37b were in the second person singular. This means the master was addressing Peter alone; his failure to honour his earlier pledge: "Even though they all fall away, I will not." (v. 29). On the other hand, in the exhortation, "keep wake and pray that you not be put to the test", the second person

¹⁴³ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 115.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁴⁵ David Rhoades and Donald Michie. *Mark as Story: An Introduction to Narrative of a Gospel*. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 114.

¹⁴⁶ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 414.

plural forms are used signed the shift of focus from Peter to the three disciples. By extension, she affirms that the audience could now identify with the disciples and apply the words of Jesus to their own situations. Jesus expects to share his feelings, hopes, sorrows and joy with his friends but they failed him in the time of test. Thus, he was only left with no one else than to turn to his father.¹⁴⁷

The exhortation to stay awake and pray was based on the conflict between the flesh and the spirit (vv. 26 – 31) “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” His prediction that all the disciples would take offence (v. 25) which was refuted vehemently by them (They promised that they will even die with him and would surely not deny him - v.31b) happened as Jesus predicted. This according to Collins is a typical example of the Spirit’s willingness but the flesh being weak.¹⁴⁸ On the other hand, Gundry in his view compares this weak state of the disciples to the strong (ἰσχυσαζ) and “the stronger one” (ἰσχυρότερός) in both the flesh and the spirit of the Son of God. Therefore, being watchful and prayerful result in strengthening the weak flesh.¹⁴⁹

The latter example suggests that περισσμοός has to do with suffering in discipleship. The instruction from Jesus to them to pray that they not be put to the test thus implies not to seek the opportunity to suffer like Jesus. Notwithstanding for some, that opportunity will come as Jesus predicts (13:9, 12–13a). Collins, therefore, indicates that the teaching on discipleship in 8:34 – 38 and 13:13b imperatively calls for the followers of Jesus to endure and be loyal to the gospel and Jesus when they are put to the test.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 518.

¹⁴⁸ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 118

¹⁴⁹ Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary*.

¹⁵⁰ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 118.

In vv. 39–41a, she indicated that the pattern of narrative used increases the pathos of Jesus' state of struggling alone with no help from even his closest friends. This she admits emphasizes the weakness and failure of the disciples.

Vv. 41b - 42 refers to an hour, the hour when the son of man is "handed over into the hands of sinners." According to Lane, both statements are synonymous. The second only clarifies the tone of the first indicating that the moment is eminent when Jesus will be overwhelmed by the power of sin and death.¹⁵¹

2.6 The betrayal and Arrest (14:43-52)

⁴³ Καὶ εὐθὺς ἔτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος παραγίνεται Ἰούδας εἰς τῶν δώδεκα καὶ μετ' αὐτοῦ ὄχλος μετὰ μαχαίρων καὶ ξύλων παρὰ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ τῶν γραμματέων καὶ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων. ⁴⁴ δεδώκει δὲ ὁ παραδιδούς αὐτὸν σύσημον αὐτοῖς λέγων· ὃν ἂν φιλήσω αὐτός ἐστιν, κρατήσατε αὐτὸν καὶ ἀπάγετε ἀσφαλῶς. ⁴⁵ καὶ ἐλθὼν εὐθὺς προσελθὼν αὐτῷ λέγει· ῥαββί, καὶ κατεφίλησεν αὐτόν. ⁴⁶ οἱ δὲ ἐπέβαλον τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῷ καὶ ἐκράτησαν αὐτόν. ⁴⁷ εἰς δέ [τις] τῶν παρεστηκότων σπασάμενος τὴν μάχαιραν ἔπαισεν τὸν δοῦλον τοῦ ἀρχιερέως καὶ ἀφείλεν αὐτοῦ τὸ ὠτάριον. ⁴⁸ Καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· ὡς ἐπὶ ληστὴν ἐξήλθατε μετὰ μαχαίρων καὶ ξύλων συλλαβεῖν με; ⁴⁹ καθ' ἡμέραν ἤμην πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ διδάσκων καὶ οὐκ ἐκράτησατέ με· ἀλλ' ἵνα πληρωθῶσιν αἱ γραφαί. ⁵⁰ Καὶ ἀφέντες αὐτὸν ἔφυγον πάντες. ⁵¹ καὶ νεανίσκος τις συνηκολούθει αὐτῷ περιβεβλημένος σινδὼνα ἐπὶ γυμνοῦ, καὶ κρατοῦσιν αὐτόν. ⁵² ὁ δὲ καταλιπὼν τὴν σινδὼνα γυμνὸς ἔφυγεν.

⁴³ And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. ⁴⁴ Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard." ⁴⁵ And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" And he kissed him. ⁴⁶ And they laid hands on him and seized him. ⁴⁷ But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁴⁸ And Jesus said to them, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? ⁴⁹ Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled." ⁵⁰ And they all left him and fled. ⁵¹ And a young man followed him,

¹⁵¹ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 523.

with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, 52 but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.

Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane was a prelude to what awaits Him a few hours after that. It was a time of test, struggle and agony, facing death alone. He had friends there to stand with Him, but they were far from offering any help.

The story of the arrest of Jesus (vv. 43-52) probably forms the second unit of the pre-Markan passion narrative.¹⁵² Hooks observes that Mark links this story to the following one with *καὶ ἐὺθὺς* (suddenly), which shows that Jesus had a foreknowledge and control of preceding events. The present form of the text (v. 43) links the arrest of Jesus to the Gethsemane scene especially to v. 41 ("the hour has come") and v. 42 ("the one who is to hand me over has drawn near").¹⁵³

Gundry observes that the introduction of Jesus and his disciples into the place of betrayal by a historical present tense in v. 32 (*ἔρχονται*) is similar to the introduction of Judas' arrival (*παραγίνεται*) to emphasize the realization of Jesus' prediction.¹⁵⁴

The expression *εἷς δέ [τις]* "Now a certain one" in v. 47 is present only in the Markan narrative. It is usually assumed that the one who drew his sword to strike the slave of the high priest would have been one of the disciples of Jesus but not a bystander indicating an effort to defend Jesus in preventing his arrest. In any case, as in the present form of Mark; the incident gives credit to the assertion that the disciples do not understand the plan of God, which includes the necessity of the suffering and death of Jesus.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Collins observes that Jesus had predicted how "one of the Twelve" would hand him over (vv. 18 – 20). Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 110.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁵⁴ Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary*.

¹⁵⁵ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 11.

Witherington on the other hand argues that apart from Mathew and Luke (Matt. 26:52-53; Luke 22:51), Mark's preoccupation was on the character of Jesus and for this reason, no mention was made of the one who cut the ear of the high priest's servant.¹⁵⁶

The phrase "I was with you daily in the temple" shows that Jesus' captors were Jews and that 'this was done that the scriptures may be fulfilled' calls to mind "he was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12).¹⁵⁷ Collins notices two readings of v. 49: First, the reference was likely to be the temple which is supposed to be a house of prayer and not a den of robbers (11:17). Secondly, supported by Lane, it would be a reproach for arresting him at all since his public teaching was not unlawful. She concludes that the two statements are both reproaches and self-defence on the Markan Jesus. In any case they are driven with passion and apologetic in defending Jesus' innocence.¹⁵⁸

Many scholars believe that the word πάντες (v. 50) was made in reference to the arresting party (vv. 48-49). In contrast, since the disciples fled after Jesus made the statement, Collins argues that in this context Jesus was obviously referring to the Disciples. Thus, the placement of the disciples' flight fulfils the scripture in 49b and Jesus' prophecy in v. 27.¹⁵⁹

Scholars differ about the identity of the "young man" (14:51 - 52). Collins refers to him as James the brother of the Lord. Evans' view is that traditionally, the story of this

¹⁵⁶ Witherington, *Mark*, 381-2.

Collins again regards vv. 48-49 as Markan additions to his source. She considers Jesus' statement to those who came to arrest him a reproach. The portrayal of Jesus as robber, bandit or revolutionary according to her reflects the evangelists posit of contrasting Jesus with the revolutionaries in the revolt against Rome by the Jesus.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁷ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 525.

¹⁵⁸ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 121.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

“young man” which Matthew and Luke omitted may be autobiographical although the identity of the “young man” was not stated.¹⁶⁰

According to Collins, many scholars including Knox suggested that the story of the young man with the linen cloth has a link with the empty tomb narrative,¹⁶¹ arguing that Mark has a tendency of describing events prophetically. In a similar fashion he notices that as the young man was able to break away from those who tried to seize him, leaving behind the linen cloth, so was Jesus destined to escape from his enemies leaving behind the linen cloth in which he was wrapped.¹⁶²

Vanhoye recognizes a positive element in the escape. According to him escape from danger also brings exaltation. Thus, the enemies are left behind with a piece of cloth in their hands. In such a situation, he says that nudity loses its shame and changes to liberation.¹⁶³ In the same line, Scroggs and Groff compared the scenario with Christian baptism. Thus, the nakedness and flight (vv. 51-52) symbolizes dying with Christ; whereas the reappearance of the young man in a new garment in 16:5 connotes rising with Christ. With Collins, the passion predictions in Mark speak only about the death and resurrection of Jesus and by extension the disciple is expected to follow the master in suffering (8:34 – 9:1) but for the disciple dying and rising with Jesus is not explicitly mentioned.¹⁶⁴

From a narrative point of view, Mark intends to emphasize the complete solitude of Jesus: “Then all the disciples left him and fled” (14:50). Even those chosen by him cannot stand and share in the destiny of their ‘rabbi’. Against this background, the

¹⁶⁰ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 427.

¹⁶¹ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 132.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁶³ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 143.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 145.

young man running away naked can be a metaphoric representation of the twelve, unable to carry Jesus' cross and follow him "on the way" to the cross.¹⁶⁵

2.7 The Trial before the Judean Council (14:53-72)

⁵³Καὶ ἀπήγαγον τὸν Ἰησοῦν πρὸς τὸν ἀρχιερέα, καὶ συνέρχονται πάντες οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς. ⁵⁴ καὶ ὁ Πέτρος ἀπὸ μακρόθεν ἠκολούθησεν αὐτῷ ἕως ἔσω εἰς τὴν αὐλὴν τοῦ ἀρχιερέως καὶ ἦν συγκαθήμενος μετὰ τῶν ὑπηρετῶν καὶ θερμαινόμενος πρὸς τὸ φῶς. ⁵⁵ Οἱ δὲ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ ὅλον τὸ συνέδριον ἐζήτησαν κατὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ μαρτυρίαν εἰς τὸ θανατώσαι αὐτόν, καὶ οὐχ ἠύρισκον. ⁵⁶ πολλοὶ γὰρ ἐψευδομαρτύρουν κατ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἴσαι αἱ μαρτυρίαι οὐκ ἦσαν. ⁵⁷ καὶ τινες ἀναστάντες ἐψευδομαρτύρουν κατ' αὐτοῦ λέγοντες ⁵⁸ ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἠκούσαμεν αὐτοῦ λέγοντος ὅτι ἐγὼ καταλύσω τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον τὸν χειροποίητον καὶ διὰ τριῶν ἡμερῶν ἄλλον ἀχειροποίητον οἰκοδομήσω. ⁵⁹ καὶ οὐδὲ οὕτως ἴση ἦν ἡ μαρτυρία αὐτῶν. ⁶⁰ καὶ ἀναστὰς ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς εἰς μέσον ἐπηρώτησεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν λέγων· οὐκ ἀποκρίνη οὐδὲν τί οὗτοί σου καταμαρτυροῦσιν; ⁶¹ ὁ δὲ ἐσιώπα καὶ οὐκ ἀπεκρίνατο οὐδέν. πάλιν ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς ἐπηρώτα αὐτόν καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ; ⁶² ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν· ἐγὼ εἰμι, καὶ ὤψεσθε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκ δεξιῶν καθήμενον τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐρχόμενον μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. ⁶³ ὁ δὲ ἀρχιερεὺς διαρρήξας τοὺς χιτῶνας αὐτοῦ λέγει· τί ἔτι χρείαν ἔχομεν μαρτύρων; ⁶⁴ ἠκούσατε τῆς βλασφημίας· τί ὑμῖν φαίνεται; οἱ δὲ πάντες κατέκριναν αὐτόν ἔνοχον εἶναι θανάτου. ⁶⁵ Καὶ ἤρξαντό τινες ἐμπτύειν αὐτῷ καὶ περικαλύπτειν αὐτοῦ τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ κολαφίζειν αὐτόν καὶ λέγειν αὐτῷ· προφήτευσον, καὶ οἱ ὑπηρεταὶ ῥαπίσμασιν αὐτόν ἔλαβον. ⁶⁶ Καὶ ὄντος τοῦ Πέτρου κάτω ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ ἔρχεται μία τῶν παιδισκῶν τοῦ ἀρχιερέως ⁶⁷ καὶ ἰδοῦσα τὸν Πέτρον θερμαινόμενον ἐμβλέψασα αὐτῷ λέγει· καὶ σὺ μετὰ τοῦ Ναζαρηνοῦ ἦσθα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ. ⁶⁸ ὁ δὲ ἠρνήσατο λέγων· οὔτε οἶδα οὔτε ἐπίσταμαι σὺ τί λέγεις. καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἔξω εἰς τὸ προαύλιον [καὶ ἀλέκτωρ ἐφώνησεν]. ⁶⁹ καὶ ἡ παιδίσκη ἰδοῦσα αὐτόν ἤρξατο πάλιν λέγειν τοῖς παρεστῶσιν ὅτι οὗτος ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐστίν. ⁷⁰ ὁ δὲ πάλιν ἠρνεῖτο. καὶ μετὰ μικρὸν πάλιν οἱ παρεστῶτες ἔλεγον τῷ Πέτρῳ· ἀληθῶς ἐξ αὐτῶν εἶ, καὶ γὰρ Γαλιλαῖος εἶ. ⁷¹ ὁ δὲ ἤρξατο ἀναθεματίζειν καὶ ὀμνύειν ὅτι οὐκ οἶδα τὸν ἄνθρωπον τοῦτον ὃν λέγετε. ⁷² καὶ εὐθὺς ἐκ δευτέρου ἀλέκτωρ ἐφώνησεν. καὶ ἀνεμνήσθη ὁ Πέτρος τὸ ῥῆμα ὡς εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι πρὶν ἀλέκτορα φωνῆσαι δις τρίς με ἀπαρήση· καὶ ἐπιβαλὼν ἔκλαιεν.

¹⁶⁵ To be naked in the Bible means to lose one's identity.

⁵³ And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. ⁵⁴ And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards and warming himself at the fire. ⁵⁵ Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. ⁵⁶ For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. ⁵⁷ And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, ⁵⁸ "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.'" ⁵⁹ Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. ⁶⁰ And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" ⁶¹ But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" ⁶² And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." ⁶³ And the high priest tore his garments and said, "What further witnesses do we need? ⁶⁴ You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death. ⁶⁵ ⁶⁶ And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the maids of the high priest came; ⁶⁷ and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him, and said, "You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus." ⁶⁸ But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you mean." And he went out into the gateway. ⁶⁹ And the maid saw him, and began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." ⁷⁰ But again he denied it. And after a little while again the bystanders said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean." ⁷¹ But he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know this man of whom you speak." ⁷² And immediately the cock crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept

The trial of Jesus in human court was based on false accusations (Luke 23:14). Beyond this, the Jews did not have the authority then to carry out death penalty (John 18:31). Granted that they even had the authority, it would be against one who has a divine authority to avert the 'calamity' (Mark 2:10; Luke 4:32) but decided to go through it for a just cause. It is ironical that injustice is being meted out to the just.

According to Thielman, the Evangelist portrays Jesus' ordeal (14:65) on the model of the Servant of YHWH, who offered his back to those who beat him and did not hide his

face from mocking and spitting (Isa. 50:6).¹⁶⁶ As Lane explains, the spitting and the administering of blows is a conventional act of rejection and repudiation.

Shepherd compares mocking of Jesus as false prophet in v. 65, to the denial of Peter in vv. 66-72 as a fulfilment of Jesus' earlier prophecy (v. 30). He, however, points out the irony in regarding Jesus as innocent but falsely accused to the moral failure of Peter, when he was questioned. The juxtaposition of the trial of Jesus onto the denial of Peter is a literary way of projecting the two events simultaneously with the effect of making the audiences differentiate between the two.¹⁶⁷

Reading vv. 66-72, Evans compares Jesus being mocked by the ruling priest who asked him to prophesy to Peter who was denying Jesus outside and for that matter fulfilling the prophecy Jesus told him about.¹⁶⁸

Collins notices an escalation in the three denials of Peter. In the first instance he only said, "I don't know what you are talking about" (v.68). This was followed by the second denial where the narrator only said that Peter denied what the female servant had said (v.70). In the third instance, the denial was followed by a self-imposed curse "I do not know this man you are talking about"; and the narrator added "He then began to curse and swear" (v. 71).

