

2014 - MY YEAR OF FLYING HIGH AND ABOVE (ISA. 31:5, PSA. 28:9)

"History has demonstrated that the most notable winners usually encountered heart-breaking obstacles before they triumphed. They won because they refused to become discouraged by their defeats." – B.C. Forbes. Just as the Red Sea and River Jordan could not stop them from advancing to the Promised Land, even so must we progress regardless of the oppositions.

Stumbling block: This term originally meant "a tree stump over which one trips". I was present at a hurdles race during an athletics championship, and a young girl made a comment: "See, there are lots of obstacles on their way, as they are getting through with one, there comes another". These words cut through my heart. I believe that so many people can relate to this, as they are getting through with one trouble, and then comes another! Some people find it difficult to overcome obstacles and are down by them.

I believe that the obstructions that stand on our way should be removed, surmounted or circumvented. It should not be a set-back. "Obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it" – Michael Jordan. Humanly speaking, a lot of people do not want any hindrance on their way to success. My understanding is that, what we obtain too cheaply, we esteem too lightly. To some people, it could be a mental barrier, so fearful of challenges that they see it as insurmountable.

Causes:

- Worldly Allurements: "Remember Lot's wife" (Lk.17:32). The treasures she left behind became her trap. This is a warning to us today to beware of the attracting pleasure of this world which could be a bait to our soul;
- Sin: "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1). Sins are weights which impede progress. When we sin, we fall below the mark and the consequences could be grievous. But true repentance can restore us to wholeness.

- Unbelief: "Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matt. 13:58). Unbelief weakens the hand of God to help us. But as we genuinely repent and learn to trust God again, we can move mountains of impossibility.
- Offences: "Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!" (Matt. 18:7). We are in the world of offenses. The pressure of life has stirred up anger, resentment and frustration in people. It is needful for you, therefore, to allow the love of God to fill your heart lest it becomes a stumbling block.
- Discouragement: "For when they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the children of Israel, so that they did not go into the land which the LORD had given them" (Num. 32:9).

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Disapproval and rejection can make us lose confidence in fulfilling our dreams. However, hope is restored when we steadfastly trust God and believe His Word.

- Human Agents: "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in" (Matt.23:13). People can be blockages preventing others from progressing. It is human nature to be wicked, except we are transformed by the Holy Spirit. The fear of men can also be a terror to our soul. "So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" (Heb. 13:6).
- Blinded By Darkness: "He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes" (1 Jn. 2:10- 11). The love of God shines light into our lives. This divine illumination makes us to avoid pitfalls.
- Unproven Armor: "David fastened his sword to his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested them. And David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them." So David

took them off" (1 Sam.17:39). Stepping into other people's experience could be very disappointing. Saul's amour was good for him but not for David. David was an anointed shepherd boy. So, David approached the battle with his "shepherd's bag", sling, staff and stones (v.40), because he saw Israel as sheep without shepherd, lost in battle. He defended Israel the same way he defended his sheep. "But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it.

Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God" (1 Sam. 17:34-36). Just like David, you also can overcome "the giant". What you consider as unimportant may be your point of strength to pull down the giants. Heroes are individuals who find strength to persevere and endure inspite of overwhelming obstacles.

Life Lessons From Surmounting Stumbling Blocks:

Stumbling blocks can mean the following: Bars, Hurdles, Impediments Knots, Set-backs or Walls. When you experience any of these or a combination, how do you overcome?

It may be good to know that obstacles can be stumbling blocks or stepping stones. I will share how I have personally turn stumbling blocks around through the unfailing grace of God.

Bars – Help me stretch and become more flexible. "For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder " (Psa. 107:16). Barriers – Make me to discover my strength to overcome difficulties.

Blocks – Make it necessary to reposition myself for a new start – like the same way the runners use blocks before they start a race.

Challenges – Help me grow my knowledge, skills, experience and resources.

Dampers – Help me slow down and cool off.

Hurdles – Require me to gain momentum so I can leap over them.

Impediments – Make me exercise caution in choosing my next steps. Knots – Make me stop, look carefully at the way things are connected – loose it or cut it through.

Set-backs – Make me turn disappointments to discovery of glorious opportunities.

Walls – Make me remember how the wall of Jericho fell down flat. "... and the people shouted, that the wall fell down flat, ..." (Jos. 6:20).

Strategic Steps To Overcome Stumbling Blocks:

Here are few steps that can help you arise above stumbling

blocks:

- **Have The Right Vision:**

Helen Keller – the blind and the deaf lady said: "The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision". It is unfortunate that so many people have eyes, but have no vision or loose their vision when

confronted by stumbling blocks. Your vision of a better tomorrow makes you wax strong and press forward in the midst of adversity.

- **Motivation:** You must be positively motivated in order to overcome the obstacles that will invariably come your way – A purposeful behavior and the right attitude to success.

- **Be Not Slothful:** "The way of the lazy man is like a hedge of thorns, But the way of the upright is a highway" (Prov.15:19). I will, therefore, encourage you to be diligent and not give up on your dream. Put action to your faith.

- **Listen To The Holy Spirit:**

"Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," Whenever you turn to the right hand Or whenever you turn to the left" (Isa. 30:21). The Sweet Holy Spirit is our sure Comforter, our Guide and Helper. Allow Him to lead you through.

- **Making Irrevocable Prophetic Decrees:** "I will lay waste the mountains and hills, And dry up all their vegetation; I will make the rivers coastlands, And I will dry up the pools. I will bring the blind by a way they did not know; I will lead them in paths they have

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not known. I will make darkness light before them, And crooked places straight. These things I will do for them, And not forsake them” (Isa. 42:15-16). As you make scriptural decrees unto your situation, the light of His Word shall shine on your path; then you shall arise above the stumbling.

- *Message by Pastor David Komolafe*