

Living Victorious in Christ

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LIVING VICTORIOUS IN CHRIST

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Written by Riaan Engelbrecht.

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To God be the glory. And to my wife, Lynette, thank you
for all your motivation, inspiration and strength.



Guidelines to a victorious life

THE ENTIRE BIBLE FROM Genesis to Revelation provides clear instructions on how to lead a victorious life as a believer of the Lord.

It says in “1 Thessalonians 5:13 Be at peace among yourselves. 14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. 15 See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. 16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 19 Do not quench the Spirit. 20 Do not despise prophecies. 21 Test all things; hold fast what is good. 22 Abstain from every form of evil.”

Thus, a victorious life consists of the following:

- b) Peace among all
- c) Addressing unruly behaviour
- d) Showing comfort
- e) Upholding the weak
- f) Showing patience
- g) Not repaying evil for evil
- h) Pursuing good
- i) Rejoice always
- j) Pray without ceasing
- k) Give thanks to the Lord
- l) Do not quench the Spirit

- m) Do not despise prophecies
- n) Test all things
- o) Hold fast what is good
- p) Abstain from evil

Secondly, it says in “Romans 12: 9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. 17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. 20 Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Thus, a victorious life consists of the following:

- a) Love without hypocrisy
- b) Cling to what is good
- c) Show brotherly love
- d) Be fervent in Spirit
- e) Patient in tribulation
- f) Bless those who persecute
- g) Repay no one evil for evil
- h) Live in peace
- i) Abhor evil

j) Seek after brethren unity

1 John 5:4 (NKJV) says “for whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.”

In Christ, we can lead a victorious life and a life of overcoming fear, uncertainty, strife and hopelessness. For Christ is our hope of glory and in Him, we do not have to fear for the battle belongs to God! He is the Light, the Way and Life.

The victorious Christian life is the life that is lived, by faith, in a moment-by-moment surrender to God. The victorious Christian life is rooted and grounded in faith. The whole of Hebrews 11 tells the stories of men and women who, by faith, were victorious in some way. Our God is always victorious, no matter the foe.

The victorious Christian life is a life lived in triumph over “everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). It is the conquering of fear, knowing God’s peace (John 14:27; 16:33). It is perseverance through “trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword” (Romans 8:35), showing us to be “more than conquerors through him who loved us” (verse 37). The victorious Christian life naturally leads to a defeat of death itself (1 Corinthians 15:54–55) and a glorious reward in heaven (Revelation 21:7).

“The righteous will live by faith” (Romans 1:17), and it’s impossible to overemphasize the importance of faith in living the victorious Christian life: “Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God” (1 John 5:4–5).

In John 15, Jesus tells a parable that gives a key to the victorious Christian life. Jesus Christ is the vine, the source of life and health and wholeness, and we are the branches, utterly dependent on the vine. The word used over and over throughout the passage is most

often translated as “abide” or “remain.” The original Greek word really means “stay where you are.” Where is the Christian? The Christian is in Christ (Ephesians 2:13).

The victorious Christian life is a journey of faith, not just for eternal salvation, but of daily decisions building up into lifestyle that reflects Christ (Galatians 2:20). Faith is the calm assurance that what we do not yet see is far more real, more substantial, more trustworthy than what we do see (Hebrews 11:1). The life of faith chooses to believe God in all things (Romans 4:3). “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:1–4, ESV).

The victorious Christian life is lived with eyes set on the things of heaven, not of this world. Jesus is our model in this: “For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:2–3).

The eternal life of the believer is set securely in Christ. We, too, are at God’s right hand, by faith. The victorious Christian is one who lives in that reality.



Victory in His Presence

MORE THAN EVER IN THESE dark times, we need to walk in the manifested presence of the Lord. In the presence of God, we overcome all darkness. In the presence of the Lord, our enemies scatter. In the presence of the Lord, sickness yields to God's glory. In God's presence, there is hope, joy, victory, deliverance and strength!

In Psalm 51:11 we read, "Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me." David knew the power of the presence of the Lord. It is the power of victory! It is the power to pierce the darkness! Indeed, the Lord said the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. Indeed, those believers who are in Christ and walking in His presence shall be victorious over every wicked and satanic scheme and demonic onslaught!

In 1 Samuel 16:14-23 we read of how the LORD's spirit left Saul, and an evil spirit sent by the Lord tormented him. How terrible it is when the presence of the Lord leaves us! We are then left vulnerable and subjected to the madness, strife and toil of a world darkened by satanic seductions! In 1 Samuel 16:23, we read that when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the harp, and played with his hand. Saul was left refreshed and was well once the evil spirit departed from him. The power was not in the harp. The power was God Himself, residing in David! That same manifested presence of the Lord was with David when he slew Goliath. Indeed, no demon or devil or enemy can stand in the presence of God!

We read of God's power in 2 Samuel 22: "5 "When the waves of death surrounded me, the floods of ungodliness made me afraid. 6 The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me; the snares of death confronted me. 7 In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry entered His ears. 8 "Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven quaked and were shaken, because He was angry. 9 Smoke went up from His nostrils, and devouring fire from His mouth; coals were kindled by it. 10 He bowed the heavens also, and came down with darkness under His feet. 11 He rode upon a cherub, and flew; And He was seen upon the wings of the wind. 12 He made darkness canopies around Him, dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. 13 From the brightness before Him coals of fire were kindled. 14 "The Lord thundered from heaven, and the Most High uttered His voice. 15 He sent out arrows and scattered them; lightning bolts, and He vanquished them. 16 Then the channels of the sea were seen, the foundations of the world were uncovered, at the rebuke of the Lord, at the blast of the breath of His nostrils."

We serve a mighty God, but we need to walk in His presence! How we need His presence in these perilous days of so much wickedness! Micah 1 says, "3 For behold, the Lord is coming out of His place; He will come down and tread on the high places of the earth. 4 The mountains will melt under Him, and the valleys will split like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place." It says in "Psalm 68:2 As smoke is driven away, so drive them away; As wax melts before the fire, So let the wicked perish at the presence of God," and "Psalm 97:5 The mountains melt like wax at the presence of the Lord, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth." Nothing can stand before the Lord. He is all-powerful. As we carry His presence, what or who shall stand against us?

God has given us the Great Commission to fulfil. This is the mandate of the Church. And we can do so in the might and power of

God. How we need to carry His Presence, therefore, a people filled with His Spirit! Nothing can conquer the manifested presence of an almighty God.

Acts 5 says, “12 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch. 13 Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. 14 And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, 15 so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. 16 Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.” The apostles moved in great power because of the presence of the Lord was with them! Glory to God, how we need the presence of the Lord! We need to be so saturated with God that His presence is even in our shadow!

In Psalm 71, we read of what David writes, “9 Do not cast me off in the time of old age; Do not forsake me when my strength fails.” David was a man after the heart of God. He had seen God move in mighty and great ways. He had seen so many victories, and being rescued from the hands of Absalom and Saul. He knew the power in the presence of the Lord. It may seem that in his later years he might not have been walking in the presence as he used to. He was crying out to God to remember him in his old age and to still strengthen him.

David was in distress because we read, “10 For my enemies speak against me; and those who lie in wait for my life take counsel together, 11 Saying, “God has forsaken him; pursue and take him, for there is none to deliver him.” It seems David was anxious that once his enemies saw him vulnerable and weak because of the Presence that was no longer burning in him, that they would pounce

and cause him harm. Psalm 23 after all speaks of how God prepares a place for His servants in the midst of their enemies. David knew that he tasted so much goodness and enjoyed such great strength because of God's Presence. And now that it seemed the Presence was no longer so tangible, for whatever reason, he feared his enemies would triumph over him. It reminds us that God's Presence is our shield and protection, and without the Presence, we are vulnerable to the attacks and oppressions of the enemy.

In the same Psalm, he then writes, "1 In You, O Lord, I put my trust; let me never be put to shame. 2 Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape; Incline Your ear to me, and save me. 3 Be my strong refuge, to which I may resort continually; You have given the commandment to save me, for You are my rock and my fortress. 4 Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. 5 For You are my hope, O Lord God; You are my trust from my youth. 6 By You I have been upheld from birth; You are He who took me out of my mother's womb. My praise shall be continually of You. 7 I have become as a wonder to many, but You are my strong refuge. 8 Let my mouth be filled with Your praise and with Your glory all the day."

David had always known God to be his refuge and deliverer (see also Psalm 144). This is a man who throughout his life sought the Lord's Presence and always praised the mighty God. In his weakness and vulnerability, he again cried out to God to save him from the hand of his enemy. How we need to realise that only with God can we taste the goodness of victory and be triumphant over natural and spiritual foe! Often we are left weak, yet in God, we are strong for His Presence never waned in power. When we depart from His presence, we are vulnerable to the onslaught of the devil and his demons! Yet when we are in His presence we are never weak because God is never weak! In God, we are strong even when our flesh mourns and our soul is downcast.

David writes of God's strength and might in Psalm 92: "8 But You, Lord, are on high forevermore. 9 For behold, Your enemies, O Lord, for behold, Your enemies shall perish; All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. 10 But my horn You have exalted like a wild ox; I have been anointed with fresh oil. 11 My eye also has seen my desire on my enemies; My ears hear my desire on the wicked Who rise up against me. 12 The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13 Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.

14 They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, 15 To declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

Zachariah 2 says about the future restoration and glory of Jerusalem: "3 And there was the angel who talked with me, going out; and another angel was coming out to meet him, 4 who said to him, "Run, speak to this young man, saying: 'Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it. 5 For I,' says the Lord, 'will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.' " Some see this Scripture referring to the New Jerusalem, which is the eternal city one day to be inhabited by all those who believed and followed the Lord. In Revelation 21 it says that "the city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it."

However we interpret Zachariah 2 or Revelation 21, consider that Deuteronomy 4: 24 says that "the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God." As temples of the living God in which the Spirit of the Lord resides, the Lord wants to be our wall of fire. We don't need any other walls to protect us or to keep us safe. All that we need is God's presence to protect us! Psalm 34 (KJV) declares: "The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them. 8 Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him! 9 Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is

no want to those who fear Him. 10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing.”

In Ezekiel’s vision of the Lord in chapter 1 we read, “26 And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it. 27 Also from the appearance of His waist and upward I saw, as it were, the color of amber with the appearance of fire all around within it; and from the appearance of His waist and downward I saw, as it were, the appearance of fire with brightness all around. 28 Like the appearance of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the brightness all around it. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.” Yes, our God is an all-consuming fire!

Psalms 50:3 says, “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; A fire shall devour before Him, And it shall be very tempestuous all around Him,” and also “Psalm 83: 13 O my God, make them like the whirling dust, Like the chaff before the wind! 14 As the fire burns the woods, And as the flame sets the mountains on fire, 15 So pursue them with Your tempest, and frighten them with Your storm. 16 Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O Lord. 17 Let them be confounded and dismayed forever; Yes, let them be put to shame and perish, 18 That they may know that You, whose name alone is the Lord, are the Most High over all the earth.

We serve a mighty God, and in His Presence burns a holy fire! Psalm 37 says, “12 The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes at him with his teeth. 13 The Lord laughs at him, for He sees that his day is coming.” We live in a world of spiritual darkness, of spiritual onslaught, of injustice, of wickedness and where believers face all kinds of persecutions and threats. In an ever growing secular world, the just are often ridiculed, mocked and laughed at and they are scoffed. We live in a world where it seems so little makes sense, of great violence and evil as in the days of Noah, but God reminds us

He is still God, He is still glorious, mighty-all-powerful and there is truly none like Him. And the final laugh belongs to God, just as the battle belongs to God. How we need to walk in His presence for then we shall know victory!

Yes, while the enemy may plot and scheme, our God laughs in contempt and in mockery of such plans! For indeed, many are the plans of man but only the plan of God shall prevail! So praise Him! Yes, the Lord is great and He mocks at the plans of the enemy. It is time that we realise who this great God is. He shall not be mocked, and while the world may laugh at Him and His Church, the last laugh belongs to God. He is all-powerful, who then can resist Him? Babylon has fallen. No darkness is greater than the light!

It says in “Psalm 2: 1 Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, 3 “Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us.” 4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision.” Let the nations rage, and let the nations plot, and let the wicked do what they do, but in God we trust! The word ‘derision’ means “contemptuous ridicule or mockery.” Psalm 2 can therefore also read that the Lord scoffs at those who plot things in vain, meaning things that hold no power or will bear no fruit. It also says in “Psalm 59: 8 But You, O Lord, shall laugh at them; You shall have all the nations in derision. 9 I will wait for You, O You his Strength; For God is my defense.” Praise God, the Lord shall not be mocked for He mocks and laughs at those who stand in great arrogance and pride, for indeed a fall comes before such vanity. All around us people are laughing at God, at justice, at truth, at love and are making a mockery of all things holy and pure, but God has the final laugh.

May dear believers, we serve a mighty God. We need to remember this truth even in unjust and wicked times. Nothing is

impossible for God. He is still the mighty God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He stills parts the Red Sea. He still heals. And let us hold true to “Revelation 22: 11 He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.”

In Daniel 3, we read of the Hebrews Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego who refused to bow to the golden statue in Babylon. We read how everyone who heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, must fall down and worship the gold image and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. In anger, the king ordered the furnace to be heated seven times more than it was usually heated. Those who threw the men in the fire were killed because of the intense heat. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego did not flinch in their faithfulness to God, even though the devil was putting up demonic a show to instil fear in their lives. They held true to God for they found their comfort and victory in Christ.

We then read: “24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” 25 “Look!” he answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the[e] Son of God.” Praise the Lord, the three Hebrew men did not fear for even though they were in the fire, they were protected by God’s presence! Even more, they were surrounded by God’s Shekinah Glory. Shekinah is the English transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning “dwelling” or “settling” and denotes the presence of God in a place. Jesus dwelled in that furnace the moment the men were thrown in. By His all-consuming glory and fire, the fires of Babylon could not touch them! Our God is indeed an all-consuming fire, and nothing can stand before Him!

Glory to God, how we need to walk in God's Shekinah Presence and Glory! The rabbis used the term Shekinah to describe the following to the Jewish people:

- The presence of God among His people (Exodus 19:16-18; Exodus 40:34-38; I Kings 6:13)

- The glory of God dwelling in the Temple (2 Chronicles 7:1)

- How God dwells in the mountain (Psalm 68:16-18; Joel 3:17)

The divine presence of God, thus His very Shekinah Glory/Fire, on earth, was for example in the Bible depicted through the following:

- As a cloud (Exodus 24:16-18; Exodus 33:9; 1 Kings 8:10-13)

- As a pillar of smoke and fire (Exodus 13:21-22)

- As fire and a burning bush (Zechariah 2:5; Exodus 3:2)

Moses certainly knew about the Shekinah Glory. Except for the burning bush experience, we read in "Exodus 34:29 Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him." Moses was indeed on fire for God! Moses was experiencing the visible presence of God long before the coming of Jesus or the outpouring of the Holy Spirit! It reminds of "2 Corinthians 4:6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Also consider when Moses pitched his tent outside of the Israelite camp in the wilderness to convene with God, how the latter spoke to Moses face to face through a cloud as though speaking to a friend (Exodus 33:11). However, when Moses asked to see God's face, He denied Moses' request, stating, "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live" (Exodus 33:20). The glory of God was too great for human eyes to gaze upon and survive. Instead, God allowed Moses to stand in a cleft in a rock and see God's back after

He had passed by (Exodus 33:21-23). For this reason, God appeared like a fire (Shekinah fire) in the bush as well. Moses, therefore, had numerous encounters with the Shekinah glory!

In the New Testament, Jesus is the manifestation of Shekinah Glory. Jesus' ministry is the ultimate encounter of Shekinah Glory that God has ever had with man on earth. He was after all God who came in the flesh so that we may behold God, yet not in His absolute fullness of being pure spirit. Colossians 2:9-10 says, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority." In Christ, we see the visible manifestation of God Himself in the second person of the Trinity. Although His glory was also veiled, Jesus is nonetheless the presence of God on earth. Just as the divine Presence dwelled in a relatively plain tent called the "tabernacle" before the Temple in Jerusalem was built, so did the Presence dwell in the human man who was Jesus. "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him" (Isaiah 53:2). But when we get to heaven, we will see both the Son and the Father in all their glory, and the Shekinah will no longer be veiled (1 John 3:2).

Remember, Jesus was made to be both God and man in one person, to act as our High Priest, so that He could be the embodiment of the redemption of our sins. Hebrews 2:17 says, "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." The separation of man from God was redeemed when Jesus paid the bond price for our sins with His blood on the Cross of Calvary. Upon His death, the veil separating the holiest of Holies in the Temple was torn, therefore, we are able to abide eternally in God's presence through a new covenant, with the Holy Spirit residing in us.

In the New Testament, Peter, John, and James also witnessed the Shekinah Glory of God during the Transfiguration of Jesus. This is an event where Jesus is transfigured and becomes radiant in glory upon a mountain. The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 17:1–8, Mark 9:2–8, Luke 9:28–36) describe it, and the 2 Peter also refers to it (2 Peter 1:16–18). The account in Luke reads as follows: “28 Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. 29 As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. 30 And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. 33 Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. 34 While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud.”

The disciples experienced the ‘cloud,’ thus the Shekinah Glory, just as the Israelites experienced God as a pillar of fire and smoke (also translated as a cloud) in the wilderness. Remember, this was even before the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. On the mount, the Lord gave His disciples a glimpse of His glory without the flesh. The vision of John as recorded in the Book of Revelation also beautifully described the radiant Jesus beyond the flesh. We read in Revelation 1, “12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 The hair on his head was white like wool,

as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.”

Psalm 91 says, “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” That “shadow” is indeed the cloud that manifested on the Transfiguration of Jesus. As we abide in Christ by the Spirit of God, we are walking in His glory daily.

This is why we need to dwell in His presence and be so aware of it. We are now the vessels in which God resides by the Spirit, just as He was so present in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” As we mature in Christ by dying to the self and as we yield and submit to the Holy Spirit, we shall indeed taste His goodness, know His power and manifest Shekinah fire! For all disciples, this is now a reality because of the Blood of the Lamb, because of the resurrection and the ascension, and because of Pentecost.

God desires to fill us with the fullness of Himself. But for this to happen, we must receive power through the Holy Spirit to have the ability to be conformed into the image of Christ. This is why peace can only truly come to us once we are reborn in the Spirit (John 3) because only the Spirit of the Lord can lead us on the journey of delivering our soul from the bondage of the Self, the devil and the world. Indeed, as we make a home for Christ in our heart through faith and obedience, He begins to give us revelations of the greatness of His love, the width, length, depth, and height of His love which leads us to a greater state of peace. We then walk in His power, His

manifested glory (Shekinah) and grace. We then enjoy His Sabbath rest and behold a state of Shalom.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NKJV) says “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

With those few words—“from glory to glory”—Paul sums up our entire Christian life, from redemption and sanctification on earth, to our glorious eternal welcome into heaven. The same Greek word for “glory” is used twice in the phrase from glory to glory, yet each usage refers to something different. The first “glory” is that of the Old Covenant—the Law of Moses—while the second is that of the New Covenant, the gospel of Jesus Christ. Both have astonishing splendour.

The Old Covenant was given to Moses directly from God, written by God’s finger (Exodus 31:18). That root of our Christian faith is glorious indeed; it’s the glory we’re coming “from.” Yet the New Covenant, the glory we’re going “to,” far surpasses that of the Old. We are moving from the shadow of the old settled in religion to the liberating presence of the Living God. As we move from glory to glory, thus from the Law to the Christ, there’s something even more important about the glory of the New Covenant that Christians must understand: its supernatural power to transform us.

And that brings us to God’s ultimate purpose and destination for every believer, to transform us into the image of his own beloved Son (2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 8:28–30; Philippians 3:20–21). And this can only happen when we walk in His Shalom and Sabbath rest to be encased in Shekinah glory.

Paul says: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). This is the invitation the Lord makes to all Christians, to have our lives

radically transformed here and now, by opening our eyes to see the glorious journey He is taking us on “from glory to glory.”

This is the splendour and reality of the Shekinah glory, experienced by those who rest from the efforts of the flesh and the world and who find their peace (Shalom) in God. For in God, we are well, whole and alive! More than ever the Lord is calling for us to fellowship with Him. This implies an intimate relationship. This implies spending time with God. We have become so used to fellowship with other believers, and in this fellowship we therefore fellowship with the Lord, but God calls us now more than ever to draw away from the crowd, away from the lights, music and noise just to spend time with Him. It says in Luke 5:16 that Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Jesus withdrew from His own disciples, from the crowd, from the ministry to spend time with His Father. How much more do we not have to withdraw from the hustle and the bustle, from the crowd, from the noise and from our routines to spend time with our Lord?

Abiding in Him is fellowship. When we fellowship with the Lord we are nourished by Him, just like a branch needs nourishment from the vine or it will dry up. Fellowship is defined as the following: friendly association, especially with people who share one's interests. We are talking here therefore about fellowship which is born firstly out of friendship, and secondly, a common ground in terms of interest. According to Jesus, we are friends with Him because we as His disciples share a common interest, which is the Kingdom of God. We are friends with God because we know what the Master is doing, and what is the heart of the Master. Therefore, according to the definition of fellowship, and according to what Jesus said, we are in the prime position to fellowship with our Lord. We have fellowship with our Lord and Saviour because we are friends and we have a common interest.

The word “fellowship” describes the beautiful relationship of faith which connects true Christians to God and to all other true believers. We need to realise we were created to fellowship. Not just with each other (for this reason, God has also called forth the marriage), but primarily with the Lord. God gave us free will, for fellowship is so much sweeter and glorious when it is voluntary and based on free will love, respect and longing. The word ‘fellowship’ generally translates into the Greek noun *koinonia*. Henry Thayer defines the word - “fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation” (Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament). It describes the state of “association” or “joint participation.”

God continually urges us to stay away from idolatry and from the ways of the world, therefore we are urged not to fellowship or partake in the things of darkness. We cannot have true fellowship with the Lord if we also want to have fellowship with the world. This does not make sense at all. Our interest cannot be divided between God and this world. It says in “1 Corinthians 10:21: You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord’s table and the table of demons.” Fellowship implies a process of partaking, therefore, we cannot partake of the Lord’s cup and then also partake from the devil, which also implies drinking from the cup of this world. We cannot wish to sit at the Lord’s Table yet also want to sit at the table of the devil. This simply does not work. We are either friends with the Lord or friends with the world, yet we cannot be both. It is therefore impossible to have fellowship with the world and fellowship with the Lord because this then means your interest is split between the Lord and the world.

God desires our ultimate loyalty, attention, devotion and faithfulness. When it comes to our fellowship with the Lord, He desires for us to spend a lot of time with Him, yet then we must be completely and utterly focused upon Him and we must seek His will

and His ways. By fellowshiping with God we abide in Him and He abides in us through the Holy Spirit.

David writes in “Psalm 16:11 You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” As believers of God, we need to yearn, seek and desire to dwell in the presence of God, for in His presence we know God and in that knowing we can thrive, overcome, prosper and grow spiritually.

In Exodus 33 we read, “11 The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.” Take note of Joshua “did not leave the tent”. Yes, he longed for God. He longed to be with God. Do we have such a desire? Do we have such an urgency to dwell in God’s presence, where there is fullness of joy and hope?

David also wrote in “Psalm 42:1 As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.” He also said in “Psalm 140:13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name; The upright shall dwell in Your presence.” David became king because he had a heart for God. Joshua took over from Moses to lead the people into the Promised Land because he longed to dwell with God.

To worship God is based on relationship, not religion. In Psalm 139:7 we read, “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?” God’s presence is always available to God’s people through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. God is also omnipresent, meaning He is always present even if we aren’t aware of it.

Yes, we must seek God’s presence. Moses understood the critical importance of being led by God’s Presence when in Exodus 33 he cried, “15 Then Moses said to him, “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.” In Psalm 51:11 David said: “Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your

Holy Spirit from me.” In 1 Samuel 16 we learn (verse 14) that “the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him.” Saul had become rebellious, seeking life after the flesh instead of serving God’s will. In Ezekiel 10 the glory departed from the Jewish temple because of Israel’s wickedness. Remember during that time God’s presence was visible, tangible yet dwelled only in the Holy of Holies, even though the Spirit of God was active among His servants but not yet poured out.

It is indeed fearful when we are left to wander this earth without the presence of God! A church without the presence of God is a mere building of noise and senseless activities! Ministry without the presence of God is powerless! The apostle Paul walked in the presence of God, therefore, in God’s power and so he wrote in “1 Corinthians 2: 4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.” Indeed, the Christian life without God’s presence is void of true regenerating life!

God is in our midst, and we are often unaware of His presence. Scripture reveals God’s deep desire to be in fellowship with us and the hunger of the human soul for a relationship with Him. God always takes the initiative by His grace and seeks to draw us back into a personal friendship. Central to this relationship is understanding the dynamics of knowing God. Since God has already revealed Himself to us, we need to be alert to recognize that God is indeed present and active in our world today.

God’s is present everywhere: we should be constantly aware of him. We read:

‘The LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.’ Deuteronomy 4:39.

‘Can a man hide himself in secret place so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord?’ Jeremiah 23:24.

‘In him we live and move and have our being’ Acts 17:28.

God is present everywhere. We can never escape God’s presence, and we can never invite Him to be present. God is present whether we are believers or not. He is present everywhere even if we do not recognise his presence. God is omnipresent. God is present everywhere in his Son, sustaining this universe: ‘For by him all things were created ... and in him all things hold together’ Colossians 1:16,17. Christ holds the universe together. We should honour and praise Christ for his work of creation, as well as salvation. We can never escape God’s presence, and we can never invite him to be present. He is present everywhere, and he is present before we are present. It says in Psalm 139 in verse 7: “Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?” Indeed, nowhere!

To meet God in everyday life, to be aware of being in the presence of God all the time, is not subjective experientialism, it is reality. To be aware of being in the presence of God all the time, is not subjective experientialism, it is reality. God not only created all that is, He also sustains it, moment by moment. As we look at the sky, we see the stars God causes to shine. Isaiah 40 says, “26 He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name, by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power not one is missing.” All living creatures receive their daily food from God. It says in Psalm 145 verses 15 and 16: “The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

As Calvin wrote, “[God] revealed himself and daily discloses himself in the whole workmanship of the universe... he shows his glory to us, whenever we and wherever we cast our gaze. ... this skilful

ordering of the universe is for us a sort or mirror in which we can contemplate God.”

God provides for all, believers and unbelievers alike. Jesus said, ‘He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.’ (Matthew 5:45) Paul said to unbelievers: ‘[God] did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.’ (Acts 14: 17). When humans refuse to ‘honour him as God or give thanks to him’ (Romans 1:21) as they see his invisible power and divine nature in the creation, they are condemned. One of the great discoveries of the Reformation was the fact that we can serve God in our daily, mundane, work.

Charles Wesley expressed it in these words: Forth in your name, O Lord, I go, my daily labour to pursue, you only, Lord, resolved to know in all I think or speak or do. The task your wisdom has assigned here let me cheerfully fulfill; in all my work your presence find, and prove your good and perfect will. You may I set at my right hand, whose eyes my inmost secrets view, and labour on at your command and offer all my work to you.

Not only is God present in our world, he also invites us into his presence through his Son and his gospel. In Genesis 3, God’s judgement is to send out, to drive out sinners from the place where he met with them every day (Gen 3:22-24, 9). When God scatters his people, he judges them (Deuteronomy 28:64-68). However, through Christ and through his sacrifice, we are summoned into God’s presence. Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus ... and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith ... (Hebrews 10:19-22)

God is around us and within us: He is closer than breathing. We might think that we are born again, forgiven, justified, and adopted, but remain at a distance from God. Not so—we come into God’s

presence. This is our reality, regardless of whatever we might (or might not) feel when we pray. Paul puts it even more strongly: God is 'in Christ', we are 'in Christ', and have 'come to fulness of life in him' (Col 2:9,10). We are 'seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus': we have been 'brought near by the blood of Christ' (Eph 2:6, 13). We as a church are 'a temple of God's Holy Spirit', and are individually 'a temple of God's Holy Spirit' (1Cor 3:16, 6:19). God is around us and within us: he is closer than breathing.

So often, when we come to the Lord in prayer or in communication, we come to pray for ourselves, for others, hopefully, the lost, and hopefully for this broken world. This is all good and well, but one morning the Lord said why don't we just come to Him for the sake of being with Him, instead of coming with requests and petitions? Our spiritual life should primarily be about our relationship with God, and not about what God can do for us or even about ministry. It is about our love for Him, and if we truly yearn to serve Him because He is I AM.

The Lord loves to hear when we pray and seek His hand in our lives and those we pray for, but at times, and indeed many times, the Lord wants us just to come to Him for the simple reason of being with Him. This is about building a relationship and drawing closer to Him. Let us think about this. How often do we not come to the Lord for a word, for revelation, for knowledge, guidance and strength [again, nothing wrong with this], but rather, how often do we not just come to sit at His feet and spend time with the Lord?

This is true for our human relationships as well - while it is good for the child to ask his/her father's help and advice, sometimes, it is just better for the child and the father to spend time together. We need to realise that God is not just there to hear our requests and to pour out His love, but we need to realise that God also wants us to receive love from us. He wants us to pour all our attention onto Him. To be honest, one can serve the Lord but not really love Him.

One can be in ministry, but intimacy is somehow lacking. The Lord longs for His children just to come to Him, to love Him, to laugh with Him, to be close to Him, and just to be in His Presence.

In the presence of God, we come alive again in the power of the Holy Spirit to be true representatives of God on this earth. How we need the presence of God to blow again through our churches, our hearts and our lives! How we need to again seek the presence of God to lead us in all truth, in power, in boldness, in God's beauty and strength! Indeed, how we need the presence of the Holy Spirit of God to breathe life into us! How we need the Holy Spirit to shake our worlds so that we become alive from our spiritual apathy to be on fire for God! How we need the Holy Spirit to be filled with conviction and a certainty that God is faithful and true. How we need the holy fire of God to burn in our bones so that the dry bones may live and the spiritually dead and lost and forgotten may be revived.

Paul on the Road to Damascus was reborn when he met Jesus. And from that day he moved in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8), fulfilling the Great Commission by declaring the Good News far and wide. Revival truly followed Paul, for Paul was following Christ in Spirit and truth. Paul had crucified his flesh and was now regenerated by the Spirit of God. For the water of life inside of him was manifesting wherever Paul ministered by the grace and power of God. Yes, revival must follow the disciple, for the disciple follows the author of life! For as we follow Christ, we walk in His life and Spirit, and by such life and Spirit, the lost shall know that God still redeems and saves the broken, the lost and the forgotten! Only in the presence of God can we be revived and, therefore, come alive spiritually to lead others to the author of abundant life, Jesus.

How we also need a cry of the heart that we need the presence of God daily! We need to cry out to God that surely we don't want to go anywhere or do anything without His presence. For in His

presence is life, hope, joy, strength deliverance and healing. Yes Lord, lead us day by day in Your presence! Let Your presence always be with us!

