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Rev. G. A. Akpabio.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to God Almighty in His wisdom in creation. Secondly, to my wife who had been so dear and caring to me during the writing process. And thirdly, to all who know that they were created great and are working hard to be great.

BOOK REVIEW

Title: Path to Greatness
Author: Godwin A. Akpabio

Publisher: De-Dako Productions, Lagos, Nigeria
Number of Pages: 116
Cover Price: Not Stated
Reviewer: Effiong Johnson

INTRODUCTION:

Up and until now, greatness in nearly all walks of life, seems to have eluded the people of Akwa Ibom extraction. In politics at the national level, particularly among keen contenders to the Presidential seat, people of this state are yet to flex muscles of worth there. In Christianity, though we appear to be the most religious of them all, yet there is no mega ministry with an Akwa Ibom man or woman at the apex as the General Overseer. Among the list of industrialists, owners of multi-national outfits, owners of satellite television and radio stations, chancellors of own-universities, proprietors of football clubs, state-of-the-art supermarkets, real estates etc, the people of Ibibio, Anang, Oron extractions, come among the tenth, eleventh, twelfth reserves in national super-reckoning.

When looked at from this diminutive perspective, Godwin Akpabio's book, titled, ***Path to Greatness***, seems to be beyond being timely, beyond being relevant, to something of an urgent ransom for release from apparent genealogical mediocrity and inferiority.

Only recently, through the combined weapons of legislation and publicity, has the house boy/girl syndrome, menial-meniachical, impoverished inferiority and the smack of littleness' been fought and is still being fought with passion, whether our people could be salvaged from them. This book would seem to recommend itself as resourceful in the reorientation of the mind-set of the Akwa Ibom people particularly and Nigerians generally.

The Book

The idea behind the book, that is, the concept is idealist and lofty. That the author could conceive of greatness as something attainable, and then researched into finding pathways which if followed could lead to greatness, stand him out as pristine and towering.

In sixteen (16) very well discussed chapters, sprinkled with canonical supports from the scriptures, and dotted with citations from sages of repute, the author comes across as convincing, persuading and absolutely certain that becoming great, especially by the Christian, is a forgone possibility.

While the author condemns in totality the uncanny pursuits of greatness through diabolical and satanic means, and shows in graphic terms how dastardly the end of such pursuits are bound to be both here and hereafter, he painstakingly, on the other hand, itemizes the things to do to get greatness, the God-approved way. These include (but not limited to) the following:

1. Becoming a child to a great God for the genetics of greatness to criss-cross the parent-child divide. This is indeed the true, the certain and the pro-success pathway to greatness.
2. Greatness is also contacted through servanthood. Learning the ropes, acquisition of experience, building capacity and practicalizing for skill developments are must rungs on the ladder of greatness; and pursuers of greatness cannot circumvent them.
3. Obedience to established authority, submission and adherence to rules and conducts, are quintessential for the birth of greatness.
4. Humility which has a divine mandate to engender exaltation, is uncompromisingly recommended; just as pride is certainly doomed to lead to demotion and crash.
5. Recognizing God's gifting, endowments, talents etc, and exploiting same for maximum benefits, could systematically facilitate the realization of greatness.

6. Diligence and hard work prove a succinct combined dose with a promise to knock out smallness in the bout for greatness. The scripture promises a diligent man that he would be found in the company of Kings (Pro. 22.29).

Greatness must be fought for, strategized and targeted at, as Satan does not want it to happen. The entire spiritual weapons, therefore must be unleashed against forces inimical to greatness and then captured and taken by force. To fight well and subdue the counter-oppositions of littleness, average, minimality, meniality, mediocrity, the weapons that are tested and guaranteed for victory, include, the word of God, truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit. The warfare for greatness is a spiritual one and only spiritual weapons in the hands of a spirit-being, can guarantee victory.

The author caps up his points in the 'Conclusion' by stating thus, "Greatness demands discipline and wholehearted service to God and humanity. It also includes fighting against hindrances that truncate one from reaching his destiny. God's master weapons are available to help do so."