Surprisingly, this is the man who earlier rebuked Jesus when He reminded them about His impending suffering and death (8:31- 32). Weeden, therefore, sees the denial as the lowest point in Peter's life. He argued that the denial of Peter signified the complete

¹⁶⁶ Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 67.

¹⁶⁷ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 224.

From historical construction perspective, according to Collins, Mark's account of the trial before the council is not reliable. She again notices that the reason why the chief priests sent Jesus to be crucified by making use of the power of the Roman prefect was only because of envy of his (Jesus') success with the people

¹⁶⁸ Weeden, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict*, 125.

and utter rejection of Jesus by his disciples.¹⁶⁹ In effect, Peter joins the Sanhedrin in rejecting Jesus (14:53 ff). He concluded by saying that “Jesus gives his life by his confession (63-64), but Peter tries to save his own by his denials.” Thus, the effect of 14:53-72 is a contrast between Jesus and Peter. Jesus accepts his death, whereas Peter seeks to save his life; Jesus manifests courage and loyalty to the will of God, whereas Peter is weak and fearful.¹⁷⁰

To sum up, the narrator offers two models to his readers, Jesus and Peter. While the first stands for the truth, embracing persecution and death; the second lies, allowing fear to control his life. In this situation, the reader needs to remember the word of Jesus: “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and for the gospel will save it” (8:35).

2.8 The Trial before Pilate (15:1 – 15)

¹Καὶ εὐθὺς πρῶτῃ συμβούλιον ποιήσαντες οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς μετὰ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων καὶ γραμματέων καὶ ὅλον τὸ συνέδριον, δῆσαντες τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἀπήνεγκαν καὶ παρέδωκαν Πιλάτῳ. ² Καὶ ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτὸν ὁ Πιλάτος· σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων; ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς αὐτῷ λέγει· σὺ λέγεις. ³ καὶ κατηγοροῦν αὐτοῦ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς πολλά. ⁴ ὁ δὲ Πιλάτος πάλιν ἐπηρώτα αὐτὸν λέγων· οὐκ ἀποκρίνη οὐδέν; ἴδε πόσα σου κατηγοροῦσιν. ⁵ ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς οὐκέτι οὐδὲν ἀπεκρίθη, ὥστε θαυμάζειν τὸν Πιλάτον. ⁶ Κατὰ δὲ ἑορτὴν ἀπέλυεν αὐτοῖς ἓνα δέσμιον ὃν παρητοῦντο. ⁷ ἦν δὲ ὁ λεγόμενος Βαραββᾶς μετὰ τῶν στασιασῶν δεδεμένος οἵτινες ἐν τῇ στάσει φόνον πεποιήκεισαν. ⁸ καὶ ἀναβὰς ὁ ὄχλος ἤρξατο αἰτεῖσθαι καθὼς ἐποίει αὐτοῖς. ⁹ ὁ δὲ Πιλάτος ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς λέγων· θέλετε ἀπολύσω ὑμῖν τὸν βασιλέα τῶν Ἰουδαίων; ¹⁰ ἐγίνωσκεν γὰρ ὅτι διὰ φθόνου παραδεδώκεισαν αὐτὸν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς. ¹¹ οἱ δὲ ἀρχιερεῖς ἀνέσεισαν τὸν ὄχλον ἵνα μᾶλλον τὸν Βαραββᾶν ἀπολύσῃ αὐτοῖς. ¹² ὁ δὲ Πιλάτος πάλιν ἀποκριθεὶς ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· τί οὖν [θέλετε] ποιήσω [ὃν λέγετε] τὸν βασιλέα τῶν Ἰουδαίων; ¹³ οἱ δὲ πάλιν ἔκραξαν· σταύρωσον αὐτόν. ¹⁴ ὁ δὲ Πιλάτος ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· τί γὰρ ἐποίησεν κακόν; οἱ δὲ περισσῶς ἔκραξαν· σταύρωσον αὐτόν.

¹⁶⁹ Weeden, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict*, 125.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Ὁδὲ Πιλάτος βουλόμενος τῷ ὄχλῳ τὸ ἰκανὸν ποιῆσαι ἀπέλυσεν αὐτοῖς τὸν Βαραββᾶν, καὶ παρέδωκεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν φραγελλώσας ἵνα σταυρωθῆ.

¹And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole Council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. ² And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "You have said so." ³ And the chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴ And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." ⁵ But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed. ⁶ Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. ⁷ And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. ⁸ And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. ⁹ And he answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" ¹⁰ For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. ¹² And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" ¹³ And they cried out again, "Crucify him." ¹⁴ And Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him." ¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

The convention concerning trials is that it takes time for an accused person to be judged and sentenced. This would happen after many defences and observations are made. But in the case of Jesus, He was tried, condemned and crucified on the same day. This happened so that His predictions concerning His death would be fulfilled (8: 31; 9:31; 10:33-34).

Evans and Collins agree that v. 1, "with the elders and scribes and the whole council," is a Markan introduction, as anticipation of the accusation by the priests in v. 3¹⁷¹ This is because in Mark's source only the chief priest was mentioned (v.1).¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 475.

¹⁷² Similarly, she says that the story concerning Barabas was a Markan redaction. Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 227.

In the trial before the Roman prefect Pilate, Mark's preoccupation was not with the details of the proceedings but only a sketch of events significance to the salvation of mankind.¹⁷³ The chief priest's handing over of Jesus to Pilate fulfils the third passion prediction in 10:33. This is another evidence of what would befall His disciples when they follow Him (13:33). In the view of Morna and Hooker, although members of the Sanhedrin bring accusation against Jesus, there was no sentence: the narrative submits that sentence was already pronounced in 14:64 and that Pilate was only used as an instrument for executing it.¹⁷⁴ Indeed, this assertion serves the apologetic purpose of the early Christian community, thus the reluctance of the Roman authorities in sentencing Jesus to death on one hand and imputing guilt on the Jewish leaders on the other hand.¹⁷⁵

2.9 Roman Soldiers Mock Jesus (15:16-20)

¹⁶ Οἱ δὲ στρατιῶται ἀπήγαγον αὐτὸν ἔσω τῆς αὐλῆς, ὃ ἐστὶν πραιτώριον, καὶ συγκάλοῦσιν ὅλην τὴν σπεῖραν. ¹⁷ καὶ ἐνδιδύσκουσιν αὐτὸν πορφύραν καὶ περιτιθέασιν αὐτῷ πλέξαντες ἀκάνθινον στέφανον. ¹⁸ καὶ ἤρξαντο ἀσπάζεσθαι αὐτόν· χαῖρε, βασιλεῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων. ¹⁹ καὶ ἔτυπτον αὐτοῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν καλάμῳ καὶ ἐνέπτυσαν αὐτῷ καὶ τιθέντες τὰ γόνατα προσεκύνουν αὐτῷ. ²⁰ καὶ ὅτε ἐνέπαιξαν αὐτῷ, ἐξέδυσαν αὐτὸν τὴν πορφύραν καὶ ἐνέδυσαν αὐτὸν τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ. Καὶ ἐξάγουσιν αὐτὸν ἵνα σταυρώσωσιν αὐτόν.

¹⁶ And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. ¹⁷ And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ¹⁹ And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

¹⁷³ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 546.

¹⁷⁴ Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 366.

¹⁷⁵ This is to fulfil what Jesus said in in one of the passion predictions "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; (10:33).

In 15:16-20, the mocking of Jesus was recorded. The one who spoke about His coming kingdom is ironically crowned with thorns as a sign of mocking His kingship claim. According to Bultmann, the scene represents a secondary expansion of earliest account of the passion, an elaboration of the whipping mentioned in 15b.¹⁷⁶ Other scholars have argued in contrast to Bultmann that the scene was part of the earliest recoverable passion narrative. Besides, Taylor argued that the passage is historically reliable although it may have been added by Mark.¹⁷⁷

Collins highlights that the specific reference to “mocking” in v. 20 (ἐμπαίζειν) is an impetus to the earlier prophecy by Jesus himself that after he is handed over to the nations, they will mock him (10:33-34). She deduces from the scene where the soldiers removed the purple garment from Jesus and put his own cloth on him, that it was not likely that they removed the *acanthus crown* from his head. Granted so, she describes it as an irony. Thus, the prisoner, wearing an improvised mock-crown, was whipped and later crucified. This scene reveals the concealed mystery of the kingdom of God spoken about to the disciples at Caesarea Philippi.¹⁷⁸ Thus, the kingship of the earthly Jesus is accompanied by rejection, suffering and death.

Schmidt defines the crucifixion of Jesus in Mark as an “anti-triumph.” The verb ἐξάγουσιν (to lead out) is commonly used in the New Testament to signify a procession by a crowd involving a key figure. This buttresses the point that the crucifixion happened outside the current walls of the city: “they led him out to crucify him” (15:20b). He is sentenced for being who he was, King of the Jews, a description both Pilate and the Jews did not understand. The charge against Jesus is His claim to be King of the

¹⁷⁶ Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972). 170.

¹⁷⁷ Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1957), 89.

¹⁷⁸ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 236.

Jews and based on that he is handed over for execution in vv. 12, 15. Mark's emphasis is that it is as King of the Jews that Jesus dies. According to Hooker, it is ironic since this does not take away but rather confirms the Christian's assertion that Jesus is the Messiah (vv. 5, 14).¹⁷⁹

2.10 The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus (15:21–41)

²¹καὶ ἀγγαρεύουσιν παράγοντά τινα Σίμωνα Κυρηναῖον ἐρχόμενον ἀπ' ἀγροῦ, τὸν πατέρα Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ Ῥούφου, ἵνα ἄρῃ τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ. ²² Καὶ φέρουσιν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὸν Γολγοθᾶν τόπον, ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνευόμενον Κρανίου Τόπος. ²³ καὶ ἐδίδουν αὐτῷ ἐσμυρνισμένον οἶνον· ὃς δὲ οὐκ ἔλαβεν. ²⁴ Καὶ σταυροῦσιν αὐτὸν καὶ διαμερίζονται τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ, βάλλοντες κλῆρον ἐπ' αὐτὰ τίς τί ἄρῃ. ²⁵ ἦν δὲ ὥρα τρίτη καὶ ἐσταύρωσαν αὐτόν. ²⁶ καὶ ἦν ἡ ἐπιγραφή τῆς αἰτίας αὐτοῦ ἐπιγέγραμμένη· ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων. ²⁷ Καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ σταυροῦσιν δύο ληστές, ἓνα ἐκ δεξιῶν καὶ ἓνα ἐξ εὐωνύμων αὐτοῦ. ²⁸ ²⁹ Καὶ οἱ παραπορευόμενοι ἐβλασφήμουν αὐτὸν κινοῦντες τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν καὶ λέγοντες· οὐὰ ὁ καταλύων τὸν ναὸν καὶ οἰκοδομῶν ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις,

²¹ And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. ²² And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). ²³ And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. ²⁵ And it was the third hour when they crucified him. ²⁶ And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." ²⁷ And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁸ And the Scripture was fulfilled which said and he was numbered with the transgressors ²⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself, and come down from the cross!" ³¹ So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. ³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also reviled him. ³³ And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴ And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice,

¹⁷⁹ Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 367.

"Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"³⁵ And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah."³⁶ And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down."³⁷ And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"⁴⁰ There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.⁴¹ When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.

Mark does not give the reason for Jesus not carrying his own cross. According to the narrator, Simon a passer-by coming from the country (v. 2) was forced to carry Jesus' cross. Garland's position is that Jesus was either too weak or too slow as a result of the severe whipping he received from the soldiers.¹⁸⁰ Collins agrees with Garland's first reason but adds that Simon's role was divinely planned.¹⁸¹

Schmidt points out that the verb φέρουσιν should be translated "they bore him to... Golgotha." In his view, apart from the physical weakness of Jesus, it signifies the custom of the triumphator in a chariot borne by a portable "curule" chair. Jesus was, therefore, borne in a chariot and led to the Golgotha.¹⁸² Deducing from all the arguments one can conclude that Jesus might be weak to carry the cross all the way to Golgotha but at the same time Simon's help was also in God's plan considering his sons conversion

¹⁸⁰ Garland, *Mark*, 126.

¹⁸¹ An unusual explanation was proposed by Campbell. He argues that Jesus was protesting against the injustice of his condemnation being meted to him hence a deliberate refusal to carry the cross to the site. Campbell, argues that the verb "carry" φέρειν (v. 22) connotes forcing the soldiers to carry him there, thus obstructing their effort to crucify him Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 48.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 249.

later.¹⁸³ From a narrative point of view, he becomes a metaphor of the true disciples, those who carry the master's cross.

There have been many interpretations given to the offering of wine to Jesus on the cross. The properties, effects and the cultural significances of “wine to which myrrh had been added” has been an issue of discussion among scholars. Gundry agrees to a large extent with Pliny that the wine spiced with myrrh is a delicacy and adds to Jesus' dignity.¹⁸⁴ Evans in contrast says that the action was an ongoing mockery (vv. 29-32) to “the king of the Jews”.

Schmidt considers it as a libation of wine that is poured when a bull is sacrificed in a celebration of triumph which he links to Jesus. He explains that before a sacrifice to end a triumphal procession, the “triumphator” being offered a cup of wine declines to take it and pours it on the altar.¹⁸⁵

The next interpretation, which the researcher shares, is based on the fact that the wine that includes myrrh, is used as anaesthesia to deaden the pain of Jesus on the cross. This reference is seen in the book of Proverbs: “Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those in bitter distress; let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more” (Prov. 31:6-7).

In v. 27, the crucifixion of Jesus between two robbers evokes a passage from Isa. 53:12: “Therefore, he shall inherit many, and he shall divide the spoils of the mighty; because his soul was delivered to death: and he was numbered among the transgressors; and he bore the sins of many, and was delivered because of their iniquities.”

¹⁸³ The children of Simon, according to the Lukan tradition, later became disciples of Christ (Acts 11:20).

¹⁸⁴ Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary*, 250.

¹⁸⁵ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 249.

Brooks refers to the word ληστές “robbers” (v. 27) as an insurrectionists or rebels.¹⁸⁶

However, the Mark’s narrative of the behaviour of Jesus during the arrest and the trial shows the readers the unfounded nature of this accusation.¹⁸⁷

The crucifixion of Jesus between two robbers brings back to the reader the memory of the request made by James and John, sons of Zebedee: “that they be granted the privilege of sitting, one on Jesus’ right and one on his left in his glory” (10:37). They were not ready to suffer with him but rather abandoned him for fear of death and for that matter left the place of honour for two unworthy people to occupy. Brook comments that this is a demonstration of what it really means to occupy the places of ‘honour’ in the kingdom of God.¹⁸⁸

Collins notices that in vv. 29-32, Mark expanded his source which read: “And those who passed by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, ‘He saved others, himself he cannot save; let the messiah, the king of Israel, come down now from the cross, in order that we may see and believe.’” She suggests that the reference to the word “passers-by” gives the impression that the Golgotha was probably situated near a road outside the city. Evans buttresses this by saying that the practice was consistent with crucifying criminals in public places along major roads.¹⁸⁹ The passers-by were said to have reviled Jesus and this evokes a scripture “All who saw me sneered at me, they spoke with their lips, they shook their heads, He based his hope on the Lord, let Him rescue him; let Him save him, if He cares for him” (Ps 21:8-9; LXX).

¹⁸⁶ Brooks, *Mark*, 258.

¹⁸⁷ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 252.

¹⁸⁸ Brooks, *Mark*, 54.

¹⁸⁹ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*.

This part of pre-Markan text is similar to Ps. 108 where we find the phrase “shaking the head” (κίνειν κεφαλήν) and the verb saving or rescuing of Jesus (σωζειν). “And I became an object of insult for them; they saw me, they shook their heads. Help me Lord, my God, save me in accordance with your mercy” (Ps 108: 25-26 LXX).

Whereas the three texts have the form of the sequence of seeing and shaking the head Ps 108 has a different term for ‘shaking ’and also a different word for σωζειν (“save” or “rescue”) which refers to the one been reviled, sneered at or insulted.