We can only abide in God when God abides in us. This calls for us to make room for the Lord. Now, think of one's life [soul] as one big room. Throughout life, we fill this room with all kinds of experiences, perceptions, and habits that form our way of thinking, our behaviour, and it determines our spiritual condition and fortitude. If there is a lot of idolatry and sinful activities also present in the room [our soul which is our mind, heart and will], then naturally the devil has the legal right to be present and active in the room. And where the devil is, there is spiritual darkness, and with darkness comes fear, disorientation, disillusionment, lack of direction, lack of purpose, bondage, slavery and oppression. On the day we come to the Lord, we invite Him into our lives, we allow Him to sanctify our spirit so that we by design are no longer sinners but redeemed children of the Lord. But the problem is, even though we commit our spirit unto Him, we often tend to only invite Him to occupy a small part of this room called our soul.

So many Christians today allow God in, but they tell Him to only occupy a corner of the room. We want to hold onto so many of our wrong habits and mindsets. This is, however, not true spiritual freedom, but only the illusion of such freedom because by our choice and action, we still keep ourselves in bondage. So now you have the devil and God sharing a room – a room filled with God's light but also a room of darkness. Our actions, mindset and behaviour are partly now being determined by our service to the Lord, but because our room still caters for the world and in some ways the pitfalls of the devil, we still find an inner war constantly being waged within our soul. Our thoughts and heart is divided between God and the world, between serving God in holiness and still dancing with the devil.

Why? Because we have not given God the full right to occupy the room of our soul completely and utterly, meaning every inch and every corner. This is the problem we find so many times with followers of the Lord – God has flooded our spirit, but we have not completely yielded our mind [thoughts], heart [emotions] and will unto Him. True freedom comes when He sets us free, meaning we give all unto Him so that He becomes all within us. We will sing and praise unto God but yet we still follow our will. This then means God has not completely made His home in our soul. We say we love Him, yet our heart yearns for things of this world and its pleasures. With our minds, we think about Him, but we have thoughts involving sin and wickedness. For this reason, as Jesus said, we cannot have two masters; for two masters cannot vie for attention within our soul, for then there will be constant internal war.

We get a glimpse of such an inner war when Paul writes about it in Romans 7, and then he writes in Romans 8 that the answer to addressing this internal war is by following the Spirit and not the dictates of the flesh. We need to understand, that God doesn't just want to be part of one corner of our soul, but He wants to fill the entire space of our mind and heart so that our will is submitted unto Him.

To love the Lord is more than just a condition of the spirit, but a condition of our soul, and once we submit all to God, then God can truly abide in us and begin to renew and change us. We can be reborn in the Spirit but have not yielded our soul unto Him. God will not brainwash us, or override our will, this is a decision and choice we have to make out of love and obedience. Let us then consider the condition of our soul, and how much room God really occupies. It might just answer a lot of questions as to why we have not found our path with God.

In this world of so much noise, more than ever we need to listen more and talk less. And this applies especially to our walk with God.

We need to listen more to God, for it says in Psalm 46:10 that we must be still and know that He is God. He is the beginning and the end, and in Him lies all the answers, and our hope. In the stillness, and not in the noise, we find our peace and our strength as we listen, as we abide and we rest in His almighty presence. So often we have forgotten what it means to rest. To rest speaks of resting from your own efforts, and seeking to pursue your own path and your own will. To rest and to abide speaks of placing your life in the hands of the Lord, and allowing God to move you, to guide and lead you. Yet so often we would rather toil, instead of bowing the knee and trusting.

To abide and to rest in His Almighty Presence is like a leaf on the water. The leaf never resists where the water goes – it simply follows where the water leads. And just so we must be in the presence of God, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead. We must not resist the Lord, or His will, or His commands or His Truth, but we must be like that leaf that simply goes and follows.



Hunger, yearn and love God above all else

IF WE WANT TO WALK in victory, we need to love God above all else. This means truly spending time with God. There are many believers in a state of burnout, which is not victory. They suffer from a loss of passion, zeal and first-love-desire for Christ. This happens when our highest priority is not to love God and spend time with Him above all else. Our highest priority is to ultimately love God. In God is our victory and in Him, we find our zeal and passion to fulfill the Great Commission.

Revelation 2:1-7 contains Jesus' message to the church in Ephesus, the first of seven exhortations to various churches in the Roman Empire. Ephesus had some unique challenges for a Christ-follower in that it was home to the Emperor's cult and the worship of the Greek goddess Artemis (Acts 19:23-40). Because of these influences, the Ephesian believers had developed great discernment when it came to false teachers and heresy. Christ commended them for this discernment, but He faulted them for having lost their "first love." They had worked hard to remain victorious over what is false, yet failed to uphold the highest priority – a relationship with God.

The first love which characterized the Ephesians was the zeal and ardor with which they embraced their salvation as they realized they loved Christ because He first loved them (1 John 4:19) and that it was, in fact, His love for them that had made them "alive together

with Christ.” So overwhelmed were they by the joy that came from understanding their former state—dead in trespasses and sins—and their new life in Christ, that they exhibited the fruit of that joy (Ephesians 2:1-5). Because of God’s great love for the Ephesians, they were “made alive in Christ” and that new life was exhibited in the passion of gratitude. That passion for the Savior spilt over onto one another and out to those in the culture they inhabited, corrupt as it was.

Jesus commends the Ephesians for their many good works and hard work. They tested teachers to see whether their professions were real; they endured hardship and persevered without growing weary. But they had lost their warmth and zeal for Christ, and when that happened, they began to “go through the motions” of good works, motivated not by the love of and for Christ, but by the works themselves. Religion replaced relationship. Ultimately, they were not walking in victory, for they had lost their passion for their First Love – Christ.

Surrounded by paganism and false teachers, the Ephesian church would have had ample opportunity to correct false doctrine and confront heretical teachers. If they did so for any reason other than love for Christ and a passion for His truth, however, they would have lost their way. Instead of pursuing Christ with the devotion they once showed, much like a bride who follows her groom “through the desert” (Jeremiah 2:2), the Ephesians were in danger of falling away from Christ completely. This is why He warns those who have “ears to hear” to prove the reality of their salvation by returning to Him and rekindling the love that had begun to cool.

It is of utmost importance to pursue the Great Commission and to address false teachings, but everything should be done based on our zeal and passion for our First Love – Jesus. The Lord calls us to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), and to not let the frustration of false teaching overpower the love of Christ in us

(Ephesians 4:31-32). It is so easy to go through the motions of our faith that we lose sight of Christ. If this happens, we lose sight of our victory.

But by the time the apostle John saw the exalted Christ on the island of Patmos, decades had passed since the Ephesian believers first repented — and in the vision, Christ issued them this stern warning: “Your love, the first one, you have left.” The phrase “you have left” is from the Greek word *aphiemi*, which denotes the voluntary release of something once held dear or to neglect, to ignore, or to leave something or someone behind. Although the Ephesian believers were still committed to Christ, doing everything “for his name’s sake,” they no longer had the deep passion and fervency for Him that had once consumed their hearts. Over the years, they never stopped faithfully serving Him yet their burning passion to love Him faded. The Ephesian congregation became so focused on protecting their church that they were no longer able to enjoy their relationship with Jesus as they had many years earlier. This was still a remarkable church, but the spiritual fervency that had characterized this body of believers in the past was now missing. It was for this reason that Jesus was so deeply disturbed. The blazing fire that once characterized the Ephesian believers had gradually waned until it became little more than a smouldering flame.

If this could happen to the church of Ephesus, it must be taken as a warning for the Church in every generation. We must regularly allow the Holy Spirit to search our hearts and reveal whether or not we are still on fire for the Lord as we once were. It may be a painful revelation to realize that we have become doctrinally sophisticated yet powerless. However, if we are willing to remember from whence we have fallen and then to repent, we can be spared the tragedy of becoming irrelevant to our generation. Indeed, our highest priority is to love God as spiritual sons and daughters, and to follow Him in zealous love.

In the *Magna Carta for Restoring the Supremacy of Jesus Christ* (a.k.a. *A Jesus Manifesto for the 21st Century Church*) by Leonard Sweet and Frank Viola, they write the following:

Christians have made the gospel about so many things ... things other than Christ. Jesus Christ is the gravitational pull that brings everything together and gives them significance, reality, and meaning. Without him, all things lose their value. Without him, all things are but detached pieces floating around in space. It is possible to emphasize a spiritual truth, value, virtue, or gift, yet miss Christ . . . who is the embodiment and incarnation of all spiritual truth, values, virtues, and gifts.

Seek a truth, a value, a virtue, or a spiritual gift, and you have obtained something dead. Seek Christ, embrace Christ, know Christ, and you have touched him who is Life. And in him resides all Truth, Values, Virtues and Gifts in living color. Beauty has its meaning in the beauty of Christ, in whom is found all that makes us lovely and loveable. What is Christianity? It is Christ. Nothing more. Nothing less. Christianity is not an ideology. Christianity is not a philosophy. Christianity is the “good news” that Beauty, Truth and Goodness are found in a person.

If we want to walk in victory, it must always be about Christ, and nothing else. Do our hearts truly burn for Him? Is God our first thought in all matters? The Lord said in Matthew 6 in the Lord's Prayer that we must pray for God's Kingdom to come and His will to be done. Thus, His Kingdom and Will take top priority, and upon such matters, we must reflect. In the same chapter, the Lord said we must **FIRST** seek His Kingdom and His righteousness. The Amplified Bible translates it as follows: “33 But first and most importantly seek (aim at, strive after) His kingdom and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right—the attitude and character of God], and all these things will be given to you also.” It is important to note the word “**BUT**”, for it precedes verses 31 and 32

which reads: “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. “For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”

In Matthew 6 we are thus urged to first consider God’s Kingdom and God’s Ways (His righteousness) above all else, even above our earthly needs, wants desires, and yes, even our will. If we make God an afterthought, then our needs, our will and our ways take priority above God’s Kingdom. It says in “Philippians 4:8: Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.” Yes, everything that is good, noble and pure – thus of God – must be our main concern and deserves all our attention and effort.

We can be so busy for God, that we hardly know Him. This is not victory. It is important to be temperate in all things. We can be so busy that we lose sight of God. We must always remember that in Christ is our victory. In Christ is our joy. I heard once that someone said that BUSY stands for Barren Under Satan’s Yoke. We must all contend for a temperate life in Christ that is equally both content to aspire to lead a quiet and peaceable life in godliness but also discontent until the high calling of God in Christ in us is fully worked out.

The question is, how do we cultivate church communities that are both content and discontent? It’s a paradox. The problem is, that our focus is so often about our works and action, yet too few seem to have found joy and contentment in their salvation and intimacy with Christ. So few know of the beauty of Christ and are captivated by the Author of our Story.

We need to not be lazy of course and not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up (Galatians 6:9) yet some have become so weary they can do no good! Some have abandoned their walk in frustration. We need to keep in step with the Spirit to finish our race. The race is not to the swift. Speed kills but the Spirit gives life. Chasing influence, impact and purpose in itself is pointless. Jesus should be our purpose. Jesus is our sanctification and righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30). Our life and works are in Him. Our predestined works are prearranged in Him. They are authored already and only found in Him but we seem to be good at doing things ourselves and in our own fleshly strength. In the end, if we lose sight of Christ, then many good works become dead works. This is not victory.

We need to repent of the abundance of 'good' dead works which flows from religion. Paul worked really hard but it was not him but Christ in Him doing the works. Paul says it was not his work but grace. "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me." 1 Corinthians 15. This is not semantics by Paul - he attributes the abundance of works in his life to God. He has 'ceased' from his works and entered rest. All his efforts are fueled by Christ, channelled by faith. He cannot take credit that they are even his efforts.

Everything we do in our pursuit of God should flow from God. John 6:28-29 says, "Then they inquired, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" Jesus replied, "The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent." And also in 1 Corinthians 15:58, "My beloved brothers, become steadfast, unmovable, abounding in the work of the LORD at all times, knowing that your labor in the LORD is not vain." We need to do the 'work of the Lord' but the work of God is our faith. Having faith is really only our work. Many are doing much for the sake of impact by human strength and

seeking purpose but they are not restricted to 'the work of the Lord but their own 'works of ambition.'

Our singular work is to believe. Jesus uses the singular for the word work - the work of God we must do is one singular work. To have faith in Him. All our works are contained in one work - that is 'to believe in Christ'. Faith that is untested, and unused is not faith. Our faith is the gold. Our work is to believe, to behold, to know, to love Him first. To obey the greatest commandment first. Out of this comes a deep rest which primes us, prepares us, and energises us for every good work so that we can lead a life of victory. We build according to the vision before us. Is Christ's face before us?

A big problem in the church is that we have lost sight of the importance of relationship, primarily, our relationship with God. We have made ministry more important than our relationship with God above all. Our primary duty above all is to be a spiritual son or daughter of God. He is the Vine. In my years of ministry, what shocks me is how many people who do 'great works' do not even know the Lord, and so their efforts are, in fact, dead works. We work for the Kingdom day and night, sweating under the sun, yet hardly know the Son.

For three years the disciples hardly did much ministry, for the Lord granted them time to know Him first. Everything flows from that relationship. Yet we are so busy with our programmes, agendas and ministry - wanting to make an impact - that we have lost sight of what is important. The church needs to rediscover a true and their first Love again, because it is not about our work, efforts, or status. It is about Christ, and finding our rest (to abide) in Him. Revival will see believers plucked from a constant motion of action, or even a spiritual paralysis, to again behold the Lord.

I am always reminded of Moses - he could do nothing (in terms of leading the people out of Egypt) until He first beheld the Lord at the burning bush. Moses had to know God, and to know it is

all about His beauty and splendour. This is why years later Moses cried out again to see God's glory. It is about believing, knowing and beholding our First Love, for out of our relationship with a mighty and holy God flows the streams of zeal. Such streams of living water quickened by the Holy Spirit is never by our efforts, but it is purely the manifestation of the habitation of a loving God. How we need to learn to rest, to abide and to walk in Shalom. Then we shall know and do His will to His glory.

Our love for God is also reflected in our prayer life. How often is our prayer life not about primarily fellowshiping with God, loving Him and knowing Him, but about constant demands and questions concerning our ministry, works, and actions? We must learn to love God, and hunger for His presence (not a mere visitation) for then we shall be left by the Spirit of God. God wants our attention, love and passion, yet our attention, love and passion lies with our ministry and obligations. We just need to sit at His feet, be quiet, love Him, praise Him, and then in that place of Shalom the Spirit move us to do His will. For some, this sounds like mysticism, but it is simply about fellowship and intimacy.

Psalm 46:10 (New International Version) says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." What does it mean when God's own are commanded to "be still"? The injunction is not given to restrict the mobility of God's people. The duty represents a spiritual disposition that ought to characterize those to whom God's unfailing promises have been given. The word translated "be still" comes from the Hebrew term *raphah*. This word is found in various forms in the Old Testament, with different shades of meaning. It refers to that which is slack, or to let drop, or in some instances, to be disheartened or weak. When used of a person (as opposed to some inanimate object) it often has a negative connotation.

Sadly, there are those who are far from “still”; they “do all the work” and give God none of the credit. They believe that they can survive and thrive by the sweat of their own brow. They can do it all on their own, without any divine dependence. They rely on their own wisdom, on their own strength and knowledge. This leads to pride in the Self, yet pride comes before a fall. We need to be still, resting in God, trusting in Him, and relying on His Wisdom if we wish to survive and thrive in a world of many challenges. Then we shall walk in His victory.

Here is the irony in this term “be still.” While we must take the initiative to fulfil our responsibilities and live our lives, the uncertainties of living in a world of sin and woe will continually challenge us. This command - “be still” - forces us to think about two things: that we are finite, and that God is infinite. That being the case, we need to drop our hands, go limp, relax, and have faith in the eternal God despite the natural desire to take control.

Psalm 46:10 thus encourages us to reflect on what God can do in the face of what we are unable to do. Spiritual serenity, the psalmist admits, ought to be cultivated in spite of the shaking mountains and agitated waters. This spiritual calm, that God commands, does not come from a lack of troubles; it derives from a steady, deep reflection on the ways God has intervened in history on behalf of his people (Romans 15:4).

There is a Scripture in Mark 8 that reads: 27 Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, “Who do men say that I am?” 28 So they answered, “John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” 29 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered and said to Him, “You are the Christ.”

This is a question I strongly believe the Lord is asking us all in this day and in this hour. To us and to you, who is He? Is He our First Love? Do we desire Him and do we burn in zeal for Him?

Is He our highest priority? Sadly, even in some churches, Jesus has been reduced to being a mere historical figure, or to a Santa Claus prototype of delivering gifts, while some religions have reduced him to being a mere prophet and other esoteric movements have reduced him to merely being a master of knowledge.

In the Scriptures, we find three powerful encounters between man and God – one being at the burning bush, two on the road to Damascus, and three, on the island of Patmos. At the bush, Moses encountered the Great I Am, Paul encountered the living Lord and John encountered the victorious Lamb that returns as the Lion of Judah. All three could say without a doubt who this mighty God is. Who is God to you? A mere friend? A confidant? Do you treat him like a bank manager? Sure, He is our friend, and sure, we may not all have a powerful encounter like Moses, Paul or John did, but God reveals Himself to each and every one of us in a unique way. The encounter may be different, but the purpose remains the same.

The purpose is to answer the question posed by Jesus in Mark 8: “But who do you say that I am?” I don’t know about you my dear reader, but this is I know, while He is indeed a friend, He is so much more. He is God divine – the Great I AM. He is our victory, for He is our joy and strength. He is our redemption. Peter answered and said the Christ, or in some versions it speaks about the Messiah. Who is this Lord? A mere historical figure? A man with a vision? A prophet? A teacher? A philosopher?

It is simple. Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is God Himself. He is our Saviour, Redeemer, Master, the King of kings, Lord of Lords, Teacher, Messiah, Hope, the Way, the Truth, the Lily of the Valley, the Rose of Sharon, the alpha and the omega, the one worthy to open the scrolls, and He is the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world was laid and He is the Lion that returns in all His Glory! Give Him praise, give Him praise! Who is He? He is God! Maker of all creation. He is all-powerful, mighty, glorious, beautiful, majestic,

and our provider, our substance and our present and future life! Is He a mere prophet? A mere teacher? Never, for by His Name all disease, all illness, all things that are dreaded and all things that are vile and unnatural shall bow. He is Jesus! Glorify Him.

Who is He to you? This is the question God is asking us all in this day. For some a curse word, for others a passing thought, but He is the reality, He is the Truth, He is the Way, He is Life, He is Love so just praise Him! He must be our First Love, for then we labour not for dead works, but in His life and hope. And such life brings revival, freedom and hope.

One day I was alerted to a mistake in one of my volumes of work. The sentence read “it is all about ...” with an important word being omitted (left out). And the word was Jesus. So the sentence should have read “it is all about Jesus” in the context of evangelism. After all, He is the reason why we evangelize and disciple. It was a small mistake, but because the word was omitted, the sentence did not make sense, nor did the entire paragraph within the context of the writing.

And this got me thinking. Nothing makes sense when we omit Jesus out of our lives. Nothing. Makes. Sense. Period and Full Stop. Like the sentence I wrote incorrectly the first time, just so for many people it will be a small thing, trivial, to omit Jesus out of their lives. Yet, it is a terrible thought to omit Jesus out of our lives. He is the hope of Glory. Our anchor. Our joy. Our life. Yet people choose to leave Him out in the cold.

As mentioned, the sentence I wrote contained a blank that needed to be filled with Jesus. And just so, many people’s lives contain ultimately the greatest blank which can only be filled with Jesus. Life is full of people who are like incomplete sentences, nothing makes sense for them, nothing is in order and nothing connects because they have omitted Jesus from their lives.

It says in “Matthew 5: 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.” Jesus is the foundation of all. In Him is every jot and tittle, for in Him is the entire meaning and purpose of life. He is the Word that was in the beginning that became flesh to die for our sins. Yet sadly so many regard Jesus as of little worth, and of no importance in their lives. He is but letters placed together, instead of being the Alpha and the Omega of all. Yet, He should be the jot and the tittle of our very existence. For He is the Word, the Truth, the Way and the Life. Without Him, we are not complete. Without Him, we have no foundation. Without Him, we have no true life, love, hope, or purpose.

So we go through life trying to fill the incomplete sentence with so many different things, for some, it becomes all about money, for others it is about fame, or maybe power, or self-glory. Who knows, but the reality is simple. It is all about Jesus and if we truly walk with Him. Eyes open, knowing Him, and abiding in Him. Then we shall walk in victory.

I was alerted to the fact that I omitted Jesus from the sentence. I corrected the mistake so that the paragraph and the entire chapter could make sense. This is what we are called to do in life as disciples – tell people it does not make sense to omit Jesus. We need to tell people they need Jesus to fill in the blanks so that they are at peace, liberated, and complete in Him. And yes, as we pray, we trust they we correct their path and insert Jesus as the Truth of all. Let us then not be incomplete, and let Jesus fill the blank so that all makes sense. He must be our First Love, lest we work in the flesh and burn out.

More than ever the Lord is calling for us to fellowship with Him. This implies an intimate relationship. This implies spending time with God. We have become so used to fellowship with other believers, and in this fellowship we therefore fellowship with the Lord, but God calls us now more than ever to draw away from the

crowd, away from the lights, music and noise just to spend time with Him. It says in Luke 5:16 that Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Jesus withdrew from His own disciples, from the crowd, from the ministry to spend time with His Father. How much more do we not have to withdraw from the hustle and the bustle, from the crowd, from the noise and from our routines to spend time with our Lord?

Abiding in Him is fellowship. When we fellowship with the Lord we are nourished by Him, just like a branch needs nourishment from the vine or it will dry up. Fellowship is defined as the following: friendly association, especially with people who share one's interests. We are talking here therefore about fellowship which is born firstly out of friendship, and secondly, a common ground in terms of interest. According to Jesus, we are friends with Him because we as His disciples share a common interest, which is the Kingdom of God. We are friends with God because we know what the Master is doing, and what is the heart of the Master. Therefore, according to the definition of fellowship, and according to what Jesus said, we are in the prime position to fellowship with our Lord. We have fellowship with our Lord and Saviour because we are friends and we have a common interest.

The word “fellowship” describes the beautiful relationship of faith which connects true Christians to God and to all other true believers. We need to realise we were created to fellowship. Not just with each other (for this reason, God has also called forth the marriage), but primarily with the Lord. God gave us free will, for fellowship is so much sweeter and glorious when it is voluntary and based on free will love, respect and longing. The word ‘fellowship’ generally translates into the Greek noun *koinonia*. Henry Thayer defines the word -“fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation” (Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament). It describes the state of “association” or “joint participation.”

God continually urges us to stay away from idolatry and from the ways of the world, therefore we are urged not to fellowship or partake in the things of darkness. We cannot have true fellowship with the Lord if we also want to have fellowship with the world. This does not make sense at all. Our interest cannot be divided between God and this world. It says in “1 Corinthians 10:21: You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord’s table and the table of demons.” Fellowship implies a process of partaking, therefore, we cannot partake of the Lord’s cup and then also partake from the devil, which also implies drinking from the cup of this world. We cannot wish to sit at the Lord’s Table yet also want to sit at the table of the devil. This simply does not work. We are either friends with the Lord or friends with the world, yet we cannot be both. It is therefore impossible to have fellowship with the world and fellowship with the Lord because this then means your interest is split between the Lord and the world.

God desires our ultimate loyalty, attention, devotion and faithfulness. When it comes to our fellowship with the Lord, He desires for us to spend a lot of time with Him, yet then we must be completely and utterly focused upon Him and we must seek His will and His ways. By fellowshiping with God we abide in Him and He abides in us through the Holy Spirit.

Let us again be reminded of 1 John 1:5-7 [Fellowship with Him and One Another]: This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

In Christ is our victory. Yet we must guard against making our life or ministry about anything else, it should all be about the Lord.

May we indeed burn for Him, and may we abide in His Presence? Let us allow the Spirit to move us in God's power, for then we shall discover that we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37). To conquer is to be victorious over an adversary. To be "more than a conqueror" means we not only achieve victory, but we are overwhelmingly victorious.

There are many illustrations in the Old Testament of God bringing miraculous victory to His people, Israel. Humanly speaking, Israel was no match for their enemies. But God cautioned them not to be afraid, that He would fight their battles for them. Exodus 14:14 says, "The Lord will fight for you, you need only to be still." The Lord told Jeremiah that He was bringing armies against the rebellious Israelites as punishment for their disobedience, but even then, "'They . . . will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you,' declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 1:19). In one instance, an entire army fled their own camp when God caused them to hear the sounds of a great army coming. The famine-racked Israelites were able to plunder the enemy camp and provide for their families through no act of their own (2 Kings 7). Not only were they saved from an approaching army, but they actually benefited from the threat. They were "more than conquerors."

Satan is our adversary. He sends all kinds of life-defeating, joy-stealing attacks to threaten the well-being and faith of God's children. Many of those attacks are listed in Romans 8:35–39: trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, and sword. Paul is encouraging us to stand firm in our faith when those attacks come, reminding us that not only will we win in the end, but Jesus enables us to win now. Satan lacks the power to steal our eternal destiny, and he cannot separate us from the love of God right now. Nothing we face worries God in the least. If we are His children through faith in His Son, then we have His pledge of love and protection. In John 10:27–29, Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and

they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand."

To be more than conquerors means we face the trials of life with the certainty that we are not alone. We have a mighty Father who fights for us. We approach the darkest valleys with confidence, knowing that nothing can happen to us that is not permitted by our loving Father for our good (Psalm 23:4; Romans 8:28). We have His promise of eternal life (John 3:16; Titus 1:2; 1 John 5:11) and the presence of Almighty God every moment of every day until we see Him face to face (Psalm 139:7–12; Deuteronomy 31:8; Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20).

No sin of ours and no attempt of the enemy can steal the loving care of God from our lives, and that makes us more than conquerors through Christ who loves us. Hunger for God as your First Love, for then you shall know victory even business, dead works, religion and pride.



The victory of Psalm 91

YOU HAVE TO LOVE PSALM 91. It is such a powerful and comforting psalm in the Bible that addresses the theme of spiritual warfare and divine protection. It speaks of living the victorious life in Christ. This psalm, often referred to as the Psalm of Protection, emphasizes the idea of seeking refuge in God during times of trouble and relying on His unwavering shield of defence in the midst of spiritual battles.

If you are experiencing difficulty or find yourself in fear, perhaps Psalm 91 will speak to your heart, helping you remember what we all can trust in: God is with us, God takes care of us, and God will prevail. The world can be a threatening, dangerous place — we all know this. From sickness and disease to earthly trials such as famine or air and water pollution, our bodies are threatened. But we also have very real foes to contend with, enemies in our community or nation who put our lives and well-being at stake. Psalm 91 offers its message of the perfect protection provided by our Heavenly Father. It should resonate in our souls, calming our fears and helping us keep our sights on the One who can do something about our problems. That One is God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

While many of the psalms were written by or for King David, it seems it was written by Moses. It comes after Psalm 90, which was attributed to Moses. The Midrash, which is the Jewish interpretation of the Talmud, notes that Moses composed Psalm 91. Some scholars believe it was originally composed by Moses and then compiled by

David, possibly with some modifications. Psalm 91 is a psalm about victory, even in the darkest times. It is about a trusting and faithful person who affirms his status as safe and secure even during a time of calamity and distress. God is the one who provides shelter, shadow, refuge, and more.

Psalm 91 upholds Psalm 23, where we are promised the following: “4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.”

Right from the start in Psalm 91, we read: “1 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.” Praise God, what a powerful statement! Verses 1 and 2 highlight the importance of dwelling in the presence of God and making Him our refuge. This emphasizes the need for believers to stay close to God during dark times and in spiritual warfare. The imagery of finding shelter in the shadow of the Almighty and declaring God as our refuge and fortress underscores the idea that our safety lies in our proximity to Him. It signifies trust and a deep, personal relationship with God.

God has a secret place for His own (Psalm 27:5, 31:20), and it is a place to live in. Those who dwell there abide under the shadow of the Almighty, knowing His protection, comfort, and care. In Psalm 90:1, Moses spoke of God as the dwelling place of His people. The opening lines of Psalm 91 seem to take that idea further. There are many followers of Jesus Christ who seem to know very little of the secret place of the Most High or what it is to abide under His shadow. Many seem to regard this as only a thing for mystics or the super-spiritual. Moses was well acquainted with the realities of life.

Isaiah 49:2 also speaks of the shadow of God's hand. If we abide and remain in Christ, covered by the Blood, we shall know victory and find our peace. As we abide in the Covenant, we rest under the shadow of His hand.

Indeed, as we rest in God in His shade, who shall move us from His Presence? Romans 8 declares, "35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." 37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Psalms 91 assures us that we can have this same sort of protection if we trust in the Lord. The angels will lift us up in their hands, and we will trample the lion and serpent. As Psalm 91:9-10 assures, "If you say, 'The Lord is my refuge,' and you make the Most High your dwelling, no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent." God will protect and shield all those who truly trust in Him. What a promise! And we need to stand upon such a promise.

We then read: "3 Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. 4 He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. 5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, 6 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday."

These verses, up to verse 15, detail the comprehensive protection that God offers to those who trust in Him. The imagery of being shielded from dangers such as traps, deadly diseases, and physical

threats conveys God's unwavering care and safeguarding during spiritual battles. The promise that even a thousand may fall around you, but harm will not come near, assures believers of God's all-encompassing protection in times of adversity. The reference to angels guarding and lifting you up reaffirms God's watchful eye over His children.

It then says: "14 Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. 15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. 16 With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation." Here we read about how God shall deliver those who 1) sets His love on the Lord and 2) knows the Name of the Lord.

To know the Name of the Lord is about knowing God. It is about knowing who He is. Thus, we should know who is the one who can deliver us from evil and distress. Psalm 121 says: "1 I will lift up my eyes to the hills [of Jerusalem] - From where shall my help come? 2 My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. 3 He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. 4 Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber [briefly] nor sleep [soundly]."

When Moses was mandated to return to Egypt to lead the people out of bondage, we read of the following regarding his encounter with God at the burning bush: Exodus 3: 13 Then Moses said to God, "Behold, when I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers (ancestors) has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I Am Who I Am"; and He said, "You shall say this to the Israelites, 'I Am has sent me to you.'" 15 Then God also said to Moses, "This is what you shall say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the

God of Jacob (Israel), has sent me to you.’ This is My Name forever, and this is My memorial [name] to all generations.

We can clearly see the importance of the NAME of God – for it is by that name that deliverance is secured and established. For there is no other name in the heavens or on earth that will truly set us free and that will deliver us from the snare of the fowler. For this reason, Moses had to make it clear that is it YHVH – the Great I AM – who will deliver and set free. And this is what Moses understood and wrote about in Psalm 91 – we are saved when we call upon the Name of the Lord, and when we know Him, and when we embrace His Truth. Moses had to encounter the Lord of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and he had to know who this mighty God is before he could walk in victory. As he met God, he was able to fulfil the task that God had given him. By beholding God he could behold the task at hand.