BOOK APPRECIATION

The cover design cast in deep green and light green colours, at once, suggests blossoming, boisterousness, riches, comfort and fruitfulness. The green field besides the pathways, confirm fertility. The dirt road for the pathways, suggests untapped potentialities for everyone who would dare to follow the path as it would lead, though winding somewhat, to greatness.

With the title of the book and the author's name on the light-green spine of the book, it tends to modestly give off the feeling that neither the book nor its author has claimed full attainment yet on the issues of greatness. Room still exists for both to assume a thicker, deeper green! This point is buttressed by the information on the book and its author, yet, in bounded light-green box-on the blurb.

The prefatory pages harbour the title page, publishing company details, the dedication which is to God, the author's parents (one dead one still living), aspirants to and lovers of greatness and his wife and children. The foreword, which is done by the Rev. Dr. Effiong Isangedihi is crisp and precise. The

point is made there, that greatness from the book's perspective, is not associated with affluence, wealth, money, power and qualification. Rather, it is associated with salvation through Jesus Christ. I couldn't but agree with him.

The book is written in simple language, which gives it accessibility to the average educated to read, understand and apply. Most points are supported with scriptural references for authenticity. Personal testimonies where they are given, add proofs of workability and clear any existing doubts. Where ideas are borrowed from existing works to lend credence to the issues in discourse, the author humbly acknowledges same. All these conflux to giving the book good quality, credit the author as humble, obedient to existing codes and endear readers to him.

FINAL WORD

Path to Greatness indeed has the pundits, the intellectual thrust, the spiritual might and the experiential push, to recommend itself as a good resource manual, capable of transforming a little man or woman who reads it, to a great man or woman who would have put the recommendations to use.

I strongly recommend it to every Christian who dreams to become great. And please let me register my humble appreciation for my preference for this interesting though demanding assignment. No doubt, it added something to my climb to greatness.

Thank you and God bless.

Professor of Theatre & Communication Studies
(Directing & Aesthetics)
University of Uyo, Nigeria.

PREFACE

THE PROMISE FULFILLED

Four hundred years ago, God promised Abraham the father of faith a land. This promise made at Genesis 12:7, was a confirmation of God's plan to rescue mankind who was at the throes of condemnation, hopelessness and lack of direction. Yes, that was the land of promise. It was from that humble land flowing with milk of liberty, God's favor and love, the honey of good health abundance, open heavens, hard work, perseverance and godliness. It was a land in which the God of Heavens Himself had after blessing it told His people that indeed;

I know my plan for you,
Plan of good not evil, to give
a future and a hope.

He continued to demonstrate this love by His loving rains, healing suns, and prosperous harmathan. This empowers our plants to yield lifesaving fruits from month to month, and from season to season. In our own generation, when Nigeria needs direction and prosperity, God looked and from Heaven as the wisest God, through the mouths of His people, as far back as early 1930s, decreed a promised land. And on September 23th, 1987, that land, like a celestial son of righteous prince was put into existence, just like with labour pains. That land of promise, is called Akwa Ibom State,-The land of infinite God. For it is written,

"We know what a person thinks,
Not when he tells us what he thinks,
But by his actions".

Yes, we discerned God's unlimited abundant blessing by His eminently lavishing the state with the choicest mineral deposits of all times namely: oil and gas, Aluminum, Newsprint materials, fertile and arable soil in Ikono, Ini, Okoso, and Ibeno. Great rivers at Itu, Oceans at Eket, Ikot Abasi and Eastern Obolo, and Oron, to Ibaka in Mbo, Udung Uko, Urue Offong Oruko, all bestriding the green lands of Essien Udim, Nsit Attai, Nsit Ubium, Nsit Ibom, Ukanafun, Uruan, Ibesikpo.

It has the finest raffia products in the world, at Ikot Ekpene, the best agricultural lands at Ukat Aran, Ekeya, Obot Akara, Ikono and Ini. Akwa Ibom state is not only rich in his goodness alone, but also has a high quality human capital. It is the first state to produce the first Blackman, who conquered the

boxing world, at the prestigious Heavy Weight category, in the person of Mr. Samuel Peter Okon. It is the most environmentally friendly state in Nigeria. It is a land of great opportunities for both her great people and strangers who are privileged to be there. Her people are good and hardworking people. This land is blessed by geographical locations, fortified by natural and human resources, and beautified by visionary leaders. Akwa Ibom state is a blessed state.