Both Ps. 108 and the expanded version of the Markan text derive their root from the word-group όνεινδίζειν/όνεινδος (to insult/object of insulting).¹⁹⁰ In Collins’ assertion a figurative expression exists between scripture and events that happened to Jesus; hence a new story is told by adapting an old one as it is in this case. There is, therefore, a link between the two that brings together the old expressions of hardship, rejection and lament with the Markan narration of the rejection and mistreatment of the messiah.¹⁹¹ She concludes that one major aim of Mark was to interpret messiahship to include debasing, suffering and death as Jesus experienced.¹⁹²

According to Evans, Jesus’ assertion of building the temple “in three days” was incongruous to his state of hanging on the cross.¹⁹³ The fact is that the revilement of the passers-by in contrasting Jesus’ alleged claim to miraculous power — when he said he was going to remove the current temple and build the eschatological one — was at variance with his current weakness and humiliation.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 252.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid, 253.

¹⁹³ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*.

¹⁹⁴ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 254.

Lane, on the other hand, suggests that the scornful allusion of reference to the Temple indicates that the first group of mockers was members of the Sanhedrin or court attendants. These people may have been privileged to witness the hearing proceedings.¹⁹⁵

Little did they know that the death of the messiah has a negative ramification on the temple that they hold in high esteem. Besides, it is indication of the physical destruction of the temple, and for that matter the demolition of the traditional Jewish community, and consequently opening the spiritual door for Gentiles to also have access to God.¹⁹⁶

The mocking “Hail, King of the Jews!” according to Hooker, is a further confirmation that *it is as King of the Jews* that Jesus dies. Therefore, Jesus’ accusers inadvertently proclaim the truth about Him.¹⁹⁷

In v. 34, “And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which is translated, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” According to Collins, the scene in Gethsemane portrays Jesus sharing in the weakness and fear of humanity when He faced death. Thus, Jesus experienced the terror of death within his inner being but was able to accept what God had ordained for him (cf. Matt. 27:46).¹⁹⁸

However, in the history of interpretation of Mark and Matthew, most scholars depart from the view that Jesus was abandoned by God. Notwithstanding, Jesus’ last words expressed loneliness and intense suffering. However, Markan narrative shows hints of Jesus’ death serving as a model for his followers. They are to take up their cross and

¹⁹⁵ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 569.

¹⁹⁶ Rhoades and Michie. *Mark*: 114.

¹⁹⁷ Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 370.

¹⁹⁸ Luke uses a more edifying and exemplary word: “Father into your hands I entrust my spirit” (Luke 23:46). The characterization of Jesus in the gospel of John was evidenced in his last words: “When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, “It is fulfilled”; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (Jn 19:30). Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 253.

follow him in addition to losing their lives on account of Jesus and the gospel (8:34—9:1). Furthermore, when they are arrested and questioned, they should speak the truth and endure torture and death, rather than deny Jesus as it was in the case of Peter (13:9-13; 14:53-72).

Mark also recorded Jesus' death accompanied by a loud cry in v. 37. Hooker states that the cry of dereliction is central to Mark's understanding of the death of Jesus.¹⁹⁹ He further explains that Jesus experienced total desolation by everyone including God who forsook him.²⁰⁰ His death, according to Collins, put an end to the bystanders' expectation of Elijah coming to help him. He also points to the probable frustration of the individual who wanted to give a drink to Jesus on a reed with a sponge. This, he adds, is the fulfilment of Jesus' prophecy in 14:25 that he was not going to drink again of the fruit from the vine until the day he drinks it new in the kingdom of God.²⁰¹ Finally, Jesus' death fulfils major part of his passion predictions in 8:31, 9:31, and 10:33-34.

The only sign after His death, "And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom" (v. 38), becomes an issue for debate among many. Scholars have divergent views as to whether v. 38 refers to the outer veil or the inner one. Some have argued in favour of the inner veil while others think otherwise. In Collins view, the outer curtain has no special cultic significance. On the other hand, the inner one is the only thing that separates the holy place and the Holy of Holies. It is only the high priest, only one day in the year, who could go beyond it. For this reason, the writer suggests that probably Mark refers to the inner curtain rather than the outer.

¹⁹⁹ Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 375.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 375.

²⁰¹ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 258.

Many interpretations arose due to the significance of this event in Markan narrative. Some suggest that it symbolizes the breaking of the barrier between humanity and God. With reference to the letter to the Hebrews, it may also signify access to God for all humanity. Another interpretation is the portrayal of the event as the revelation of God in understanding divine theophany. Other scholars compare it to 15:29-30 and 14:58 and interpret it as the destruction of the temple and the beginning of Jesus' prophecy: "I will destroy the temple." In addition, others saw a link between the baptism and the death of Jesus with particular reference to the splitting of heaven — "And immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him" (1:10) — and the splitting of the curtain "And the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (15:38).²⁰² Thus, Jesus' earthly ministry as the son of God was manifested by the descent of the Holy Spirit following the tearing of heavens. Similarly, his earthly ministry is brought to a close by the Spirit ascending out of him at the giving out of his last breath which tears the temple curtain at its departure.²⁰³

The centurion who confessed Jesus as the Son of God (15:39) was a Roman officer who supervised Jesus' execution.²⁰⁴ His reference to him as the "Son of God" presumably means that he recognizes Jesus as a divine being or a deified hero whose death was as a result of obedience to a higher mandate.²⁰⁵

In Witherington's view, the statement, "Truly this man was a/the Son of God," would have originally been "truly this was a divine man" which supports the opinion of Lane. His reason is that the definite article does not appear before the noun 'Son,' since

²⁰² Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 259.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 259.

²⁰⁴ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 573.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 576.

predicate nouns which precede the verb omit the article and that the word ‘Son’ is indefinite.²⁰⁶ Hooker suggests that whether the centurion acknowledges the true significance of his words or not, Mark sees them as an unconscious acknowledgement of Jesus’ identity, a confirmation of His divinity²⁰⁷

In summary, Mark at the beginning of the narrative informs his reader that Jesus is the Son of God, but no human confessed this claim as such till his death on the cross. According to Mark, nobody can proclaim Jesus’ identity without accepting the crucifixion and the death of the Messiah.²⁰⁸ Only the cross, in fact, reveals the son of God because only the cross reveals a quality of love that is divine, the love able to transform death in a gift of life: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (10:45).

2.11 Theological Synthesis

This chapter looked at the exegesis and analysis on the passion narrative according to Mark from 14:32—15:41. Mark tries to explain what the reader should know about the significance of Jesus’ suffering and death. The way and manner he narrates the calling of the disciples shows a total dependence on Jesus. However, the disciples could not accept that following Jesus leads to the cross.

In the first place, Pruitt suggests that Mark 1:1 sets the stage for his gospel and the claim that Jesus is the Son of God finds meaning at the foot of the cross.²⁰⁹ His position is that Mark’s community or audience was suffering persecution and could not understand

²⁰⁶ Witherington, *Mark*, 400.

²⁰⁷ Hooker, *Mark*, 379.

²⁰⁸ Bryan Christopher, *A Preface to Mark: Notes on the Gospel in its Literary and Cultural Settings* (New York: Oxford University Press), 119.

²⁰⁹ Richard, A. Pruitt, “The Meaning of the Cross in Mark,” *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 34, no. 4 (2010): 359.

the role suffering might play in fulfilling the community's experience. This is due to the fact that they could not in the first place appreciate the place of suffering in fulfilling Jesus' purpose and destiny.²¹⁰

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus is seen in the company of the three disciples (James, John and Peter), as Lane puts it so that they can share in his destiny.²¹¹ Sharing in His destiny means both suffering and reigning with Him. Jesus went through a state of great emotions, distress, and anguish. Garland describes it as both physical and psychological suffering.²¹²

Jesus' closest friends, the three disciples, could not stay awake with him even for an hour (14:37-41). Peter promised not to fall away (14:29) but in the end he denied his master three times (14:66-71). James and John who requested to sit both at his right and left hands in his kingdom (10:35-41) were nowhere near the cross. Their positions were rather taken by two robbers a demonstration of what it really means to occupy the place of 'honour' in the kingdom of God.²¹³

Jesus also took upon himself the wrath (cup) to be meted out on others who deserved it (14:36). He, according to Mark, experienced the suffering of being forsaken even by the Father (15:34). He was literally 'abandoned' not only by the disciples but also by his Father although confident that his stand will be vindicated at the end, by the resurrection.

Consequently, readers are challenged by Mark's narrative to see the full identity of Jesus in the light of the cross, and appreciate who s/he is in the light of suffering. It has

²¹⁰ Pruitt, "The Meaning of the Cross," 359.

²¹¹ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 515.

²¹² Garland, *Mark*, 132.

²¹³ Brooks, *Mark*, 259.

to take obedience, sacrifice and servanthood as he taught the disciples (10:42-45) to be a disciple and to identify with him. Therefore, it is to be expected that becoming a disciple is an acknowledgement of sharing in the fellowship of His suffering.

In reference to the reply he gave James and John concerning the request to sit beside him in glory, He was emphatic that this does not come by exaltation and respect but by suffering and rejection.

In conclusion, Mark constructs his story to show “Identity and status among Jesus’ followers will not be measured in terms of human greatness but in matters of submission and humility.”²¹⁴ It is, therefore, clear that the ‘cup’ which Jesus referred to in 14: 36, is one full of suffering and that those who follow him must also drink from it.

To sum up, Mark did not just invite his readers to follow Jesus. He ‘warned’ them that discipleship was not an easy task. It involved intentional effort and the willingness to deny one’s self and carry one’s cross to follow the crucified Lord. Thus, the cross is central to discipleship in Mark’s gospel.

Mark’s readers are called to selfless and committed following. They must renounce their own selves and make the mind and will of Christ their own. In doing so, they can take up their cross, symbolic of partaking in Christ’s mission, and then follow Him. The cross is suggestive of suffering, pain, and death, but Mark’s readers are entreated to embrace it because it is part of the ‘radical service’ that characterized Jesus’ mission.

The Markan Jesus also shows that not only is suffering and cross bearing a natural consequence of following Him, but also, God’s will for Himself and for His disciples. Thus, anyone who wants to stop Him from embracing the cross becomes ‘Satan,’ an

²¹⁴ Pruitt, “The Meaning of the Cross,” 367.

opponent to God's will. Such a person, like Peter, is not thinking of God's thoughts and needs to retake his position as a disciple in order to conform to God's will of cross bearing.

CHAPTER THREE

CHARISMATIC THEOLOGY ON SUFFERING AND DISCIPLESHIP

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the researcher offered a narrative analysis of Mark 14:32-15:41, focusing on the suffering of Jesus and the reaction of the disciples. The analysis of the text was the first step of the theoretical framework to understand the call to action of the text in its original cultural setting.

The second step deals with the ‘reality,’ in which the text needs to be situated in the culture of the Ghanaian Charismatic churches.

This chapter therefore analyses the Charismatic teaching on suffering. An overview of the history of the Charismatic Church is first proposed, before comparing the teaching on discipleship and suffering of the leaders of two leading Charismatic Churches: Lighthouse Chapel International (LCI), and Christian Action Faith Ministries (CAFM).

3.2 Overview of Charismatic Churches in Ghana

The Charismatic movement started in 1950 in North America when Dennis Bennet announced to his congregation that he spoke in other tongues.²¹⁵ His ministry trained believers who were baptized in the Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues.²¹⁶ Prior to this, famous evangelists such as William Branham, Oral Roberts, Gordon Lindsay and T.L Osborn were already teaching and performing healing and miracles.²¹⁷

²¹⁵ Stanley Burgess and Eduard Van De Maas, eds. *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 15.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 477.

²¹⁷ Burgess and Van De Maas, *The New International Dictionary*, 477.

However, some scholars debate on whether the movement really begun in North America. For example, Burgess and Van De Maas trace its root in the ministry of Iviyo Lofakazi, a mixed-race preacher.²¹⁸ According to Burgess and Van De Maas, the original group was initially part of the Anglican Church with the name ‘Legion of Christ Witnesses’ in Zululand, Natal (South Africa), in 1940, two decades before the Charismatic renewal movement in America.²¹⁹

Regarding the diffusion of the Charismatic movement in Africa, Burgess and Van Der Maas notice that it took place a decade after most of these countries gained independence from their colonial governments.²²⁰ Its emergence and surge in West Africa is attributed to factors both within and without the region. The external factor is as a result of foreign ministries extending their branches into Africa while internally, it was born out of student leaders establishing Christian fellowships on various campuses.²²¹

Charismatic churches are said to be the fastest-growing churches in West Africa.²²² Asamoah Gyedu explains that one of the main reasons for their growth rate is their ability to adapt to different cultures and societies. In other words, they have been able to contextualise Christianity in contemporary Ghanaian context.²²³

Ter Haar, in her study of Ghanaian Christianity, discovered that

The rise of Charismatic movement in its various forms is undoubtedly the most significant trend in Church life in Ghana today, both inside and outside the mainline churches. It is part of a worldwide movement which has introduced into the churches

²¹⁸ Ibid., 477.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 230.

²²⁰ Kojo Justin, “The Birth and Effects of Charismaticism in Ghana,” Accessed 2nd Jan, 2007. <http://ghanaweb.com>

²²¹ Burgess and Van De Maas, *The New International Dictionary*, 15.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity*, xiii.

elements of spirituality which were formally found among the Pentecostal and Spiritual type of Churches.²²⁴

The transformation from ‘trans-denominational movement’ to ‘church’ started from the late 1970s.²²⁵ According to Omenyo, “the Charismatic Church developed as a renewal through institutionalization of some of the fellowships into churches or the development of completely new and independent neo-Pentecostal churches known in Ghanaian parlance as Charismatic Church or ministries.”²²⁶ The charismatic spirituality is also recognised as renewal movements inside the Historic Missionary Churches.

Atiemo asserts the movement developed from the evangelical fellowships. He argues that they transited from the mainline churches as non-denominational movements.²²⁷ In other words, individual members left the mainline churches to form non-denominational fellowships which later became churches. Justin adds that the group developed from Pentecostalism in late 1970s but were not well established till the 80s. He explains that the movement expanded through the youth who became Christians and joined the Scripture Unions (SU). Consequently, they engaged in vigorous “soul winning” programs.²²⁸ These youth belonged to Pentecostal churches: Christ Apostolic Church, the Church of Pentecost and The Assemblies of God Church and their evangelism took them to the streets, hospitals and prisons.²²⁹

²²⁴ Gerry ter Haar, “Standing up for Jesus: A Survey of New Development in Christianity in Ghana” *Exchange* 23 (1994): 232.

²²⁵ Elorm Dovlo. “A Comparative Overview of Independent Churches and Charismatic Ministries in Ghana,” *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* 2, no. 2 (1992), 55-73.

²²⁶ Cephas N. Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostals: A study of the Development of Charismatic Renewal in the mainline churches in Ghana* (Bockencentrum: Zoetermeer. 2002), 96. Omenyo uses Charismatic Renewal and Movement interchangeably.

²²⁷ Abamfo O. Atiemo, “The Evangelical Christian Fellowships and the Charismatization of Ghanaian Christianity,” *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 2, (2009), 43-65.

²²⁸ “Soul wining” is a phrase used frequently in the charismatic church referring to evangelization. It is basically preaching Christ to an ‘unbeliever’ (non-Christian) and bringing same to church especially to one’s local assembly to become a member.

²²⁹ Justin, “Charismaticism in Ghana.”

One of them, Mrs. Raji preached to Duncan Williams on his hospital bed at Korle–Bu leading to his conversion to Christianity.²³⁰ This information was confirmed by Gifford who adds that after his conversion he went to Idahosa’s Bible College in Nigeria.²³¹ After he returned from Nigeria, Duncan Williams established his church, Christian Action Faith Ministries (CAFM) in 1979. Furthermore, Charismatic leaders such as Abbey, Heward Mills, Ampiah Koffie and George Johnson joined CAFM and were actively involved with the ministry.²³²

Earlier in the late 70s, Enoch Agbozo established a training school, Ghana Evangelical Mission, for the youth that trained leaders. Prominent among them are Mensa Otabil, Agyin Asare and David Abbey. Archbishop Nicholas Duncan Williams and Brother Enoch Agbozo both have been credited with the genesis of the Charismatic Movement in Ghana.²³³ Out of these two individual persons’ ministries originated most of the Charismatic Church in Ghana. Besides the CAFM, we can remember International Central Gospel Church (ICGC), Perez Chapel, Light House Chapel International, Charismatic Evangelistic Ministries (CEM), Global Revival Ministries and many more.

The Charismatic movement is characterised by some unique features that accompany their form of worship. One of this, which was also one of the reasons for the upsurge in growth, is their emphasis on the dynamic work of the Holy Spirit, expressed through tongue speaking, deliverance prophecy and healings.²³⁴ Besides, their mode of worship

²³⁰ Justin, “Charismaticism in Ghana.”