It was thus important for Moses and for the people of Israel to know who will deliver them – not merely some or other so-called god, but the one and only God – YHVH. Of Jesus and the importance of the NAME we read the following in Philippians 2:8-11 Amplified Bible (AMP): 8 After He was found in [terms of His] outward appearance as a man [for a divinely-appointed time], He humbled Himself [still further] by becoming obedient [to the Father] to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also [because He obeyed and so completely humbled Himself], God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus [a]every knee shall bow [in submission], of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess and openly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord (sovereign God), to the glory of God the Father.

Truly, by the Name of the Lord, by the Name of Jesus, we are saved and redeemed and rescued! For it is the Lord God of

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that sets us free and delivers us! On Paul's journey to Damascus in Acts 9 we read the following: "4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice [from heaven] saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting and oppressing Me?" 5 And Saul said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He answered, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting". Again, Paul had to know the NAME of the one he was persecuting, for indeed it is the name above all names. He was persecuting the Lord who spoke to Noah, Moses, and David.

When Daniel faced Goliath he said the following in "1 Samuel 17: 45 Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted." David defeated Goliath because the victory was already won in the spiritual, for David know who God is and he had set his love upon the Lord. He reminded Goliath, thus the spirit that drove the giant to kill and to destroy that he comes in the mighty Name of the Lord, for it is by that Name that we are saved, delivered and rescued! Yes, David was saved on that day because he had set his love upon the Lord, and he knew the name of the Lord.

We read in Deuteronomy 30: 15 "Listen closely, I have set before you today life and prosperity (good), and death and adversity (evil); 16 in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk [that is, to live each and every day] in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments (precepts), so that you will live and multiply, and that the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to possess. 17 But if your heart turns away and you will not hear and obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, 18 I declare to you today that you will certainly perish. You will not live long in the land which you cross the Jordan to enter and possess. 19 I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore, you shall choose life

in order that you may live, you and your descendants, 20 by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding closely to Him; for He is your life [your good life, your abundant life, your fulfillment] and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the Lord promised (swore) to give to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

When we truly know His name to the point of having a relationship, and when we truly set our love upon Him as our greatest love, then we shall live and we shall prosper in spirit, soul and body. For in the Name of Jesus is our hope, and redemption. And as we know His Name by knowing Him, we walk in His authority, and to His Glory and to His honour. For unto that Name – the Name above all else – belongs all dominion. May we set our hearts upon the Lord, and love Him above all else, lest we fall into the trap of idolatry, and may we behold Him as Moses beheld Him. For then we shall know the reality when Moses wrote: “He will call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With a long life I will satisfy him And I will let him see My salvation.” God is our Life, our Hope and our Strength. So praise Him. Love Him. Obey Him, Seek Him. And know Him. Calling upon the Lord in times of trouble and seeking His help demonstrates reliance on God. The promise of deliverance, honour, and exaltation reinforces the idea that when God is our first love and refuge, He will lift us up, set us on high, and cover us with His love and protection.

So find in Psalm 91 the blessing of His presence that He will be with His children in trouble. We can enjoy the blessing of His protection, for He will deliver His children. We stand upon the blessing of His promotion, for He will honour His followers. We can rejoice in the blessing of His prosperity, for it says that “with long life I will satisfy him.” And we can walk in the blessing of His preservation for we shall be shown His salvation.

Psalm 91 is full of wonderful promises of victory, but we must stay close to God, trust in His unfailing protection, and maintain a deep and intimate relationship with Him by making Him their first love, knowing His name, and calling upon Him in times of need. God's promise in these verses assures us that He will not only deliver us but also honor and elevate us, covering us with His love and protection during the battles of life. Not only is Psalm 91 a reassurance of protection for those who love and put their faith in God, but it's a direct promise from God for all who do the same: I will be with him. I will deliver him. In a world plagued by so many difficulties, it is heartening and encouraging to have these assurances. Yes, we are not alone. God is with us despite the dangers and threats.

It's perhaps the same reason so many people cling to Jesus' promises to his disciples in the Gospel of John. As He says in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." And later, in John 16:33, He says, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Have peace. Take heart. Don't worry. All of these comforting sentiments are like a balm to the Christian tossed upon the waters of a turbulent sea, terrified as difficulties overcome so many.

It's the same sentiment God expressed to Joshua upon entering the Promised Land: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). Yes, not only will God guard over us with His feather and shield us physically, but He'll rescue us. Further, God will send us supernatural aid in the form of angels to help us prevail. He also promises salvation and eternal life for those of us who believe in Him. Jesus references the psalm in Luke 10:19, telling his disciples, "I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power

of the enemy; nothing will harm you.” The devil also uses elements of this psalm in his attempts to sway Jesus in the wilderness (Luke 4:9-11).

Let us again be reminded of the following in Psalm 91: “15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.” Psalm 91 never mentions maybe when it comes to God’s action. It says it will be done. God’s Word is Yes and Amen. He will not forsake or leave us (Deuteronomy 31:8, Hebrews 13:5). Let us also remind ourselves of the following: “9 Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, 10 no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling.” All of these wonderful promises hinge upon our relationship with God. He must be our Rock, Fortress, High Tower (Psalm 144) and First Love.

It is the reminder of “Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” Glory to God, there is victory in Christ, but He must be our Lord, Shepherd and King. Psalm 91 is the promise for the righteous, and those who follow God and seek Him above all else. God shall not fail in His promise, so if we want to walk in victory, we must abide in Him, and be obedient and faithful in our devotion, zeal and love.



True liberty is only found in Christ

LIBERTY IN THE WORLD is a big thing. It is a big thing for many people, just ask someone who was once a slave yet who is now free. But for the Christian, the liberty sought is vastly different to the liberty sought by the world. The one truly liberates, and the latter enslaves. God liberated Israel from oppression and slavery, underlying it has always been His intention to liberate His people from any form of slavery – be it spiritual, emotional or even physical. And still today, the cross liberates, for God’s mercy and kindness is encapsulated by John 3:16.

Galatians 5 verse 1 says “1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” Let us pay close attention to the word ‘stand’. We are, therefore, urged to take decisive and purposeful action in fighting for our liberty and freedom in Christ. The Amplified Version translates this Scripture as urging the believer to keep standing firm.

This idea of ‘standing’ is also found in Ephesians 6 where it says in verse 11 “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil,” and also “13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” There is thus a very clear call for believers to take action themselves to stand firm against the world and against demonic onslaughts that constantly

threaten to lead us away from God and His glorious path. Again, we are called to stand, meaning the responsibility lies with us to diligently make sure that we remain in the liberty of God, and that we resist the devil. We must make sure we are not swept away by all kinds of philosophies, psychologies, social sciences, and clever ideas of wisdom that flow from this world.

We need to walk in victory, which comes from walking in God's liberty.

James 3: 13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

Thus it is clear all wisdom detached from God, thus the wisdom of this world, is regarded by James as "earthly, sensual, demonic." Why? Because it leads us away from God, away from His Truth and away from a life of true blessing, hope, life and love. It is thus dangerous, manipulative and a lie. Yet it is such demonic and sensual wisdom that encourages the world to seek freedom, not in Christ, but freedom in earthly pleasures, delights and immorality. This is dangerous freedom, for it only brings destruction.

The idea of a house standing firm is also found in Matthew 7 when the Lord teaches about the sure foundation, thus the eternal Rock of Christ Himself. It says "25 And the rain fell, and the floods and torrents came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock." The idea of standing is also the same idea of abiding in John 15, where we are urged to remain in Christ so that we may bear much

fruit. And as abide in Christ, He then abides in us. Yes, we must thus remain standing (again, the emphasis is on an action) on the true Rock to overcome the world and the devil's lies.

The question is, what are we supposed to be standing and fighting for? Did Paul urge us to fight for our wealth, our property, for religious tolerance, no, we are admonished to fight for liberty. And what is such liberty? It is the liberty to be free from a life of sin. It is the liberty to be free from spiritual darkness and captivity. It is the liberty to be free from carnal desires and dictations. It is the liberty to be free from the fallen ways of the world. It is even the liberty to be free from religion, man-made traditions, legalisms, worldly customs and spiritual suffocating rituals and ideas.

True liberty is only found in God, and not in the liberty of this world. And in such liberty, as found in God, lies great power. It is the power of freedom that was sealed when the veil was torn in two at the crucifixion of Jesus. We are liberated from the kingdom of darkness, thus the oppression and the clutches of the devil (Colossians 2:15). We are liberated from the lies of the world. We are liberated from manipulations, distortions and propaganda. We are in a new creation in Christ, thus liberated from the old self, from pain and hurt. We are now new wineskins carrying the new wine of the Covenant!

In the days of Paul, the great danger for his fellow believers was slipping back into the life of the Law as given to Moses. This is why Galatians 5 also says "2 Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. 3 And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. 4 You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love." Paul was addressing the

issue of liberty found in Christ compared to being a debtor to the Law. In Romans and the Book of Galatians, he offered plenty of arguments to urge believers to seek true liberty in Christ. It is also written in “Acts 13:39: and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

More than ever all believers must continue to fight for liberty in Christ, thus true liberty is found in a relationship with God. Yet the danger is not so much slipping back into the Law of Moses. We live in perilous times where apostasy in various forms and shapes is rife in churches. We live in times of 2 Timothy 3 (as written about the end of days in the church), of Jude and 2 Peter 2. These are days of countless false teachings, gospels and doctrines. These are days when one can easily become entangled and enslaved in a web of lies, and instead of being liberated in Christ, one becomes a slave to man-made ideas, programmes, agendas and thoughts. We must thus be very careful of not becoming entrapped by dubious teachings in the church, for such doctrines are without a doubt plentiful. The devil will constantly seek to spin his web, hoping to entrap the believer like a spider traps a fly. We can only be mindful of such schemes and actions and strategies of the devil and the world by abiding in the Lord, standing on the true Rock, and being led by the Spirit of God. For indeed, God is our deliverer even when we are entrapped, for His truth stills sets free (John 8:32).

The author of Hebrews 6 warns about the peril of falling away, which is a result of becoming ensnared again in the web. It says “4 For [it is impossible to restore to repentance] those who have once been enlightened [spiritually] and who have tasted and consciously experienced the heavenly gift and have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted and consciously experienced the good word of God and the powers of the age (world) to come, 6 and then have fallen away—it is impossible to bring them back again to repentance,

since they again nail the Son of God on the cross [for as far as they are concerned, they are treating the death of Christ as if they were not saved by it], and are holding Him up again to public disgrace.” The devil wants us to become slaves to the world again, to lies, to deceptions, to man-made rituals, to demonic suggestions and to carnality (sin). For in such slavery is our destruction, and such destruction is the work of the thief that only comes to steal, to destroy and to kill (John 10:10). Thus we are urged by Paul to stand firm in our liberty and not be yoked again to slavery.

In Exodus 16 we learn the Israelites bemoaned their freedom and longed to return to the slavery of Egypt! In Egypt, they had grown comfortable in their slavery, even though they were not free. They were fed and homed, even though they worked like dogs! It is shocking to think they cried out for a life of slavery instead of freedom in God, but such was the deceptive state of their slavery! Yet many Christians are turning back to their old ways and life because at times it may seem easier and more comfortable than to remain on the narrow road of Christ. But a life of slavery is still slavery, even if it feels that it provides temporary pleasure and greater delights. Just as a fly is caught in a web, so does slavery blind us to our entrapment and present a lie that we are free even though we are not! This is the illusion of the world and the devil. We are called to keep our eyes upon God and the eternal prize, and not to keep looking back over our shoulder to a life that was yoked by terrible bondages.

The Reformation after all was a protest movement (hence the Protestant Faith) against the lies and manipulations of the Catholic Church hundreds of years ago. Martin Luther and so many others stood their ground for liberty, fighting against spiritual abuses and heresy, such as the practice of indulgences and having one's sins pardoned by a priest. How we need to again keep guard over our minds and heart, how we need to keep in step with the Lord and how we need to make sure we are not entrapped in our pursuit of the

eternal Kingdom and its all truths, values and culture! May we be not like that fly in the web, but may our eyes be open to the truth of God.

Paul writes in “Galatians 5:13: “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Paul made it clear liberty in Christ is not lawlessness or acting worldly. This is another false doctrine circulating in churches, one fueled by hyper-grace (encouraging believers to act as they wish based on grace). It is liberty in Christ, thus liberty that flows from surrender and submission that produces godliness through the sanctifying power of the Word of God. 1 Peter 2:15-17 says “For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men— as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.” We must thus not seek liberty in the sense of being liberated from all things good and proper, but we seek liberty to be free in Christ, and in such freedom lies our strength, joy and hope.

1 Corinthians 7:22 declares “For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord’s freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ’s slave.” Indeed, this may sound strange that we are now a slave, but it simply means we are now bound to Christ and in Christ is our hope, our life, our joy and eternal hope! Romans 6:18 declares “And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness,” and also “Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” The true liberty we fight for is not to do as we please, but to be free from the bondages and the yokes of this world, including its destructive tendencies and seductions. Romans 6:22 says “But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.”

In our liberty, there is a great power, and this makes us dangerous! For we are truly free from the yokes of this world, from

the lies of the devil, from the turmoil of one's inner demons and the manipulations imposed by man. Out of such liberty, we are free to operate in the glory of God, tearing down the darkness, the lies, the deceptions and the demonic strongholds of this world (2 Corinthians 10). In such liberty, we find our healing, our redemption and our restoration! We are free to praise, to rejoice and we are free from worry and stress (Matthew 6)!

Romans 6:14 says "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace." Glory to God. What liberty! Only in God are we truly liberated. Only in God do we know the path of wisdom. And such liberty and wisdom lead us to quiet waters and green pastures! True liberty is when God takes hold of us, and nothing else can control us or have dominion (thus power) over us! For unto God belongs all dominion and power, and when we abide in God, then we abide in His dominion and power (read Romans 8). True liberty it is the joy of walking in the reality of Psalms 23 and 91. Indeed, in Christ we are free, and thus the Lord said in "Matthew 11: 28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am [f]gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Isaiah 61 speaks of the ministry of Jesus, which is one of freedom and liberty, for it says "1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound." So while the world desperately seeks to be liberated, it is resisting and fighting the One who offers the true form of freedom! Indeed, the wisdom from below enslaves and does not liberate. Only God sets us free, and those who are in free in Christ as free indeed (John 8:36).

The Bible speaks of a lot of liberty, for we are called to be liberated from wickedness, from strongholds of the mind and the systems of the world that enslave. We find the law of liberty first mentioned in James 1:25, “But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.” James here refers to the gospel, which, although it is called here a law, is not, strictly speaking, a law comprised of requirements and enforced by sanctions. Rather, it is a declaration of righteousness and salvation by Christ, an offer of peace and pardon by Him, and a free promise of eternal life through Him. What glorious liberty indeed! The juxtaposition of the two contradictory terms—“law” and “liberty”—made the point, especially to the Jews, that this was an entirely new way of thinking about both. Paul uses this same technique when he refers to the “law of faith” in Romans 3:27. Glory to God, only in God and God alone does true liberty rest. For the perfect liberty found in Christ fulfils the “perfect law” of the Old Testament because Christ was the only one who could. Those who come to Him in faith now have freedom from sin’s bondage and can obey God in a real and loving relationship.

True liberty is found in Christ, for His perfect sacrifice brings release from the an eternal death sentence that the Law brings upon all sinners, and it gives believers the ability to please God as we put off the works of the flesh (Colossians 3:1–9), put on love (Colossians 3:12–17), and walk in (or by) the Spirit day by day. It is by the Spirit’s filling and control (Galatians 5:16–26; Ephesians 5:17–21) that we can walk in love and please our Heavenly Father. What perfect liberty we now enjoy! What a blessed privilege to have received mercy, to be redeemed (liberated) from the bondage of sin, and to be empowered for service by our Creator! Our love for others proves the reality of our faith (1 John 4:7–11).

Indeed, for such liberty, we must fight. And we do so in the Spirit of God. It says in “2 Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” We do so by adhering to the Word of God. John 8:32 says “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” For when we are led by the Spirit and the Word we truly remain in Christ. To enjoy such true liberty in God (John 15) we need to seek God’s wisdom, for His wisdom is above intellectualism, rationalism, or the liberalism of this world! Psalm 119 says “45 And I will walk at liberty, for I seek Your precepts.” As we walk with God step by side, liberated by His love and by His mercy and grace, we walk as His children. And as His children, we are disciples, and such disciples are called to obey, and to yield and to submit to God in His greatness and goodness.

The liberty we are urged to fight for is vastly different to the liberty the world is fighting for. This world seeks to destroy true liberty by introducing false freedom that only enslaves and corrupts. The liberty the world seeks is not true liberty, for it only blinds and shuts the gates of heaven in the minds of man. We live in a world that is sliding deeper and deeper into liberalism. In political and social philosophy, liberalism simply promotes individual rights, civil liberties, democracy, and free enterprise. It calls for openness and tolerance of ideas. Liberalism is one of the most dangerous movements in the world that opposes the true faith of the Christian, for it opposes the fundamental conservatism as upheld by the Bible.

Many libertarians will say they are not extreme or radical, meaning they have no intention of enforcing their beliefs on anyone. They seek not anarchy. The term radicalism after all is the belief that society needs to be changed, and that these changes are only possible through revolutionary means. What is quite ironic is that so many social changes in the world have come into existence through vigorous campaigning, marketing and protests. So yes, while many in the liberal camp may warn of radicalism and extremism, such

radicalism is becoming a growing danger! Take for example the forceful campaigns for the equal rights of same-sex partners and for those who fall into the LGBTQIA+ group who are fighting tooth and nail for recognition, free expression and liberal empowerment in society. Such demands for social injustices to be rectified have slipped in churches and are even now being openly defended.

The church needs to realise that the pursuit of liberty and freedom in this world, despite such pursuit being so often an abomination and wicked, has without a doubt become more and more extreme and radical. You can see this with regulations surrounding abortions, with babies allowed to be aborted so deep into the term of carrying. We also see it with the entire debate of gender and sexual orientation and equality, with the world accepting more classifications of gender while it now openly and boldly embraces, accepts and lauds all sexual conduct and thinking. The world is pushing the boundaries of liberalism, to the point where all forms of morality and goodness are surrendered for the sake of personal fulfilment and egotistical delights. The reality is that such liberal views will never find a common ground with Christian fundamentalism or conservatism. A true disciple after all is not called to yield or submit to the ways of the world, but only the ways of God and His Truth. 1 John 2 says “15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

Thus, we as believers are called to stand for liberty, for we are under assault to accept worldly liberty, thus freedom completely detached from God! The more the world seeks an intellectual approach to freedom, self-development and evolvment beyond God, then the greater the world is finding itself on a moral path of

self-destruction. And this is a dangerous ticking time bomb. We see this happening daily across the world. For as long we deny the Cross, argue the Bible, and rationalise God and His absolute truths, the greater the risk of imploding. Indeed, intellectualism and liberalism, which have given birth to moral relativism (where each person chooses his right and wrong), have tried their best to destroy the absolute truths and order of God. And thus we see a world teetering on the edge of lawlessness, for man's mortality cannot be controlled or shaped or moulded by external laws, ideas or academic thoughts. It can only be shaped and transformed by the hand of God and His indwelling presence.

Those who hold onto the wisdom of this world that fuels worldly liberty will continue to find themselves bound to sin, to their inner demons, and to the torments of finding some kind of meaning to everything. The world will continue to push for the freedom of choosing what is right and wrong and will continue to seek its path of enlightenment. Yet on such a path, there is no true freedom but only slavery. For only in Christ is our true hope, liberty, joy and peace! Yes Lord, may the world know true freedom in Christ and Christ alone who is our hope of glory.



Let us not relent in fighting the good fight

1 TIMOTHY 6:12 FIGHT the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Many years ago I said to someone everything regarding ministry and our spiritual walk boils down to spiritual warfare. My statement was met with surprise, even a measure of mockery for surely everything is not about warfare? Guarding against not being critical, the church is in a mess because we have not realised we are involved in a war, each and every person who follows Christ. If we fail to realise such a daunting reality, means we will not act as warriors for Christ, adopting a mindset of resistance, defiance, and bold aggression to pull down the strongholds of darkness.

Indeed, we have failed to adopt a warlike mindset, and instead of being a church that is actively engaged in a spiritual war, we are more a church that is engaged in self-upliftment, self-empowerment, self-glorification, self-exaltation, and self-motivation. When you talk about war, many think of deliverance and directly confronting the devil. This is part of the war (and by the way, each disciple is called to be actively engaged as well in deliverance), but mostly it is about countering the deceptions, demonic strategies, vile intentions, fleshly cravings and worldly carnality by standing in God's truth, His will, light, love, and authority.

This same person asked me how I can say that everything is about war. If we fail to understand that EVERYTHING is about warfare, then we have already lost the fight. We need to understand that while we are all leading our lives daily, undergoing our struggles and enjoying triumphs, a war over our soul's wage. To be more correct, you can say war wages for ownership of our spirit, for the soul which is our mind, and heart and will also perish along the temporary body, leaving us to either in spirit be with God for all eternally or be separated from God for all time. Of such a reality we read in Revelation 21 and 22 (regarding those who are outside the New Jerusalem).

The Gospel primarily is about salvation. The church is called to first and foremost lead people to Christ. Jesus makes it very clear in Matthew 24 that we should be concerned about people's physical welfare as well, but shall we rejoice if someone goes to hell as long as they can go on a full stomach? The Gospel is a warfare gospel, for the devil also does not want ONE person to know Christ as their personal Saviour, or follow the Lord. Jesus told the parable of the 99 sheep and left them all behind to find the lost. The devil has the same mindset, he wants to devour EVERYTHING in his path. There is a constant battle that rages between light and darkness. This is the only real and important war. Yes, the devil has already lost the war, but the battle still rages until his final demise. The devil seeks to drag as many people with him to hell, so it must be the believer's primary and deepest concern to see as many people saved!

God or the devil never sleeps. Our lives on earth are but a twinkle in contrast to eternity. If you do not know and follow Christ as Lord and Saviour, you are damned. It is that simple. It means eternal desperation from God who is the source of all light, joy, and love. Without God, there is only darkness. Before we come to Christ, we are ALL damned to this fate. Yet by God's incredible mercy and love, He extended an olive branch of peace and reconciliation when

His Son died on the cross. For those who believe and know the truth, it should be a solemn and sacred duty to diligently, and with great persistence and dedication, tell others about Christ so that they may come into the light right now.

But do we truly think the devil will let people go without a fight? So many are embroiled in numerous struggles with their inner demons. Some are held captive by trauma, others by deceptive ideas, while some are slaves to soul-destroying systems, ideologies and religions that thrive on brainwashing, manipulation, exploitation, and propaganda. Every day the devil wages a psychological war, especially against believers so that they may reject Christ. People are constantly being demonically oppressed, and some are even possessed!

As I said, if we like it or not, all believers are part of this war. If we think we are not, then we surely do not understand the Gospel or the price Jesus paid. For the Lord did not die on the cross for us to have great jobs, or be famous, rich or have great ministries, but to be saved from damnation! That is the Gospel! For without Christ a great darkness awaits, and it should concern us deeply those who are still far from Jesus and those who are slipping away in the blackness of the devil's madness.

Do we truly think the devil will let go so easily of those who are dwelling in darkness, held as slaves by his cold embrace and who are seduced by the whispers of his depravity? Of course not, it takes a fight most of the time. The church had sadly over time dismissed the reality of this war. In many churches, the existence of hell, demons and the devil is even denied! The enemy has managed to distract believers to remain relentless in their noble quest of fighting the war. Churches have become more like social clubs, enjoying the good mood, the good vibes and the goodness of heaven! Yet the reality is that the church has been called to wage war, meaning leading people out of slavery, setting the captives free, and piercing the darkness.

Of this truth, we read in Isaiah 61. We fight the good fight by proclaiming the Good News of Christ, shining His light, fulfilling the Great Commission and proclaiming the Word. This is not an easy task, but as good soldiers, we will constantly be resisted by the devil, the flesh and the world.

Yes, we are all involved in a war if we like it or not! When you lead someone to Jesus, you lead such a person from captivity into liberty, from darkness into the light, and from damnation to salvation. That is warfare! You have encroached onto the enemy's territory and by the might and power of Jesus have managed to release a captive from the clutches of despair.

Paul writes in "2 Timothy 2: 3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier." When we are saved by the blood of Christ, we are enlisted in His army! He is the great commander of the hosts of heaven. Our primary focus should be to obey the Lord, to seek His will, to overcome and to fight for others by telling them of Christ and making disciples. The affairs of this world should not be our primary focus, for we have a mighty task at hand to establish the Gospel in the hearts of man. Of this reality we read in the Book of Jude: "20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. 22 And on some have compassion, [j]making a distinction; 23 but others save [k]with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh."

When you pray for someone who is sick and is then healed, then this is warfare, because you have delivered that person from the slavery of sickness/infirmity. And at times the sickness is a result of demonic oppression. We read for example how Jesus cured the nobleman's son (John 4:46-47). In this story, there was a certain

royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death. Yes, Jesu healed him and thus delivered him from the clutches of death. That is warfare! Jesus performed many such miracles, such as curing Peter's mother-in-law of a fever (Mark 1:30-31), healing of a leper (Mark 1:40-45), healing the centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13) and curing the paralytic (Matthew 9:1-8). Yes, Isaiah 61 states Jesus has come to set the captive free! This is waging warfare.

Consider how Jesus also opened the eyes of two blind men (Matthew 9:27-31), loosened the tongue of a man who could not speak (Matthew 9:32-33), restored a withered hand (Matthew 12:10-13) and cured a deaf and mute man (Mark 7:31-37). This is a demonstration of power and God's authority to restore and heal! This is warfare against any work of the devil, of the world, of the unnatural or the unfortunate. When you set someone free from demonic possession, then this is surely spiritual warfare! After all, that person was in the clutches of Satan but is now set free. Praise God. Jesus for example cured two demoniacs (Matthew 8:28-34), a demon-possessed man (Matthew 12:22) and He cast out an unclean spirit (Mark 1:23-28). Jesus also cured a boy who was plagued by a demon (Matthew 17:14-21).

When you pray for someone who was dead and then becomes alive, you are waging warfare for you have brought someone from the grip of death into life. Jesus raised the ruler's daughter from the dead (Matthew 9:18-26), He raised the widow's son from the dead (Luke 7:11-18) and of course, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-46). When you evangelise, preach or teach the Word of God, you are engaged in spiritual warfare, for the Truth of God (John 8:32) sets the captive free. Jesus is the Truth and the Way and the Life. When we share the Gospel, we tell the world of the goodness and the greatness of God, of His love, and of His mercy. Yes in God

there is liberty, there is hope and there is salvation. That is a defiant shout of victory in the face of the devil. The Great Commission is thus a triumphant call to arms, for indeed in God there is victory and hope!

The devil will always try and defy God. And he will always try to be the champion of the struggle, but as we see in Exodus 7, Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the sorcerers. Yes, God is always more powerful, for He is God, and the one who battles him is but a fallen angel, nothing more. This we must always remember in this war. It says in "Colossians 1: 13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." The spiritual war is thus defined as being a conflict between the Light of God and the darkness of the devil, described and defined as the thief who only comes to steal, to destroy and to kill (John 10:10). The devil seeks to counter God's good works, thus he is the great counterfeiter and corrupter.

Once we come to the Lord and accept Him as our Saviour, we are delivered from the grip of darkness, therefore we are no longer slaves of fear. It says in "Romans 8:15: The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." In God, we are called to be sons and daughters of the Most High God, no longer subjected to slavery to darkness, but now co-heirs to the Kingdom of God. It says in "Romans 8: 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."

Jesus is the Light of the World (John 8:12). The devil doesn't want people to walk in the light, or to receive their adoption as sons and daughters. He wants people to wallow in darkness – broken,

miserable, enslaved and unsaved. It says in "Romans 13: 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." The war is firstly about oneself coming to God to put on the armour of light, thus clothed with Jesus, and to shed the darkness, but also secondly to lead others to the Light which encapsulates the Great Commission of Matthew 28.

It says in "2 Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." This war is about the devil trying to keep people enslaved in spirit, soul and body, thus entombed in darkness, while God seeks to bring people out of the darkness into the liberating Truth of His Glory.

The first disciples had a heart of a warrior. They were constantly persecuted. Paul certainly knew about spiritual warfare (2 Corinthians 10, Ephesians 6). Victory for him was about walking in the Spirit of God (Romans 8). Paul evidently speaks of his anxiety for all the churches because he intensely desired them to remain faithful to Christ and he feared the consequences of their not being faithful. The consequence of the churches not remaining in the faith is that they would be "accursed and cut off from Christ." Paul waged war against deception, idolatry, apostasy and the works of the world and the devil because he knew damnation awaits those who are not found in Christ.

We must have a similar mindset and attitude, seeking to reach the lost, the forgotten, the weary, and the oppressed so that they may no longer be slaves but children of God. To wage such a war is not learned by reading books. Theology will only take us so far. It is about a life sold out for Christ, yielded and submitted to the

Spirit of God. It is about walking the walk and talking the talk. Head knowledge will not count for much in this war. The devil cannot be fooled, and neither can God. It is about walking in authority, which flows from a true and genuine relationship with God.

Yes, our titles mean NOTHING in this war. A demon is not impressed when you say you are a doctor of theology! Even our education means nothing, for when the fight wages, then six years of study without real power holds little weight. All that counts is that we know Christ and that we are recognised as His servants and children. Of this truth we read in “Acts 19: 13 Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.” 14 Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” 16 Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.”

May we know Christ, and may we like good soldiers wage the good fight! The devil will not relent, so let us not relent in doing good, telling others of the Lord and setting the captives free in the name of Jesus!



A season of life

IN THE BEGINNING, THE world was dark, formless and without life. That is until the Lord moved by His Spirit. And so there was light and life! Great power was manifested for it was the power of an eternal Kingdom! Just so says the Lord, the world is again dark and dying, but for those who trust in the Lord and behold His Glory, there is glorious life and light, for the Spirit of the Lord still moves mightily over the earth to bring life and light! The Spirit of the Lord brings form to what is formless, order out of chaos and hope out of hopelessness! Shall we despair and give up hope? The Lord reigns and the Lord comes soon! All power belongs to our Lord! In the dark, there shall be light, until there is no more darkness but only life and light at the coming of His Glory.

Jesus is the life and the resurrection. He gives not only eternal life, but He gives life psychically and spiritually. He is the author of our salvation, spiritual calling and faith. He is LIFE, and those who abide in Him will truly ABIDE in Life. Glory to God. He resurrects what has fallen and broken. He is the giver and sustainer of Life. Abide in Jesus to walk in life!