INTRODUCTION

The sum total of one's destiny attainment or God's purpose for one in life is greatness and everybody is born with that seed.

The struggle to become what God wants us to be constitutes the fight for greatness.

Your life is not an accident but a gift from God. It is like a seed that is sown and is expected to germinate and grow, become fruitful, mature and be harvested. There is no greatness in the grave. Your ability to engage your life every second, minute, hour of the day on a logical thought pattern which results in a positive outcome for your good and the good of others is greatness. Life lived on profitable ventures and not on the opposite. Not regret as a result of carelessness, laziness and unproductive ventures.

Your life is a seed planted by God. It should have focus and be result oriented. Just as seed satisfies its reasons of being in doing well, the life that is given as seed finds its uniqueness in attainment, achievements, progress, exploits and advancement. It derives its ultimate joy and satisfaction from being a blessing to others.

By giving thought to your life — a reason of being, you give your life meaning. Even now, you can rise up from the sin-stained, unproductive and wretched misery to evolution and dimensions of relevance.

You can choose to add life and joy to people by your decision to change your psyche through mental liberation than constituting a nuisance and menace due to irresponsible living.

There are powers that try to hinder us from becoming what God wants us to be by destroying our destiny foundations and placing limitations on us, beginning from the family lineage. *"A man's enemies are the members of his own household"*(Micah7:6b). Jephthah's brethren had to drive him away from sharing in their father's inheritance as an illegitimate son (Judges 11). David faced many enemies when he wanted to fight against Goliath to remove the insult, shames and blasphemies faced by the nation of Israel and their God in 1Samuel 17. Saul the King of Israel attempted to eliminate David's life for having won the victory over Goliath and being praised by the women in their song (I Samuel 18:6-9). Joseph would have been killed by his family members for telling them his dream if not the intervention of Judah his brother (Genesis 37:26-28). Through him they converted killing him to selling him. Hindrances can also come from external territorial forces e.g. Daniel had to face the Prince of Persia in his attempt to seek for the welfare of his people in Babylon, Daniel10. These are curses or beasts whose intention is to destroy our very best, like the Tobias and the Sambalatz, the enemies want to spy our latest liberty, welfare or progress to our disfavor. Most hindrances to our destinies are permitted by own selves.

In each of these, David, Joseph and Daniel were not mere spectators. They occupied squarely as drivers rather than passengers of their destinies. David was challenged and he also challenged by killing Goliath. Joseph refused to compromise to bring shame to God. As a result, he became a preserver and restorer of life to many nations. Daniel in the other hand persevered in prayer until his prayer was answered and the promised deliverance to his people actualized.

Anthony Robbins says; "Nothing has power over me other than that which I give it through my conscious thoughts".

Nnamdi C. Ibekwe also reiterates; "thoughts are the fulcrum, epicenter of whatever any individual achieves".

"Thought" is a noun and has the power to bring a desired change. It is the foundation of invention and discovery. It brings about proficiency in

professionalism. It means, "the act or manner of thinking: An idea or opinion: Intention" **"For as he (anyone) thinks in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7 NIV).**

Life is a complex existence or phenomenon that deserves a serious concentration of thought. The ability to reason rightly and use the power of reason logically can truly affect one's self prestige or personality concept. It can change his destiny. It can also affect those living with him positively. The scripture encourages giving thought to whatever that is good.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things (Philippians 4:8).

Think about good things, unity, feed your mind on profitable ventures that result in positive impact rather than things that will bring condemnation and regret. Hence, what you see, touch, eat, drink, do build or destroys you. Where you live, go, can equally do so. ***Evil communications corrupt good manners (1Corinthians 15:33).***

Your life is a fountain of God's abundance blessing and therefore a function of greatness. It needs to be exploited through with refined, defined and articulated pattern of thought with the result to attain to the expected height of greatness. Read on.

CHAPTER ONE

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is vital in the act of attainment or achievement.