²³¹ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 77.

²³² Justin, “Charismaticism in Ghana.”

²³³ J. K. Asamoah- Gyadu, “The Church in the African State: The Pentecostal Charismatic Experience in Ghana,” *Journal of African Christian Thought* 1, no. 2 (1998), 54. Enoch Agbozo, now in his early eighties is credited to have trained most of the leading Charismatic leaders in the country. With the formation of the Ghana Evangelical Society (GES) he trained many of the youth who were in the three main Pentecostal churches and who later formed most of the Charismatic churches. Duncan Williams, after his return from Bible School in Nigeria was refused ordination in his mother church (Church of Pentecost) which led to him forming CAFM, a major Charismatic Church in the country.

²³⁴ Asamoah- Gyadu, *Pentecostal Christianity*, 17.

conforms to the African traditional form of worship which is not an end in itself but a means to achieving abundant life good health safety and prosperity.²³⁵

Kudzai, points out the fact that Charismatic leaders contradict themselves by demonizing the beliefs of African Traditional Religion while emphasize on health and well-being and “here and now.”²³⁶ Asamoah- Gyadu notice this African ‘flavour’ was absent in the Historical Mission Churches (HMC) and cites Anaba, who in his book “God’s End-Time Militia,” describes the HMC as “cold and dead.”²³⁷

The Charismatic churches are classified in various ways: Burgess and Van Der Maas, and Justin identifies them as those with inspired and ecstatic experiences accompanied by speaking in tongues, healing and prophecies.²³⁸ Asamoah-Gyadu refers to their worship as “very expressive, expectant, dynamic, exuberant, experiential and interventionist.”²³⁹ Their membership is mostly composed of young people, because their activities appeal more to the youth, although no deliberate actions are taken to leave out the older generation.²⁴⁰ Concisely, apart from the form of worship mentioned, their teachings and beliefs centre on deliverance, health, success and prosperity as a result of faith in giving, prayer and confessions.

3.3 Discipleship and Suffering in Charismatic Theological Thought.

Salvation in general terms may refer to the act of rescuing, protecting, preserving or shielding someone from a seemingly difficult situation. In Charismatic Christian thought, salvation simply refers to the deliverance, freedom or rescue from sin: its

²³⁵ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Pentecostal Christianity*, 18.

²³⁶ Kudzai Biri, “Neo Pentecostal Churches in Africa,” *Anthology of African Christianity* Oxford 39 (2016), 416.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

²³⁸ Kojo Justin, “Charismaticism in Ghana”

²³⁹ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Pentecostal Christianity*, xiii.

²⁴⁰ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 89.

penalty, power and presence.²⁴¹ This is achieved through repentance from one's sin coupled with the acceptance of Christ as Lord and saviour of one's life.

The fall places all humankind under the bond of sin, not by commitment but by birth, thus every person is alienated from God and needs salvation. But the salvation of mankind from the Charismatic perspective is not just a mere deliverance from sin and its consequence of death, but also a 'supernatural transportation' into wealth, peace, good health, long life, among others. Thus, as soon as one receives salvation in Christ, s/he is privileged to have these accompanying blessings on the condition that other principles are adhered to. Aminu posits that:

God would not want the devil to boast of victory over His creature; so He sent His only begotten son, Jesus who came to the earth in the form of man but when the time for His assignment was due, He rose up to the task, disinherited the devil and restored the keys of salvation which includes our wealth and prosperity' Jesus then instituted the kingdom of God on earth and placed all and even more of the wealth which was nearly lost to the devil in this kingdom. As a result of this, anyone who takes a decision to belong to the kingdom of God has automatically signed a treaty to become rich.²⁴²

Such principles include; obeying God's word, faithfully giving tithes and offerings, praying, diligent service to God, caring for the poor and the less privileged etc.²⁴³

This line of thought locates suffering completely outside God's will for his children. But what then becomes of Christian doctrine of following in the footsteps of Christ Jesus? Does it not also include suffering ills of many kinds? In contemporary times, a Christian who experiences varying degrees of suffering such as sickness, poverty, loss

²⁴¹ Darrell W. Robinson. *The Doctrine of Salvation* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1992), 8.

²⁴² Enoch Aminu, *Power of Prosperity* (Achimota: Olive Media, 2008), 196.

²⁴³ K. Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic churches, 2001).

of job and any form of tragedy is considered as ‘unspiritual’ and bereft of the knowledge of biblical principles.

According to Aminu, God’s gift is for every deserving Christian; “it requires religious endurance; understanding, and spiritually working towards a divine release. Whoever discovers the mystery in blessing is bound to recover from poverty and every demonic trick”²⁴⁴ But is that the case?

In Ghana, Charismatic churches have focused on salvation that is hinged upon a theology of economic emancipation, preaching a “gospel of success, health and wealth.”²⁴⁵ The prominence of success as a charismatic theme is reflected in the names of churches: *Winners Chapel*, *Victory Bible Church* and *Power House Chapel International*, and in the titles of convention and conferences: “Breaking Barriers”, “Retreat for Promotion”, and “Daughters of Destiny”.

It is found in the bumper stickers visible in cars, shops, etc. around Ghana: ‘Unstoppable Achievers’, ‘I am a Winner’, ‘The Struggle is Over’, ‘I am a Stranger to Failure’, ‘There is Power in the Blood’, ‘My God is able’, ‘I am smelling Success’, Then, there are those who use biblical verses: “More than Conquerors”, (Rom. 8:37); “If God be for us who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31); “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13), etc.

There is a special category of bumper sticker, proclaiming a particular church’s label for the current year, like: ‘2000, My Year of Dominion’, ‘2001, My Time to Shine’, ‘2002, My Year of Enlargement’. The same emphasis is found in the themes of their crusades and conventions: ‘Possessing your Possessions’, ‘Stepping into Greatness, and

²⁴⁴ Aminu, *Prosperity*, 222.

²⁴⁵ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 78.

‘Highway to Success’, ‘The Best is yet to Come’. It is also evident in advertising slogans. For example, Action Chapel International advertises itself in bus shuttles around the city as ‘Where Overcomers never quit’. Perez Chapel headquarters proclaims, ‘Where Jesus makes Everybody Somebody.’

The following are some of the themes for programs and church names being advertised:



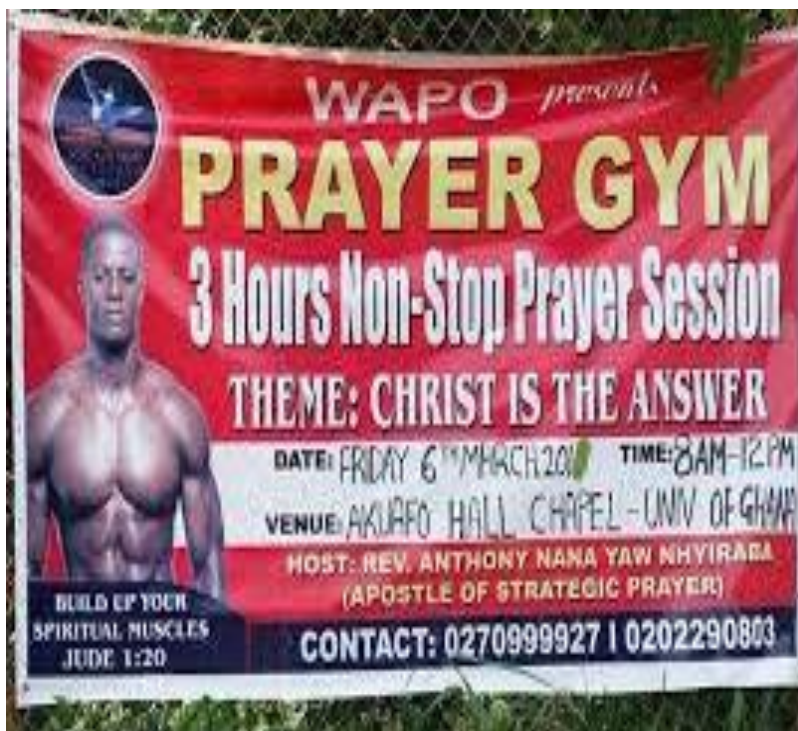
These two pictures show two separate programs promising deliverance from any kind of bondages for members and the public.



Above is a program advertising for any single person who desperately wants to marry.



The name of the church “God’s Business Assembly” shows how God can use the leader pray for someone to acquire a car.



One only needs to meet the “apostle of strategic prayer” to receive deliverance during a 3-hour prayer section.



This church is a place where the source of one's problems will be diagnosed and cured!

Although few of Charismatic churches and their leaders are beginning to refine their theology on suffering and prosperity, many still maintain their traditional position.²⁴⁶

Gifford refers to these churches (mega-churches) in general terms as having emphasis on success, achievement and wealth here and now.²⁴⁷

3.4 Teachings on suffering and Discipleship at Lighthouse Chapel International

Bishop Dag Heward-Mills is the founder and General Overseer of the Lighthouse Chapel International. His ministry started in 1982 as a medical student at the University of Ghana with an outreach group. This group, called Calvary Road Incorporated (CRI) used music and drama as a vehicle to propagate the gospel.²⁴⁸ He later moved to Korle-Bu Hospital for his 'housemanship'²⁴⁹ where he formed another fellowship, after which he resigned to establish a church called Korle-Bu Christian Centre (KCC) in 1985 in response to God's call. Here the church starts to meet every Sunday and the number

²⁴⁶ Heward-Mills, Dag. *Foundations for the Work of Ministry* (Accra: Parchment House, 2016), 30. Bishop Dag Heward- Mills in his book acknowledges that one of the tools God uses for Christian growth is suffering. And that happiness is not a life to live at all cost, but survival must be preferred.

²⁴⁷ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 78.

²⁴⁸ "Our History," Lighthouse Chapel International, accessed Feb 12, 2018, <http://www.Lighthousechapel.org/lci2/index.php/about-us/history>

²⁴⁹ A term used in medical parlances for an on-the-job training for medical doctors.

began to grow. Finally, on 23rd December 1989, The Lighthouse Chapel International was founded with Heward-Mills as the head.²⁵⁰

In one of his writings, he supports the idea that suffering is a proof of being a good Christian: “No amount of faith, healing and prosperity can remove the truth about Christian suffering. The Bible is littered with Scriptures that point us clearly to the existence of a divine plan that includes suffering for a Christian”.²⁵¹ In other words, God allows his servants to go through such experiences and for that matter one must accept it as a reality; Christian life is not only about believing but also entails suffering.

Generally, however, his teaching does not support the earlier teaching. For instance, he claims that since he became a Christian, he continued to experience increase in all areas of life because he stopped reading scriptures on decrease, failure, setbacks and limitations. He also asserts that God does not encourage poverty and would not bring anyone to Himself to demote or disgrace the person.²⁵²

According to him, people who have faith are more “blessed and prosperous” than those who do not.²⁵³ He supports this with the quotation from the Scripture: “But my righteous one will live by faith; and if he shrinks back I will not be pleased with him” (Heb 10:38) and “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him” (Heb 11:6). He, therefore, compares faith with love and argues that Jesus never

²⁵⁰ “Our History.”

²⁵¹ Dag Heward-Mills, *Losing, Suffering, Sacrificing, Dying* (Accra: Parchment House, 2016), 26. Id., *Foundations for the Work of Ministry*, 30.

²⁵² Dag Heward-Mills, *Name it! Claim it!! Take it!!! A Descriptive Term for Exercising Faith* (Accra: Parchment House, 2008), 4-5.

²⁵³ Heward-Mills, *Exercising Faith*, 2.

said, “Your love will make you whole” but rather “Your faith will make you whole” (Luke 8:48).

Similarly, Heward–Mills posits that Jesus was moved by the faith of the four men who had to force a paralytic man through a roof in order to get His attention (Mark 2:3-5). According to him, Jesus was touched by their level of faith, irrespective of their character. In other words, faith is able to work for someone no matter the flaw in one’s character.²⁵⁴

In a sermon, one of the LCI pastors, Rev. Baiden, referred to poverty as the devil and assumes personal responsibility to ensure that no believer tolerates the limitations to freedom and challenges posed by poverty.²⁵⁵ According to Bonsu and Russell, the pastor posits that one of the most dangerous things that a person suffers from is hopelessness, because hopelessness weakens the person’s resolve to fight and, consequently, the person cannot stand any opposition. Therefore, according to him the hope they give them urges them to pray, thus focusing on a target although it cannot be seen, faith makes you believe it is there. In effect, what they do as pastors is to reach out and teach the members the basic principles of life, to give them hope so that they continue to live with smiles on their faces.²⁵⁶

3.2.1 Positive Thinking

This assertion is in line with their leader, Heward-Mills’ view that a belief in prosperity would make one gravitate towards it. On the other hand, if a believer is in a church that preaches that sickness and disease are means through which God uses to humble a

²⁵⁴ Heward-Mills, *Exercising Faith*, 5-6.

²⁵⁵ Bonsu and Russell, *Pentecostalism*, 305-323. Adherents to such messages emphasize material acquisition as a means to emancipation.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Christian, then that is what he/she would believe in.²⁵⁷ He asserts that this is why Jesus said to the disciples: "... be careful what you are hearing..." (Mark 4:24). Likewise, he avows that scripture is full of prophecies and the choice one makes is what manifests in his/her life. According to him, for example, "Do not marvel as I said to you that you must be born again" (John 3:7), is what many church members believe in resulting in the members being born again. As a result, both the Evangelical and Charismatic churches have 'born again' believers.²⁵⁸

Similarly, the verse "If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7) is also used to support the idea that one would have whatever s/he desires and that this wholly is left at the discretion of the individual. Thus, in Heward-Mills opinion, a believer becomes who or what s/he says he is and can do what s/he professes. As a result, the confession of "big things" is desired because one has a "big God" who is willing to listen to the prayer of the faithful.²⁵⁹ Similarly, emphasis is laid also on 'the power of the tongue' to perform many miracles. Heward-Mills, therefore, encourages members to 'tap' into the use of the tongue as power "by naming it and claiming it." For instance, members are asked to say the following prayer loudly, "Let poverty run away from my home" and also speak to their bank accounts to come alive.²⁶⁰

3.2.2. Giving and Payment of Tithe

The charismatic church's general belief in wealth cannot be over emphasized. Giving, and most especially tithing, is prominently featured in their worship. LCI is no exception and therefore lays much emphasis on tithing. Heward –Mills uses the assertion of

²⁵⁷ Heward-Mills, *Exercising Faith*, 15.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

“Jewish belief in wealth”²⁶¹ as a yardstick, to teach both his members and readers in general the way to wealth and prosperity. In fact, he asserts that Judaism never considered poverty as a virtue and quotes the Talmud: “You are only as wealthy as you are able to give,”²⁶² to support his assertion. He refers to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as wealthy in land and cattle, a blessing from God.²⁶³

According to Heward-Mills, the wealth of biblical personalities of the Old Testament came from their faithfulness to the payment of tithes. Therefore, he avows that the result of non-payment of tithes is a curse similar to the one God pronounces on those who repay His goodness with evil. He reiterates that “people who do not pay tithes are cursed with the curse of closed heavens. The heavens over them are become brass.”²⁶⁴ The result is that they will sow much but will reap little or nothing at all. This will in turn lead to frustration and bitterness in the person.

He supports his assertion with the scripture “And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron” (Deut. 28:23); and “Cursed be the man who makes a graven or molten image, an abomination to the LORD, a thing made by the hands of a craftsman, and sets it up in secret.’ And all the people shall answer and say, ‘Amen.’” (27:15).

Similarly, he claims that “Non-tithers become poor because their minds are full of bad thoughts. Negatively-minded people do not prosper. You need to be positive and faith-

²⁶¹ Some scholars have contested this assertion in reference to Retribution Theology present in some books of the Tanak but the books of Job, Habakkuk and Psalm 73 are at variance with this assertion.

²⁶² Dag Heward-Mills, *Why Non-Tithing Christians Become Poor and How Tithing Christians can Become Very Rich* (Accra: Parchment House, 2011), 92.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 92.

²⁶⁴ Heward-Mills, *Exercising Faith*, 16-17.

filled if you are to flourish and prosper”²⁶⁵ Heward-Mills supports his claim with the scripture “For as he thinketh in his heart so is he” (Prov 23: 7). In fact, he writes:

Prosperity in its basic form consists of someone sowing a seed and later harvesting the returns. Not paying your tithes separates you from this most basic principle of sowing and reaping. When you do not pay your tithes, you harm your finances because you take away the foundations of your prosperity.²⁶⁶

In summary, LCI and for that matter Heward-Mills from his earlier submission acknowledged the role suffering plays in the life of a Christian. Subsequently, his teaching on tithing and prosperity in general vis-a-vis poverty, hardship and for that matter suffering defeat his earlier assertion. It is, therefore, difficult to reconcile his teachings today with his former position on suffering as part of a Christian life.