Only He shall be served and worshipped! Destroy the idols, flee from wickedness, seek holiness, pursue righteousness and resist the devil for then living water shall break forth out of the barren ground and bring forth new life!

For I understood by the Spirit that where God reigns, there is always hope and there is always life. The world may be dark and

spiritually formless, but Jesus remains true and faithful! Despair not but declare the glory of God, for Light shone in a dying world when He walked the earth, and still, His light shines in the heart of those who walk with Him. Has the Lord not called us to let our light shine?

Many believers somehow have given up hope in this dark world. Why says the Lord? Is He not the one who grants and gives life? There are many who are waiting for the birth of God's promises, yet they deem those promises dead and buried. Is the Lord not the one who gives life? Have we lost faith and trust in the Living Lord? Is anything impossible for Him?

As the Lord cried to Lazarus to rise from the dead, declaring His authority over death, just so we as believers can never give up hope or allow the spirit of death to take hold of our heart to destroy our faith. For even now, we need to take hold of God, trust in Him and stand in faith, for there is always hope and life in the Presence of God. His light is always greater than darkness, and His life and love will never fail! Death has no power over Jesus, neither does the devil, so rejoice even in the midst of a world dark and dying.

For God brings forth life, so declare life and let the lame walk, the blind see, the deaf hear and the fallen be born again! Glory.

There is a great move of the Spirit these days as the spiritual war wages, and in this time and season, many believers will birth their calling unto the glory of God. Yes, many have been in labour for a long time, and many have believed such delivery will never happen or have even given up on God, but there is a season and a time for all things and such a time of spiritual life given unto the calling is truly upon us.

Many have settled for a spiritual walk of little splendour, for they have given up on faith and trust in the Lord, and yes, others have believed they are walking in their promised destiny and calling, but this is not so for only now will many truly give birth to their spiritual

calling. The travail before the birth has been great, but great is the blessing of the birth! This is a season of life, or birth, of hope. Abide in Jesus, lean upon Him, walk in His holiness and truth for this is the cry of the Lord.

See says the Lord, there is a season coming for a great spiritual birth of souls, for behold, the harvest awaits for the labourers who seek no other glory than the glory of God. It will be a season where many believers will move into their promised calling and their promised land as ordained by the Lord. This is a season of life, but a season of life that will be to the glory of God and not man! It will not be a move dependent on the efforts of man, but it is a move of God and God alone. It will be a season of life that will be accompanied by great signs, wonders and miracles. It will be a season where the gates of hell will shake and the physical foundations of the earth will tremble at the power of God.

It will be a season of life in the Church where God will rise against the deadness of religion and against the deadness of man's traditions and legalisms. For God will again take His rightful place in the church as King and Lord, and His Way and Truth shall prevail. He is taking back the threshold and the pulpit for He is the very foundation of the Church. Who can and shall resist? He is the power and glory. Walk by the Spirit says the Lord, for then the Kingdom of God shall truly be manifested.

God is LIFE and for those who abide in Him, truly living waters will flow from them! For those who abide in the Lord, they shall know and taste the living waters. Have we not been called to give the world the living waters by leading the broken and the spiritual dying to Jesus? If we lead the world not to Jesus, then we lead the world not to true life.

This is also the season of physical life. There will be signs and wonders for barren wombs will be opened to give life. There will be signs and wonders as untreatable and incurable sicknesses will be

healed. This is a season of the great power of God, where man will stand in awe. For with God, all things are possible. This is a season of signs and wonders, of life and light! Where light shines, so darkness shall flee! The tide of darkness will rise, but the grace of God calls the lost into His embrace.

Glory to God, for He gives life and hope in a world of darkness and despair! The Lord will roll away the great stones that the world has rolled in place to shut away from the believer's calling and purposes. The Lord will reveal and unearth what the world has tried to hide. The Lord will reveal what has been hidden in darkness. Watch, for life will spring forth out of the hardest of soils - those who have backslidden, for those who have forgotten, for those who have gone astray, for those who have walked in darkness, for those who gave given up on all hope, there is life in the embrace of God! Glory to God, for Jesus reigns and He returns soon!

This is indeed a season of life! There is life for all tribes and people, for Jesus is the author of life. He makes sweet the bitter waters, and He still makes a way. There is none greater than our God.

It is time to return to the Lord, to embrace Him, for then living waters will flow and the waters will feed the spiritually hungry and quench the thirst of a world broken and hungry for God's love.

This is indeed a season to truly feed a dying and broken world the spiritual nourishment of our Lord Jesus!

Let there be life Lord, and let Your light and love shine bright in the hearts of the believers so that the great harvest may be brought to Your Throne. Amen



Pursue doing good

I WANT TO SHARE A WORD out of 1 Peter 3 which the Lord laid upon my heart. Peter writes here about being a blessing and suffering for doing good and not evil. I do believe we live in times where it is not going to get easier for those who truly follow the Lord in spirit and truth.

There will be increasing opposition from even within the Church ranks from those seeking after religion and holding onto traditions and man-made agendas and structures (Saul vs David scenario). There will also be ever-increasing pressure coming from the world to conform, to yield to the ways of the world and to swim with the stream. There will also be ever-increasing spiritual attacks by the devil and his demonic cohorts.

But in the midst of this trouble, strife and persecution, we are reminded that we are called to be a blessing, no matter what. So it says in the above Scripture: “8 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; 9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For “He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. 11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

Proverbs 6 says: “16 These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17 A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, 19 A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.”

In the world, there is a lot of hatred being sown, a lot of deception being spoken, a lot of evil being harboured, and to be honest, there is simply a lack of compassion and love. At the moment there is a lot of evil being returned for evil, instead of returning evil with good.

We as disciples can never be part of this walk. No matter what, our battles are spiritual and not flesh. No matter what, we are called to walk by the Spirit, understand by the Spirit, move in His Glory, and show love, kindness and goodness. No matter what, we are called to always but always speak the TRUTH of the Lord, and not to be bitter, or full of hate, or to be malicious, or to bring discord.

For let us remember “Matthew 5: 3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. 10 blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

We are called to be a priesthood of the Lord, and according to Malachi 2:7 “the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge.” The Lord is asking us if we are preserving His Knowledge, therefore moving in sound doctrine. Are we repaying good with evil or evil with evil? Are we walking in hate rather than love? Are we walking in Truth or have we chosen a path of deception?

For the Word is true that that the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers. It is that simple. If we walk in the Spirit and in Truth, then God's eye be upon us and He shall hear us. Let we shall live as He deems.

Or are we too consumed with the Self, with our own needs, and have we become blinded by our own perceptions, ideas and agendas? Above all, we are called to be a disciple of the Lord – His servant. These might be days of terrible darkness, but we are supposed to let our light shine in the darkness.

Now, let us go to “1 Peter 3: 13 And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. “And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.” 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. 17 For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.”

Will we have trouble in this world? Most likely. Will we be persecuted, threatened, ridiculed and mocked? Of course, simply because we follow Jesus who was hated before we were hated. Yet, despite all of this, the Lord says we shall be blessed if we suffer for righteousness. Those are not words we would like to hear, but the reality is that history attests to thousands of followers of God who became martyrs for His Kingdom. Yes, blessed are those who are persecuted!

Let us take note where it says “always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” The fear spoken about is the fear of the Lord. And wisdom comes by fearing the Lord. And does Matthew 5 not say “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

The disciples were also under threat and there were conspiracies against them. They prayed the following in "Acts 4: 29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness."

Praise God! If God is with us, who can then be against us? Let us also be reminded of 2 Timothy 2 when it speaks of a workman approved: "15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 16 But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. 17 And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, 18 who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. 19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Yes, in this world we will have trouble, but the Lord reminds us that even so we must not allow our hearts to be troubled. David understood this battle when he wrote in "Psalm 23: 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil." David was also surrounded by enemies, but he refrained from returning evil with evil.

Saul tried to kill him, and when David had the opportunity to kill Saul, he did not do so. Praise the Lord! And lastly, let us be reminded of verse 17 which says: For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

At the end of the day, as believers and followers of the Lord, we need to take a stand for goodness, truth, kindness and love. We might be ridiculed, mocked, persecuted or even beaten or some might try to silence us, but in the end, the Lord's eye is on the righteous and we remain blessed.

Paul suffered terribly for doing good, but surely the Lord was with Him. And the Lord shall be with us even if suffering comes. So let us be strong like Daniel, or like Paul, and let us continue to fight the good fight of faith, and let us not grow weary from doing good, from speaking truth and to walking in God's love all the time.



Give the devil no foothold

THERE IS A SONG SUNG by Al Wilson regarding a vicious snake and a woman. It goes like this:

*On her way to work one morning
Down the path alongside the lake
A tender hearted woman saw a poor half frozen snake
His pretty colored skin had been all frosted with the dew
"Oh well," she cried, "I'll take you in and I'll take care of you"
"Take me in oh tender woman, Take me in, for heaven's sake
Take me in oh tender woman," sighed the snake
She wrapped him up all cozy in a curvature of silk
And then laid him by the fireside with some honey and some milk
Now she hurried home from work that night as soon as she arrived
She found that pretty snake she'd taking in had been revived
"Take me in, oh tender woman, take me in, for heaven's sake
Take me in oh tender woman," sighed the snake
Now she clutched him to her bosom, "You're so beautiful," she cried
"But if I hadn't brought you in by now you might have died"
Now she stroked his pretty skin and then she kissed and held him
tight*

*But instead of saying thanks, that snake gave her a vicious bite
"I saved you," cried that woman
"And you've bit me even, why? You know your bite is poisonous and
now I'm going to die"*

*"Oh shut up, silly woman," said the reptile with a grin
"You knew I was a snake before you took me in."*

Now, based on this little story, is it not amazing how we often allow the devil into our lives and homes, just as the woman allowed the snake into her home? And then we cuddle the 'snake' – the devil – by advocating his ways, we comfort him by listening to his lies and we make him feel warm and cosy by the fire by embracing his fallen ways.

And yet, when we get 'bitten' and 'betrayed' by the snake – the devil - we wonder why. Is it not amazing that when we play with fire we wonder why we get burned? Is it not amazing that we wonder why our lives fall apart, yet we forget the devil is poisonous, full of venom and full of lies?

Yes, we heed not Ephesians 4:27 that says do not give the devil a foothold. Indeed, as the song also states, we are very silly to believe we can toy with sin and seek the gratifications of this world and we can enjoy the charms and the cheers of depravity and idolatry and iniquity, yet at the end of the day the snake shall bite and we shall pay the price.

Yes, the 'snake' comes and whispers in our ears – "let me in, let me in". For the devil will play on our emotions, manipulate our senses, tug at our hearts, promise us the kingdoms, and offer us fame and fortune. He even tempted our Lord. Yes, and so we allow him in, and we wrap him in blankets and we kiss him even goodnight, as we dance with the darkness in the hope of sweet delight and sweet and tender promises of joy. Yet this 'snake' shall bite, and he shall betray, as he betrayed Adam and Eve.

The devil only seeks to steal, to destroy and kill, and so he shall destroy and kill those who have embraced him, and welcomed him in.

This is the nature of the snake – vile, deceptive, venomous, cruel, and without remorse.

This is why we are called to abstain from evil or engage in any form of evil, even if it is repaying evil for evil! For this will give the devil a foothold in our lives. If we wish to walk victoriously in the Lord, then we need to abstain and flee from wickedness.

It says in “2 Timothy 2:22 New King James Version: Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

The answer to victorious living is to seek the Kingdom of God, thus righteousness, faith, love and peace and to abstain from any form of evil! We must not engage in the evil of this world but seek to serve God above all! For it says in “1 John 2: 15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

We are called to abhor evil, meaning treat it with disgust and hatred! It must be vile to our very senses and must be offensive to our spiritual nature.

It also says in “1 Corinthians 6:18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.” No matter how you look at it, the believer is called into action to flee from sin! It is not a matter of entertaining carnality in any form, but a matter of fleeing and running away from all that corrupts and stains the soul of a believer.

We read in “2 Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and also “1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.”

Psalms 1 says: “1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat

of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.”

The enemy wants to come into our lives and he does so when we flirt with sin and carnality. Let us understand the devil wants us to abandon the path of God to walk the path of the wide gate, thus abandoning the Truth, and the Way and the Path of Life. He wants us to step out into disobedience, and rebellion and onto the path of iniquity. Why? For then we move closer to his state of darkness.

We need to remember John 10:10, which speaks about the enemy/thief (the devil) coming to steal, to destroy and to kill. The enemy, therefore, wants to enter our lives and “space” in order to cause division, strife, confusion, death and destruction. He wants to enter in order to influence, and he can only do so when he has a legal right to be present in our lives, in our hearts, in our minds, in our homes and in our cities. He is the serpent - deceiving, sly, manipulative and arrogant. We are called to resist the devil, for if we don't, he shall make his presence known to destroy us.

In order to understand the strategy of the serpent in greater depth, let us visit “Galatians 5 (KJV): 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”

As soon as we flirt with evil, wickedness and sin, we subject ourselves to the works of the flesh. The Amplified Version states it as follows: 19 Now the practices of the sinful nature are clearly evident: they are sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality (total irresponsibility, lack of self-control), 20 idolatry, sorcery, hostility, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions [that

promote heresies], 21 envy, drunkenness, riotous behavior, and other things like these.

So we see the works of the flesh are:

- a) Adultery, sexual immorality, fornication
- b) Uncleanness, impurity
- c) Lasciviousness, sensuality (total irresponsibility, lack of self-control)
- d) Idolatry
- e) Sorcery/ witchcraft
- f) Hatred, hostility, variance, emulations, wrath
- g) Strife
- h) Seditions, heresies, disputes, dissensions, factions
- i) Envyings, jealousy
- j) Fits of anger
- k) Murder
- l) Drunkenness, riotous behaviour, revellings

These are all manifested work, actions, behaviour and mindsets caused by a life of the flesh, thus a life opposed to the holiness and purity of God. Whenever we speak of the work of the flesh, this speaks of the work of the world, thus of the enemy and thus it speaks of manifested acts and behaviour that is contrary to the work of the Holy Spirit.

In other words, the devil wants us to display and act upon the work of the flesh, for then we are open and vulnerable to strife, anger, division, carnality and immoral behaviour. It says in “Luke 8:17 - For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither anything hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.”

The reality is that whatever we do according to the works of the flesh, no matter how much we try to hide it, will eventually be manifested or be brought into the open. The spiritual realm works according to manifestation – just so we are called to walk in the fruits of the Spirit so that the Lord may be glorified. Yet the devil wants us

to walk in the works of the flesh so that we sow destruction and thus reap destruction.

This is why he wants to get into our lives and homes – so that there will be manifested (what you can see and detect) works of destruction and death. The devil wants his strategy of destruction to become a manifested reality in our lives, homes and cities. Remember, he promotes lawlessness, lewdness, anarchy, immorality and impurity. For this reason, we must resist the devil, so that he may flee from us. We must stand guard over the ‘gates’ of our lives – the spirit, soul and body – and we must stand guard over the ‘gates’ of our homes, cities and relationships. We simply cannot give the devil any room to influence, harass, manipulate, deceive or work his evil ‘charm’.

Sadly, we are still seeing a lot of these manifestations among the children of God and in their homes and in their relationships. Is it not because we have failed to truly submit completely to the way of the Lord? Is it not because we have failed to completely resist the devil? We need to stand guard and be alert for the devil is like a roaming lion looking to devour and to destroy.

Take note how Paul writes in Romans 8 that to be carnally minded is “death”. In verse 8 he also says “the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.” We are called to walk in the mind of God, and not the carnality of this world!

The work of the flesh in the end only brings destruction, for the work of the flesh is the domain of the enemy. And death comes in many forms, and it manifests in the spirit, soul (anxiety, fear, doubt, confusion, depression, disorders) and in the flesh (sickness, infirmities, restlessness).

The devil wants to get into our lives, into our heads, into our homes so that we drift away from the Truth until we rebel against God and until we rebel against His commandments. For then we

become proud, boastful (just like Nebuchadnezzar), and being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, and malignity.

This is not the way of life but the way of death. Yes, the devil wants us all to forsake the truth of the Lord and engage in rebellion, strife, envy and confusion. He wants us to forsake our allegiance and loyalty until we are no longer worshippers of spirit and truth. The more we drift away from God, the more we drift into the realm of idolatry.

Of just a great concern is how believers are repaying evil for evil. Romans 12 after says: “17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.”

It is quite clear what should our actions be – it should be one of love, kindness and goodness! The way to deal with your enemies (real or perceived) is NOT to bash, abuse, sue, and slander them, or to avenge the evil they have done to you. This is not the Christian way. After all, the most common attitude is "payback".

Romans 12 tells us we are “as far as possible” to live in peace. It says in “1 Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; 9 not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. 10 For “He who would love life

And see good days,

Let him refrain his tongue from evil,

And his lips from speaking deceit.

11 Let him turn away from evil and do good;

Let him seek peace and pursue it.

12 For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,

And His ears are open to their prayers;
But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

Of Jesus we read in 1 Peter 2: 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving [f]us an example, that you should follow His steps:

22 “Who committed no sin,
Nor was deceit found in His mouth”;

23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.”

Jesus had mighty strength at his command (Matthew 26:53), yet He chose instead the path of non-violence "as a lamb that is led to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53:7). The way of the disciple is not one of evil, but one of love, goodness, patience and kindness.

Romans 12 also reminds us that vengeance belongs to God. Deuteronomy 32: 35,41 speaks about vengeance belonging to God and that He will repay. 1 Thessalonians 4:6 says: "The Lord is the avenger of all”.

We thus need to remember we are called to "overcome evil", not to avenge evil. By avenging, we engage in evil. Only good can overcome evil. Evil cannot overcome itself.

Jesus said we are to love our enemies" (Matthew 5:43-48). Yet so often we hear of how believers are cursing someone else, of even speaking death over someone or wanting to take physical revenge or they resort to abuse and slander!

This is not victorious living, but a life subjected to the manifested works of the flesh. From such actions, we must flee and pursue God's way, God's path and God's truth.

In these days of peril and danger, we need to keep aware that the devil is ever-present. He was right there at the table when the Lord shared His last supper with His disciples, and he was present in the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve enjoyed the company of God.

Very unlikely places, but the devil always lurks and wants to draw our attention away from God. Can you imagine walking around the Garden – a place of perfect order and no corruption – and encountering the serpent? Yes, right there in a state of bliss and perfection, the devil showed up with his lies.

This is why it says in “1 Peter 5:8: Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” To be “sober” means not drunk. In other words, we are urged not to be intoxicated with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2). We are called to be well-balanced and self-disciplined in the Spirit, and to prepare our minds for action (1 Peter 1:13). Peter urges us to be completely sober [in spirit—steadfast, self-disciplined, spiritually and morally alert], because the devil is restless.

It should be a sobering thought that right there in the Garden the devil appeared, and right there at the Lord’s Table, but such is the nature of the serpent – sly, devious and lurking. While Moses was meeting God on the mountain, the devil was in the valley distracting the people and seducing them to build an idol. Yes, the devil is always working, always looking for how to crawl and squeeze his way into situations to bring forth his satanic suggestions. So we need to remain alert and on guard.

Many think that right there in the church service, the devil cannot lurk, or show up where congregants worship, but he does. He wants to cause confusion. He wants to cause distraction. Thus, we need great discernment, and we need to be awake, functioning fully in the Spirit not to be caught unawares. Churches, revival movements and ministries have many times been destroyed because the presence, or the influence or the work of the devil was not expected, especially in unlikely places. The devil feeds on our levels of comfort and familiarity, or when we fall into a false sense of peace.

The spiritual war still rages, so keep praying, keep reading the Word and keep seeking God's will.

Yes, in the Garden of Gethsemane, as the Lord prayed before His pending crucifixion, the "betrayers" showed up. It may have been Judas, but Scripture is clear that Satan entered Judas before the time. So right there, as the Lord was in fellowship with the Father and seeking the will of the Father, the devil made his appearance. Yes, he wants to steal our joy, our peace, and he comes to sow destruction, chaos and calamity. And he loves to do so in the midst of God's people. Adam and Eve serves as a very good lesson of his deception.

We live in perilous times and we will succumb to such danger because we continue to underestimate the devil, misunderstand his tactics or think him to be a fool. So we remain blind to his presence, to his destructive work and sly operations. He wants to come into our homes, into our churches and into our lives, just as he made his home in a tree in the Garden, for then he can whisper his vile intent, spew his poison and weave his web of spiritual darkness. But because of our lack of knowledge of the spiritual, he often does find his way in. So be alert. Seek wisdom. Always listen to God. The devil is never far away.

The question is how we overcome all of this. It says in "2 Timothy 1:7 (AMP): For God did not give us a spirit of timidity or cowardice or fear, but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of sound judgment and personal discipline [abilities that result in a calm, well-balanced mind and self-control]."

Paul made it very clear how we are supposed to conduct ourselves according to Ephesians 4:22-32, Ephesians 5:1-21, and Colossians 3:4-10. We are called to continually wear the full armour of God (Ephesians 6). We are called to constantly renew the mind (Romans 12:2) and guard our hearts (Proverbs 4:23). We are called to be led by the Holy Spirit and to yield to the Spirit of the Lord. Only when we are completely submitted to the Lord so we will be

able to walk in His life, light and truth and resist the devil and thus resist the manifested works of the flesh.

Fulfilling Colossians 3 remains our goal (New King James Version) Not Carnality but Christ: 1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. 5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. 8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. 12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

Yes, we must seek all that is good, proper and wholesome. It says in “Philippians 4:8: Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”

Therefore, for those who keep pursuing a path of evil and wickedness, do not be surprised when the snake does bite, for surely the devil shall look you in the eye and say ‘Oh shut up,’ when we moan and his words will surely echo that we knew he was a snake before we took him in. And the devil does it all with a grin, a smile, for he is a snake, and he shall never change.

So do not be fooled, do not be deceived, or do not be dismayed when you see the devil and he wants to come in.



Convicted in our pursuit of God

WHEN IT COMES TO DOING good and testing all things, we need to allow the Spirit of the Lord to continuously guide and lead us. While the Spirit of the Lord deals with our sin, at the same time we need to realise the Spirit of the Lord also deals with the conviction of our purpose.

Is there therefore truly a conviction in our heart to serve God, a conviction to pursue Him, a conviction to love Him, a conviction to run the race He has set before us, a conviction to fulfil the Great Commission and a conviction to preach His Truth? Does such a conviction drive us, no matter the trials, no matter the cost or the price to pay?

Peter wrote in “2 Peter 1:10 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble.”

In order to fulfil our calling and our election, in order not to stumble, we need to be convicted of such a calling and an election. If God has called you to be an evangelist, is there truly a conviction of your heart to fulfil such a calling? Are you prepared to sacrifice all for that calling and election? Or if God has called you to preach and teach the Gospel no matter the cost, is there truly a mighty conviction of God to run the race, to pursue such a mandate or are we left distracted, and without conviction?

Brothers and sisters of our Lord, is there truly a conviction in our heart for what God has called us to do? Is there a burning conviction to pursue such a purpose, and to make your election and calling sure? For if we pursue and strive towards such a purpose in the conviction of the Holy Spirit, we shall surely not stumble for our gaze is set upon Jesus.

And so Paul writes in “1 Corinthians 9: Striving for a Crown: 24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. 26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”

Paul writes here about temperate in all things, in other words, exercising self-control to reach such a prize. He speaks about running with certainty, thus conviction, and he speaks about practising discipline (note not legalism) to the point of subjection.

This is a man who understood conviction and about being driven to complete what God placed before him. This is why he wrote in “2 Timothy 1: Amplified Bible (AMP): 14 Guard [with greatest care] and keep unchanged, the treasure [that precious truth] which has been entrusted to you [that is, the good news about salvation through personal faith in Christ Jesus], through [the help of] the Holy Spirit who dwells in us and also 2 Timothy 1:7: For God did not give us a spirit of timidity or cowardice or fear, but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of sound judgment and personal discipline [abilities that result in a calm, well-balanced mind and self-control].”

Our conviction needs to be accompanied with fruitful growth in the faith as we are led by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Peter 1: 5 But

also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control [d]perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Based on what Peter wrote regarding virtue that he then admonished believers to be even more diligent to make their call and election sure.

And yes, with the conviction of the Holy Spirit burning within us, we can complete the race; we can set aside all hindrances and challenges and embrace what God has called us to do. Hebrews 12: The Race of Faith: 12 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, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Yes, may we look upon Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, and run this race with conviction! For God shall lead us by the rod and the staff, and prepare a table for us in the midst of our enemies! In the power of the Holy Spirit and by the conviction of His Presence, we shall then not stumble.

Paul wrote the famous Scripture in “Ephesians 6: 10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God,

that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth.”

While we all know this Scripture as it deals with the spiritual armour of God, just as important is to note how Paul continually spoke about standing one's ground. We need to stand in the conviction of our faith, our calling, our election and our hope so that we may stand against the wiles of the devil.

Remember this is a man who endured every hardship and suffering you can imagine in his service to God. His journey is spelt out in “2 Corinthians 11: 22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. 23 Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? 30 If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.”

Despite all of this, Paul wrote about standing one's ground. Why? Because he was convicted of God's greatness, God's goodness, God's redemption and salvation! He was convicted by the Holy Spirit that the Gospel is the Good News, that he has been sent to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles and such news is the message of the cross that sets the captives free and binds up the brokenhearted.

Yes, this was a man convicted of his own mortality, of his own humanity and weaknesses, yet he persisted, yet he endured because of conviction. Of the conviction of preaching the Gospel at all cost we read in “Ephesians 3: 8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; 10 to the intent that now the [d] manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the [e] principalities and powers in the heavenly places, 11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. 13 Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.”

Glory to God! Paul suffered it all to preach the manifested wisdom of God and make known to the world of the redemption by the Blood. Remember, Paul was opposed not just by fellow disciples, but by the Roman Empire, and the pagan ways of Greece and Asia Minor. Yet he endured, yes, he endured and ran the race because he was convicted that no matter the cost the Gospel needed to be preached! He made sure of his calling and election, he ran the race and endured it all to the glory of God.

And so at the end, he writes in “2 Timothy 4: 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

This is conviction! He has come to the end of it all, he has fought the good fight, and he has kept the faith in order to receive his crown

of righteousness. Paul was a man driven and convicted because he not only preached the Gospel, but he believed it and he was willing to give his very life to glorify God. Do we truly believe the Gospel? Are we still convicted of the message of the cross and the Blood?

Also remember, the ‘pouring out of a drink offering’ is a metaphor for the blood Jesus spilled on the cross. Jesus spoke to this directly in Luke 22:20 when He instituted the New Covenant. He picked up a cup of wine and said, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.” Jesus’ sacrifice fulfilled the need of a drink offering, His blood literally pouring out when the soldier pierced His side with a spear (John 19:33).

Paul even endured the “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7) “to keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations.” He called it “a messenger of Satan” that had a purpose of “torment.” Many explanations have been put forward, but whether Paul is referring to a physical, spiritual, or emotional affliction—or something else entirely—has never been answered with satisfaction.

Whatever it was, God’s goal in allowing the thorn in the flesh was to keep Paul humble. Indeed, Paul remained humble in his pursuit of God, because of the conviction of the Holy Spirit to only seek to glorify God.

In 2 Corinthians 14, he writes: “5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. 6 But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified ... 8 For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. 9 For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete. 11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.”

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 9 of the danger of being disqualified, as he mentions again in chapter 14. Paul's concern was the danger of falling away, thus abandoning the Lord, abandoning the path God has set one on, and departing from one's calling and election.

We can therefore only stay the course when we are convicted of the Truth of the Lord, and such conviction comes by the Spirit who was poured out to lead us in all truth (John 16) with the Truth being Jesus.

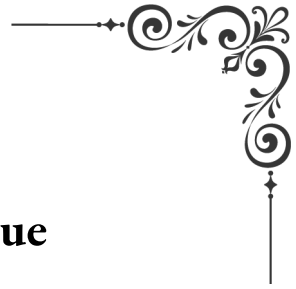
Again, we find here the mention of Paul's humility, and his urging for believers to be complete, to be united and to walk in peace. The Amplified translates 'complete' as fully restored, growing and maturing in godly character and spirit—pleasing your heavenly Father by the life you live.

May we, therefore, walk in such a conviction – a conviction of God's Truth, the conviction of the power of the cross and the Blood, the conviction of the Gospel, the conviction of abiding in the Lord (unity) and abiding in love and unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Let us remain humble, let us remain true to the Lord and may we with conviction run this race because God's Word is True and God shall be with us.

And may we stand our ground, yes stand, no matter the cost, no matter what we endure! May we stand no matter what the enemy throws against us.

Jesus stood His ground in the wilderness when the devil tempted Him. And so by His strength and grace (2 Corinthians 12:9) and conviction we can stand and fight the good fight of faith. So let us stand, be vigilant, be alert, and with boldness and humility declare the intended wisdom of God!



Aim and pursue godliness

1 TIMOTHY 6: 11BUT as for you, O man of God, flee from all these things; aim at and pursue righteousness (right standing with God and true goodness), godliness (which is the loving fear of God and being Christlike), faith, love, steadfastness (patience), and gentleness of heart. 12Fight the good fight of the faith; lay hold of the eternal life to which you were summoned and [for which] you confessed the good confession [of faith] before many witnesses. 13In the presence of God, Who preserves alive all living things, and of Christ Jesus, Who in His testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I [solemnly] charge you 14To keep all His precepts unsullied and flawless, irreproachable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Anointed One), 15Which [appearing] will be shown forth in His own proper time by the blessed, only Sovereign (Ruler), the King of kings and the Lord of lords, 16Who alone has immortality [in the sense of exemption from every kind of death] and lives in unapproachable light, Whom no man has ever seen or can see. Unto Him be honor and everlasting power and dominion. Amen (so be it) ... 20O Timothy, guard and keep the deposit entrusted [to you]! Turn away from the irreverent babble and godless chatter, with the vain and empty and worldly phrases, and the subtleties and the contradictions in what is falsely called knowledge and spiritual illumination.

Final instructions and words of advice usually contain treasures of worth – such as the instruction given to Paul in his epistle to Timothy the young disciple. Final instructions are like a condensed version of the teacher’s wisdom and knowledge and portray fundamental truths and treasures of spiritual values.

When it comes to his final instructions, Paul charges Timothy to flee from all things that are not from God and to rather pursue and aim for righteousness (right standing with God and true goodness), godliness (which is the loving fear of God and being Christlike), faith, love, steadfastness (patience), and gentleness of heart.

Both the verbs flee and pursue speak of action and deliberate decision – it speaks of an action that simply doesn’t happen but it is an action that needs to happen by the will and the conscious decision of the one initiating the action.

We are therefore not simply going to wake up one day and by mere chance walk in righteousness, godliness, love, gentleness and faith.

These virtues speak after all about the fruits of the Spirit – therefore the Spirit of God – which implies we need to take a decisive and conscious action by moving closer to God by seeking Him and obeying Him. We need to actively and with purpose submit to His will and intent.