Friction in the course of motion between materials or relationship between people is a natural phenomenon. Man's nature that is fashioned in imperfection has made possible certain inconsistent behaviours or misunderstanding among people such that there must be the decision to agree together before people can flow together and work as a team for the progress and success of a common goal.

It is said "to err is human and to forgive is divine". Human beings are subject to natural propensity and hence, natural vulnerability and limitedness. Friction, misunderstanding, disagreement must go on in homes, schools, offices, businesses, church in this material earth as long as life elongates except by God's special and divine intervention. Life in the flesh is a stage, a struggle and the desire to grow to perfection is engaging in battles of doing good over evil.

To forgive may not mean one has forgotten the pain or hurt caused by the offender but that one does not allow the information of the past to rule or influence him in his dealing with the offender or people having been forgiven. One's integrity is mostly needed here.

GOD INITIATED FORGIVENESS:

The subject of man's separation from God and his way back to God was a known fact to God right from the foundation of the world. Man was created perfect and walked in the sight of God until the very day that Satan through the serpent tempted man to sin against God by eating the forbidden fruit in Genesis 3.

Man's disobedient and sin made him be deprived of the sweet fellowship that he had been having with his creator. He ran away and hid himself from his creator after his sin. Humanly, it is rare for the superior person to look for the inferior after having been offended and broken faith with him. But God came down from heaven to look for a sinful, wayward creature — man. It takes love, simplicity, humility and real honesty and concern to do this service as a great man and remain on the pedestal of greatness. His statement, "Where art thou?" v9 is a question, not of surprise, but of concern, love and longing for intimacy.

It showed wisdom, concern, supremacy and control on the part of the creator to look for a man who ought to have looked for God. Here God displayed the highest form of integrity and excellence in control, as a true Creator, father and Leader.

LOVE NECESSITATED THE FORGIVENESS

The Greek word "Agape", is the highest form of love unconnected with the selfish, carnal human or worldly love. It has the affinity to produce a desired result with its concept of sacrificiality and eternity in view. ***For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16 KJV).***

God's love is seen in the quality of His gift to humanity. This has so far necessitated the so many who have surrendered their lives to God since

inception, leading to the territorial expansion and population of the kingdom of God. His one son has attracted the many billions of souls into His kingdom. One therefore ought not consider the price paid for having forgiven, or level of love given since it attracts great result.

SUPERIORITY OF FORGIVENESS

My understanding is that many people are deprived of healing, some miss blessings or get their ways blocked when they do not forgive those who hurt them from their heart and pray for their good. Job's public vindication was not complete until he interceded for his three friends — counselors, ***And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord have Job twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10 KJV). Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconcile to your brother; then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5:23-24NIV).***

A sister visited us as we were having our family altar. She knocked at the door with such vigor that we wondered what had happened and who had done that. She left immediately. Unknown to us was a woman whom the sister had seen sitting by the door, whom she quarreled with sometimes ago, and whom the sister did not forgive. This traumatic experience had risen the emotion of this sister that she acted otherwise. She became stressed and acted insensibly for having carried along the past. When we opened the door to see who, the woman narrated the whole story to us. But when we met the sister, she told us another thing.

Nnamdi C. Ibekwe in his book, "**You can be great**", quoted from Zig Zigler the following "The person who damaged your past is negatively impacting on your present and will negatively influence your future unless you forgive him or her". I will buttress this fact with the following story from Nnamdi: In 1980, we used to live in the same compound with Ogonna who lived with her aunt Nkechi and her husband. Nkechi had a penchant to constantly maltreat Ogonna to the extent that the neighbours wondered whether they were actually related. For instance, at the slightest provocation, even over a matter that should have been overlooked, Nkechi would beat Ogonna almost into a coma, this inhuman treatment got to a head that, one day after beating her nonstop, she proceeded to insert a mixture of salt and pepper

into her private part. Countless were the days she denied her food. One day Ogonna was withdrawn from school on mere allegation of failure to warm the soup at night. Regrettably, as all these were happening the neighbours were unhappy, yet, non was able to mitigate her condition, or boldly confront her aunt over the inhuman treatment on her, however, the last straw that broke the carmel's back was the day Nkechi stripped Ogonna naked, tied her with a rope and left her under the sun from dawn till dusk. That evening, the Landlord convened a meeting of the entire tenants where he spoke at length. Everybody knew the die was cast when he said, "what you did to your fifteen year old niece is inhuman, evil, a grave act of wickedness, the way you are going, one day you might commit murder. I therefore, want you to quit my home before that happens or you put everyone into trouble".