3.5 Teachings on Suffering and Discipleship of Christian Action Faith Ministries

Christian Action Faith Ministries, now Action Chapel International (ACI) was formed from a Saturday prayer ministry by then Rev Duncan Williams in his father’s house near Kotoka International Airport, Accra. The prayer meetings experienced rapid growth that led to the formation of the church in 1979. The church was moved from the house through several transit locations including the Associational International School, International Students’ Hostel and the Trade Fair Centre before finally established at its present site, The Prayer Cathedral, on the Spintex road Accra.²⁶⁷

Christian Action Faith Ministries’ theology is referred to as the “Faith Gospel of success, health and wealth.” This is cited from the founder, Archbishop Duncan Williams’s book, ‘You are destined to succeed.’²⁶⁸ In this book, he refers to Gen. 1:29-30 to state

²⁶⁵ Heward-Mills, *Exercising Faith*, 52.

²⁶⁶ Heward-Mills, *Tithing*, 92.

²⁶⁷ Nicolas Duncan- Williams, *Providence and Destiny, The Nicholas Duncan-Williams Story* (Accra: Action Chapel International, 2015), 60.

²⁶⁸ Bonsu, *Pentecostalism*, 78

that God's destiny for man is to be physically sound without sickness, fear, and be bold and successful in all areas of life.²⁶⁹ Thus "the word of God is a tree of life that will produce riches, honour promotion and joy"²⁷⁰. Duncan Williams posits that the ability to be poor or rich is embedded in God's spiritual laws of prosperity and that each person has the opportunity to access and be who s/he wants to be.²⁷¹

In a sermon, the Archbishop also emphasised that Ghanaians do not celebrate wealth. According to him, people who make wealth hide it rather, and live it to rot because the fear is that others would talk about them. He compares his fellow Ghanaians' attitude to that of Nigerians who have no problem with anyone celebrating his/her wealth publicly.²⁷² He, therefore, advises that the atmosphere should be created for Ghanaians to work, flourish and enjoy their success without fear and victimization. In the light of this the citizens would be willing to live well and pay their taxes to the authorities, he reiterates.²⁷³

Emphasis on prayer seems to be the means to access one's 'breakthrough.'²⁷⁴ This led to the establishment of 'Jericho Hour' in 1998 (named in line with Jos 6) a weekly prayer service by the then resident pastor of the church, Bishop James Saah. This prophetic service is dubbed, "A place where giant problems receive giant solutions"²⁷⁵ Jericho hour, therefore, becomes a place of 'spiritual warfare' where in believers pray to God for their breakthroughs. These breakthroughs are in areas such as businesses, employment, international travels, and money to build houses and to buy cars; help in

²⁶⁹ Bonsu, *Pentecostalism*, 78

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 79.

²⁷² This message was preached by Archbishop Duncan Williams on Sunday 29th April 2018 at the Prayer Cathedral, ACI.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ A general term used in the charismatic circle for encountering a good opportunity, overcoming a problem or receiving something good that one has been looking forward to.

²⁷⁵ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Pentecostal Christianity*, 36

finding a spouse and fruit of the womb. To achieve this ‘prosperity-aim’ prayers are made to fight against their enemies, to overcome their problems.²⁷⁶

According to Asamoah-Gyedu, the number of people who participated in the prayer service grew from less than thirty when it began, to over 3000 after only two years. It is suggested that the introduction of prayer and apostolic meetings, although new, led to the numerical growth of the church in such a short period. This resulted in the proliferation of like prayer services by other charismatic churches code-named: Hour of Divine visitation, Hour of Grace, Hour of Divine Breakthrough, Hour of Prophetic unction and many more.²⁷⁷

In charismatic circles, declaration of words is believed to have so much power behind them. Thus, the act of declaring these words have performance effect both in terms of blessings and cursing.²⁷⁸ One of the main areas of such declarations is in the area of giving; most especially financial obligations as a Christian.

3.3.1 Giving, Offerings and Tithes

The archbishop posits that the key to financial blessings is not in the prayer one offers since prayer only enforces one’s principles and requirements.²⁷⁹ As always is the case in the charismatic circles, he also uses the widely used scripture: “Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How are we robbing thee?’ In your tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me; the whole nation of

²⁷⁶ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Pentecostal Christianity*, 37.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁷⁸ “Every day Devotional” Duncan Williams, accessed May 28, 2018, http://www.zapmeta.ws/ws?q=Duncanwilliamsprayer&asid=ws_gs_v2420mt

²⁷⁹ Williams, *Story*, 47.

you.” (Mal 3:8-9). According to Duncan-Williams, if a person breaks the laws of God, he/she cannot experience financial favour from God.²⁸⁰

Similarly, if one does not give both tithe and offerings one does not experience financial fruitfulness. In other words, tithe and offerings are means through which financial blessings come, he reiterates.²⁸¹ Following is an example of prayer by Duncan-Williams for a financial breakthrough:

In the name of Jesus, I deploy the key of tithing in order to get access to the door of financial protection and insurance against the devourer. By divine authority that is given to a tither from the throne room perspective. I revoke any curse of indebtedness over my business, my finances, the work of my hands, programmed to spoil my finances to deplete my financial harvest, to divert goods, to hijack my blessings and financial breakthroughs in the name of Jesus. I revoke any curse programmed in the realm of the spirit that goes into effect when my tithes are not paid and diverts my blessings to someone else anytime an opportunity is coming my way. By the blood of Jesus, I override and overturn any such programming in the name of Jesus. I take stand in prayer and I deploy the protections guaranteed to tithes and use my tithe to block demonic taskmasters and satanic armed robbers in the name of Jesus²⁸²

The archbishop explains that prophecies about purposes of God for people’s lives expose them to satanic forces.²⁸³ This is an indication that Satan is not aware of what God intends to do in one’s life, till a prophetic word regarding same comes. Consequently, the devil becomes aware and fights such a prophecy through his evil forces to abort God’s plan. That is why a believer has to enforce prophecy by intensely declaring words in prayer for it to be fulfilled.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ Williams, *Story*, 48

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² Duncan-Williams, “Every day Devotional”.

²⁸³ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Pentecostal Christianity*, 37.

²⁸⁴ Duncan-Williams, *Story*, 20.

3.3.2. Poverty, Sickness and Diseases

Poverty, sickness and diseases are some of the challenges faced by a Christian. In the charismatic church these challenges are widely believed to be caused by the ‘work of the devil who fights believers.’ According to charismatic thought, God’s plan for the Christian is to be healthy and live in abundance: “Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in health; I know that it is well with your soul” (3 John 1:2). Duncan-Williams echoes his view on the will of God for His children to prosper when he writes:

The traditional and orthodox churches we grew up in held many views which were diametrically opposed to God’s word... They preach a doctrine which says in essence- poverty promotes humility. But you all know this is not true... The missionaries erred tragically by not teaching the Africans God’s Word and laws regarding sowing and reaping... Thank God he called us to declare his full counsel to our generation. I preach and teach prosperity like any other doctrine of the Bible.²⁸⁵

Williams critique on the salvific ministry of the missionaries to Africa seems to point in the direction that the gospel message, or message of salvation, they brought was not holistic, but only cantered on the preaching of the cross, without its accompanying benefits of prosperity.

Similarly, he argues that the purpose of God is to fulfil all requirements to heaven including pleasing Him and destroying the works of the devil.²⁸⁶ It is therefore unacceptable for the one who is supposed to preach the word, cast out demons and heal the sick (Mark 16:15-18), to be physically weak and sick. Good health, which includes taking good care of the physical body, he emphasizes, is a perquisite for the spirit to function well.²⁸⁷ Consequently, prayer becomes the key by which God uses to unlock the door

²⁸⁵ Nicholas Duncan-Williams, *You are Destined to Succeed* (Accra: Action Faith, 1990), 145-150.

²⁸⁶ Nicholas Duncan-Williams, *Enforcing Prophetic Decrees* (Grand Rapids, MI: Prayer Summit Publishing, 2007), 67.

²⁸⁷ Duncan-Williams, *Enforcing Prophetic Decrees*, 67.

of good health and prosperity for the believer. It is the emphasis that he lays on prayer that gives meaning to the name of Action Chapel International as the ‘Prayer Cathedral.’ According to him even Jesus who was fully God and fully man was committed to prayer no matter the miraculous work he was doing.

The archbishop maintains that the enemy attacks the physical body to prevent the believer from living the very life God ordained for him/her. In line with this, he writes a prayer for his congregants and readers for declaring and invoking the healing power of God, and at the same time cancelling all the plans of the Devil.

Father in the name of Jesus, I thank you for life and health and even sound mind... Right now in the name of Jesus I come against every spirit of sickness, illness and disease assigned against me and my loved ones. Let the spirit of sickness raised to buffet me be arrested and I command its hold over my life to be broken and permanently destroyed in the name of Jesus. By His stripes we were healed therefore I enforce the healing power of the Cross over my life right now and I break free from the yoke and chain of sickness and disease... Let anything that I’ve eaten physically or in my sleep that was planted by the enemy to cause sickness and disease, let that demonic food and contamination come out right now and go back to sender... I break free, I break out and I lose myself from every sickness and disease. Let all demonic diagnosis be reversed by the blood of the Lamb and I command them to boomerang and go back to sender. I soak my body in the blood of Jesus and I seal every crack that gives the enemy access to me. I thank you lord for healing and I enforce it now through the finished work of the Cross, in Jesus mighty name, Amen.²⁸⁸

Duncan-Williams quotes these scriptures as a support of his prayers: Matt 15:13; Ps 91:10; Deut 33:25 and 34:7.

3.6 Analysis of Data

The Charismatic churches’ teachings centre on health, success and prosperity. In the first place Heward Mills claims that he supports the idea that suffering is a proof of

²⁸⁸ Duncan-Williams, *Enforcing Prophetic Decrees*, 68-70.

being a good Christian. He also acknowledges the fact that the Bible contains many texts which agree with the fact that suffering is one of the divine plans for Christians.

On the contrary, however, most of his teachings do not support such claims. It cannot be entirely true that since he became a Christian, he continued to experience increase in all areas of life. This, he said is because he stopped reading scriptures on decrease, failure, setbacks and limitations. One would ask, if he stopped reading on these entirely how then would he reconcile it with the fact that the Bible contains many texts that show divine plans for Christians through suffering? Granted that his resolve not to read such scriptures is also true then he must be selective in his teachings.

Secondly, his position that people who do not have faith are not blessed is not supported by scripture. In fact, all the texts he cited (Luke 8:48; Heb. 10:38 and 11:16) to support his claims do not necessarily mean what he sought to portray. Even his former assertion about suffering contradicts his latter position: “No amount of faith, healing and prosperity can remove the truth about Christian suffering. The Bible is littered with Scriptures that point us clearly to the existence of a divine plan that includes suffering for a Christian”.²⁸⁹

Again, he asserts that once a person acts with faith the issue about character is immaterial. He referred to the people who carried a paralytic person through a roof to draw Jesus’ attention (Mark 2:3-5). According to him, Jesus was moved and only interested in their faith. Although Jesus responded positively to their faith in Him to heal the sick coupled with the fact that He did not comment on their persons does not necessarily mean that He was not concerned about their character if indeed they had any problem

²⁸⁹ Heward-Mills, *Losing*, 26.

in that area. For scripture did not record any comment on these people for us to think so.

Heward-Mills' view that whatever a Christian believes in and confesses is what he would get is also quite flawed. He quotes "If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7) as a basis for his assertion. Indeed, God honours his word by answering the prayer of His children, but one must also remember that He answers prayer according to His will.

In the area of wealth and prosperity, these two selected Churches (ACI and LCI) believe that every Christian is enjoined by God to be wealthy and prosperous. This is in support of Heward - Mills earlier reference to Jewish belief in same.

First, the assertion that Jews believe in wealth is not based on Biblical truth. Some scholars have contested this assertion in reference to Retribution Theology present in some books of the Tanak but the books of Job, Habakkuk and Psalm 73 challenge this assertion.

Further, his claim that the result of non-payment of tithe is a curse similar to the one God puts on those who repay His goodness with evil is also selective. He reiterates that "people who do not pay tithes are cursed with the curse of closed heavens. The heavens over them are become brass."²⁹⁰ The result is that they will sow much but will reap little or nothing at all. The response, contrarily to this assertion, is that there are many rich people who do not pay tithe and are also not Christians in the first place. The fact is that to become rich or prosper to a large extent is a result of good planning and hard work.

²⁹⁰ Heward-Mills, *Exercising Faith*, 16-17.

Action Chapel International, and for that matter Duncan-Williams, is the proponent of the “Faith Gospel of success, health and wealth” which was cited from his book ‘You are destined to succeed.’²⁹¹ In this book he refers to Gen. 1:29-30 as God’s destiny for man is to be physically sound without sickness, fear, and be bold and successful in all areas of life.²⁹² Thus “the word of God is a tree of life that will produce riches, honour promotion and joy”²⁹³.

In response to his belief and specifically to the scripture text he used (Gen. 1:29-30), one would also cite from Genesis to counter his assertion.

To the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return. (Gen 3:16-19)²⁹⁴

Again, in a sermon in support of this position about celebrating wealth, the Archbishop suggests that Ghanaians do not celebrate wealth. According to him, people who make wealth hide it rather, and live it to rot because the fear is that others would talk about them. In responding to his view, one would say that as much as God is not against people acquiring wealth, He admonishes us about how to give to others and also live a modest life: “And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:23; 1Tim 2).

²⁹¹ Bonsu, *Pentecostalism*, 78.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 78.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ One thing about the Charismatic Church preachers is that they are selective in their use of scriptures and most times the texts are used out of context to suit a particular situation.

Additionally, Duncan-Williams asserts that prophecies about purposes of God for people's lives expose them to satanic forces.²⁹⁵ As much as this assertion may be true it is also a fact that most of the people God used in the Bible were victims of this assertion, but it was through most of the battles they fought that brought them to fulfil God's purpose. In fact, God literally used their problems and persecutions to perform His will in their lives. Examples of biblical characters, such as Moses, Joseph, Daniel and apostle Paul, confirm that through persecutions and trials God used to accomplish His purpose on earth.

3.7 Conclusion

The Charismatic church in earlier submission developed out of the mainline and Pentecostal churches as non-denominational. The membership is largely youth and is characterized by features with emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit expressed through tongue speaking, deliverances, prophecies and healings. Their doctrine hinges on health and well-beings and "here and there now" described by Kudzai.²⁹⁶ The charismatic belief in Salvation is not only deliverance from sin and its consequences of death but also a journey into wealth, peace, good health, long life and among others. This belief is reflected in slogans, themes, songs and prayer topics found in their worship expressions.

For instance, although Bishop Dag Heward- Mills once said that suffering is one of the proofs of a good Christian, most of his teaching and preaching are at variance with his earlier thought. He attests to the fact that his continuous experience of success and prosperity stems from the fact that he stopped reading scriptures on decrease, failure, setbacks and limitations. In support of this he quotes Heb 10:38; 11:16 to show that with

²⁹⁵ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Pentecostal Christianity*, 37.

²⁹⁶ Kudzai, *African Christianity*, 416.

faith one is able to achieve all that God promises to Christian. In addition, one main belief in LCI is to instil hope in the members to have faith and not to give up. The hope given them inspires them to pray and confess scriptures in line with their prayer.

Similarly, ACI theology is premised on “Faith Gospel of Success, Health and Wealth.” In an explanation, the founder, Archbishop Duncan Williams, writes a book entitled “You are destined to succeed” where he cites scripture (Gen 1:29-30) as god’s destiny for man to be physically sound without sickness, fear and to be successful in all areas of life.

By and large, it is obvious to say that in every charismatic belief and thought scripture is used in support. For instance, “Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in health; I know that it is well with your soul” (3Jn 1:2) is used to support the belief in prosperity and good health. Besides, Malachi 3:8-10 is also used to support giving of offering and tithes.

In summary, charismatic belief is that God has provided all that it takes in both His word and life to make the Christian live without suffering. Thus, suffering cannot and could not have come from God and for that matter every effort must be made by the Christian to resist it.