To pursue implies a forward motion, but such a journey towards God and such a desire to walk in the Spirit and Truth comes not merely by remaining motionless.

No, we need to want and desire to pursue all that is right. This implies taking action when it comes to the way we think, what we say, what we do and how we do it.

Paul also speaks about keeping all His precepts unsullied and flawless, irrefragable, until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Anointed One).

Again, this speaks of action as the word “keep” is also the word used to imply keeping guard and keeping guard. We have to be mindful, aware, and alert and to be constantly striving every day to walk in the ways of God and in the ways of godliness until the coming of Jesus.

Again, emphasis is placed here on the continuous journey of pursuing goodness and godliness, for we need to do so until a set period of time which is when the Lord returns, therefore it should be an effort on our part that should never fade in terms of our resolute passion in the pursuit of being children of the Lord.

It says in 1 Peter 5: 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of suffering.

Again, as with Paul, Peter emphasizes the ongoing and active process of being alert, sober-minded, standing firm and resisting the ways of the world.

How we need to come to that point of realisation that the Lord is looking at us to also play an active and certain role in our spiritual development – we simply cannot be passive and lethargic but we need to be active, bold and determined to make sure that what we say, do and think is to His glory.

We all experience external pressures that make us walk not according to the ways of the Lord. For this reason, we need to be actively aware of such dangers and pitfalls and instead seek to earnestly walk in His Spirit so that we may walk in true love and hope.



Keeping to Lord's way and forsaking wickedness

ISAIAH 55: 6 SEEK THE Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. 8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. 9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

To forsake implies a process of abandoning and deserting. It implies an active and functional activity whereby one chooses voluntarily and with intent to walk the path of righteousness and not the path of evil inclination. Throughout life, we are faced with many options, and such a course of action implies an active movement towards embracing our decisions.

And just so, the prophet Isaiah's words also speak of an active and purposeful intent to seek good and evil. We are called to seek and to call, which indicates a decision that we have to make and no one else can make it for us. We are called to forsake and we are called to turn away and to abandon all that is wicked, evil and not right.

This was the plea of Isaiah to a nation that had fallen into idolatry and wickedness. And yet Israel in the end chose not the right path and suffered at the hands of the Assyrians and the Babylonians. Shall we make the same mistakes? The Lord has not made us to

be automatic machines but people with a soul and with a free will and He has given us the intellectual faculty to think logically and to rationalize. He has also given us the operating faculty of our consciousness, so that we can be conscious of what is right and wrong.

After the ascension of the Lord Jesus, God the Father also sent us the Holy Spirit to lead us in all truth, in righteousness and to make us away what is evil and harmful. And so, regarding our free will, and with the Holy Spirit being freely available, and with all mankind having access to the Lord in heaven, and with His Word in mass print, a time comes that one has to make a direct and focused choice concerning one's behaviour and attitude.

In Revelation we read specifically how the Lord desires not for believers to be lukewarm but to be either ablaze for Him or to be cold, therefore distant from His truths. To be either hot or cold implies an action of choice and a deliberate spiritual course of action to either serve Him or to serve the prince of this world, who is Satan.

Even Bob Dylan, the famous folk singer, sang a song where he said that every man in his life will serve a master, and such a master is either the Lord or the devil. Now if Dylan had the insight to understand that we have to make a choice, so we, who have the Word of God freely available, can no longer, stay lukewarm. For the Lord Himself said we cannot serve two masters (Luke 16:13).

And this choice entails either seeking the Lord, calling upon Him and keeping to His ways or it entails walking in the council of the wicked. One day we cannot shift the blame and stand before the Lord with all kinds of excuses – we need to make a choice of intent what course of action we shall take.

Indeed, there is a path to abandon the ways of wickedness, and thus following the Lord, or there is the path of abandoning the Lord and follow wickedness. And so easily we can try to walk both paths but this simply does not work with the Lord. We must either glorify

Him in all things (Colossians 3), whereby our deeds and words and actions speak loudly and boldly of His love, or we must abandon such hopes and continue along the route of darkness.

The Lord is full of grace and mercy and so He forgives us every day and He grants us the opportunity of entering heaven. But then our hearts must speak of a righteous attitude and our spiritual condition must testify to true repentance and a hunger to be more like Him and walk in His image.

And so we are called to actively and with intent seek His ways, for He is God and we are man. It says in Colossians 3: 1Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

To set your minds on things above is also an active and clear call that we need to channel our thoughts and actions so that they will glorify the Lord and not call forth wickedness. If we think of the things of God, ergo His Kingdom and what is important to Him, then the condition of our soul will be filled with greater light and life.

Romans 12:2: Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Let us then seek the Lord and His ways. Let us then with determination, with intent and purpose in this day and hour turn away from wickedness. May God's love shine forth, may His light be evident within us, may our tongues be filled with praise and goodness, and let the world know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we are Christians.

Let us then make that decision and let us make a choice. Let us do so while the Lord is to be found and while we have an opportunity to bring Him glory.



Conviction in times of truth and error

IT SAYS IN "1 JOHN 4: 1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess [a]that Jesus [b]Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. 4 You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. 6 We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

Let us pause here for a minute – John writes that those who know God hear them (the disciples teaching the Gospel of the Lord), yet they who are of the world hear them not. Then he concludes by saying “hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error”.

The Amplified Bible’s translation is as follows: 5 They [who teach twisted doctrine] are of the world and belong to it; therefore they speak from the [viewpoint of the] world [with its immoral freedom and baseless theories—demanding compliance with their opinions and ridiculing the values of the upright], and the [gullible

one of the] world listens closely and pays attention to them. 6 We [who teach God's word] are from God [energized by the Holy Spirit], and whoever knows God [through personal experience] listens to us [and has a deeper understanding of Him]. Whoever is not of God does not listen to us. By this, we know [without any doubt] the spirit of truth [motivated by God] and the spirit of error [motivated by Satan].

So what was John saying? He said those who truly know the Lord will hear the truth as spoken by those walking in the truth, yet those who do not know the Lord will not listen to the truth for their ears are turned towards the world.

For those who know the Lord thus will want to listen to the truth of the Lord, which is the spirit of truth, and those who choose not to listen to the Lord and His Truth are thus still of the world, which is the spirit of error. Those who walk in the spirit of error as those Paul warns about in "Galatians 1: 9 As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Let us connect what John wrote to "2 Timothy 4: 3 For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine and accurate instruction [that challenges them with God's truth]; but wanting to have their ears tickled [with something pleasing], they will accumulate for themselves [many] teachers [one after another, chosen] to satisfy their own desires and to support the errors they hold, 4 and will turn their ears away from the truth and will wander off into myths and man-made fictions [and will accept the unacceptable]."

So if you take into consideration what John and Paul wrote, we see clearly the manifestation of the spirit of error within churches. After all, as Paul mentioned, a time will come "when people will not tolerate sound doctrine and accurate instruction."

This means their ears are no longer turned to the truth, for they wish not to listen to those who are still standing and preaching the Truth. John makes it clear they do not even know God or is of God. And we need to take note of such error for we are living in perilous times.

If we want to lead a victorious life, we need to walk in the Spirit of truth, and not in error. For error will deceive us and lead us away from God's victory, blessings, light, way and life.

Now, it says in "Romans 8 (KJV): 9: Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Let us take stock of this". In Romans 8, Paul is writing about a life led by the Spirit of the Lord and not the dictates of the flesh. He, therefore, said that those who do not have the Spirit do not belong to the Lord (take into consideration the Lord's teaching in John 3 regarding the importance of being reborn in the Spirit).

These are harsh words, but it is about the same as what John said. He said those who do not listen to the Truth are not of God. Remember, the Spirit of the Lord was poured out to lead us in all truth. So if we truly are led by the Lord, we are then led by the Spirit, and then our ears should be turned to the truth and we should be embracing the truth. If our ears are turned away from the truth, then how can we truly be in the Spirit, and therefore how can we belong to the Lord?

A victorious believer's ears are thus turned towards God and His truth!

Apostasy in the last days is marked by large-scale deceptions and false teachings. It is the days as described by Paul regarding the itching ears turning to many teachers. This then also implies the teachers are also false because the itching ears are turning away from the Truth.

After all, we read they are turning away their ears to satisfy their own desires and to support the errors they hold and will turn their

ears away from the truth and will wander off into myths and man-made fictions [and will accept the unacceptable]. Again, we see the connection between what Paul wrote and what John regarding error. Of course, what they warned about links up to the false prophets and teachers as described by Peter in 2 Peter 2. Yes, apostasy is rife in churches, because so many are turning away their ears to listen to the spirit of error, instead of the spirit of truth.

So Apostasy is very much characterised by the spirit of error because so many are turning away from the Truth as taught by Jesus and the first disciples. Again, if our ears are turned away from the Truth, as we see happening more and more in churches, then you have to wonder who truly belongs to the Lord.

After all, if we belong to the Lord, we shall know the voice of the Shepherd (John 10), and we shall be led by the Spirit who leads us in all truth. Again, a mark of a true believer is a person who turns his ears to the Truth, who seeks the truth, and who speaks the truth of the Lord. After all, a true disciple worships in spirit and truth, and therefore walks in the spirit of truth and not the spirit of error.

One should remember that apostasy deals with a falling away from key and true doctrines of the Bible into heretical teachings that proclaim to be “the real” Christian doctrine, and also to a complete renunciation of the Christian faith, which results in a full abandonment of Christ. The latter is the goal of the devil – to get the believer in a position where he becomes so confused and deceived he even abandons God. Think it cannot happen? We need to wake up then, for it is happening all around us, and many who are preaching on the pulpit are even questioning God or are not even walking in the Spirit of the Lord!

We are living more than ever in such a time of apostasy. A time of false prophets and false christs WITHIN the church. We are living in the time of 2 Timothy 4, where more than ever those within the church system are abandoning sound doctrine to believe fables and

myths, and they are lured away and deceived by the lying wonders and false power and signs.

Indeed, in such perilous times, we need to guard against the spirit or error and apostasy by allowing ourselves to be convicted of sin. It says in John 16:8 of the Holy Spirit: “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”.

Believers, this is a matter of utmost great urgency. Where is the conviction of the Holy Spirit in our lives anymore? Are we truly convicted when we speak falsely, act immorally or when we behave and think as those led by the flesh and not the Spirit? For let us understand, where we live a life in the Holy Spirit, yielded, and submitted, we shall be convicted of our sins, transgressions, backslidden ways and iniquity. We shall, for we have yielded to God – this is a holy and mighty and powerful God. This is a God who shall not be mocked. Yes, where is the conviction?

For surely, we are called to lead such a life as believers in the Spirit of God that when we sin, then we shall know it by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, to repent and correct our ways!

For surely, when our sins have become iniquity, where we continuously and habitually embrace the sin, then surely the Holy Spirit must convict us! We must fall on our knees and cry out to God! Yet we no longer weep. We no longer cry out in repentance. Yes, we just want God’s goodness, forgetting God is a jealous God and consuming fire who does not tolerate sin or idolatry.

Surely, the Holy Spirit must convict us when we behave like the world, when we walk in the carnal nature of the flesh, and when drift away from the holiness and purity of God. For then we shall guard against abominations, apostasy and the spirit or error. But this is no longer happening! Every day across the globe men and women who proclaim they follow God preach and teach not sound doctrine, but

heresies, fables and myths, all for self-gain and self-profit. It is done in good conscience! Where is the conviction?

Where is the holy burning fire of conviction of the Holy Spirit to burn in us so that we know, yes know, we are teaching and preaching not the truth and not the will of the Kingdom! Where is the weeping for we are accursed when our tongues speak not the truth of God (Galatians 1:9). It is absent.

Across the globe, false word is spoken, not here and there, but a constant stream of deception and lies, disguised as prophecy but it is nothing more than divination. Where is the conviction? This is the same God of old, who spoke against the false prophets in “Ezekiel 13: 8 ‘Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Because you have spoken nonsense and envisioned lies, therefore I am indeed against you,” says the Lord God’.

Constantly we hear stories of pastors and so-called prophets who tell congregants to drink poison, eat grass, and walk on all fours like sheep. This is the spirit of error in operation! This is apostasy. Where is the conviction? Pastors and spiritual leaders look the congregants in the eye and tell them lies about financial prosperity, knowing it is only to benefit them and not the Kingdom of God. And they cry out “so says the Lord” yet the Lord has not spoken! Yes, they know full well they spew nonsense and rubbish, as so they distort the Word and manipulate, all the while they look the Lord in the eyes and babble forth to trick and deceive. Where is the conviction? Spiritual abuse is common, yet where is the conviction?

Christian families and marriages fall apart, yet where is the conviction when we behave as marriage partners and as parents like the world? Where the holy fire of God’s conviction is when the man treats the woman like a dirty rag, or the woman no longer can respect her husband, or when parents treat their children with cruelty and violence? Where is the conviction? And so Christians willingly commit adultery, climb in bed with prostitutes, doing so

without thought as they stare the Lord in the eyes. Where is the conviction? Where is repentance? Where is the correction of our fallen ways?

Paul spoke in Ephesians 4, 5 and Colossians 3 on our conduct. Can we truly say we have lived up to such standards of moral and holy living? And is written in Ephesians 4: 20 But you have not so learned Christ, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

It is time to get rid of the old and fallen ways! It is time to get back to God! It is time to walk in the glory and the holiness of God, as children of God, who by their very breath give God all the glory and all the honour! God forgive us when we cling to the old man and our fallen ways. And so it says in 1 Peter 1: 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

Where is the conviction when we as believers scream and shout in anger, spewing vile words, when we lift our hands in violence, or when our thoughts and hearts become polluted with the darkness and the lawlessness of this world? Day in and day, believers behave just like the world. Destructive, abusive, immoral, unholy, impure, and we do so without repenting and without turning back to God.

Any wonder we are in such days of great apostasy? In such days of such spiritual anarchy? And so we pray for revival in our churches and nations, yet we are spiritually 'dead'. Have we forgotten "Psalm 24: 3 Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol."

The problem is not the Holy Spirit. We as believers have become puffed up in arrogance, full of pride and selfish desires and ambition, holding on to our crowns that we no longer yield, submit and bow before God. We want our will to be done, yet where is the cry “God let thy Kingdom come and let thy will be done!” If we did, we would be convicted. As soon as we raise our voices in anger, then we must be convicted. As soon as we want to get in bed with another who is not our wife, then the holy fire of God must burn so that we fall on our knees and cry “God forgive me”.

Yet we no longer fear God. Are we truly even led by the Spirit of God? Are we truly yielded? Do we know the Spirit of God? Then where is the conviction? Or have our hearts become so calloused, so hard, so stubborn and so unyielding that we cannot repent anymore? Have we become so arrogant, so full of pride, so full of ourselves, that we now ignore God? We convince ourselves we no longer need to repent. And the result? A lawless and a backslidden church! God is holy and pure, and He is calling for a Bride without spot and wrinkle! Such a Bride walks in the power of God, in the fire of the Holy Spirit, never flinching, never backing down, looking the devil in the eyes and tearing down strongholds, and declaring the intended wisdom of God without shame or compromise! Such a Bride drinks only from the cup of the Lord, and seeks only the truth, the way and the life of the living and eternal God! A Bride walking in the power of God, convicted, and seeking His holiness, Kingdom and righteousness and His will above all!

For if we are truly led by the Holy Spirit, we shall immediately be convicted when saying anything that does not glorify God, and we shall be convicted when we act and when we conduct ourselves not to His glory, and when our words and teachings is a curse instead of the truth of God. Where is the conviction? Paul says to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12 be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

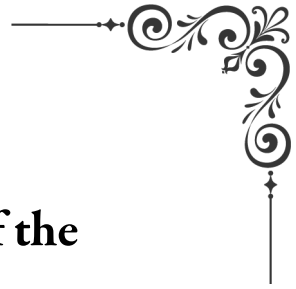
Are we truly an example? Or we do we look like the world? In Joel 2 we read: “17 Let the priests, who minister to the Lord, Weep between the porch and the altar; Let them say, “Spare Your people, O Lord, And do not give Your heritage to reproach, That the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’”

It is time we weep again before the Lord. Weep for our sins. Weep for our arrogance. Weep for our pride. Weep for our conduct. Weep and cry out to God to forgive us. For our hearts are hardened and we have lost our way. We need to weep! We need to cry out to God! We must cry out that we want Him to be the King in our lives! The world looks at the church and says, “Where is your God?” They say so for we have become like the world - backslidden, rebellious, and flirting with idolatry and flirting with the love for the world and the love for the Self. Do we still exude the sweet aroma of God, or have our hearts and our ways become stubborn and hard? It is time to weep. It is time to cry out for God to light the fire again.

It is time for us to yield, to submit, and to cry out to God and for the Holy Spirit to convict us, so that we may repent, turn and be healed (Ezekiel 18:32). We need to guard against deception, for it is time to fear God again, to walk in holiness and to live! Psalm 31:19 says “Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You, which You have prepared for those who trust in You in the presence of the sons of men!”

May we walk in holiness and in truth, for then we shall guard against all error and will not stray in our pursuit of God.

For in conviction and action of repentance and submitting, we find the Lord, walk in His ways and thus taste and know victory.



Connoisseur of the Word

A CONNOISSEUR MEANS basically to be 'acquainted with' or 'to know somebody/something'. In secular terms, it is a person who has a great deal of knowledge about for example the fine arts, or wine or who is a keen appreciator of cuisines, or who is an expert judge in matters of taste.

Connoisseurs thus evaluate for example works of art on the basis of their experience of the style and technique of artists. Judgment informed by intuition is also important, but it must be grounded in a thorough understanding of the work itself. The responsibility of the connoisseur is, therefore, to attribute authorship, validate the authenticity and appraise quality. Such responsibility applies across the board to connoisseurs no matter to what field their expertise applies, for they are called in general through experience and knowledge to determine quality, authenticity and in some cases indeed authorship.

Now consider that God calls for a people who are also connoisseurs of the Word. We are thus called to be disciples of God who know the Word, and by truly knowing the Word, we can test and weigh up every doctrine and teaching based on quality, authenticity and if it is true to the real author – God.

For then we shall be able to test all things, discern what is right from wrong and be able to walk in the victorious truth of God. Just like a connoisseur of the arts can determine if something is fake,

just so a connoisseur of the Word should be able to determine when something spoken or declared or pronounced is fake, a pretence and doesn't weigh up the true value of the author. If we do now know the Word, how then shall we know what is fake and what is true?

After all, experts in art can for example determine if a work is genuinely based on knowing the work and the style of the artist. They know for example the paint used by the artist and the techniques applied to the finer detail. Just so, we must be so acquainted with the Word of God that we can determine when something is not from the original author – God. We must all become experts, not just theologians or pastors, by studying the Word as led by the Spirit of God. We need to acquire a deep knowledge of the Word, thus become 'experts'. It is simply a matter of reading the Word, studying it from Genesis to Revelation, and above all seeking the wisdom and understanding and counsel of God to become a connoisseur.

It is also important to note that translations of the Bible are important. This is because words are important, and so is the style in which things are written. Someone who for example reads a lot of my writings will be able to determine if a certain volume of work was truly written by me. I use words and types of words in very specific ways.

Each person uses words differently, and constructs sentences in a certain way and uses different styles of writing to express and convey a certain thought or idea. They are thus identifiable by the way they express themselves. This is also true with the Bible. A lot of translations simply destroy the authenticity of authorship, and thus the true meaning of what the author is conveying. Remember, a connoisseur should be able to determine quality, authenticity and authorship. Modern translations have, however, destroyed such quality, authenticity and authorship of the Bible.

Remember Ted Kaczynski? He was the Unabomber in America that evaded capture for 17 years, bombing a number of targets and killing a number of people. Interestingly enough, the FBI profiler who caught him used forensic linguistic work. You see, in the 1990s, the Unabomber began sending letters about his crimes to the media and some of his victims. In 1995, he sent a sprawling, 35,000-word "manifesto" to The New York Times and The Washington Post.

FBI criminal profiler James R. Fitzgerald began working on the case in July 1995. He said the Unabomber's writings were a "pivotal factor" in cracking the case. He and his colleagues used them to help pinpoint the age and geographic origin of their suspect — evidence that helped lead to the arrest of Kaczynski. Forensic linguistics was back then unheard of and was actually invented in a way by Fitzgerald who realised how people could be identified by the way they use words and phrases. It is today known as the application of linguistic knowledge, methods and insights to the forensic context of law, language, crime investigation, trial, and judicial procedure.

Kaczynski was exceptionally smart with an IQ that measured off the charts. He was very careful in constructing and sending his bombs and left no DNA evidence that could be used by investigators. It was basically therefore his use of language that was his downfall.

He was very articulate and spoke using a particular and out-of-date vernacular. This is what gave Fitzgerald the idea to use linguistics as a way to catch him. Fitzgerald was clever, urging for the publishing of the manifesto, hoping that someone would recognize the writing (thus authorship). David Kaczynski, Ted's brother, was shown the manifesto by his wife. He recognized the writing style immediately to be his brother's. And the rest is history.

Thus style of writing and use of vernacular is very important. Thus stick to the older Bible versions, such as the King James or New Kings James Version. Be a connoisseur and weigh up these

translations to other translations and see how the style and the meaning can easily be changed by using different words and by changing the style used to express a thought.

Again, we need to know the Word but then we need to know the Word as far as possible in its original context. Again, we are not all learned in Hebrew or Greek, but some of the older versions at least try to be genuine and true to the original. Thus, know and study the Word for if we know the Word of God then it prevents contagious error and it also leads to a closer walk with Jesus. Why? Because it says in “John 1: 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”

God is the author of the Word. Just like Fitzgerald began to “know” Kaczynski through his writings, just so we shall begin to know God deeper through the written Word – the Logos. And as we are led by the Spirit of God, the Logos becomes alive to be Rhema. We need to be thus connoisseurs of Word of God as Logos and Rhema, therefore striking a balance between the intellect and the spiritual.

Jesus said in “John 6: 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” Yes, the Word of God is alive just as the Spirit makes us alive (Romans 8). We must embrace the Word as being alive, therefore we must be careful how we dissect, study and interpret it. It must be done in the Spirit of Truth (John 16), for then we shall not rely purely on our own intellect, education, experience or expertise. There is no one greater to explain the Word than the author Himself!

We have to remember the Bible is breathed out by God (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and its Spirit guided words (2 Peter 1:21) in order

to deliver unto us the very mind of God (Romans 8:27). When Jesus died and paid for our sins, He shattered the priestly system (clergy) that stood between God and men.

The curtain of the Temple was torn open (Matthew 27:51) and no longer was the mortal separated from the divine. Our hope of salvation is now anchored behind the curtain (Hebrews 6:19) and no preacher, priest, reverend, Cardinal or Pope is needed for my salvation. It is the Word of God that is our true standard, for it also teaches us that Jesus alone is our mediator (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 9:15; 12:24). Jesus is alive, and so is the Word. And if we truly follow Jesus, then we need to obey and yield to the living Word as Logos and Rhema.

It says in “Psalms 1: 1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.” Not only must we be connoisseurs of the Word, but we must love it and delight in it! David writes in “Psalm 119: Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord! 2 Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart! 3 They also do no iniquity; they walk in His ways. 4 You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently. 5 Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes! 6 Then I would not be ashamed, when I look into all Your commandments. 7 I will praise You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments. 8 I will keep Your statutes.”

We can only know the heart of God, who God truly is and understand His commandments, His teachings, His truths and values when we study and know the Word! We will then be able to stand against every wind of devious teaching and every thought that exalts itself against the kingdom of God (2 Corinthians 10).

Paul declared that our sufficiency comes from God and rests with him (2 Corinthians 3:5-6). Thus our sufficiency rests in the

Word of God! Yes in God, thus in the Word, we have all we need (2 Corinthians 9:8).

Scripture is truly ablaze with the passion of God for us. We need to consume the Words He has spoken, thinking on them often, repeating them to ourselves over and over, until they are etched into our hearts, until we can hear His divine voice in our minds.

Indeed, as we study the Word of God, we become living epistles. Paul wrote in “2 Corinthians 3:1-3: Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.”

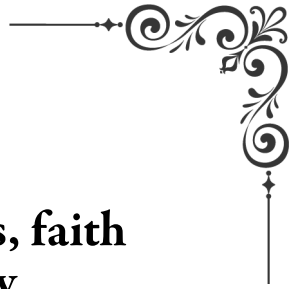
Yes, the world must know us as disciples of God, but they must also be able to recognise that we are living the Word of God! We must so study and know the Word and we must live it in such a manner that it is truly written on our hearts by the Spirit of the Living God! For then we shall truly live the Word, for it becomes the breath of God in our lives, and it becomes the power to change, to edify, to correct and to define our walk with the Lord.

Jesus said that He is the bread of life and those who come to Him shall never hunger (John 6:35). It is also written that ‘man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” Matthew 4:4.

Thus, we need to constantly feed on the Word of God, be sustained by Him and be nurtured so that God becomes our only source of true life, hope and strength. Yes, we need to study and consume the Word, and not lightly and not frivolously, but in the fear of God so that we stay true to the Word and stay obedient. For we overcome when we stand upon the Word, for what is written is the Truth and by that Truth we are indeed free (John 8:32).

And so it says in “Psalm 34:8 Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!” And also “1 Peter 2: 1 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

May we desire the Word, may we taste it, and may we consume it until we become connoisseurs. For then we shall know the blessed way of God, His blessed Truth and His blessed will on earth as it is in heaven.



Worship, holiness, faith and intimacy

ON MATTERS OF WORSHIP: Be not distressed says the Lord, be not discouraged, for the Lord knows His Bride - the Lord is calling them to worship and to pray. Oh the Bride, the Lord is calling for His children to worship.

We need to know worship – it is the act of prostrating oneself in utter abandonment, humility, consecration and obedience unto the Lord. It implies leaning towards the Lord, drawing closer to Him with all our strength and might. We need to again fall prostrate before Him in our daily lives, submitting to Him, yielding, yielding, and yielding - we need to bow and we need to search for Him.

From true worship flows all - from worship flows the hunger for the Lord, from worship flows obedience, submission, love, compassion and a heart aching for the lost and dying. The saints are called to worship, worship and worship - fall before Him, seek him, call Him, for He draws near to those who draw near to Him. In worship, the Lord speaks, moves in our spirit and reveals Himself.

In worship, we lean towards Him and we are taught His principles, His laws, His ordinances, His statuettes, His constitution and His precepts. Worship has been distorted into a concept of noise, performance, showmanship and emotionalism. Big noise, big lights and big events do catch not the attention of YHVH.

A still humble heart, captivated by the beauty of the Father, is what stirs the heart of the Master. A heart moved by the lost and

the broken and the hurting stirs the Father's heart. A heart seeking for man to know the beauty of salvation and the delivering power of truth stirs the Father's heart.

Only when the children return to the Father will they be taught how to worship in spirit and truth. True worship takes place before the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies. For there, in that place of worship, the true bond of Father and son grows strong and spirits join and become complete. True worship is the inward journey to where the Father dwells in our Spirit. True worship is when we abandon all, not only in the Holy of Holies but also in life to worship Him. In that silence, one's spirit is embraced by His Spirit and quickened. Indeed, the flesh profits none.

Our spirit is moved then not by words or manifestation, but by His mere presence. It is not moved by needs, wants or desires, but by simple adoration. Let us draw closer and look upon His face.

On matters of intimacy: How many walk the Road to Emmaus yet never find the Lord? Reading Luke 24:13-32 it dawned on me that so many children walk the road of life, accompanied by the Lord Jesus, yet their eyes are blind to see Him and their hearts do not recognise our beloved Master.

How the Father cries that too many children walk with Him but do not know Him, walking to Emmaus, yet they fail to walk in gladness and joy for they have not allowed the presence of the Lord to captivate their soul. But here is the glory. Only when we allow the Lord Jesus into our hearts, as these men on the road to Emmaus allowed Jesus into their homes, will our eyes truly open, will our spirit burn with His Spirit and will our ears hear His words. Only when we fellowship with Him do the mystery and truth of Salvation feed us like bread and water for the body.

It is only when we make room that we allow room for the Lord to teach us. His teaching opens our spiritual understanding and allows us to walk in spiritual reality. It is only when we acknowledge

His presence that we walk in the victory of the cross and the power of salvation. But, so many walk the road to Emmaus and never do break bread with the Lord or allow Him to enter. The Lord cries, for so many do not see Him, do not know Him and do not hear His voice. For too many He is still absent and the victory of the cross is made dull.

On matters of serving Him: Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! O, how the Father is calling back His children and how the Father wants His children to glorify Him! In the Spirit I saw these words ablaze like fire engraved on a wall – Jesus is Lord.

And then I understood what the Lord was saying as the words JESUS IS LORD filled my spirit. Saints, we need to proclaim, proclaim and proclaim that God is the only true God and that Jesus is real and alive. We need to proclaim it in the valleys, shout it from the hills, in the cities, by the shore and everywhere! It must be a proclamation that burns like fire.

We need to say boldly and loud: God is Lord Yahweh and He reigns. He reigns, who can resist? Who is like Him? His will be done. For then I knew that the truth of the reality of Jesus and the absolute nature of God (He is I AM) should be engraved on our hearts and be engraved in our spirit.

The engraving of fire on the wall was an absolute indication that boldness needs to be awakened in us to proclaim who God is. He is Lord and there is no other god that we shall serve. He is the same forever and He has not changed. He loves righteousness, justice and a pure and contrite heart.

Our whole lives should proclaim God is Lord of all! We are not ashamed. It should be like fire bursting from us. Oh, imagine if many walls would proclaim this message. We are called to proclaim, proclaim and proclaim. The world has lost touch with the true King. Make way then the path for Him and open the gates for His glory.

Let us be far bolder and be like a trumpet announcing He is always Lord!

On matters of faith: Faith commands power; faith comes from the Word of God - those who fear the Lord live in the truth and power of the Word. "You disregard and give up and ask to depart from the commandment of God and cling to the tradition of men, and He said to them, you have a fine way of rejecting (thus nullifying) the commandment of God to keep your tradition - thus you are nullifying and making void and of no effect (the authority) the Word of God through your tradition, which you in turn hang on" - Mark 7

On matters of the Kingdom: God seeks a kingdom that dwells in the hearts of His children, not a kingdom solely that dwells in walls built by man. God's kingdom is one of Spirit and Truth; built on the true riches of salvation, brought by the ransomed Blood of Jesus. Let the walls of our differences and our ways come down! We say the world must see the church, yet we are the kingdom of heaven on earth? How the world only sees a secularized, materialistic, prideful and tainted picture of heaven - where are the judges? Let the kings lay down their crowns.

God seeks humble, pure-spirit Crusaders, called to free the lost from the clutches of darkness through the Blood of Jesus. He seeks crusaders walking in love, truth and honesty, seeking no glory but only His will. Let the Crusaders not walk in hate, intolerance and anger. Let the glory come down. His presence brings you to your knees. It strips away all vanity and pride. It crushes all worth and arrogance. Oh God, arise in our midst!