After many years, some time in 1999, a friend invited me to a colleague's child dedication. During the thanksgiving, the mother of the baby was given opportunity to talk and she said, "I want to thank God for giving me this child after five years of marriage. My husband and I were certified fertile medically, yet, I couldn't conceive. One day during a counseling session, the man of God said that my problem was as a result of unforgiveness. That, if I wanted to conceive, I must forgive; initially, I found it absolutely difficult to forgive my aunt whom I hated passionately. However, after much counseling and praying, I called my aunt and told her I had forgiven her for all the atrocities and bodily harm she caused me. That same month I took in. Praise the Lord".

In 2011, a Sister Mayen came to the Church to worship.

- Her intention was to join any Church but was deeply moved to join our church. Her first surprise was she heard that her husband who had abandoned her was now worshipping with the Assemblies of God at Lagos where she was now a member at home. Secondly, things started working.

She continued and decided to become a regular member of our Church. After each message and in prayer meetings, the sister will be observed to be sobbing with unceasing tears flowing down her cheeks. I often saw it but with deep rooted concern that the sister was having an undisclosed

problem. We decided to take the sister to God in our private prayer time. After sometime, we decided to call the sister for counseling. The day we planned to do this, she came to us on her own and told us the following:-
In 1986 she decided to get married to a man. At being impregnated and delivered her first daughter, she was abandoned by the man for other women. Since then, her life had sunk into the mud with all the associated ridicules hardships and embarrassments. When people approached her for marriage and found she had a husband she would be disdained. Because of this, she had to leave her former church. She was confused and wanted God's intervention. She did not know where the man was.

We encouraged her that God would do something to bring back her husband. By this time her daughter Helen was 23 years.

The daughter started to trace her father's where about. Her father was surprised to see the daughter he abandoned one day as a full grown girl. God started to unfold His plan for the sister. Firstly, the former wife died. Secondly, like a drama, life became tough with him. Thirdly, with the visit of the daughter and news that the mother was still waiting for him, all his thought changed. Then for the first time, he called the former wife and assured her that he would marry her.

3) On Friday 24th February, 2012, precisely by 11.30am, I saw and witnessed the young man Okoi by name, an assistant Police Superintendent by then came into my palour with his eldest brother for the marriage of the sister. At interrogation with the man, he confessed that his fears were that the wife might have become an old woman by now and again he might not be forgiven for what he did. But that contrary to his thought, his wife was younger, fresher and more beautiful than he had expected. That God had planned everything for them. This miracle seemed dreamy but it was a reality. I actually followed them to the in-laws partly to declare to them that what they saw was God's intervention and partly to share and see and know what would be the disposition of the in-laws after 25 years of abandonment. At the in-laws house, the brother could not do anything yet, but asked first if he was forgiven for the long time of his abandonment and for all what happened. On hearing, his in-laws answered, "you are forgiven" he went on with what he had to say and the marriage commenced. They are happily married since then.

Unforgiveness is satanic, a cankerworm that eats into the fabric of human life and existence. It is capable of causing severe psychological and physiological imbalance, health disorders with attendant incapacitation and uselessness. On the other hand, forgiveness and love are the clear antidotes for unforgiveness. They clear the heart, the way from such deadly impurities and satanic consciousness while assuring soundness, peace of mind and the systematic flow of blood, thought, sleep and dream. This positively ensures a sound health. Love makes possible forgiveness and generates boldness, power and sound mind which are the elements of greatness (2Timothy 1:7).

Like our heavenly father, a man that practices forgiveness exercises maturity and superiority over the unforgiving and is bound to receive favor both from God and man. Jesus taught, ***For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matt.6:14-15 KJV).***

Let us learn to forgive from our whole heart those who have hurt us, damaged our past with such unforgettable experiences. The future is greater than the past and God is greater than our future. He alone can heal and cement our lives with good things through our forgiving lives.