However, the reality is that members of these churches continue to experience suffering in one area of life or the other. It is in line with this reality that an intercultural reading is proposed in the next chapter. This is to engage the reality in the Charismatic Churches on one hand and exegesis of the text of Jesus’ suffering as an example to the disciples in Mark 14:32 -15:47 on the other. The essence is to challenge the preaching of the charismatic church by looking at how Mark, the evangelist, incorporates the issue of suffering in his narrative about Jesus and disciples’ identity

CHAPTER FOUR

INTERCULTURAL READING

4.1 Introduction

Intercultural reading takes place when an interpreter's culture engages the culture of the text. This chapter, therefore, employs the intercultural reading espoused by Loba-Mkole to engage text and reality.

The African scholar affirms that the Bible is a living example of intercultural Hermeneutics between the word of God and human cultures.²⁹⁷ Loba-Mkole further explains that an intercultural reading transpires when an interpreters' context employs the culture of the word of God.

For this reason, two realities were used. These include the reality of the text, Mark 14:32—15:41, and the reality of the contemporary context, the selected Charismatic churches. In analysing the reality of the text, the concept of discipleship and suffering in Mark's narrative were considered because Mark's narrative consistently links suffering to discipleship, to inform readers that suffering plays an important role in discipleship.

4.2 Summary of the Culture of the Text

Suffering and discipleship are major themes running through Mark's narrative. The rugged journey of Jesus to the cross was evident as early as the third chapter when the Pharisees met with the Herodians to kill Him (3:6). Furthermore, Jesus, through His teachings, explains His mission, the need to suffer and be rejected (8:31).

²⁹⁷ Loba-Mkole, "Biblical Exegesis," 13-54.

Consequently, he referred to the Cross, and for that matter persecution, as a proof of a true disciple.

It is, therefore, evident that Christ's suffering was a pointer to the fact that suffering is real, and every believer was to expect that s/he would encounter it in the journey to become a true disciple. Besides, it establishes the fact that Christians, as followers of Christ, should and will experience suffering in the process of their daily Christian walk.

Mark shows through his narrative how the twelve disciples continuously do not understand Jesus' mission and for that matter that of a disciple. On one of these occasions He had to rebuke Peter whom He referred to as 'Satan' for being a stumbling block, preventing Jesus from going to the cross (8:33). In fact, Peter has since failed to understand that he, following Jesus, would eventually end up on the cross. In this text Jesus demonstrates clearly that anyone who decides to become a disciple must first deny oneself, take up the cross before following Him (8:34).

The evangelist draws attention to the fact that in this instance Jesus does not speak to the disciples alone: "Jesus called the crowd, along with his disciples" (8:34a). This is an indication that discipleship is not limited to the twelve but also to those who are willing to follow Him; hence, those who are willing to take up their cross and follow Jesus.

Mark with his narrative makes the community aware that the lot of their master, Jesus, leads ultimately to the cross. Consequently, the way of a would-be disciple may also end up on the cross. The work of Kittel, therefore, confirms that the statement *εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἀκολουθεῖν, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθείτω μοι* (8:34b) is an indication of a fellowship of life and death with the

Messiah. This fellowship, according to him, emanates from first of all sharing in His mission of salvation.²⁹⁸

4.3 Summary of the Culture of Charismatic Churches

The Charismatic churches in general terms are associated with having emphasis on success, good health, achievement and wealth here and now. Gifford summarized their theology as being physical, emotional and economic emancipation; thus, preaching a “gospel of success, health and wealth.”²⁹⁹ The prominence of success as a charismatic theme is reflected in the names of churches such as Winners Chapel, Victory Bible Church and Power House Chapel International and many more.

Similarly, their traits are also in the titles of convention and conferences they hold “Breaking Barriers”, “Retreat for Promotion”, and “Daughters of Destiny”. Besides, they have as bumper stickers, prevalent in Ghana: ‘Unstoppable Achievers’, ‘I am a Winner’, ‘The Struggle is Over’, ‘I am a Stranger to Failure’, ‘There is Power in the Blood’, ‘My God is able’, ‘I am smelling Success’, Then there are the biblical snippets; ‘More than Conquerors’ (Rom. 8:37), ‘If God be for us who can be against us?’ (Rom 8:31), ‘I can do all things through him who strengthens me’ (Phil 4:13).

In summary, Charismatic preachers and believers usually use scriptures, often quoted out of context, to support such themes (3John 1:2; Rom 8:37; Mal 3:8-10). They avoid biblical passages which have anything to do with virtues associated with suffering and failure and attribute any of such ‘misfortunes’ in the life of a Christian to the devil’s work. The theology of the cross, therefore, does not appeal to the charismatic preachers and believers.

²⁹⁸ G. Kittel, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1967).

²⁹⁹ Gifford, *African Christianity*, 78.

Smail, in analyzing their position, attests:

Much teaching in the renewal nowadays—perhaps in contrast to its earlier beginnings consist more of testimonies to and anecdotes about the present day works of the Spirit than expositions of the word of Scripture... Bolstered up by what has happened to us and by the testimonies of others, we can easily come to see ourselves as living in a world of supernatural power that leads us from triumph to triumph where the weak, desolate sufferer of Calvary has been left far behind or at any rate has ceased to dominate the scene.³⁰⁰

However, the following should be noted:

- a. The ineluctable presence of suffering in human life;
- b. The risk of over-demonizing of life's issues;
- c. Faithfulness required of us to preach and live the gospel which is centred on proclamation of the cross (1 Cor. 1).

Taking into consideration the biblical position on suffering vis a vis the theology of the Charismatic churches, an intercultural reading of the latter and Mark's narrative on suffering and discipleship is necessary. This is to challenge charismatic churches' position on discipleship and suffering as related to Jesus's suffering.

4.4 Engagement

In achieving the purpose of this work, these two cultures — the culture of the text and that of the two charismatic churches — are engaged in order to deal with the issue about the reality of suffering in the life of a Christian.

First of all, the centrality of the cross in the narrative of the second gospel is an indication that the community had issues with accepting the cross. The text is therefore used

³⁰⁰ Tom Smail, "The Cross and the Spirit: Towards a Theology of Renewal," in *Charismatic Renewal*, eds., Tom Smail, Andrew Walker, and Nigel Wright (London: SPCK, 1995).

to explain the meaning of the cross and discipleship in order to challenge charismatic churches' thought on the issue. In Charismatic thought, it is unacceptable to believe that God as a Father could allow His own to suffer. According to them, it is rather, the devil that is responsible for such sufferings.

The contemporary Charismatic community, therefore, stands to benefit with the explanations offered by the text: cross bearing is one of the lots of discipleship and the reality of suffering. Consequently, this would affect the theology of the charismatic church in accepting suffering as a means to an end, rather than seeing all forms of suffering as evil.

Jesus, in the garden of Gethsemane, foresaw what would befall Him. He, therefore, called His closed disciples to stay with Him (14:32-42). The mark of a true friendship which they were expected to show at the moment eluded them, when they failed to stand in prayer with Jesus even for an hour (v. 38). The question is would their prayer have prevented Jesus from going to the cross? No! Because the will of the Father for Him was more important when He Himself asked that the Father's will be done (v. 37). Their presence there was first of all to pray so that they do not fall into temptation (14:38), and more so to have the strength to persevere even in suffering. Consequently, a follower or a disciple of Christ should first of all be ready to share in Jesus' destiny which includes suffering.

Betrayal is also part of what a believer would go through as a disciple. Jesus himself had predicted how one of his own would betray him: "And as they were at table eating, Jesus said, 'Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.' They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, 'Is it I?'" He said to them, 'It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me'" (14:18-20).

One thing is certain; if it happened to Jesus, then his followers must also be ready for it “Remember the word that I said to you, A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also” (John 15:20-21).

As a believer, most times vengeance must be deferred to the Lord (Rom 12:19). God must be the one who fights for his own. As it were, one of the disciples tries to fight for Jesus by cutting of the ear of the servants of the high priest who came to arrest Jesus (14:47). Jesus knowing that the battle was not a physical one and that he had predicted the action of Judas (14:18-20), restored the servant’s ear (Luke 22:51). Indeed, it is evident that if this disciple had known the plan of God for their master, he would not have drawn his sword. This confirms the earlier assertion that Jesus’ disciples did not up till then understand him and his teachings, a situation the charismatic church finds itself in concerning discipleship.

Again, Jesus’ arrest and his subsequent statement, “Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled” (14:49), shows his captors were Jews. In Lane’s views the reference to being with them in the temple (a house of prayer) and Jesus public teaching were not unlawful to demand such arrest like an armed robber.³⁰¹ According to him, Mark regards the arrest as both reproach and self-defence, a proof of Jesus innocence.³⁰²

Going forward, the disciples, at the moment of the arrest, became afraid and the option left for them was to flee and leave their master in the hands of the captors (14:50). The disciples by this couldn’t fulfil their mandates of taking up the cross to follow Jesus.

³⁰¹ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 525.

³⁰² *Ibid*, 525.

Indeed, discipleship is not proven in ‘fair weather ‘times but in times of persecution, rejection and intimidating conditions; no doubt one of them who was following him also fled naked.³⁰³

Jesus went through many humiliating circumstances even before his crucifixion and eventual death. Lane posits that the spitting and administering of blows on Jesus during the time of his trial, conventionally was a sign of rejection and denial.³⁰⁴ The fact is his followers had earlier given up on him just after his arrest. A Christian going through trials and hardship should therefore not be surprised if fellow Christians, especially close ones, repudiate him/her; a feat Jesus himself experienced.

Peter’s three-time denial came as no surprise since Jesus predicated it (14:30). Collins notices the graduation of Peter’s denial from “I don’t know what you are talking about” (v. 68) to self-imposed curse “I don’t know this man you are talking about” with a curse (v. 71). Weeden referred to Peter’s denial as a complete and alter rejection of Jesus by a disciple.³⁰⁵ Here again, because of fear, one of the disciples (Peter) tries to save his life rather than defend his master in contrast to what Jesus told them “For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.” (Mark 8:35).

The climax of Jesus suffering was on the cross. Even before that he was so weak that he could not carry it alone through the journey³⁰⁶. Similarly, according to Collins, the pain Jesus was going through was so severe that wine was given him as anaesthesia.³⁰⁷

³⁰³ Most scholars have argued that the disciple in question is Mark the Evangelist himself.

³⁰⁴ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 539.

³⁰⁵ Weeden, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict*.

³⁰⁶ Garland, *Mark*, 126.

³⁰⁷ Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 252.

The time for the crucifixion came and the son of man is crucified in between two robbers (15:27). Earlier, James and John, son of Zebedee requested that Jesus allow them to sit, each of them on his left and right side in his kingdom (10:37). The two disciples, going forward, were nowhere around the place of crucifixion to see these robbers rather on the left and right sides of Jesus. According to Brooks, the cross is the real place of occupying the place of 'honour' in the kingdom of God.³⁰⁸ It must therefore be realized that the place of a disciple is not to avoid persecution and shame but to face it, demonstrating a sign of tenacity, faithfulness and selfless attitude.

Finally, Jesus' last words "my God, my God, why have you abandoned me" were that of an expression of dejection, rejection and abandonment. Hooker posits that Jesus experienced complete desolation not only by the disciple but everyone including God his father.³⁰⁹ Yes, he was forsaken by the Father because he bore our sins on our behalf. (Heb. 9:28, Pet 3:18, Rom 3:25).

It is therefore pertinent for one to understand and appreciate the value and meaning of the cross as explained by Mark. Indeed, it is only after counting this cost that one can become a true disciple.

4.4.1. Centrality of the Cross in Mark

Discipleship in Mark is not only a matter of following Jesus but a journey of self-denial and readiness to carry one's cross to follow Him. It is a conscious endeavour to be ready to face rejection, suffering and even death, a journey the Lord Jesus was willing to undergo and ultimately did.

³⁰⁸ Brooks, *Mark*, 54.

³⁰⁹ Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 375.

Admittedly, the cross was necessary because it was a major act in Christ's mission in obedience to the will of the Father. Mark in his passion narrative account speaks of Jesus as having a type of learning experience in his suffering, the genesis of which is expressed in Jesus statement, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to you. Remove this cup from me, yet not what I will but what you will" (14:35). Jesus learns obedience to the will of the Father even if He had to suffer. The emphasis here has to do with what God wills for his children, no matter the difficulties a believer goes through in pleasing Him.

However, it has become apparent that in many charismatic circles, the phenomenon of suffering is rather perceived as the will of Satan rather than the will of the Father. Less emphasis is laid on the teachings on standing for justice and true values. Respect and recognition accorded leaders in the church are based on 'charisma' ability to demonstrate power through spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12; 14) rather than evaluate the presence of the 'fruits' of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). The result is the increasing phenomenon of corruption in all ambits in the Country.

In Mark 8:34, Jesus describes the steps of someone who wants to become a disciple "And he called to him the multitude with his disciples, and said to them, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." Jesus knowing the cost of discipleship gives three steps or qualifications of who should follow Him. These are self-denial, cross bearing and finally a resolve to follow Him.

4.4.2. A Disciple is to Deny Himself / Herself

Jesus in Mark's narrative gives conditions for His would-be disciples. The first condition is denial of oneself. The verb ἀπαρνησάσθω (deny, disown, repudiate) is in the imperative. It is the same verb that is used in Peter's denial of Jesus (14:72). According to Erdman, self-denial does not mean denying oneself of something but rather losing

sight of self or forsaking one's selfish affectations and worldly safeties in order to follow Jesus.³¹⁰ Thayer concurs with the assertion that self-denial is one having no acquaintance with or to be detached from himself or has nothing to do with himself. It also means to forget oneself or lose sight of self and one's interest.³¹¹

Consequently, to the disciple, the verb ἀπαρνηομαι means that one's desires and affections become less important considering what it takes to follow Jesus. It means readiness to be mocked, hungry, looked down upon and to suffer because of Christ. Hargreaves puts it in this way that every disciple should be willing to sacrifice for the other even to the extent of being prepared to die for a good course.³¹²

In effect, the verb ἀπαρνηομαι signifies a call to action to surrender to the will of God. In many cases, the desire to hold on to the 'self' is very strong but a disciple is the one who is able to say "let go" and "let God" in the mist of challenging situations where the edge to listen to 'self' happens to be the easier option. The disciple who takes the easier option is, therefore, not fit to be called as such. At the end of the day, if one is able to deny 'self' then he/she is also willing to take up his/her cross and follow Christ.

Contrarily, in the Charismatic churches because any form of hardship is attributed to the work of the devil, every effort is made to avoid it. Lack, failure, barrenness, hindrances and anything negative in a Christian's life is attributed to the work of the devil or through demons and other evil spirits and for that matter prayer must be offered to stop it.

³¹⁰ C.R. Erdman. *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker, 1988), 135.

³¹¹ J.H. Thayer. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977), 54.

³¹² J. Hargreaves, *A Guide to St Mark's Gospel* (London UK: SPCK, 1995).

However, Smail alerts that any struggle in life that is not well-examined and the only solution is to offer prayer against it or declare success and prosperity for it is likely to be an abuse of power.³¹³ Indeed, he reiterates that:

God's purpose in such situations is not always to take us out of what is threatening to hurt or destroy us but is sometimes rather to take us through it. Our ultimate victory comes not from escaping evil but from being given the ability to endure and bear it, the way that Jesus bore it on the cross, so that the death that was its ultimate destructive onslaught upon him become the way to his own Easter victory and to the world's salvation.³¹⁴

Similarly, Asamoah-Gyedu agrees by acknowledging that the 'theology of liberation' practiced by the Charismatic church loses sight of the high cost of discipleship taught by Jesus but rather focuses on success, promotion, wellbeing, among others.³¹⁵

4.4.3 A Disciple is to Carry His/Her Cross

Carrying one's own cross is part of what makes one a disciple of Christ. Hargreaves holds the view that becoming a disciple is to share in Christ's destiny. It is a challenge to abase oneself to an extent that one's dignity does not matter when it comes to sacrificing because of Christ.³¹⁶ Similarly, for Oden and Hall, the cross signifies one's own anxieties and sufferings in the body which is modelled in the form of a cross.³¹⁷

In Williamson's view, however, the cross in reference here is not the "burdens life imposes from without but rather the painful, redemptive action voluntarily undertaken for others."³¹⁸ To Hendriksen, compared to what a convict would do when s/he is

³¹³ Tom Smail, "The Cross," 65.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 65.

³¹⁵ Asamoah-Gyedu, *Pentecostal Christianity*, 114.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ T.C. Oden and C.A Hall (eds.), *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Mark* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998).