On matters of holiness: In the Holy of Holies there is perfect union with Father and child. Truth dwells in the Holy of Holies. As we are in union with the Lord, we are in union with the Word, who is Jesus, who is the Bread of Life (manna) and the Truth (Commandments) and who came to give us life through grace.

Union with the Lord leads to obedience and willingness unto His commandments and precepts. Such obedience comes not from duty or obligations, but because those who dwell in the Holy of Holies walk in the sweet surrendered union with the Father, His Spirit and Son.

In the Holy of Holies, our spirit calls unto deep and we flow in His Spirit. Oh, why do we seek noise when the Holy of Holies is silent? Why do we need performance when the Lord seeks truth and honesty? The Lord is present in the silence. He is in the stillness of the spirit. He dwells in the realms where a contrite spirit stirs Him. We behold Him as we draw towards Him in the Holy of Holies. There, in His loving embrace, He captivates our spirit as He brings us closer to knowing truth in Spirit.

It is in the Holy of Holies where we taste that commanded moment of surrender and perfect union, producing a clarity that rises like the dawn and where revelation is birthed like creation. If we live a life of true union with the Father, thus walking in the sweet ways of the Holy of Holies, then our strength will soar like an eagle and we will run and not grow faint and we will walk and not grow weary.

Man's ambitions, ideals and self-love drive Him further away from true union. Indeed, the Lord dwells in the silence of surrender. He speaks in silence. His power is in the silence. But not just any silence. It is the silence of the Holy of Holies where a man seeks His heart and is prepared to die in the self for His glory. Behold Him and seek Him - nothing else.

Let us leave the ways of the world and enter into His glorious presence where His latter rain sustains us. There, in the silence, we will know His voice and know what to say to this broken world: only in the silence of the Holy of Holies.

Come Spirit and revive and restore the true and undemanding relationship of the generation of Jacob unto the faithful, real, alive

God! Spirit, let us arise, soar and climb above judgment, perceptions, wrong ideas and deceitful misunderstandings of the relationship-generating God!

Be alive unto God so that His mind, Will and Spirit reach out to the lost - bringing light into darkness. God seeks the humble heart - the potential, the willingness, the essence and the hunger of those who walk in his righteousness. Let us then embrace our weaknesses and strengths. Let us be humble, poor, true and honest - we then allow God the complete possession of our being!

Arise, arise, arise oh power of the Lord! Shine, shine, shine oh glory of the Lord! Rise, rise, rise oh love of the Lord! Freedom in truth and grace to all saints!!



Thoughts on holiness

HOLINESS IS NOTHING more than reflecting the very character of God Himself. Is God loving? Then we reflect holiness in the love we show to others. Is God pure? Then we reflect holiness in the purity of our lives. Is God patient? Then we reflect holiness by our patience with others. So when we read in 1 Peter 1:15, “Be holy, for I am holy”, it means to reflect the very nature, their heart, the beauty and the purity of God in our lives, daily.

Galatians 5, which speaks of the fruit of the Spirit, is an illustration of the holy character of God. Take a close look at what these fruits are: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23a).

Did you notice how many of these fruits are things that we demonstrate — or should demonstrate — in the context of relationships and our daily living? These fruits of the Holy Spirit are at their core very practical things that work themselves out in our everyday lives and in our everyday relating with those around us. It should be evident in the home, in the marriages, in the children and within the context of the family structure.

Holiness is not merely spending a lot of time reading the Bible, or even spending time with God, but it is the ability to bring God and His nature into every situation of one’ life, which includes within the family structure and workplace and yes ministry. The Lord has provided us with His Holy Spirit to help us become more like Him. Becoming holy is abiding in God (John 15), so that God

abides in us. So when a married couple for example abides together in Christ, then Christ abides in the marriage. Holiness is thus the essence of a fully honoured relationship. Holiness after all is a covenant term which describes both the complete, undefiled union of marriage, as well as the complete, undefiled union of the Godhead.

Holiness simply means cutting out what does not belong in a relationship or in our lives, and this implies our relationship individually with God as well so that we can be devoted to what does belong. Holiness is the “belonging” that is created within a covenant relationship, which is primarily manifested in our Covenant with God and in the covenant for example of a marriage. It is a state of beholding, yielding and submitting to His divinity and glory, so that we may truly shine His light in the darkness.

The Old Testament Tabernacle provided an incredible picture of holiness. The courtyard of purification represented the “setting apart” aspect of holiness. After removing all that did not belong in terms of any impurities, the priests could then enter the Holy Place, which housed symbols of all that did belong within holiness. The sacred core of the Tabernacle was the Holy of Holies, corresponding to the very heart of the relational covenant. This protected core of holiness depicted the fullest experience of the covenant. The “setting apart” and the “belonging” allowed entrance into the place of glory. This is the truth that the enemy of our souls frantically, feverishly, and furiously tries to keep from us. Individually, we are called to be set apart for God by setting apart all things that hinder us from abiding in God, so that in the abiding we may belong unto Him.

The world is falling apart because at the heart of it is the destruction of holiness. We now belong more to the world than to God. We fail to bring things that do belong, primarily God, including also focused attention and devotion to our spiritual walk, while we continue to bring things that do not belong, such as

carnality and our worldly desire to our spiritual lives. Holiness is thus simply set apart for God after having been made righteous because God counts Jesus' goodness instead of our sins when we have faith in Jesus. We are becoming holy as we obey God more and more in our lives. Holiness is indeed moving from glory to glory, sanctified by the Word and yielding to the glory of eternal greatness.

All believers are set apart for God and are therefore made holy (or sanctified, which has the same meaning). We see this for example in 1 Corinthians 6:11: "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." Holiness, however, is not a one-time event, but a continuing process. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 says "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely". As we are living with God, we are growing in faith, and we need to daily manifest His goodness, thus holiness in this world of darkness.

The more we walk with Him, the more we are changed into the likeness of Jesus and the more we display the fruit of the Holy Spirit. In that way, we are made holy and walk in holiness. This process will only be complete when we are with God in heaven. Blessed indeed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Matthew 5), so in our journey of holiness and expressing such holiness, the more we shall see God!



A word on abiding

LET US CONSIDER THE following Scripture: “John 15: 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.:

Today, I want to share a prophetic insight regarding the word “abide”.

In Greek, the word abide is *Meno*, which means to remain, not to depart, to continue to be present, to be held, kept, to continue to be, not to perish, to last and to endure. So firstly, when we read of abiding, the Lord is speaking about not departing from His presence. It speaks of continuing, about time, to be within His Glory, and His Glory to remain so that we are kept within His Divinity. And as we are kept, we shall not perish, and as we shall not perish, we shall endure. This is vital to understand – for our life, for our well-being, for our perseverance and strength depend on abiding, and resting in the Lord. In our strength, we cannot endure, or enjoy abundant life.

Secondly, when we speak of the word abides, the Lord shows the image of a growing fetus within the womb. Now, consider how while a baby is in the womb, it is situated within the amniotic sac, a bag formed of two membranes, the amnion, and the chorion. The fetus grows and develops inside this sac, surrounded by amniotic fluid. The baby is constantly cared for, protected, provided, nurtured, and the baby is safe. While within the care of the mother, the baby shall

not perish, and the baby shall last until the determined time of birth. The baby enjoys life, and the hope is alive and true.

And this is how it is with the believer when we ABIDE in the glory of the Lord, where His very glory, divinity, power and majesty are like an amniotic sac. And while we are WITHIN His Presence, - abiding and habitually resting – we are protected, provided, nurtured, and we GROW. Yes, we develop, and we become spiritually strong because we are in God and God in us.

Take note again of John 15 which says the following: “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless I abide in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.” We can do nothing unless we abide in Him. So the Lord says in the Scripture that one cannot bear fruit in one’s power unless one abides.

The fruit specifically deals with Galatians 5, which is the fruit of the Spirit. Now consider how a growing baby in the womb in itself cannot grow or develop, but is completely dependent on the mother. Just so, we cannot spiritually grow, develop or become mature as disciples unless we continue to abide in the Lord, and this is what is underlined in John 15.

Philippians 4:13 says: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”. Yes, we can only do such things when we ABIDE in the Lord, for again the Lord says if we abide not in Him then we can do nothing. Our entire life and our calling are dependent on abiding in the Lord.

We also need to keep the image in mind when considering a baby in the womb – the baby is completely and utterly surrounded. The baby is completely encased and is protected. This is the greatness of God. Just so, as we abide in the Lord, we rest in His glory as a baby rests in the womb –we are continually nurtured, provided, protected and we are surrounded by His Glory. Who then can touch, harm or destroy us when we remain in such a position when we therefore abide and rest in His Glory?

This is after all the reality of “Psalm 91: 1 He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.” And what happens when we abide under the shadow of the Lord, thus surrounded by His Glory? In the same Psalm we read: Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. 4 He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. 5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, 6 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, Nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.”

And take note, the baby will never seek to depart from the womb until the right time of birth. But we as disciples of God must continue to abide in the Lord following our spiritual birth, for as we remain in the Lord, we are positioned in the power of His consecration and sanctification for glorification.

May we continue to abide in the Lord, His Presence and Glory, for then He shall keep us safe and protected. Noah was protected in the ark for God shut them in, and Moses was protected when he lay in a basket that acted as an ark. Yes, God is our ark, and He shuts us in from the darkness and the strife and the conflict and the terror of this world – so just abide, and be at peace and rest in His divine nature and glory.

For in His abiding is our victory.



Abide in God to be delivered from the devourer

THERE IS SOMETHING very important we have to understand about walking in God's Presence not to be devoured by the devourer. Now, this may sound like something that belongs with teachings on deliverance, and while this does deal with deliverance it also deals with overcoming and walking in victory. And we can only walk in victory when we are truly and utterly led by the Spirit of the Living God.

Let us first understand that many times we look at the events of the Old Testament and we see a God who intentionally and with almost great delight inflicts all kinds of punishment on nations and people. It is true, as we will study, how been times it speaks of God's judgement in the form of some or other devouring punishment.

God many times does act as the devourer, but in the sense that He only allows the consequences of our rebellion, iniquity, wickedness, lawlessness and idolatry to play out. Thus, this means that when we fail to obey God and we fail to abide in Him, we can easily invite the devourer to devour our lives. Yet there are also times when God will be the devourer against His enemies for a specific purpose.

We read in "1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

Remember, John 10:10 says that of the thief he only comes to steal, to destroy and to kill. Yet God comes to give us life and life in abundance.

You see the devil wants us to rebel against God. He thus entices, seduces, manipulates, lies and influences man to forsake the way of God and to choose the path of darkness. Why? Because then they choose the path of the devourer. It is the nature of the devil to devour. He wants people to be devoured. So this is why, as we will see, God may be the devourer, but it remains the truth that the devil is of such a nature. So the devourer in whatever form or shape will come on our path if we walk in darkness or sit in the way of the wicked (Psalm 1).

The devil seeks to devour no matter what. He is simply cruel and will jump at any chance. With God, we have to remember He is just, good and holy. His Sovereign Will allows and brings about devouring because His perfect goodness, purity, and holiness are violated and challenged by an unholy and impure order. There is thus a difference. As we will study, there are so many ways in this world that we can be devoured by the devourer, and most of the time it is simply because we have allowed the devourer to devour.

God's judgement most of the time is thus simply the consequence of a people who have chosen the path of the devourer, instead of walking in the path of blessing and hope. God's intention is not to devour for the sake of devouring (unlike the devil), yet we allow ourselves to be devoured when we forsake God and His ways.

And yes, such actions of devouring may be attributed to God, but this is simply because God remains Sovereign and all things are only allowed because of His will. God thus does allow man to be devoured when choosing the devourer because we have free will and we have a decision to make. Yet, at the same time, we need to also realise that while God is not a devourer of the just and the good, He

does act as a devourer when it comes to the wicked and the unjust and the unholy.

Consider how in our times there are many ways for one to be devoured. Take for instance substance abuse. Millions of people are addicted to drugs, alcohol, indulges, gambling, pornography and so on. Every one of those addictions is a devourer.

It devours you spiritually, mentally and physically. It will devour you and slowly consume you until there is nothing left. Consider how many people are devoured by their carnality, or how many people are consumed by hate, fear, unforgiveness, insecurities, bitterness, violence, and lust. How many people are not devoured by greed, thus the warning that the love of money is the root of all evil. Take for example how many people are consumed by a life devoted to the occult, or the esoteric teachings, to Spiritism, or other dark arts. Think of how many people are consumed by religions that hold no value, meaning or life.

Day in and day out so many people are devoured. Devoured by their habits, behaviours, perceptions, ideas, pursuits of man-made goals and desires. Day in and day out people are devoured and consumed by all kinds of evil, wickedness, and dark desires.

Oh yes, daily fears are devouring people. Daily the lust of the eyes and the flesh devours. Daily people are devoured by their thoughts, mental anguish, psychological disorders and all kinds of maladies of the soul. Day and day people struggle with illnesses, diseases and sicknesses that devour the body. It is thus a constant and bitter struggle with devourers of spirit, mind, heart and the flesh.

1 John 2 says: “16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.” Indeed, such lust and such pride are all devourers. Anything that comes not from God shall devour, and those who abide not in God shall be subjected to

being devoured. It is the nature of a wicked world that devours, and such devouring is fuelled by sin, iniquity and wickedness.

Galatians 5 speaks of the fruit of the flesh: “19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” All of these ‘acts’ or manifestations of the flesh are devourers. We are devoured by jealousy, rage, selfishness, impurity, and sexual immorality. We live in a very decadent world where man makes the rules and nothing is frowned upon. Yet all such iniquity and idolatry eventually lead us straight into the mouth of the devouring. And such devouring devours you in spirit, soul and body. Indeed, a lot of such devouring is a result of a life not led by abiding in God. In God, there is peace, hope, love, light and inner healing. In God, there is meaning, purpose, understanding, contentment and a deep calm from the inner and external storms of life.

There are countless instances where Israel was devoured by plagues, sicknesses and the sword because of their rebellion against God. It says for example in “Lamentations 2 (NIV): 1 How the Lord has covered Daughter Zion with the cloud of his anger! He has hurled down the splendor of Israel from heaven to earth; he has not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger. 2 Without pity the Lord has swallowed up all the dwellings of Jacob; in his wrath he has torn down the strongholds of Daughter Judah. He has brought her kingdom and its princes down to the ground in dishonor. 3 In fierce anger he has cut off every horn of Israel. He has withdrawn his right hand at the approach of the enemy. He has burned in Jacob like a flaming fire that consumes everything around it.”

God ALLOWED the Assyrians and the Babylonians as the devourers to conquer the northern and southern tribes of Israel.

Remember, this is God's chosen people, yet He remains just and He will protect and uphold His honour. Israel simply allowed through their iniquity and rebellion against God to be devoured, to be ravaged and to be scattered.

Take for example what is says in "Ezekiel 21: 18 The word of the Lord came to me again, saying: 19 "And son of man, appoint for yourself two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to go; both of them shall go from the same land. Make a sign; put it at the head of the road to the city. 20 Appoint a road for the sword to go to Rabbah of the Ammonites, and to Judah, into fortified Jerusalem. 21 For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the road, at the fork of the two roads, to use divination: he shakes the arrows, he consults the images, he looks at the liver. 22 In his right hand is the divination for Jerusalem: to set up battering rams, to call for a slaughter, to lift the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to heap up a siege mound, and to build a wall. 23 And it will be to them like a false divination in the eyes of those who have sworn oaths with them; but he will bring their iniquity to remembrance, that they may be taken. 24 "Therefore thus says the Lord God: 'Because you have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are uncovered, so that in all your doings your sins appear—because you have come to remembrance, you shall be taken in hand. 25 'Now to you, O profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose iniquity shall end, 26 thus says the Lord God: "Remove the turban, and take off the crown; nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the humble, and humble the exalted. 27 Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him."'

By the time of Ezekiel's prophecy, it was declared that Babylon will devour Judah. The king of Babylon in all his wickedness and evil (as demonstrated by his divination) was about to conquer the land of God. Israel had fallen into great wickedness, for we read of

profanity and a wicked prince. Yet this would never have happened if they remained obedient to God.

Then again, it was also proven that by the external Law that man will never change in his wicked nature, and thus needs the Messiah (Jesus who sits forever on the throne of David) to come and be our Saviour. By the coming and death and resurrection of Jesus, the outpouring of the Spirit was made possible. By the Spirit God now dwells within us, and changes our stony hearts into hearts of flesh and leads us on a path of victory and not a path of the devourer.

Take a look at what happened in the wilderness when Moses came down Mount Sinai and found people dancing around the Golden Calf.

Exodus 32: 19 When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain. 20 And he took the calf the people had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it. 21 He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?" 22 "Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil. 23 They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.' 24 So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!" 25 Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. 26 So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, "Whoever is for the Lord, come to me." And all the Levites rallied to him. 27 Then he said to them, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.'"

So many died that day because they allowed themselves to be devoured. They brought the devourer upon themselves for worshipping the golden calf. It also says in Numbers 26:10 “and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up together with Korah when that company died, when the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men; and they became a sign.” Because of Korah’s rebellion, as in the days of the gold calf, many were devoured. Did God find pleasure in this? Of course not, but we obey and follow God to walk in life, yet when we rebel we walk in the ways of the devourer.

Take note of what God says to Moses in “Deuteronomy 31: 16 And the Lord said to Moses: “Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. 17 Then My anger shall be aroused against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured. And many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say in that day, ‘Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?’ 18 And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods.” Israel was ultimately devoured by devourers - the Assyrians and Babylonians - because they rebelled against God. God shall not be mocked as we see in “Leviticus 10: 1 Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. 2 So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.” We cannot toy with the devourer. We shall be devoured when we mock God and when we continue to follow our evil ways and hold onto carnality.

As mentioned, so many are being devoured right now in the world because they have allowed the devourer into their lives, their families, their marriages and homes. By simply not following,

obeying and yielding to God we give a right to the devourer to destroy and bring us to a point of weakness. Only in God do we overcome the devourer to walk in life and healing.

Remember the 10 plagues that struck Egypt? It was 10 devourers that came upon Egypt for enslaving Israel. David writes in "Psalm 78: 40 How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert! 41 Yes, again and again they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. 42 They did not remember His power: The day when He redeemed them from the enemy, 43 When He worked His signs in Egypt, and His wonders in the field of Zoan; 44 Turned their rivers into blood, and their streams, that they could not drink. 45 He sent swarms of flies among them, which devoured them, and frogs, which destroyed them. 46 He also gave their crops to the caterpillar, and their labor to the locust. 47 He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost."

God is thus a God who does look out for His children. He is a man of war. And so it says in "Deuteronomy 32: 42 I will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword shall devour flesh, with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the heads of the leaders of the enemy." 'Oh yes, God is a devourer of His enemies and He does not it lightly when His name is mocked or His people are under threat! This reality we find in 2 Samuel 22 when David says "7 In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry entered His ears. 8 "Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven quaked and were shaken, because He was angry. 9 Smoke went up from His nostrils, and devouring fire from His mouth; coals were kindled by it. 10 He bowed the heavens also, and came down with darkness under His feet. 11 He rode upon a cherub, and flew; and He was seen upon the wings of the wind." And also "Psalm 50:3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous all around Him."

The 10 plagues remind us of the judgement on the earth in Revelation. The seven plagues in Revelation are loathsome sores, the sea turns to blood, the waters turn to blood, the sun causes a major heatwave to scorch the planet with fire, thick darkness overwhelms the kingdom of the beast, the great river Euphrates dries up and lastly a global earthquake causes the cities of the world to collapse. This is of course very similar to the plagues of Egypt, such as the Nile's rivers turning to blood, the days of darkness and the sores. Each one of these plagues against Egypt and in Revelation is a result of direct disobedience and rebellion against God. Also, read Romans 1 when it comes to God's wrath. God shall not be mocked.

Every plague was a devourer in its own right. And this includes locusts that are often used in the Bible to represent a state of devouring. Locusts eat plant material and they are a problem because swarming locusts will strip an area of its vegetation including the crops. Ultimately they can do a great deal of damage to the crops. And it is said a large swarm may eat 160 000 tonnes of food each day. Thus often locusts are seen as devourers in the Bible. And a devourer of whatever nature works like locusts – it strips clean and destroys all in its path. Thus, the devourer destroys spirit, soul, and body, and it will destroy families, marriages and homes when allowed.

Joel and Amos as prophets had visions of the locusts. The locusts were also one of the plagues in Egypt. Joel and Amos were active long before the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles, yet they saw the pending doom, thus the pending devourer that will come upon Israel. Joel also saw the restoration of Israel, reminding us that God is just, and He wants us to walk in victory. If we turn to Him, there is always deliverance, hope, restoration and redemption from the devourer. They saw the following concerning the devourer in the form of the Assyrians and Babylonians in the form of the locust:

Joel 1 says “4 What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; what the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has

eaten; and what the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten. 5 Awake, you drunkards, and weep; and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the new wine, for it has been cut off from your mouth. 6 For a nation has come up against My land, strong, and without number; His teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he has the fangs of a fierce lion. 7 He has laid waste My vine, and ruined My fig tree; He has stripped it bare and thrown it away; Its branches are made white.”

We also read in Joel 2 of promised restoration and hope “24 The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. 25 “So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, The consuming locust, And the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you. 26 You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; and My people shall never be put to shame. 27 Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the Lord your God and there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame.”

Amos 4: 6 “Also I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, And lack of bread in all your places; yet you have not returned to Me,” Says the Lord. 7 “I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered. 8 So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water, but they were not satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me,” Says the Lord. 9 “I blasted you with blight and mildew. When your gardens increased, your vineyards, your fig trees, and your olive trees, The locust devoured them; Yet you have not returned to Me,” Says the Lord.

Amos 7: Vision of the Locusts: 1 Thus the Lord God showed me: Behold, He formed locust swarms at the beginning of the late crop; indeed it was the late crop after the king’s mowings. 2 And so

it was, when they had finished eating the grass of the land, that I said: “O Lord God, forgive, I pray! Oh, that Jacob may stand, for he is small!” 3 So the Lord relented concerning this. “It shall not be,” said the Lord. 4 Thus the Lord God showed me: Behold, the Lord God called for conflict by fire, and it consumed the great deep and devoured the territory. 5 Then I said: “O Lord God, cease, I pray! Oh, that Jacob may stand, for he is small!” 6 So the Lord relented concerning this. “This also shall not be,” said the Lord God.”

Amos 1 speaks of judgments on Israel’s neighbours. For example, it says “1 The words of Amos, who was among the sheepbreeders of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. 2 And he said: “The Lord roars from Zion, and utters His voice from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers.” Thus says the Lord: “For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have threshed Gilead with implements of iron. 4 But I will send a fire into the house of Hazeal, Which shall devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad. 5 I will also break the gate bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the Valley of Aven, and the one who holds the scepter from Beth Eden. The people of Syria shall go captive to Kir,” says the Lord.”

Joel and Amos prophesised about the devourer that will come. Yet still the people failed to hear and abide in God’s will. Just so, isn’t it amazing how this world keeps rebelling against God, most likely being aware of the dangers and the destructive force of the devourer? Surely people know the dangers of substance abuse, or how we invite wrath upon ourselves when we commit abortions or condone all kinds of sexual immorality? Or are we simply too full of pride to seek God and repent?

The locusts, thus a state of devouring, also appears in “Revelation 9: The Locusts from the Bottomless Pit: 1 Then the fifth angel

sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. 2 And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. 3 Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months.” Thus the wicked will be tormented by devourers, all because they refused to obey and follow God. In this world, and sadly, so many people continue to remain unjust, immoral, cruel and wicked, and so they face the fearful reality of being devoured. Yet in God, we are only consumed by love, by hope and by the all-consuming fire of His glory.

Indeed, even as we see in the Book of Revelation, there are consequences of defying God. Isaiah 24 says, “5 The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. 6 Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left,” and also “Isaiah 10:17: So the Light of Israel will be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; it will burn and devour His thorns and his briars in one day.” Isaiah 29 declares woe over Jerusalem “6 You will be punished by the Lord of hosts with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with storm and tempest and the flame of devouring fire.” We of course know the entire world will be consumed by fire (2 Peter 3:10). Isaiah 30 says “30 The Lord will cause His glorious voice to be heard, and show the descent of His arm, with the indignation of His anger And the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, tempest, and hailstones.”

Indeed, Israel learned the hard way about taunting God, and so will this world. Throughout history, many devourers have been eventually devoured because as you devour you shall be devoured. In Isaiah 30 we read “27 Judgment on Assyria: Behold, the name of the Lord comes from afar, burning with His anger, and His burden is heavy; His lips are full of indignation, And His tongue like a devouring fire.” Assyria was devoured by the Babylonians.

The Babylonians was devoured by the Persians. The Persians devoured by the Greeks who were devoured by the Romans and the Romans by barbarians and inner strife. Thus the truth of “2 Samuel 11:25: Then David said to the messenger, “Thus you shall say to Joab: ‘Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another. Strengthen your attack against the city, and overthrow it.’ So encourage him.”

Indeed, we need to walk in the ways of God. Right now in this world many people, who are being devoured, hurt others. Yet those who devour shall be devoured. It is the nature of things. Yet so many are suffering innocently at the hands of those who are manifesting the inner turmoil of their devouring. Thus we see a world of so many murders, rapes and child abuse. Innocent people thus suffer daily because of so many who allow the devourer to settle in their soul and spirit. Thus, we live in a world of great wickedness, hurting, destruction, tragedy and trauma. Too many people have simply allowed themselves to be devoured, and thus devour others. How this world needs God! Our choices thus so many times feed the devourer.

Revelation 12:4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

There has been much speculation about who the child is and the woman, with some agreeing it is Israel giving birth to Jesus who

ultimately births the Bride of God. Whatever our opinion, what is important is to note that the nature of the devil is to devour. So he loves to influence people to seek the path of the devourer, and so suffer in the fires of devouring. And by torment, they inflict harm on others.

In the Body of Christ, we have also allowed the devourer to come upon us. There are so many conflicts, dissensions, strife and division in the ranks of the church. It says in “Galatians 5:15: But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!”

We have allowed our selfish nature and pride to also consume and devour us, thus we are devouring each other. The church is certainly in a mess because of the manifold work of the devourer. How we need God to lead us down the true path of righteousness, and the fruits of the Spirit!

The bottom line is we need to keep in step with God and not rebel or defy God, lest we invite the devourer. In God are our hope and victory. In God, we overcome the devourer.

This is the reality of “Revelation 20:9: They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.” In Numbers 13 we read “32: And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, “The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature.” Indeed, so many in Israel were afraid of the devourers in the Promised Land. Yet in God, we do not need to be afraid. He is greater than the devourer.

Thus, if we keep in step with God, and thus abide in the Spirit, we shall be victorious. In Isaiah 1 of Judah, it says “19 If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; 20 But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword”; for the mouth

of the Lord has spoken.” A clear and simple choice yet Israel didn’t obey. In Isaiah 9 of Samaria, we read, “Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts the land is burned up, and the people shall be as fuel for the fire; no man shall spare his brother. 20 And he shall snatch on the right hand and be hungry; he shall devour on the left hand and not be satisfied; every man shall eat the flesh of his own arm.”

The reality of dealing with the consequences of rebellion and being saved by God’s hand through repentance is outlined in “2 Chronicles 7: 12 Then the Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: “I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. 13 When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, 14 if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” In this case, we see that devourers such as lack of rain, or locusts or pestilence will be withheld by those who seek God and seek His ways. In God is our victory!

Let us finally remember Psalm 91 that speaks of abiding safely in the secret place of the Most High, thus under the shadow of the Almighty. It speaks of how God will be our refuge and fortress.

We read: “3 Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence ... 5 You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, 6 Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. 7 A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you.” Glory to God. God protects us from any form of devouring! Yet, as Psalm 91 declares, we must make the Lord our refuge and our dwelling place. If we do so, then no evil shall befall us, and no plague will come near our dwelling. It says “14 “Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has

known My name. 15 He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. 16 With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation.”

Even when we are entrapped by the devourer (the snare), God can and will rescue us when we serve Him as our God and Lord. No matter the weapon (devourer) formed against us, we shall not be harmed! No matter if we are thrown in the furnace of the devourer, the flames shall not touch us. Even when we are thrown into the pit of devourers, it shall not consume us.

Exodus 12:13 says “13 Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.” (Also see Deuteronomy 7:15). Glory to God, under the Blood of Jesus we are protected from the devourer and the devourer shall not devour our lives or our families or our homes! Indeed by the word of our testimony and by the Blood of the Lord, we shall overcome (Revelation 12:11).

May we adhere to Proverbs 4 to make sure we keep under the shadow of God and thus protected, provided, restored and safe: “14 Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. 15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on. 16 For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; and their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall. 17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence. 18 But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. 19 The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.”

Glory to God. He keeps us safe for He is the devourer of the devourer and the strength of the weak!



Not by might, not by strength, but by the Lord

WE WILL NEVER EVER BE VICTORIOUS OR SEE VICTORY UNLESS THE LORD FIGHTS THE BATTLE. We will never be victorious if it is by our might and strength or by our plans. Let God's will and plan be done! When we allow God to fight for us, we shall be victorious in conquering, and be victorious in love, faith and hope!

The church is called to be dangerous simply because God is a God of power and strength. His incredible might and strength were on display when He struck Egypt with 10 plagues.

The story of Samson reminds us of what happens when we move in God's power and strength. Oh yes, we are not called to take up physical arms as our spiritual warfare is not carnal (2 Corinthians 10, Ephesians 6) and it is not by might or power but by the Spirit of the Lord. But we are called to be strong and mighty in spirit, in truth and faith! So it is good to remind ourselves of who this mighty God is.

God after all endued incredible strength to Samson, who killed a lion (Judges 14:5–9), who killed 30 Philistines (14:19), who escaped from ropes and killed 1 000 Philistines (15:14–17), and who was responsible for the final destruction of 3 000 Philistines when he tore down the pillars during his time of captivity (16:28–30). Samson's strength reflects the greatness of God!

We read of other incredible feats of strength in the Bible, such as in 2 Samuel 23:9-10 of Eleazar son of Dodai the Ahohite. As one of the three mighty warriors, he was with David when they taunted the Philistines gathered at Pas Dammim for battle. We read that when the Israelites retreated, Eleazar stood his ground and struck down the Philistines till his hand grew tired and froze to the sword. The Lord brought about a great victory that day. The troops returned to Eleazar, but only to strip the dead. Eleazar was considered one of David's top three warriors. Along with Adino and Shammah, Eleazar was a ferocious warrior who earned a reputation for his strength in battle.

Or what about 2 Samuel 23:20 where we read of Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, who had done many deeds? He killed two lion-like heroes of Moab. He also killed a lion in a pit on a snowy day. The lion-like men of Moab, we can only assume, were terrifying! The Bible describes Benaiah as a fearless warrior noted for his heroic exploits.