³¹⁸ Lamar Williamson, *Mark, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1973), 154.

compelled, the disciple does it voluntarily by decisively accepting pain, shame, sickness, persecution and death for the cause of Christ.³¹⁹

Her line of thinking obviously deviates from the modern Charismatic thought on the position of suffering in Christian life and practice. But whether or not Julian was right in her understanding that suffering was a necessary part of Christian development, her account speaks of the shift in expectation and experience of Christians throughout the ages concerning the cost of following Christ. The question then is; what gain is there in Christian suffering?

Richard Baxter coined the phrase “the art of suffering” to refer to the sufferer’s state of mind in reaction to various forms of sore events that had a divine purpose. For Baxter, the doctrine of providence encompassed every facet of life and in every individual Christian in knowledge, will, and power of God. Thus, divine providence implies that all the unfortunate circumstances that occur in the world have a larger purpose or goal and will consequently tend to the good by the loving sovereignty of God. This doctrine, therefore, gives Christian suffering a meaning and places it within the confines of God’s will for believers.

Discipleship, therefore, involves denying oneself or simply death to self. Taylor explains that Jesus’ request for the disciples to carry their cross shows the greatest level of obedience. He reiterates the fact that Mark’s reference to the cross was metaphorical, meaning death.³²⁰ Erdman concurs with the claim that taking up the cross was more than a burden or distress, a journey to the place of crucifixion and readiness to die.³²¹

³¹⁹ William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Mark: New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books House, 1982), 330.

³²⁰ Taylor, *Mark*.

³²¹ Erdman, *Mark*. 135.

Consequently, having taken the cross, Christ's mind, His desires, shame and sufferings become that of the disciple's. In effect, the disciple takes upon himself the very life of Christ. It is after this that s/he would be ready to follow Him.

4.4.4 A Disciple is to Follow Jesus “On the Way”

The word ἀκολουθεῖτω (8:34) is an imperative present, expressing a command to follow or continue to follow, accompany or follow as a disciple. Indeed, the use of the verb in this form is limited only to the New Testament. In the Old Testament it was used in reference to YHWH (Deut 13:5; 1Kings 14:8). Even in this case, the usage was not to follow to become like God but rather obeying Him since He is unrivalled, and no one can compare to Him.³²²

The imperative form of the verb is a strong indication of the relationship Jesus wants His followers to have with Him. It is living a life of self-denial, mortification and contempt of the world. It is also to renounce all confidence of oneself devoid also of self-righteousness. Luke's, rendition could be a way of agreeing with Mark “carry their cross daily (continuously)”. In other words, it presents a strong hermeneutic key to who a disciple is.

4.4.5. Implication for Charismatic Christians

From the biblical point of view, therefore, suffering is an indispensable part of the Christian life on the merit that it helps in the general building up of the believer. For

³²² Kittel, *Theological Dictionary*.

In the New Testament ἀκολουθεω appeared 56 times in the Synoptics and 14 times in John. In Acts it appeared 3 times and only once in Paul's letters and 6 times in Revelation. It was however used in the indicative with reference to the crowd that followed Jesus (Mark 10:32; Matt 4:28, 8:1). Curiously, where it refers to individuals, the imperative form is always employed, especially in cases where Jesus calls His disciples (Matt 8:23; Mark 1:18; Lk 5:11 and Jn 1:37).³²²

the early believers of Christ, suffering was a constant part of their lives. Their daily walk was characterised with sacrifices and expectations of suffering.

Deducing from the above, one feels that Charismatics do not always subscribe to the religious view that a life may be deemed successful in spite of failing at human endeavours. For most of them there is no virtue in pain and suffering, and they see it as their God-given responsibility to stay out of such misery. It is no surprise that their messages appeal to a large number of people who have no alternative pathway to economic and social mobility. Their converts join them in the hope of invoking the miracles of God to be delivered from material poverty.

On the contrary, if material riches or prosperity are the result of salvation, then why are so many Christians all over the world struggling to make a living? The teaching that God wants everybody rich is an illusion. This is because focusing much on physical riches would result in lust for material gains.

Again, the emphasis of the Charismatic churches on power and success fronted Smail to resolve that “a spirit who diverts us from the cross into a triumphant world in which the cross does not hold sway may turn out to be a very unholy spirit”.³²³ Notwithstanding, Asamoah-Gyedu admits that Charismatic preaching sometimes is a motivation for people to work hard to relieve themselves out of poverty, sordidness and other kinds of unfortunate situations.³²⁴ Although laudable, he however does not agree with their budge from the theology of the cross to that of glory which is in adverse with the

³²³ Smail, “The Cross and the Spirit”, 58.

³²⁴ Asamoah-Gyedu, *Pentecostal Christianity*, 117.

principles of God.³²⁵ To him, the recognition of God in His Glory and Majesty can only come after first recognising Him in His meekness and humiliation.³²⁶

In Daniel 7:9-14, the title “son of man” is used in reference to one to whom God bestows glory, dominion and kingship³²⁷. However, according to Matera, reading the whole context from vv. 5-16 indicates a reference to one in suffering. He avers that the title is used in identification of a man with a suffering people, a credential which compelled him to the suffering of the holy ones of the Most-High.³²⁸ For this reason Jesus must suffer that which is of the lot of man, a fate of rejection, suffering and death, a situation necessary to understand Mark’s Christology. Hence, Charismatic church’s teachings must therefore, take cognisance of Mark’s Christology in order to understand this lot of man.

From the analysis, one can say that Jesus’ teachings on discipleship focused on informing beforehand the cost of discipleship, a sacrifice the disciples would have to make before following Him. According to Mark’s narrative, when Jesus predicted His first passion, the response from Peter (one of the disciples) led to the rebuke from Jesus and His subsequent teachings on discipleship. It is evident that the mention of discipleship does not refer only to the twelve (8:34) but His followers in general and by extension all Christians. This assertion was confirmed when John tried to limit Jesus’ statement to the twelve (9:38) and the subsequent response from Jesus (9:39-40) contrary to that of John.

Similarly, Jesus attached much importance to discipleship by using organs of the body to illustrate the cost that goes into it. He demonstrates how parts of the body that are

³²⁵ Ibid., 117.

³²⁶ Asamoah-Gyedu, *Pentecostal Christianity*, 118.

³²⁷ Matera, *New Testament Theology*, 18.

³²⁸ Ibid., 18.

well cherished need to be sacrificed before one is able to enter into the kingdom of God. Unfortunately, the disciples who didn't count the cost before following Him "immediately abandon their nets and follow Him" (1:18-20); and became part of His ministry (6:12f), and for that matter were unable to understand Him (10:14; 14:37). Subsequently, the disciples' lack of understanding the teachings of Jesus was also evident in the miracle of the loaves (6:52). According to Quesnell, the climax of their misunderstanding Him was when He finally asked a question to that effect "And he said to them, do you not yet understand?" (8:21).³²⁹

One area also in which Charismatic churches distinguish themselves from the mainline churches is the assertion that they are Bible-believing. According to Asamoah-Gyedu, biblical passages are used to address existential circumstances. However, these passages are often selectively used to tackle situations that draw their attention.³³⁰ Jenkins concurs with Asamoah –Gyedu in emphasizing their literal interpretation of scripture:

For one thing the Bible has found a congenial home among communities who identify with the social and economic realities it portrays, no less than the political environments in which Christians find themselves. For the growing churches of the global south, the Bible speaks to everyday, real-world issues of poverty and debt, famine and urban crises, racial and gender operations, state brutality and persecution. The omnipresence of poverty promotes the awareness of the transience of life, the dependence of individuals and nations on God, and the distrust of the secular.³³¹

This phenomenon is a motivation to misuse or quote scripture out of context to suit the prevailing circumstance.

³²⁹ Q. Quesnell, *The Mind of Mark: Interpretation and Method Through the Exegesis of Mark*, AnBib 38 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 96.

³³⁰ Asamoah-Gyedu, *Pentecostal Christianity*, 162.

³³¹ Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 5.

Tithing and giving in general is a very important teaching in the Charismatic church. It is no doubt directly linked to prosperity.³³² Ashimolowo could not have put it rightly in his book entitled “The Coming Wealth Transfer” a book on principles of giving: “Giving is a principle of prosperity in contradiction to secular opinions, but which provokes the blessing of the Lord... it opens the windows of heaven, it rebukes every financial devourer, and it stops them dead in their tracks. Giving becomes your powerful seed for a future harvest.”³³³ In addition, he asserts that tithes and offerings achieve two different things. First, the tithe must open the windows of heaven and secondly, the freewill offering brings down the blessings.³³⁴

4.5 Discipleship and Suffering

The gospel of Mark as a narrative does not explain the phenomenon of suffering. The fact is that suffering is a mystery that needs to be accepted and lived. However, other biblical texts explore the mystery of suffering and, therefore, are used in the following paragraphs to elucidate this phenomenon.

Hebrews 12:5-11 reminds believers that they are chosen in the sight of God as sons who can be corrected and disciplined. Proverbs 3:11-12 also buttresses this as a word of encouragement and for this reason it encourages believers to pay heed to it. By using these two passages the researcher considers three possible responses among Christians to the hardships they encounter.

³³² Asamoah-Gyedu, *Pentecostal Christianity*, 88.

³³³ Ashimolowo, *Wealth Transfer*, 193-4.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

The first is that some who encounter hardship may act indifferent to their sufferings. Others may become incredulous by them, but the appropriate response, which is the third, is to rejoice in them.

The warning not to despise the Lord's discipline brings out the possibility that some may be in danger of disregarding the fact that God's hand is at work in their hardships and suffering as well as in their joys and pleasures. In and through their bitter experiences, God may be speaking some truths to them and about them that they would otherwise never hear or understand if all was well with them. Perchance, it is a clarion call to renew their faith in God's providential care and concern and a call to an additional willingness to follow him in obedience despite the consequence of their immediate difficulties. Maybe it was essential for these believers to go through discipline as a precursor to pursuing God's will and not their own, in their journey of becoming more like their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.³³⁵

In Charismatic thought, however, a Christian who experiences varying degrees of suffering such as sickness, poverty, loss of job and any form of tragedy is considered as 'unspiritual' and bereft of the knowledge of biblical principles. Heward-Mills, therefore, encourages members to tap into the use of the tongue as power by 'naming it' and 'claiming it.' For instance, members are asked to say the prayer loudly "Let poverty run away from my home" and also speak to their bank accounts to come alive.³³⁶

The second possible reaction to Christian suffering is to become overwhelmed. The believer becomes discouraged when that occurs. As adversities overhaul them, they tend to develop a keen sense of hopelessness stemming from a feeling of dejectedness

³³⁵ Brown, *Christ above All*, 232.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

by their Lord. However, they need to be reminded that believers who endure misfortune have to keep in mind that the God who tests them is also the God who relieves them of their burdens. His assurance is to never test them beyond their capacity to overcome but to always make enough grace available for the circumstance. As Paul said, "...God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear (1 Cor. 10:13b).

Thirdly, scripture upholds that Christians should rejoice in their sufferings. This is true since the Lord chastises those he loves. The challenge of privation and distress, persecution and difficulty, temptations and trials, should not lead Christians to anguish and despondency because Mark includes all these as part of discipleship. Those who do not experience God's love in this way are not tested by him. Brown concurs: "The devil is content to leave most of his subjects in the superficial 'peace' of spiritual apathy and ignorance. Those who are in the Lord's company are sure to be wounded by the arrows which are constantly directed at Christ himself."³³⁷ These miseries prove that those who withstand them belong to God's family.

The reassurance gathered from these verses principally has to do with the identity of these Christians. They are the true disciples who are accepted by God as his own children. Secondly, paternal discipline marks true sons from those that are not as the scripture says. "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 or our spirits and live!" (Heb. 12:7-9).

³³⁷ Brown, *Christ above All*, 232.

The writer of this letter is able to lay hold on these remarkable truths because he is persuaded that God's fathering is undeniably done in such a way that it meets the needs of each of his children. This chastisement is essentially purposeful and effectively useful in the hands of God who disciplines his children for their good. This means that there is direct benefit from the suffering Christians experience and the fact is that they are used by God as part of the process of discipleship according to Mark.

Raymond Brown remarks,

By his very nature as our loving and generous Father, he could not possibly introduce any form of discipline into our lives which would not be of real help to us. More than all else, he longs that we might share his holiness; or our closeness to God in sanctification often becomes far more real to us in the grim and difficult episodes of life. Adversity sometimes helps us to enter more fully into our indebtedness to God, our partnership with Christ and our reliance on the Spirit. In this way we can more fully share his holiness.³³⁸

No discipline is enjoyable at the time of its enforcement; in fact, it is aching. But Christians are encouraged to always remember the eventual benefit of their bitter experience of adversity, since "later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it (Heb.12:11b)." Although, this may take time, as it takes time for a tree to produce fruits, the produce that is worth waiting for is that of righteousness and peace by the Father in their lives. Such discipline, through suffering, cannot be taken for granted. Those who have been trained through it recognize that it will require great deal of effort which will consequently result in great reward. This metaphor is further echoed in John's message to the Laodicea church in which Christ affirms "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline (Rev 3:19)."

³³⁸ Brown, *Christ above All*, 235.

Peterson considers this statement as part of the spiritual directives Christ Jesus instituted in the Church, besides affirmation, rectification, and inspiration. This three-fold directives groom the body of Christ into maintaining confidence in Christ in an antagonistic environment. This development is what the Greeks called *paidea* (from *paideua*, i.e. “to chastise”), the procedure by which the society passes on its passion and qualities from across generations. He perceives the process of correction as occurring in seven aspects. These aspects are;

- a) where the church is trained to love (Ephesus),
- b) to suffer (Smyrna),
- c) to tell the truth (Pergamum),
- d) to be holy (Thyatira),
- e) to be authentic (Sardis),
- f) to be in mission (Philadelphia),
- g) And to worship (Laodicea).³³⁹

Thompson contends that God’s methods in dealing with his church have not changed over the years. He puts it this way, “The family of God still learns lessons through suffering.”³⁴⁰ John Calvin would concur,

As long as we live we are with regard to God no more than children and this is the reason why the rod should ever be applied to our backs...for if no one is to be found among us, at least no prudent man and of a sound judgment, who does not correct his children – for without discipline they cannot be led to a right conduct – how much less will God neglect so necessary a remedy, who is the best and wisest Father?³⁴¹

³³⁹ Eugene H. Peterson, *Reversed Thunder: The Revelation of John and the Praying Imagination* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 53.

³⁴⁰ J.A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1978), 136.

³⁴¹ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 317.

Similarly, other church patriarchs have taken the same approach. John Chrysostom of the 4th century AD and Oecumenius of the 10th, interpret the letter to Hebrew in the same way, both affirming that God's discipline endorses our status as his sons. Chrysostom condemns the idea that the suffering of ills meant that God reviled the individual. Oecumenius acknowledges the modicum of God's correction when he writes, "For human fathers do not always prevail to discipline us so that they can render us perfect, but God always disciplines us and makes us perfect. For the process of discipline stops when the father dies or the child comes of age."

Theodore of Cyr augments, Fathers are in the habit of disciplining their true children, and if they see them caned by their teachers, they do not worry; they see the fruit coming from the discipline. But they despise illegitimate children and do not accord them equal attention. So if you avoid discipline, you are of the number of the illegitimate."³⁴²

C.S. Lewis further agrees, "The Father uses his authority to make the son into the sort of human being he rightly, in his superior wisdom, wants him to be."³⁴³

Guthrie opines that any father who does not discipline his son is lacking in his aptitude as a father, and any son who refuses all such discipline is mislaying his son-ship; "God's knowledge of us is perfect and he does what is for our good, for he understands what discipline is needed."³⁴⁴

The Lord yearns for us to be made into disciples, and he has an exact purpose for us to share in his holiness. Lockyer states that afflictions and chastisement are continually sent by God in love. The meaning of chastisement confirms this since its etymology denotes a "bringing up or rearing a child; to train, to instruct, educate, correct, hence

³⁴² Calvin, *Commentaries*, 227.

³⁴³ C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 40.

³⁴⁴ Donald Guthrie, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 254.

the Greek proverb, “To learn is to suffer.” Lockyer explains that this implies reprimand as a way of sustenance, or something good for us.³⁴⁵

Lastly, one can deduce that a disciple is made by learning obedience through suffering. The Lord can always be trusted in his appraisal of our circumstance and our need: “Our heavenly father, in the perfection of his wisdom and love, can be relied upon never to impose any discipline on us that is not for our good.

Conclusion

It is then obvious from the engagement that suffering is part and parcel of discipleship. Indeed, Mark gives the reason for Jesus’ coming and mission as to serve and give His life as ransom for many (10:45). A disciple of Jesus for that matter is taught and promised among other things giving one’s life for others.