Benaiah was making a name for himself through numerous daring military achievements: "He struck down Moab's two mightiest warriors. He also went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion. And he struck down a huge Egyptian. Although the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, Benaiah went against him with a club. He snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear. Such were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he too was as famous as the three mighty warriors" (2 Samuel 23:20-22).

Benaiah was instrumental in safeguarding the passing of the royal succession to Solomon after David's death and thus gained the honor of assisting in Solomon's coronation at Gihon (1 Kings 1:32-40). As Solomon's supreme army commander and chief bodyguard, Benaiah was responsible for executing those who

opposed the new king, including Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei (1 Kings 2:25, 34, 46).

We may say that surely we are not like Benaiah, but the reality is that in the power of God we can all be mighty in this spiritual battle! We must just trust God, give not foothold to fear and remain courageous in God's strength.

In 2 Samuel 23:16, we read of the three mighty men of King David who broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and took it and brought it to David. These three men did the impossible simply because David wanted a drink! There is also the story in 2 Samuel 23:8 of Josheb-Basshebeth the Tachmonite, chief among the captains, also called Adino the Eznite, who killed eight hundred men at one time.

Consider also 1 Samuel 14, and the life of Gideon, David and Samson to name a few, where God brings about victory in the most peculiar, strange, mysterious and awesome ways. Why? BECAUSE WHEN IT COMES TO DELIVERANCE, HOPE, VICTORY AND THE BATTLE THEN GOD ALONE WILL TAKE THE GLORY AND NOT MAN! God is a mighty warrior, and when God is on our side, we do not have to fear! YET WE CAN NEVER TASTE AND SEE VICTORY UNLESS GOD DICTATES THE BATTLE, UNTIL THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD STEPS IN AND UNTIL WE STEP BACK AND ALLOW GOD ALMIGHTY TO STEP ONTO THE BATTLEFIELD!

We often still try to fight the battles in the natural, yet this is a spiritual war. We are still trying to come up with all kinds of ideas, campaigns and plots to defeat the enemy. And this implies to our battles as well says the Lord. It is time to fix our eyes upon the Lord, trust Him, and listen to Him!

He is not a man that needs to battle in the natural. Is this not the same God who sent one angel to slay 185 000 men of the Assyrian

army? Is this not the Lord who crushed Egypt with 10 plagues before destroying so many in the Red Sea? Is He not God? Yet we fear. Yet we doubt. Let us rather wage war according to 2 Corinthians 10 and Ephesians 6 and trust in Psalms 23 and 91!

Who do we truly think He is? He is God. He is YHVH. The Great I AM. He is the End. He is the Beginning. Read Job 40 and 41 which addresses those who wish to accuse the Lord. Yet we might the same mistakes as Israel – we make allegiances and treaties, trying to win the favour of the world to come to our aid. Israel sought an alliance with Egypt and was punished.

In 1 Samuel 14, we find Jonathan (the son of Saul) and a young bearer rout the Philistines. It reads: “6 Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, “Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us. For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few.” 7 So his armorbearer said to him, “Do all that is in your heart. Go then; here I am with you, according to your heart.” 8 Jonathan said, “Come on, then; we will cross over toward them and let them see us. 9 If they say to us, ‘Wait there until we come to you,’ we will stay where we are and not go up to them. 10 But if they say, ‘Come up to us,’ we will climb up, because that will be our sign that the Lord has given them into our hands.” 11 So both of them showed themselves to the Philistine outpost. “Look!” said the Philistines. “The Hebrews are crawling out of the holes they were hiding in.” 12 The men of the outpost shouted to Jonathan and his armor-bearer, “Come up to us and we’ll teach you a lesson.” So Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, “Climb up after me; the Lord has given them into the hand of Israel.” 13 Jonathan climbed up, using his hands and feet, with his armor-bearer right behind him. The Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer followed and killed behind him.”

Then we read in verse 15: “Then panic struck the whole army—those in the camp and field, and those in the outposts and

raiding parties—and the ground shook. It was a panic sent by God.” Glory to God! Now, let us remember that Jonathan and the armour bearer could have waited for Saul and the army, but we need to remember according to 1 Samuel 13 most of the army did not have weapons. Glory to God! Hear the Lord ... Two men brave and bold and fearless stood up against the enemy. Two men struck down 20 Philistines. Why? Because God had sent PANIC in the army. It was not the might of the Israeli army that defeated the enemy. It was the might of the Lord. It was not the might, the skill or any treaty that won the battle, but God had struck panic in the midst of the enemy. Yes, even the ground shook with His Power! We serve a mighty God!

Remember Gideon. He led 300 men to victory. In Judges 6 the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon and said “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.” Gideon doubted in the Lord, for he said “but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.” Gideon made a key mistake. He trusted in his strength. In verse 16 of the same chapter, the Lord said: The Lord answered, “I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive.”

With ONLY trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside, Gideon defeated the mighty army of the Midianites! Why? Was it because Gideon was a great leader? No! God HAD ALREADY GIVEN THE ENEMY INTO THEIR HANDS AS THEY HAD GIVEN THE ENEMY INTO THE HANDS OF JONATHAN. With only a small stone David slew Goliath, because David never placed his faith and trust in his ability. GOD HAD ALREADY GIVEN THE ENEMY INTO THE HANDS OF DAVID.

In Judges 11 we read, “19 Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, who ruled in Heshbon, and said to him, ‘Let us pass through your country to our own place.’ 20 Sihon, however, did not trust Israel to pass through his territory. He mustered all his

troops and encamped at Jahaz and fought with Israel. 21 “Then the Lord, the God of Israel, gave Sihon and his whole army into Israel’s hands, and they defeated them.” YES, GOD GAVE SIHON INTO THE HANDS OF ISRAEL!

In Exodus 17, the Israelites won the battle against the Amalekites simply because Moses held his arms upright on the hill! Was victory secure because of Moses’ strength? No, the prophet obeyed God and supernaturally and by God’s will and plan, He slew the army. Such a simple action but this is sometimes all that is required, such as marching around a city! You will never see victory until God has given the enemy into your hands.

And this will only happen when we trust Him, listen to Him, follow Him, praise Him, worship Him, obey Him and follow Him as the only true King! With God, we can and must be dangerous when it comes to dealing with the threats to God’s Kingdom. Again, this does not imply physical warfare, but we need to be dangerous in our spiritual warfare!

Yes, Joshua listened to God and marched 13 times around Jericho and then the city fell because GOD HAD GIVEN THE CITY INTO THE HANDS OF JOSHUA! When Joshua came to Jericho, his heart must have sunk because this was a secure city! How were they to defeat such an enemy? And so we read in “Joshua 5: 13 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, “Are you for us or for our enemies?” 14 “Neither,” he replied, “but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.” The battle belongs to God! Joshua marched as the Lord instructed, and the walls fell. Joshua never had to fear because God is in control and His will shall be done.

In Isaiah 36 and 37, we read how Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. The King of Assyria mocked God and put pressure on Hezekiah, king of Juda,

to bow before him. Hezekiah was facing a mighty opponent and a mighty battle because Assyria at the time had swept all before them. How easy for Hezekiah to bow to pressure and to fear! He could have looked at the circumstances and the physical evidence, which would have led to a moral defeat. Lo and behold, Hezekiah received a word from Isaiah and was reminded that the battle belonged to God, no matter the army that faced him.

Just like when Elijah faced an army of 850 false prophets, just so Hezekiah faced great dangers, but they didn't need to fear, for God is with those who stand with Him. The battle belongs to God! Praise the Lord! He is always greater and His might is always more powerful. We do not have to fear, for the Lord is with us, why then shall we fear? In Judges 15 we read the following of Samson when he was attacked by the Philistines: The Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him. The ropes on his arms became like charred flax, and the bindings dropped from his hands. 15 Finding a fresh jawbone of a donkey, he grabbed it and struck down a thousand men. **YOU SEE, IT WAS NOT BY HIS STRENGTH ALONE, FOR IT WAS BY THE MIGHT AND POWER OF THE SPIRIT!**

We cannot make the constant mistake of placing our hope in ourselves, in this world, in politics, in money or in our strength in the hope of seeing victory. God deals with the supernatural, with the extraordinary, and He shall give victory when we listen when we bow down and obey Him.

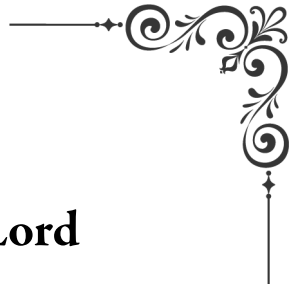
But truly we need to listen and abide in God for the victory!

Glory to God, there is no reason to fear, there is no reason to be anxious, for the Lord is indeed the Lord of the battle. And how the Lord reminds us He is the only and true master of any battle, no matter what kind of battle, no matter what kind of struggle we face, no matter the obstacles hindering us or the circumstances that threaten to surround us. We may face the battles of the mind, or the battles of the physical, or the battles of the spiritual, but the battle

that wages is never greater or distant from the hand of God. Indeed, is the hand of the Lord too short to save or deliver? Isaiah 59: Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.

Praise the Lord, for the battle belongs to God, even when Daniel was facing a death threat from the lions! David's faith and the power of God stirred the king of Babylon to believe in the Lord Almighty. Just as the Israelites passed safely through the Red Sea, Daniel passed safely through this trial, and just as the pursuing Egyptians were consumed by the flooding waters, just so those who falsely accused Daniel were crushed when the lions fell upon them. The Red Sea enfolded upon the Egyptian and the lions enfolded upon Daniels' enemy! Talk about the power of God! Praise the Lord, for no weapon forged against us, shall prosper.

Indeed, the battle belongs to God, and we never have to fear! God has a plan and a purpose, and that plan and purpose shall prevail. NEVER FEAR BUT LEAVE THE BATTLE IN THE HANDS OF GOD!



Rejoice in the Lord

TO REJOICE SPEAKS OF showing great joy or delight. Right now in the world, we are not seeing much joy or delight in the children of God. Have we forgotten whom we serve? He is glorious and mighty.

For it says in "Philippians 4: Amplified Bible (AMP): 4 Rejoice in the Lord always [delight, take pleasure in Him]; again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your gentle spirit [your graciousness, unselfishness, mercy, tolerance, and patience] be known to all people. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious or worried about anything, but in everything [every circumstance and situation] by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, continue to make your [specific] requests known to God. 7 And the peace of God [that peace which reassures the heart, that peace] which transcends all understanding, [that peace which] stands guard over your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus [is yours]."

It also says in the following Scriptures:

Psalm 97:12 Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous ones [those whose moral and spiritual integrity places them in right standing with God], and praise and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.

Psalm 64:10 The righteous will rejoice in the Lord and take refuge in Him; All the upright in heart will glory and offer praise.

Habakkuk 3 declares: "17 Though the fig tree does not blossom and there is no fruit on the vines, Though the yield of the olive fails and the fields produce no food, Though the flock is cut off from

the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls, 18 Yet I will [choose to] rejoice in the Lord; I will [choose to] shout in exultation in the [victorious] God of my salvation!

My dear believers, rejoice! Yes, rejoice! God is with us. He will not leave or forsake us. Seek Him. Rejoice! Be glad. God is for us. And if we truly seek Him, pray, and trust, then in our rejoicing the peace of God [that peace which reassures the heart, that peace] which transcends all understanding, will stand guard over our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.

Glory to God. Glory to God. Let us rejoice so that we may walk in peace, and that in our rejoicing our hearts and minds may be guarded against the defeatism of this world. God is not done. The church is not done. We still have a mission. So rejoice.



Fear not, the battle belongs to God

GLORY TO GOD, THERE is no reason to fear, there is no reason to be anxious, for the Lord is indeed the Lord of the battle. And how the Lord reminds us He is the only and true master of any battle, no matter what kind of battle, no matter what kind of struggle we face, no matter the obstacles hindering us or the circumstances that threaten to surround us.

We may face the battles of the mind, or the battles of the physical, or the battles of the spiritual, but the battle that wages is never greater or distant from the hand of God. Indeed, is the hand of the Lord too short to save or deliver? Isaiah 59: Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear.

There are countless of tales of how the battle belongs to God and how we do not have to fear so take heart, be full of joy, for God is with us. He slays the mighty, He brings low the lofty, and He brings kings to their knees and shakes empires until it is mere dust. What a God we serve.

How Job struggled in the wake of Satan's torments, but the Scriptures illustrates how the Lord is always the Lord of the battle. Job had never to fear, he just had to remain close to God, and in the end the victory was secure! Praise God. Indeed, we serve a mighty God! Satan tried to steal Job's hope and love and life, and Job could have easily drifted away from the Lord. But no matter the schemes

and plots of the enemy, no one is greater than God and for this reason we do not have to fear or be anxious!

For those who wait and trust in the Lord, such as Job, will be victorious for the battle – because even Job’s battles ultimately and always belong to God and to no one else. For this reason, it speaks of overcoming seven times in the letters to the seven churches, because for those who trust and hold firm to God never have to fear or be doubtful for all our battles – no matter who or what wages such battles against us – belong to the Almighty.

When we are sick, we can have hope – for sickness is a battle, but God is Lord of all battles.

When we face financial struggles, we can have hope – for poverty and troubled times is a battle, but God is Lord of all battles. When we face uncertain times, seasons of the adversary, of pain or illness fear not, for these are battles says the Lord and such battles belong to Him.

Jesus is the Name above all names, and all and every battle belongs unto God. There is no battle that is beyond the control of God. There is no challenge that is greater than God.

Goliath thought he would destroy David and the army of Israel. But he forgot that David served the Almighty, and so David did not fear. He trusted in God and God alone. The victory was secure and true because the battle belonged to God. In 2 Kings 6, the King of Aram amassed an army to destroy Elijah. Did Elijah fear? Of course not, why should he? Even that battle, like all our battles, belongs to God.

In Isaiah 36 and 37, we read how Sennacherib king of Assyria attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. The King of Assyria mocked God and put pressure on Hezekiah, king of Juda, to bow before him. Hezekiah was facing a mighty opponent and a mighty battle because Assyria at the time had swept all before them. How easy for Hezekiah to bow to pressure and to fear! He could

have looked at the circumstances and the physical evidence, which would have led to a moral defeat. Lo and behold, Hezekiah received a word from Isaiah and was reminded that the battle belonged to God, no matter the army that faced him.

Just like when Elijah faced an army, just so Hezekiah faced great dangers, but they didn't need to fear, for God is with those who stand with Him. The battle belongs to God! Praise the Lord! He is always greater and His might is always more powerful. We do not have to fear, for the Lord is with us, why then shall we fear?

When Joshua came to Jericho, his heart must have sunk because this was a secure city! How were they to defeat such an enemy? And so we read in "Joshua 5: 13 Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" 14 "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" 15 The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so."

The battle belongs to God! Joshua marched as the Lord instructed, and the walls fell. Joshua never had to fear because God is in control and His will shall be done. Praise the Lord, for the battle belongs to God, even when Daniel was facing a death threat from the lions! David's faith and the power of God stirred the king of Babylon to believe in the Lord Almighty.

Just as the Israelites passed safely through the Red Sea, Daniel passed safely through this trial, and just as the pursuing Egyptians were consumed by the flooding waters, just so those who falsely accused Daniel were crushed when the lions fell upon them. The Red Sea enfolded upon the Egyptian and the lions enfolded upon

Daniels' enemy! Talk about the power of God! Praise the Lord, for no weapon forged against us shall prosper.

Indeed, the battle belongs to God, and we never have to fear! God has a plan and a purpose, and that plan and purpose shall prevail. In 1 Kings 18 Elijah faced the 400 prophets of Baal. He did not flinch or retreat or surrender!

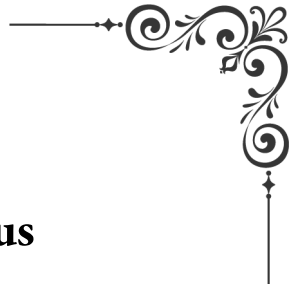
Our God is after all greater than any Ba'al! God answered Elijah's offering with fire from heaven, soaked three times with water, but the servants of Ba'al could not get an answer from their god despite cutting themselves until they bled. God answers His children, and in every battle, He is there to answer our prayers and supplications. We do not have to fear, even though the dangers look so great and daunting. Do not fear, for God is with you!

In Hebrews 11, we read of great accounts of faith, but such faith was activated by men and women who trusted in God and knew that the battle belonged to Him. And So Samson did not fear when he faced the Philistines or the lion. Just so David stood strong against Goliath, despite the challenge being so great. Just so, John the Baptist paved the way for Jesus without fear, for God is great and mighty!

When we are sick, tired, down or depressed, remember, this is a battle and so lift the battle to God. God is our banner, our hope and our refuge.

Take heart, for God is with His children! The problem is we forget God is Lord of all battles. Not man. Not the devil. Not the world. So the outcome and the solution and the answer always but always rests with God. The devil is not greater than God. Neither is any sickness, government, person, thought or institution.

For this reason, we do not have to fear – God is in control! Praise Him. So bring every battle unto God. Bring every challenge unto the Lord of Hosts. Fear not, but be brave and bold in Jesus. In God, we have victory, but victory is secure for those who stand in Christ.



Be not anxious

PHILIPPIANS 4: (NEW International Version) 6Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

In Matthew 6 Jesus commanded His disciples not to worry about anything for surely as the Lord takes care of the birds and the flowers, so surely He will sustain, provide and take care of those who call upon His name. You see, Jesus wasn't merely giving advice, for He knew that anxiety, stress and worry bring us no profit but rather bring us even greater trouble! So He gave a command not to be concerned and to seek His Kingdom for then the rest will be added unto us. Why then do we then so worry when the Lord of Heaven is with us?

Paul the Apostle wrote this letter to the Philippians on his second missionary journey. He came to the city around 49 CE. At the time Philippi was an urban centre at the eastern end of the plain, a few miles northwest of Neapolis.

The people there were both Romans and Greeks. The religious life of those in Philippi was marked by very syncretistic practices including the worship of the emperor (Julius, Augustus, and Claudius), the Egyptian gods Isis and Serapis, as well as many other deities. It was against this backdrop that Paul established His church and spoke to the followers of Jesus, who were under enormous

pressure from the pagan citizens of Philippi to stay true to God. Talk about stress and anxiety!

As we read Paul's letter to the people of Philippi, we find he placed great importance on prayer and giving your care to God. However, by this time Paul was a man who walked in great faith and trust because He understood, grasped and acknowledged the greatness of the Lord. Isn't it also time that we need to grasp the truth that the same God to whom we pray is an awesome, amazing, and all-powerful and all omnipotent Lord who can and shall and will answer our prayers? If we can grasp how great God is then surely we shall not be anxious or fearful, for as Paul wrote, we must bring all our cares and worries to God for He is the One who upholds the heavens, who gave us life, who is the Lord of all and nothing is too great for Him to handle!

Praise the Lord for He is great, He is beautiful, He is majestic and He is incredible. Why then be anxious? Be like David who slew Goliath, for David also served the same God that performed the great miracles in Egypt, by which the heart of Pharaoh was melted which led him to set God's people free.

This is the same Lord who led the Israelites out of Egypt into the wilderness, especially the crossing of the Red Sea when the waters were rolled back and the people went through. This is the same God who fed by His hand well over a million strong, perhaps a million and a half people for forty years so that they lacked nothing and even their clothes were kept from wearing out.

God ministered to these people in the desert, making the rocks gush with water, feeding them with manna from heaven, and watching over them with a pillar of fire at night, and a cloud by day.

We serve the same God! He is so powerful! He is so enormous! The greatness of God is amazing. When you let your mind ponder just how great, powerful and majestic God is it is boggling. Think

about human creation. Humans were created in the image of a living God.

Maybe circumstances in your life have left a shadow over you, but God's power is greater than the shadow. He can remove the shadows of doubt and fear if you ask. No circumstances on earth are greater than the power of God. Nothing you face is greater than God's goodness. God's greatest aspect is love. God is love, pure love, unconditional love expressed in Jesus Christ.

Luke 9:43 says, "And they were all amazed at the greatness of God." We also read in "1 Peter 5 (New International Version) 6Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

What an awesome God we serve! So let us not fear or be anxious. He hears our cries, knows the desires of our hearts and He leads us by His hand (Psalm 23).

History has proven time and again that we cannot place our trust in money, governments or any other institution of so-called influence. We cannot place our hope even in ourselves, for we are but human. We cannot place faith in others all the time, for we are fallible and we all stumble, fall and make mistakes.

But we can and must and shall with blessed assurance place our full trust and faith in the Lord who can be trusted for He is faithful and He never leaves us. It says in "Deuteronomy 10: 14 To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it."

Wow, what an incredible truth and hope! To the Lord whom we serve to belong all the heavens, which include billions of galaxies, planets and stars. To Him belong all things and He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, to fill the whole universe (Ephesians 4:9-11 NIV).

We know that Earth is one of the smallest planets in our Milky Way, and we know how small we are compared to the sun. But beyond the sun some other stars and universes make the earth look like a golf ball compared to a soccer stadium when compared to God's other creations. But, we are known by Majesty, and He the Glorious One who sent His son Jesus to this small planet to die for us and to give us victory, hope and life.

Colossians 1: (New International Version): 16For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

We may feel that daily we are swimming upstream and fighting the tides of life to survive, but we do serve an awesome God who knows us, who cares for us, who loves us, who holds us close to His heart, who knows our fears, who knows our desires, who knows our hopes, we know our challenges and yes, He is the Mighty One who is in control and we do not have to fear! For surely as He holds all the universes and all the billions of massive stars in the palm of His hand, this same God holds us in His palm and we must trust and faith for His love and grace and mercy sustain us.

We may not always be promised sunshine and roses, constant good days and 24-hour wealth and health, but we do receive the following promises in "Isaiah 40: 29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. 30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; 31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

May we set our hearts upon the Lord, and love Him above all else, lest we fall into the trap of idolatry, and may we behold Him as Moses beheld Him.

God is our Life, our Hope and our Strength. So praise Him. Love Him. Obey Him, Seek Him. And know Him.



We are called to overcome, not to merely cope!

FOR MOST PEOPLE, WHEN it comes to trauma or stress in life, they are simply coping. Coping usually involves adjusting to or tolerating negative events or realities while attempting to maintain your positive self-image and emotional equilibrium. Trauma and stress can even lead to panic attacks, thus an unhealthy fear.

Interestingly enough, in the Bible, there is no mention of coping. The reality is as Christians we are not called to cope, which means trying to survive, trying to deal with stresses in life and traumatic changes and assaults. We are not called to merely 'hang on' and hope we will survive the storm! Yes, we are human, but God has not called us to merely hope we will make it through the storm. God wants us to thrive, prosper and realise we are more than conquerors. And in His strength, it is possible, for He is mighty, glorious, loving, our comfort and praise in the stillness of the night and day.

It says in Romans 8: 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation,

or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” 37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

Paul faced many stresses in life. He also faced many traumatic events, such as being shipwrecked, such as beatings and being imprisoned. He writes in 2 Corinthians 11: 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?

In light of all of this, Paul writes we are more than conquerors! He knew God was with him. He knew nothing could separate him from the love of Christ. But ultimately, he knew God! He found his strength, comfort, hope and joy in God and not the world. Paul did not cope, no, he saw himself more than a conqueror. Psalm 46:1 declares “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble”. But didn’t merely hang on or make it through the storm, he found his hope in the glory of God. So he wrote in Philippians 4:6-7: Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

God said to Moses in Exodus 3: 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and

honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.

The Lord Himself said He will rescue His people! And yes He still delivers and rescues His people. No wonder David named one of his sons Eliphalet, for the Lord delivers. No wonder Paul writes with such gusto the following in Philippians 4: 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

We can rejoice, and we can be joyful, for no matter our trouble or woe or trial or tribulation, God still delivers His children and He hears us and He knows of us! Praise His name for He can deliver us out of all situations. There is nothing too hard for God to break through, or heal, or to help us to overcome. We are more than conquerors. Our God is the one who still the waves. He parts the waters. He is the Provider. He is the Healer. He is the hope of now and tomorrow. He is our Fortress. He is our Refuge in ever-trying times. He is our song in the morning and our praise in the evening. Yes, we must not be concerned or stressed, and we are not called to merely cope, but to indeed prosper in spirit, soul and body for God Is glorious and He is victory!

For it is written in John 14:1: "Do not let your hearts be troubled." Glory to God. Let us not be troubled. Sadly, so many of God's children have allowed their hearts to become troubled. They have allowed anxiety and fear to overcome them. They have allowed such trouble to blind them to the glory of the Lord, to His majesty, His greatness, His goodness and His mercy. Yes, there are so many storms in this life, so much heartache, betrayal, struggles and battles,

BUT DO NOT LET YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED SAYS THE LORD OF HOSTS.

The Lord also says in "John 16:33: I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace. In the world you have tribulation and distress and suffering, but be courageous [be confident, be undaunted, be filled with joy]; I have overcome the world." [My conquest is accomplished, My victory abiding.]"

Yes, in this world we will have trouble – it will come in all shapes, sizes and forms. Throughout the entire Scriptures, all the servants of the Lord endured trouble. Just ask Moses, or Daniel, or David, or the Apostle Paul. Trouble impacts us personally, emotionally, spiritually and psychologically. The troubles wish to break us, shatter us, destroy us, but the Lord cries DO NOT LET YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED! For surely God does not slumber, and He is a jealous God, and He is an all-consuming fire and His eyes are upon those who seek Him and serve Him. He is our Refuge, our Hope and our Strength. Psalm 11: For the Lord is [absolutely] righteous, He loves righteousness (virtue, morality, justice); the upright shall see His face.

Yes, we WILL have trouble but the Lord says to His children LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED. Why? Because He is the Lord – omnipotent, all-powerful, and He loves His children. He is the Lord of Israel. He is the Great I AM. He is our Peace, our Hope, our Strength. "Deuteronomy 32: 3 I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! 4 He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he."

So do not merely cope, but overcome by the word of your testimony and the blood of the Lamb!



Rest in God to draw strength to follow His Will

IN THIS WORLD OF SO much noise, more than ever we need to listen more and talk less. And this applies especially to our walk with God. We need to listen more to God, for it says in Psalm 46:10 that we must be still and know that He is God. He is the beginning and the end, and in Him lies all the answers, and our hope.

In the stillness, and not in the noise, we find our peace and our strength as we listen, as we abide and we rest in His almighty presence. So often we have forgotten what it means to rest. To rest speaks of resting from your efforts, and seeking to pursue God's path and will. To rest and to abide speaks of placing your life in the hands of the Lord, and to allow God to move you, to guide and to lead you. Yet so often we would rather toil, instead of bowing the knee and trusting.

To abide and to rest in His Almighty Presence is like a leaf on the water. The leaf never resists where the water goes – it simply follows where the water leads. And just so we must be in the presence of God, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead. We must not resist the Lord, or His will, or His commands or His Truth, but we must be like that leaf that simply goes and follows. This is the prophetic imagery as presented to Ezekiel in chapter 1.

Ezekiel saw an image of the living creatures and the wheel. And so we read in chapter one, “19 When the living creatures moved, the

wheels beside them moved; and when the living creatures rose from the ground, the wheels also rose. 20 Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, and the wheels would rise along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. 21 When the creatures moved, they also moved; when the creatures stood still, they also stood still; and when the creatures rose from the ground, the wheels rose along with them, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.”

And so we must be, as we abide and rest in God. We go when the Commander of Heaven speaks. We move when the Spirit moves. After all, we are not here to follow the commands of man, or to follow the agendas, programmes or the will of man. We rest not in the efforts of man, or in our own efforts. We go and we follow, for this is the way of the disciple. And such a disciple abides, rests, and obeys the will of the Lord.

In our resting and abiding in the Lord, we consider the importance of Lord’s Prayer. For as we pray the Lord’s Prayer, we seek the will of the Lord, we seek His Kingdom, we seek His way, and we seek His Presence. Nothing more and nothing less, for as we abide and rest in His Glory, we then seek His Kingdom according to Matthew 6.

And so, in this world of so much chaos, anarchy, rebellion, and strife, it is important more than ever for the believer to know the will of God. For God’s plan for the Church, and our lives, individually, rests in heaven. And we must always seek to know such a will, and we must seek to follow it, and we must seek to rest and abide in His ways and truth.

And so, in the silence, we know He is God, and as we come to the Lord, let us then listen, and let us rest in Him. And as we tabernacle with the Great I Am, in fellowship sealed with the Blood of the Lamb, as disciples we need to learn to pray for discernment and to know the will of the Lord. For it is all about His will perfect will –

the commanded and sovereign blessing. For then we stay true to His path and the Kingdom.

For if you know and follow the perfect and complete will of the Lord, you shall find your rest, your joy, and your peace. Yet, this calls for us to abide, to rest in Him and to listen. And as we abide, we know He is God. And so, when it comes to the will of God, which is the crux of the Lord's Prayer, as disciples we need to therefore learn to seek wisdom how to walk in the will of the Lord. For to know the will of the Lord is one thing, but we require His guidance, knowledge and understanding how to follow His path, and to stay true unto God.

Therefore, as disciples, we need to also learn to seek strength to do the will of the Lord. For often what God calls us to do will not be easy, and it might confront our comfort zone, or it might challenge our own will and the path we seek to walk.

So often we speak of the power of the Holy Spirit to minister and to be witnesses unto the ends of the earth, but just as important is the inner power of the Lord to overcome, to persevere, to stand our ground, to keep following the right path and to love. For it is not easy to be a disciple, and it is not easy to seek the narrow road, and so in our quiet time with the Lord we need to listen, and we need to draw strength from the Father to know His will and to follow.

In speaks of Isaiah 11 of the Spirit of the Lord being the Spirit of wisdom, guidance, discernment, counsel, understanding and might. It also speaks of the fear of the Lord. You see, we need to yield and submit to the Holy Spirit, all throughout the day, always united and always submitting, for then we shall be led by the Spirit so that in the counsel, understanding, wisdom and might of God we shall know the will of the Lord.

For the Spirit of the Lord is not just there to empower us to do, but also to empower us to obey, and to know and to follow. And more than ever in such times of darkness, we need to know the will

of God, how to walk in it, and how to understand His will and how to yield. For the Holy Spirit comes not for our enjoyment and self-edification, but to discern the way of the Lord, and to walk in the path of the Kingdom to the glory of the King of kings.

In the process of seeking and walking in discernment, wisdom and strength, we need to abide and to abide implies having faith and trust. Faith to know God is still in control, and to trust that God is not only able but will also do. More than ever we need to simply be still, and abide. We need to come before the Lord, draw strength from Him, and seek His will, His direction, His guidance and the courage to keep going. For it is not about us or the Self, but about the Kingdom, Therefore, we need to listen, and not always speak. For God knows the way, and so we need to draw close, and know His heart and know His will.

Jesus would often withdraw from the crowd. He would seek silence. Is this because he sought silence to speak to the Father? I would rather venture He sought silence to hear from the Father, to draw strength, to know the will of heaven and to pursue such a purpose. After all, the Lord knows our hearts, our intentions, our plans, our hopes and dreams. What He desires is to fellowship, and to show us who He truly is, and the path he wishes us to follow. For this, we need to listen, and we need to abide – in peace, in tranquillity, and in hope.