Consequently, the cost of discipleship according to the second gospel is pouring out one’s life for others. It is service to others and not prestige as Charismatic thought would like us to believe. The disciple of Christ is therefore, entreated to accept the glory that comes from serving God and others faithfully which includes suffering than the glory the world gives – fame, riches, greatness among others. Mark’s theology on discipleship therefore is faith in God irrespective of the consequences as against Charismatic theology of faith in God that rewards with prosperity, good health, greatness, promotion among others.

The Charismatic churches therefore have to learn from these passages in order to correct their teachings on suffering. The supreme good that God has in view for his children is this that they should share in his kingdom if even it comes through suffering.

³⁴⁵ Herbert Lockyer, *Dark Threads the Weaver Needs* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1979), 93.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The issue of hermeneutical challenge concerning the subjects of suffering and discipleship in the teachings of the Charismatic churches cannot be overemphasized. Due to the upsurge in numbers, edifices and general influence of these Christian denominations it is pertinent that a research is undertaken in this field. The aim of this work as stated in the statement of the problem was to exegete the passion narrative of Mark 14:32 – 15:41 to understand the significance of Jesus' suffering and its implication for discipleship. Second is to ascertain the understanding of suffering in the selected Charismatic churches: Lighthouse Chapel International and Action Chapel International. In effect the work was to compare and contrast Mark's theology of suffering and discipleship, with the teachings on suffering and Christianity by the leaders of Charismatic churches.

The work was organised into five chapters. The first chapter dealt with introductory issues namely: background of study, statement of problem, research question, literature review methodology and organisation of chapters.

Chapters 2-5 followed the three steps suggested by the Communicative approach proposed by Ossom-Batsa, chosen as Theoretical Framework: adherence to the biblical text, exegesis of reality and engagement between the text and the culture.³⁴⁶

Chapter 2 presents the analysis of the text. The narrative criticism espoused by Marguerat and Borquin was used in order to ascertain the communicative force of the text. This method helps in analysing a narrative text and the tools in understanding the codes

³⁴⁶ Ossom-Batsa, "Biblical Exegesis," 128.

and signals of the narrative. Consequently, an appropriate structure and exegetical analysis are done.

The narrative analysis begins with the journey of the reader followed by the delimitation of the narrative unit. The next step is the proposal of an appropriate structure, after considering various organizations proposed by other scholars. The chapter ends with the theological synthesis of the pericope.

Chapter 3 deals with the exegesis of reality. This chapter, therefore, looks at the charismatic view on suffering. An overview of the history of the Charismatic Church is first proposed. Finally, it compared the teachings on discipleship and suffering of the leaders of two leading Charismatic Churches: Lighthouse Chapel International (LCI), and Action Chapel International (ACI).

Chapter 4 shows the engagement between text and reality from which a call to action is proposed for the contemporary Charismatic readers.

The final chapter dealt with summary of findings i.e. the results obtained from the data on the research, centred on the questions guiding the research. This is followed by conclusions made from the entire work, then recommendations and some suggestions to help in academic discourse and the pastoral field.

5.2 Summary

The study explored the issue about suffering and discipleship with an exegetical study of Mark. 14:32 – 15:41 and engaged the call to action of the text with the theology of suffering of the selected churches i.e. Lighthouse Chapel International (LCI) and Action Chapel International. The exegesis of the text unearthed how the narrative guides

the reader to understand the divine aspect of suffering in the life of Christ and for that matter Christians.

In view of the fact that an intercultural reading necessitates an engagement between the original biblical culture and the reader's culture, chapter two centred on the exegetical analysis of Mark 14:32-15:41, the text for engagement.

The study of the text revealed that Mark's community was suffering persecution. This fact, therefore, informs his quest to bring them to understand the role suffering plays in the life of a person and subsequently, how this contributes to development of a community. The concept of discipleship is therefore, important for Mark's audience amidst increasing persecution. The way and manner the narrative unfolds is an indication that the community did not appreciate the role of suffering in the fulfilment of Jesus' mission.

For instance, in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was seen in the company of His three close disciples (Peter, James and John) so they can share in His destiny.³⁴⁷ Unfortunately, because they did not understand their master and the role suffering would play in sharing in His destiny, they could not stay awake for even an hour (14:37-41). On another occasion, two of the three, James and John, requested to sit on either sides of Jesus in His Kingdom (10:35-41).³⁴⁸ However, at the time of the crucifixion, the two were nowhere to be found; rather, two robbers were hanged on either sides of Jesus, taking over 'the place of honour.'³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 515. The destiny of both suffering and reigning with Him.

³⁴⁸ Brooks, *Mark*, 259.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

Similarly, Jesus was forsaken by the disciples (14:50) after he was arrested and by the Father when He was on the cross (15:34).³⁵⁰ Indeed, in His state of intense agony, when He needed the disciples most, they all fled and deserted Him (14:50). Peter — one of His close disciples and the one who earlier rebuked the master when He reminded them of His impending suffering and death (8:31-32) — denied knowing Him on three occasions (15:68-71). In fact, his denial even ended up in a curse (v. 71). In Weeden's view, while Peter seeks to save his life by denying his master, Jesus accepts His death, a manifestation of courage, loyalty and submission to the will of the father.³⁵¹

The periscope, further, revealed the patience and endurance of Jesus even in the face of the incessant provocation from both the Jews and the Roman soldiers. Even when He was mocked and challenged to come down from the cross as proof of being the son of God, Jesus did not reply (15:29-32); for His disposition and mission is to show that salvation comes not through working of miracles but through faith. He must therefore, suffer and endure to the end.

Finally, when He offered His last breath on the cross, it took a centurion, a non-Jew to recognise and confess who Jesus was “Truly, this man was the son of God.”³⁵² Through the cross, Jesus' identity became fully manifest, to Israel and the Nations.

The third chapter looked at the charismatic view of suffering. An overview of the history of the Charismatic Church was first proposed before comparing the teachings on

³⁵⁰ In the history of interpretation of Mark and Mathew, most scholars depart from the view that Jesus was abandoned by God. Notwithstanding, Jesus' last words in Mark expressed loneliness and intense suffering. However, Markan narrative shows hints of Jesus' death serving as a model for his followers. They are to take up their cross and follow him in addition to losing their lives instead of trying to save them on account of him Jesus and the gospel (Mark 8:34-9:1).

³⁵¹ Weeden, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict*.

³⁵² Christopher, *A Preface to Mark*, 119.

discipleship and suffering of the leaders of two leading Charismatic Churches: Lighthouse Chapel International (LCI), and Action Chapel International (ACI).

The study revealed that the charismatic church developed out of the mainline and Pentecostal churches as non-denominational. The membership is largely youth and is characterized by features with emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit expressed through tongue speaking, deliverances, prophecies and healings. Their doctrine hinges on health and well-beings and “here and there now” theology.³⁵³ The charismatic belief in salvation is not only deliverance from sin and its consequences of death but also a journey into wealth, peace, good health, long life among others. This belief is reflected in slogans, themes, songs and prayer topics found in their worship expressions.

Some of these captions are: ‘Unstoppable Achievers’, ‘I am a Winner’, ‘The Struggle is Over’, ‘I am a Stranger to Failure’, ‘There is Power in the Blood’, ‘My God is able’, ‘I am smelling Success’, Then, there are those who use biblical verses: “More than Conquerors” (Rom. 8:37); “If God be for us who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31); “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13), etc.

One of the leading Charismatic figures in Ghana is Bishop Dag Heward-Mills. He founded Lighthouse Chapel International. He has quite a ‘controversial’ view on suffering of a Christian although he supports the idea that suffering is a proof of being a good Christian, most of his teachings are at variance with such a stand. For instance, he claims that since he became a Christian, he continued to experience increase in all areas of life because he stopped reading scriptures on decrease, failure, setbacks and

³⁵³ Biri, “Neo Pentecostal Churches in Africa,” 416.

limitations. He also asserts that God does not encourage poverty and would not bring anyone to Himself to demote or disgrace the person.³⁵⁴

According to him, people who have faith are more “blessed and prosperous” than those who do not.³⁵⁵ He supports this with the quotation from the Scripture “But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him” (Heb 10:38) and “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him” (Heb 11:6). He, therefore, compares faith with love and argues that Jesus never said, “Your love will make you whole,” but rather “Your faith will make you whole” (Luke 8:48).

Archbishop Nicholas Duncan Williams is regarded as the pioneer of contemporary Pentecostalism in Ghana.³⁵⁶ According to Asamoah-Gyedu, his influence goes beyond both the title (archbishop) and acknowledgement outside the country. He is, therefore, referred to as the ‘Paapa’.

He founded the Christian Action Faith Ministries’ now Action Chapel International (ACI). His theology is referred to as the “Faith Gospel of success, health and wealth”. This is cited from his book, ‘You are destined to succeed.’³⁵⁷ In this book he refers to Gen. 1:29-30 as God’s destiny for man is to be physically sound without sickness, fear, and be bold and successful in all areas of life.³⁵⁸ Thus “the word of God is a tree of life that will produce riches, honour promotion and joy”³⁵⁹.

³⁵⁴ Heward-Mills, *Name It!*, 4-5.

³⁵⁵ Heward-Mills, *Exercising Faith*, 2.

³⁵⁶ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Pentecostal Christianity*, 36.

³⁵⁷ Bonsu, *Pentecostalism*, 78

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

The archbishop posits that the key to financial blessings is not in the prayer one offers, since prayer only enforces one's principles and requirements.³⁶⁰ As always is the case in the charismatic circles, he also widely quotes "Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How are we robbing thee?' In your tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me; the whole nation of you." (Mal 3:8-9). According to Duncan-Williams, if a person breaks the laws of God s/he cannot experience financial favour from God.³⁶¹ Similarly, if one does not give both tithe and offerings one does not experience financial fruitfulness. In other words, tithe and offerings are means through which financial blessings come.³⁶²

Chapter four engaged the two cultures — the culture of the text and that of the two charismatic churches — in order to deal with the issue about the reality of suffering in the life of a Christian. The engagement revealed that from the biblical point of view, suffering is an indispensable part of the Christian life, on the merit that it helps in the general building up of the disciple.

Asamoah-Gyedu admits that Charismatic preaching sometimes is a motivation for people to work hard to relieve themselves out of poverty, sordidness and other kinds of unfortunate situations.³⁶³ Although this assertion about them is laudable, he however does not agree with their budge from the theology of the cross to that of glory which is in adverse with the principles of God.³⁶⁴ To him, the recognition of God in His Glory and Majesty can only come after first recognising Him in His meekness and humiliation.³⁶⁵

³⁶⁰ Duncan-Williams, *Story*, 47.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 48

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 48.

³⁶³ Asamoah-Gyedu, *Pentecostal Christianity*, 117.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 118.

The Charismatics church should, therefore, accept the fact that a life may be deemed successful in spite of failing at human endeavours. Although God does not wish that His children suffer, suffering is part of human life and often a consequence of radical service to God and humanity.

5.3 Conclusion

The objective of the research was to analyse the relationship between suffering and discipleship in the passion narrative of the Gospel according to Mark (Mark 14:32 – 15:41) in order to address Charismatic thought on the subject. An Intercultural Reading, therefore, was employed to engage the reality and the culture of the text in order to achieve the intended objective.

The findings of this research exposed the deficiency in the teachings of the selected Charismatic churches on wealth, success, good health and power and many of such achievements as proofs of God's approval. Karkkaanen buttresses the findings in this way;

What has been much more problematic to Pentecostal/charismatics is the negative side of the Christian life: disappointments when the healing did not come, agony when one faces the death of a loved one despite prayers of faith, the tragedy of financial breakdown, and so on. In fact, many Pentecostals and charismatics have been left with few options: either to deny experiences that seem to shatter one's faith, or to give up ones faith. Pentecostal preachers do not often tackle the problem of prayers unanswered or faith disappointed. Rarely does one find in Pentecostal/Charismatic periodicals honest consideration of life situations where a prayer of faith was either not answered or was bluntly rejected.³⁶⁶

In the charismatic churches, the power of God is supposed to help live life victoriously and overcome life's problems. Their belief in God is therefore, based on what God will

³⁶⁶ Veli-Matti Karkkainen, "Theology of the Cross. A Stumbling Block to Pentecostal/ Charismatic Spirituality?" in *The Spirit and Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Russel P. Splittler*, ed. Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies (London: T&T Clark), 2004.

provide for the believer including material blessings, prosperity, children, success and many more. They have faith in God, but this faith is not entirely based on who God is and his sovereignty but his power and resolve to meet the needs of the believer. This is what Asamoah-Gyadu, refers to as a religion with a survival strategy by which people are rewarded by God as a result of their faithfulness.³⁶⁷

Charismatic belief teaches that because Jesus died on the cross, He gives salvation to all who believe and as a result took away human suffering. For this reason, anyone who still suffers does not believe or fully believe in the salvific-work of Christ.

Contrarily, Mark's gospel emphasises cross bearing "And he called to him the multitude with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.'" (Mark 8:34). The cross in Mark signifies a symbol of endurance, steadfastness, obedience, perseverance, dedication and suffering which Jesus taught his disciples and for that matter every follower of Christ must be willing to experience.

Furthermore, in the Charismatic church, riches power, good health and honour are proofs of God's blessings to faithful Christians. Mark, on the other hand, teaches his audience that power and glory experienced in the life of a believer is not a sure indication of God's approval, rather the only true sign of belonging is the desire to follow Jesus on the 'way'. Indeed, the way of making their own the 'mind' of Jesus. Asamoah-Gyadu rightly put it "we are indeed rejuvenated and empowered at Pentecost, but we are judged, corrected and matured at the cross."³⁶⁸

³⁶⁷ Asamoah-Gyadu, *Pentecostal Christianity*, 117.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 114.

The recent messages of success and prosperity at all cost, where most times scripture is misused to align with a preacher's intentions, has produced many Christians with misinformed knowledge of the Bible. The church is therefore, failing to produce Christians as Anderson summarizes Luther's words, "whose emphasis is supposed to be on the word of God, sin's gravity, God's graciousness through Christ; strong faith and the church that is built on the Spirit of God."³⁶⁹ Indeed, according to Luther how God deals with his saints is unreasonable according to human standards. Thus "the more highly he endows them with grace and exalts and honours them, the deeper he thrusts them into sorrow and suffering, yea even into dishonour shame and desertion"³⁷⁰

Teachings on God's provision, prosperity and well-being in the Charismatic churches are attractive because as Asamoah-Gyedu concedes it whips up one's energy for security, success and happiness.³⁷¹ Although the quest for these objectives are not wrong in themselves because God's wish is to bless His children, he admits that one's necessities and time are better known to God. Rather than seek for life's comfort, pleasure and power at all cost, more of God and His presence should be sought even if it means suffering. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." (Mark 13:31).

5.4 Recommendations

Some recommendations are made based on the findings of the research. These recommendations are in two parts, first are academic and second, pastoral.

³⁶⁹ James I. Parker, *Honouring the people of God* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 3-12.

³⁷⁰ Martin Luther, "The cross and Severe Suffering", in John Nicholas Lenker (ed.), *Sermons of Martin Luther, vol. 2: Sermons on Gospel Test for Epiphany, Lent and Easter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1906),32.

³⁷¹ Asamoah-Gyedu, "Designed Robes?" 6.

From the outcome of the discussion on the research topic “Suffering and Discipleship: Reading Mark 14:32-15:41 from a Charismatic Perspective”, it has become evident that there is more to be explored. On the academic front therefore, scholarly work must be done on the following:

1. A comprehensive study on Suffering and Discipleship from a Charismatic Perspective.
2. A study on the scriptures Charismatic Church Leaders use in Support of their Argument that a Christian should not go through Suffering.

Pastorally, the researcher recommends the following:

First, the study recommends that Christian leaders preach a balanced theological message that is not devoid of the realities of suffering as part of training a disciple of Christ. The cross, as a symbol of suffering, which is central in Mark’s discipleship narrative, should be emphasized in preaching. In so doing, the notion that believers who experience suffering have little or no faith in God, should be looked at again as it seems very inconsistent with biblical theology of discipleship.

Secondly, members of the church should be informed that material gains are good and not bad in themselves, but they are not necessarily proof that God is rewarding them because of their faithfulness.

Further, preachers should emphasize that healing, miracles, power, prosperity etc. are not ends in themselves. Their faith should not be built on these things for they will all pass away one day 1Cor. 13. In summary, the research recommends that scripture be preached holistically and not subject to private interpretation. Based on these the

researcher also recommends that a careful study be done on Charismatic theological Institutions.

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