After all, God desires for us to walk in peace, but then we must walk in the will of the Lord. For in the will of the Lord is peace, understanding, and hope. But we need wisdom to know the will of the Father, and the path to walk. And yes, we need the strength to pursue it, and we need the wisdom to follow it, and we need the character to run the course.

Jesus knew the will of the Father. He spent time with the Father, alone, listening and praying. He knew the path led to the cross. He knew He had to sacrifice Himself. So He would withdraw, be silent,

and draw strength, and He would seek discernment, and the leading of the Spirit so that He may walk the path in ministry which led to Golgotha. Jesus as the Son of God sought only the will of the Father and of the Kingdom.

His character was refined, his resolve set and determined, for in the will of the Father he found the way and the truth. Even in the Garden of Gethsemane, before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed the following in Luke 22:42: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." Yes, Lord, it is not about our cup, but let Your will be done, always and always, for unto You belong all the dominion and power!

The Apostle Paul knew the will of the Lord. His path ended eventually in imprisonment. Along the way as he preached the Gospel to the Gentiles, he was ridiculed, mocked, beaten, and faced many dangers. Amid all the noise of the time, as he faced tribulation and spiritual resistance, he drew his strength from God, and he sought the wisdom, and the courage to keep running the course. And he did finish the race because he sought only the will of God. In the Presence of God, we must abide.

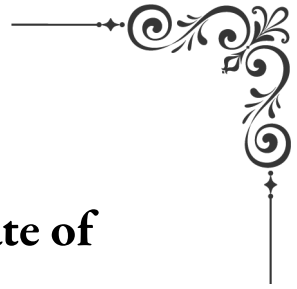
And so, as disciples, we must listen, rest, and trust in His divine guidance. Thus, it remains so important that we must continue to abide. We must rest in the Lord, and know His will. And we need to seek strength, wisdom and the courage to pursue it and to allow God to change our hearts, and fortify our character and strengthen our resolve.

For truly, in His Presence, we learn to die to the Self and to gain Christ, who is the hope of our Glory.

And so let us continue to pray the prayer of "Matthew 6: '10 Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our

debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

Let us continue to seek, to be still, and to know He is God. Let us continue to abide, to rest and to listen. And let us continue to follow His divine plan and purpose, yielding and abiding in His will.



Embracing a state of Shalom

EPHESIANS 2: 14 FOR he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

To walk in the rest of God, one needs to walk in the peace of God. Peace comes from being at rest with struggles. Peace only comes when walk in God's order, and order comes by following God's will. To walk in the rest of God means following God's will, to walk in His order which will lead to a state of peace.

Even though we may walk in the will of the Lord, it doesn't mean we will not come under attack from the devil or the world. Just like the Israelites were faced with many obstacles during their time in the Promised Land, our pursuit of holiness will never be smooth sailing.

Yet, we can obtain a greater degree of rest when we allow God to be in control, for then the battle belongs to Him. We can only overcome in the power of the Holy Spirit, but to overcome calls for submission and obedience. Thus, to walk ultimately in the rest of God is a result of our deep submission, obedience and faithfulness.

This will allow us to be in His will, to be in His order, for then the Lord's way shall be done. To walk in His rest, therefore comes back to walking in God's peace, because to be at rest speaks of peace. To be at peace is to be in a state of shalom and shalom is that wonderful state of rest.

It says in "Isaiah 9: 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

James 3: 17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

What is peace? It is a state of tranquillity, quiet, calm, freedom from civil disturbance, a state of security - being secure within a community, freedom from oppression, strife and disorder. It is being in harmony in personal relations. It is being untroubled by conflict, agitation or commotion.

On a deeper level, the most common word in the Bible translated into "peace" is a Hebrew word "shalom". First, the verbal form, shalem, means "to make whole" and derivatively "to bring to completion", "to complete", "to restore" and "to compensate". Second, the adjective form of the word, shalem, means "whole" or "full". Third, the noun form of the word, shalom, means, basically, "wholeness", "fullness", "totality", "completeness". Shalom, therefore, means wholeness in the sense that no part is missing, impaired or damaged. It means also that all parts are in harmony, order and unity. From this basic meaning, shalom is used comprehensively in a variety of ways depending on the context. For example, when shalom is used for physical condition, it means health in the sense that a body is in a state of wholeness. When shalom is used in the context of material conditions, it means prosperity, good harvest and fertility.

Jesus in His last discourse with His disciples before His crucifixion said the following: John 14: 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. Just three days later, at evening on the day of His resurrection, Jesus came and stood in the midst of His disciples and said to them, "Peace be with you." Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord (John 20:19, 20). What a Prince of peace! Death and the grave could not hold Him.

Considering peace translates us 'shalom', Jesus was therefore saying that we as His disciples will have the means and the ability as our spiritual inheritance to walk in the wholeness and fullness and completeness – which is the essence of Shalom – of His divinity. Praise the Lord! The Holy Spirit was sent so that we can walk in the fullness of the Lord, to His glory, and by this fullness, our spirit, soul and body can come into alignment with God.

Jesus said to us He gives us peace- therefore fullness in Him - and by walking in the Spirit we can be whole and complete in our faith and hope and love. He therefore said He is giving His Blood as a sacrifice of redemption and holy salvation so that we may obtain wholeness, fullness and completeness.

The Lord has always intended that His children will not just be redeemed by the Blood, by that they will have the means by the Spirit and Truth for their soul [heart/mind/will] to be made complete and whole as we allow God to transform, heal and deliver our soul from the bondage of the world and the devil.

God wants us to be free and delivered in spirit, soul and body. For it says the Truth shall set us free, and indeed Jesus has set our spirit free by the Blood, but we also need to heed and obey God's Word [Truth] and be led in the Spirit [Truth] so that we may be conformed in image and in character to God. When Jesus said peace unto 'you', He reminded us that His intention is for us to be

completely and fully delivered in spirit, soul and body, walking in His glory.

So many Christians today have come to the Lord and have been washed by the Blood of Jesus. They are now redeemed in the spirit. But what about our soul [will/emotions/thoughts]?

This gradual process requires the renewing of the mind, guarding our hearts and walking in holiness, not just living according to the dictates of the flesh. It requires breaking strongholds in the soul [incorrect thought patterns/incorrect habits/actions prompted on perceptions and knowledge learned and gained]. It requires acting upon the Word of God and not acting according to our will. It involves seeking His way and will, and taking every argument and false knowledge captive (2 Corinthians 10).

To be liberated in the spirit comes by the Blood, but to be liberated in the soul comes by adhering to the Word, acting upon it and applying it to one's life. When Jesus thus says peace I leave unto you, He was alluding to the divine truth that if we truly follow and obey Him and walk in a deep relationship with Him, then surely not only will our spirit be liberated, but also our soul through the cleansing and obedience unto the Word.

Ephesians 3: 14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

God desires to fill us with the fullness of Himself. But for this to happen, we must receive power through the Holy Spirit to have the ability to be conformed to the image of Christ. This is why peace

can only truly come to us once we are reborn in the Spirit (John 3) because only the Spirit of the Lord can lead us on the journey of delivering our soul from the bondage of the Self, the devil and the world.

Indeed, as we make a home for Christ in our hearts through faith and obedience, He begins to give us revelations of the greatness of His love, the width, length, depth, and height of His love which leads us to a greater state of peace.

Isaiah 48: 17 This is what the LORD says - your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. 18 If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your well-being like the waves of the sea."

In this scripture, peace is equated to "heeding" God's commandments. Heeding implies paying attention. God's commandments were given to guide mankind in ways of peace and doing what is right. All God's laws are given to benefit men and women, to direct them in the way of doing what is right and to protect them from sin and suffering. Paying attention to God's laws means following them, practising them, and being guided by them. When we follow God's instructions, our peace will be "like a river." This is God's promise to us.

What is the promise to those who do not pay attention to God and His instruction? It says in Isaiah 48 that there is no peace for the wicked (verse 22). Those who heed God's commands will have peace. Those who ignore Him will not have peace.

The Holy Spirit ultimately works in us to take us into a deeper relationship with God so that we are rooted, grounded and settled in His divine love and Presence. Thus, as we submit to the Lord by obeying the commands we come into greater fullness and wellness of the Lord.

Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?” Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. (John 14:21-23).

Our love for Jesus is proven by keeping His Word. The word “keep” means to guard with your eyes so that it is not lost. The ultimate way that we keep God’s word is by focusing our minds on His word to the point of obedience.

Obedience is one of the keys to walking in the fullness of the Lord – obedience implies a walk of holiness and purity. The word manifest in John 14 means to appear in person or to reveal. Jesus promises to reveal Himself to the one who keeps His word.

He also promises that He and the Father will come and make their home with the person who keeps His Word. God desires to make you His holy home and to fill you with all the fullness of Himself. Such an infilling and walking in the fullness of His Presence leads to greater peace – the same kind of deeper inner peace that David spoke about in Psalm 23.

Jesus is indeed the Lord of peace, coming to provide us with the means to walk in the fullness of God in spirit, soul and body, but we can forget how important it is to have peace in one’s life. The importance is thus only made clear when we consider peace is not just about rest, but about being complete, whole and fulfilled. It applies being healed and delivered in all facets of life so that one is free of torment, guilt, fear and anxiety.

If we have no peace [shalom], we are therefore not complete, whole or even walking in the fullness of God. Remember, we are only whole, complete and walking in His fullness once our soul is liberated from strongholds, our minds are renewed and we live according to His will. Otherwise, we are not walking in His peace.

IF WE REMAIN ONLY DELIVERED IN THE SPIRIT, WE WALK IN REDEMPTION, BUT NOT IN SHALOM.

If we are not in peace, then the devil still has grounds to attack us, and this is where he comes with strife, chaos, disorder, panic, anxiety, fear, uncertainty and confusion to ensure we do not walk in the wholeness, fullness and completeness of God.

Satan made sure Adam and Eve lost that completeness and wholeness when he tempted them in the Garden. They were left naked by their disobedience and suddenly were overcome with guilt and shame. Remember, obedience is critical to attain the peace that Jesus wishes us to obtain. How easily can Satan also not tempt us by turning our focus away from God and focusing on the world?

And once we step onto these grounds of fear and anxiety, we encounter the devil at his trickiest self, for the devil loves to cause us to walk in confusion, disunity and chaos. He wants us to doubt, to be uncertain and to be confused. He does not want us to walk with God in fullness.

THE DEVIL DOES NOT WANT US TO EXPERIENCE A STATE OF 'SHALOM'.

The devil's purpose is thus to produce a double-minded fearful Christian who is unsure of God and His Word, and thus he comes to destroy the Lord's peace in our lives.

Satan can only achieve this by getting us to walk outside the will, way and truth of God, and leading us astray so that we become carnal-minded, instead of Spirit-minded.

Fear breeds doubt, and doubt eventually nibbles and gnaws at our faith. Faith without action is dead, and so the devil seeks to disarm the Christian's faith through fear, anxiety and disobedience. The devil does not want Christians to walk in faith, or in certainty or hope, for then they are too focused upon God and His promises.

A Christian who walks in peace [shalom] trusts and has faith in God, and does not allow himself or herself to become discouraged

or disillusioned by circumstances or situations or the schemes of the devil. A peaceful Christian seeks to become more like God, moving from glory to glory.

A Christian who walks in peace [shalom] has found his or her place upon the true rock of Jesus and does not allow the devil or the world to instil doubt or fear into their lives.

Peace means we are secure in our faith and we have hope in Christ. Where there is no peace, we forget at times our place in Jesus. It says in Romans 5: New International Version (NIV): Peace and Hope: 1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Faith breeds peace. Peace leads to hope in the glory of God. Peace enables us to stand in times of trouble, but we need such times to learn perseverance, build character and lead a life of hope.

2 Peter 1: 3 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and

unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. 10 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Lord has indeed empowered us to lead a life of victory. But victory comes when we draw closer to God and be conformed to His image. And so it says, "For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love."

If we do this, thus grow in our relationship with God, we will not become ineffective and unproductive in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and this knowledge and hope and character are needed in our life to confirm our calling and election so that we do not stumble for us to receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Those who do not stumble, therefore walk in the peace of the Lord.

So how would the devil ensure we stumble? By making sure we do not grow in faith, goodness, knowledge; self-control, perseverance, godliness, mutual affection and love. He doesn't want us to produce perseverance or character to lead a life of faith and hope.

A child of God who grows in the knowledge and hope and character of the Lord, and whose election and calling is sure, will hardly stumble or fall. They remain at 'peace' and; therefore endure a "Shalom" state of existence.

So what does the devil do? He wants us to become fearful, uncertain and doubtful. He wants us to drift away from Him and to walk not in the knowledge, love, hope, self-control or virtue of the Lord. And he does this by causing us to fear, and unholy fear is the enemy of peace.

2 Peter 1 is supported in “James 1: 2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. 6 But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. 7 That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. 8 Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.”

James says that a lack of faith comes when we fail to allow God to bring us into spiritual maturity, which comes through perseverance so that one's character is formed according to the divine design of Jesus. And a Christian without faith indeed becomes unstable, uncertain and full of doubt. Such an unstable spiritual state produces fear, a drawing away from the Lord, eventually leaving us vulnerable to live not in the fullness of God but in the brokenness of the Self.

Thus, an unstable Christian walks not in the peace of God. Read also “Ephesians 6: 11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their

deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

As in James 1, Paul speaks about the immature Christian who will grow into the fullness of Christ so that we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

If we want to guard against unhealthy fear and doubt, we need to grow into the fullness of God – thus a maturity of character – so that we stand firm in our hope and faith. This will lead to a Christian who is at peace and who lives with certainty, therefore leading a life in Spirit and Truth.

A peaceful Christian is certain and is led by the Spirit.

Romans 8: 1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. 7 The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. 8 Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. 9 You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed

the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you. 12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. 14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs —heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

For the devil to ensure we walk not in peace which comes through a life in the Spirit, he will constantly tempt us to walk in the flesh until we are so carnal-minded that we become unstable in our hope and faith. A carnal Christian in the end will be susceptible to spiritual deceptions and suggestions and thus will fail to walk in the peace of God. Therefore, a restless and immature Christian remains fearful and can easily fall for the ways of the flesh and the world.

Galatians 5: 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Galatians 5 illustrates how important peace is, for with peace comes love, joy, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. This will prevent us from becoming conceited, provoking and envious. Such virtues ground us and lead to maturity and a life of peace.

1 Timothy 6: 3 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, 4 they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions 5 and constant friction between people of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

Paul argues that those who walk not in the ways of the Lord and His Truth can easily be deceived to walk in a different instruction, and by that spiritual condition sows discord, causing strife and envy. The devil after all wants to cause disunity and discord in the church, and he can only do so when we become fearful, doubtful, uncertain and confused in our relationship with God, in relation to His Truth and Spirit. So the devil attacks our levels of inner peace.

Matthew 6: Treasures in Heaven: 19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are health, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! 24 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. Do Not Worry 25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat

or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? 28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

The devil loves to shift our focus to earthly desires and hopes and wants. He will use his means of deception and spiritual attacks to dislodge a Christian from the rock of Jesus causing him to wander down pathways and byways that take him further away from the Lord.

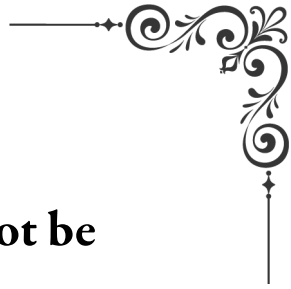
Romans 1: 28 Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. 29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. 32 Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such

things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Romans 16: 17 I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. 18 For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. 19 Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. 20 The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”

Paul warns in his letters in the Book of Romans about the need to always stand firm in the Truth of the Lord, and to be careful of deception and false teachers and teachings.

Again, it is about perseverance, keeping faithful to God and overcoming in the might of the Spirit. And those who persevere and who stay faithful and who walk by the Spirit and by Truth will walk in peace, and truly the God of peace will soon crush Satan under our feet.



Let our hearts not be troubled

AS CHILDREN OF GOD, have we not allowed our hearts to become troubled? Have we not allowed anxiety and fear to overcome us? Have we not allowed such trouble to blind us to the glory of the Lord, to His majesty, His greatness, His goodness and His mercy? My children, do not let your hearts be troubled says the Lord.

Yes, there are so many storms in this life, so much heartache, betrayal, struggles and battles, **BUT DO NOT LET YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED SAYS THE LORD OF HOSTS.**

John 14 (AMP): 26 “Do not let your heart be troubled (afraid, cowardly). Believe [confidently] in God and trust in Him, [have faith, hold on to it, rely on it, keep going and] believe also in Me. 27 Peace I leave with you; My [perfect] peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. [Let My perfect peace calm you in every circumstance and give you courage and strength for every challenge.]

The Lord also says in “John 16:33: I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace. In the world you have tribulation and distress and suffering, but be courageous [be confident, be undaunted, be filled with joy]; I have overcome the world.” [My conquest is accomplished, My victory abiding.]”

Yes, in this world we will have trouble – it will come in all shapes, sizes and forms. Throughout the entire Scriptures all the servants of

the Lord endured trouble. Just ask Moses, or Daniel, or David, or the Apostle Paul. Trouble impacts us personally, emotionally, spiritually and psychologically. The troubles wish to break us, shatter us, destroy us, but the Lord cries DO NOT LET YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED!

For surely God does not slumber, and He is a jealous God, and He is an all-consuming fire and His eyes are upon those who seek Him and serve Him. He is our Refuge, our Hope and our Strength. Psalm 11: For the Lord is [absolutely] righteous, He loves righteousness (virtue, morality, justice); the upright shall see His face.

Yes, we WILL have trouble but the Lord says to His children LET NOT YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED. Why? Because He is the Lord – omnipotent, all-powerful, and He loves His children. He is the Lord of Israel. He is the Great I AM. He is our Peace, our Hope, our Strength.

Deuteronomy 32: 3 I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! 4 He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

When we turn our gaze away from our troubles, and when we behold Him in all His holiness and splendour, we see the author and finisher of our faith. We then behold the majesty and the glory, we see the resurrection and the life, and we bow before the Rose of Sharon, the Lilly of the Valley, the Lion of Judah and the Lamb who is worthy to open the seals.

We behold the truth and the power, and we know, yes we know, He is God and He is Lord! With our eyes upon Jesus, this world fades, our past and future fades, for only the here and now is where we long to live and breathe. With our eyes upon Jesus, we see His plans, His ways, His perfection and His beauty. With our eyes upon Jesus, we know in our hearts that His grace and mercy is new every

morning. Truly, His grace is sufficient for us. His grace makes us strong when we are weak and by His love we are forgiven and strengthened to reign with Him.

With our eyes upon Jesus, there is peace, there is hope, there is comfort, there is joy and there is the cry of the heart just to worship and serve. All the shackles and burdens shatter.

All that remains is His perfect and pleasing will. Oh, let us lay down our ways and follow completely His will! Oh, with our eyes upon Jesus, there is only one desire and only longing: to worship Him and to glorify Him. There is the only desire to live and please Him! Oh, by the power of His love, by the power of His grace, by the power of His touch, we bow the knee, our hearts melt, and we know that He is God and we are but man!

With our eyes upon Jesus, everything in this world pales in comparison and fades away. At His feet, we lay down our crowns, we lay down our plans, our ways, our deeds and our pride and we surrender. We lay down our troubles. At the feet of God, our longing is stilled, our thirst and hunger quenched and we can be at peace. O, the Lord says be still and know that He is God.

Let us always remember we are God's children, His sons and daughters of faith. Let us remember that we are filled with the resurrection power of Jesus, working through and in the Holy Spirit, that we are able to do all that God has called us to do, that we are victorious, alive, free, brought into light, bought by the precious Blood, cleansed, consecrated, sanctified, adopted, anointed, called and blessed.

His Spirit moves us to greater heights and destinies. We are magnificent, not yet perfect, not yet pure, but broken in humility, filled with praise, filled with a new song for the Lord, filled with great wisdom and knowledge, all to the glory of the Lord! We shall not be condemned, we shall not be ridiculed, we shall not be pushed back and we shall not be made to feel weak in error.

Indeed, let us be reminded of Hebrews 6: 19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. We can be assured and be at peace for the living Lord will forever be our life anchor – immovable, infallible, incorruptible and always faithful! What a hope and what a blessing to know that God, the defender of Israel and the defender of His children, is indeed with us and not against us (Romans 8:31), and that in the storms and in the still waters, He remains our anchor that grounds us and that keeps us steady and who will keep us on course. Let us praise the Lord and be thankful in this day, lifting up our voices in psalms and hymns, for Jesus died and rose from the grave, tearing the veil before the Holy of Holies so that we the redeemed by His blood are saved, and that we have access to the throne room of God and that this Mighty God truly and undoubtedly anchors us.

No matter the storms, no matter the winds of life, no matter the lashing rains of trouble and strife, no matter the heat of the sun, God anchors us, God keeps us from sinking and God keeps us from being shattered against the rocks of our hardships. He is our Rock and the Fortress for the disciple.

When God is our rock and our fortress, when He is our anchor and when He is our hope, then the challenges, the obstacles, the fears and the worry of this life pale. God is our refuge, and under His wing we take shelter (Psalm 91) and we can know that nothing will separate us from His love (Romans 8:37-39). For indeed, with God as our rock and our anchor, we can rejoice with David when he said in Psalm 23: 6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Let us cast our eyes on Him. Let us trust. And let fear be gone. Let the high praises be on our lips as we give Him all the Glory. Trouble will come but God is with us! Yes, He is with us! The

mountains may quake and the seas may roar and it may seem all will fall apart, but God will sustain us, hold us upright, and He will defend us. He was with His servants in the land of Israel, and He will surely be with us. Let not your hearts be troubled! Find your peace in the Lord. Cast away anxiety and fear and know He is God, for our struggles are not with flesh and blood, but with spiritual rulers, and surely God is greater for all domino belongs unto Him!

Let us stand upon Psalm 37 which says, “39 But the salvation of the righteous is from the Lord; He is their refuge and stronghold in the time of trouble.”



An unshakable faith leads to an unshakable peace

LET US BE REMINDED of the word Shalom, and then also how God is calling for a people with an unshakable faith. For Shalom and such faith is connected. For the truth is, when we have an unshakable faith in an almighty God then we will have an unshakable peace! It is a peace that surpasses all understanding.

Colossians 3:15 states: “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts”. This means God must have complete control and dominion over your life. This is very important.

The Word of God also states we walk by faith and not by sight. It is well known what we see or hear determines our reality, and it determines our emotional reaction. But God is calling for faith in a mighty God that surpasses what we see or hear in the natural, and then walk by the supernatural reality and truth of God.

So, what rules your heart today? Do you walk by the faith of Hebrews 11? Do we walk by the faith where we trust in the impossible and know we serve a God of the impossible? God is truly in control of our very being, we shall not fear, and we shall walk by unshakable peace!

Philippians 4:7 states “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”. So if we let God rule and have dominion, as we walk by unshakable faith and trust, then our minds and hearts will be

guarded against all fear, trouble and anxiety! And we shall know peace, thus Shalom, and we shall be whole and rest.

God, may we walk in Your unshakable peace with an unshakable faith!



Fearing and loving God

A DILEMMA FOR CHRISTIANS today is to reconcile themselves to either fearing or loving God. It seems to be a paradox – how can we fear Him and love Him at the same time?

The truth is that the journey towards loving and understanding God's love begins by fearing Him in a loving and respectful way. It says in "Revelation 1: 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

Let us then examine this phenomenon – the alpha of our spiritual journey is to fear Him – therefore to respect and to be conscious of His holiness and purity – and the omega is to love Him unquestioningly.

And just as God is the alpha and omega – therefore He exists as the beginning and the end continuously – just so is our journey towards spiritual maturity which leads to a point where we both fear and love God continuously, with both interwoven and without a discernible beginning or end.

To fear and to love Him becomes to us a natural state of our spiritual condition, for this becomes intertwined and interwoven. Think of a circle – there is no beginning and no end. Just so our spiritual state of being should be like a circle with God as the Alpha and the Omega – with the fear being the beginning and the love being the end- always flowing, always moving, never starting and never stopping.

And the circle speaks of a ring and a ring speaks of a wedding – just so under the New Covenant we are wedded to the Lord, and so His desire is for us to grow so close to Him so that our spiritual being is one of constantly flowing with Him. We need to reach that point where we love Him and fear Him at the same time, all the time – so then, it is required of us to lovingly fear Him and fearfully love Him!

It says in “Job 28: 28 And he said to the human race, “The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.”

Based on this Scripture, to fear the Lord and to love Him shouldn't be a dilemma, once we comprehend that even though the fear of the Lord may be the beginning of wisdom, the end journey of wisdom is the understanding and application of love.

So we learn to love through the cultivation of the fear of God, We may struggle to comprehend this, but the reason is that through a healthy fear we learn to cultivate a God-consciousness, and by such an effort we draw closer to God, and so we learn more of Him, more of His heart and ultimately more of His love.

And as we fear the Lord, we walk in holiness and purity, we walk in His Spirit and so we gradually learn what delights Him, what love is, how to walk in love and at last to how to administer the walk of love to others.

Jesus should be our foundation and the capstone of our spiritual walk. This is our first and greatest priority and challenge - to get this foundation right. Secondly, we need to BUILT upon this foundation, meaning we need to spiritually mature and grow as disciples of God.

And through maturity comes loving and fearing the Lord at the same time, for indeed, if we fear Him, we shall obey Him, yet we obey also because of love. It is also true that many just serve God for what they can get out of it, or in the hope of not going to hell, but we should serve and follow God because we love Him, respect Him, adore Him and want to abide in Him.

And so, once we have our foundation secure, the Lord says then we need to address our next biggest challenge - learning to grow through submission and obedience unto the Lord in order to walk in faith, to walk in the fear of the Lord and to walk in the love of the Lord. For this is vital to understand - we need to love the Lord, we need to fear Him and we need to have faith in Him.

But this doesn't happen overnight - this is a process of drawing closer to Him, denying the self, laying down our crowns and following Him.

We need to love Him above all else and then love this broken world. How we need to fear and respect the Lord and His Truth and His Commandments (something which is hardly being preached about anymore).

This will then spark life. For to obey the Lord is about walking in His will, and there is life in His will. And obedience comes through fearing Him, for if we fear Him not we walk in rebellion and apostasy, which sparks death.

The Lord said in John 14:23 that those who love Him will obey Him. Obedience comes through honour and respect, therefore if we love Him we shall also honour Him, which is to reverentially fear Him.

How we need to have faith in His provision, in His Presence and in His Word. We must trust and have faith in the supernatural, in the impossible and the wondrous. Indeed, to FEAR THE LORD MAY BE THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM, BUT THE LOVE THE LORD IS THE END OF WISDOM.

And so, to fear and love the Lord is intertwined and inseparable. Once we fear and love the Lord, we will know the Lord, know our place in the Lord, and so walk in faith and hope. Thus, let us then begin to seek the Lord so that we may walk in love, fear and faith. Amen

The 10 Commandments are all about love. The first four commandments deal with our relationship with God, but the other six deal with our relationship with our fellow man.

All of these six commandments speak about how we ought to love one another instead of hurting each other. They deal with respect and compassion. They speak of how to live in peace and with love with our fellow man by not stealing, by not murdering, by not coveting, by not slandering and bringing someone's name into disrepute. In the eyes of God that means walking in love.

Yet, for thousands of years the love which should exist among mankind has been shattered, resulting in war, conflict, violence, bloodshed, murder, hate and abuse, in essence, rebelling against the 10 Commandments. Why? Because we have not followed the fundamentals of the Holy commandments! We have therefore not feared the Lord!

We have not learned to respect the importance of God's laws, His holiness and purity, and we have failed to live for one another in Spirit and Truth, rather choosing to live for the Self. No wonder there is so much death in the world in the form of anarchy, violence, pestilence and lawlessness. We have failed to look after each other, to respect each other and to respect life because we no longer fear God!

If we do not respect and fear God's laws and commandments, then we are not going to follow them and so it is not surprising that mankind has not adhered to the basic principles of taking care of the poor, the needy, the widows and the orphans. Without the fear of God which teaches us about His pure laws and commandments, how then are we going to love Him and others?

God is the alpha and the omega – He is the beginning and the end. The beginning is to fear Him, and then the end of the journey is to know Love and to walk in Love. We cannot love without learning to respect and fear the Lord Almighty.

And so, placed between the Alpha and the Omega, we begin our journey towards cultivating a God-consciousness. We have to learn, as we travel this path what it means to guard against the folly of spiritual deception, of the ways of the world, or the reality and truth of His presence and of the value of the Gospel in order for us to become mature Christians walking in the Omega of our faith which is love.

The two greatest commandments after all are to love the Lord and secondly to love our fellow man. We cannot learn to love and to understand the importance of love until we cultivate a healthy understanding and appreciation of divine holiness and purity which comes from walking in reverential fear of the Lord.

Indeed, love is our hope, our goal and our sure destiny as believers. If we are obedient, we will learn to love and walk in love. In the meantime, we fear now, because none of us is yet without sin or perfect in love.

For it says in 1 John 4:17-18 Love will come to its perfection in us when we can face the Day of Judgment without fear; because even in this world we become as he is. In love, there can be no fear, but fear is driven out by perfect love: because to fear is to expect punishment, and anyone who is afraid is still imperfect in love.

Yet, these days we have failed to cultivate a God-consciousness through a reverential and holy fear of the Lord.

There is, however, no greater argument for the fear of the Lord than as found in "Isaiah 11 (Amplified Bible): 1 And there shall come forth a Shoot out of the stock of Jesse [David's father], and a Branch out of his roots shall grow and bear fruit. 2And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the reverential and obedient fear of the Lord-3And shall make Him of quick understanding, and His delight shall be in the reverential and obedient fear of the Lord."

Isaiah 11 speaks of the coming of Jesus who will be empowered by the Spirit of the Lord. But it was prophesied that Jesus, with the indwelling of the Spirit, will delight in the fear of the Lord. How incredibly! If the Son of God and the Holy Spirit delights in the purity and holiness of God the Father then why shouldn't we then fear God too? Why shouldn't we also, like Jesus, delight in the fear of God?

We read in Psalm 111:10 (NEB) The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and they who live by it grow in understanding... and also in Proverb 9:10: The first step to wisdom is the fear of the Lord, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Job 1: 8And the Lord said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who reverently fears God and abstains from and shuns evil because it is wrong]? Job was seen as a blameless and upright man, and he surely walked in God's fear to the point of cultivating a God-conscious.

Jeremiah 5:22 (NIV): "Should you not fear me?" declares the Lord. "Should you not tremble in my presence?"

The question remains, why is it that we will not accept the fear of God? Why do we try to "explain away" the fear of God in Scripture? What is it in our unconscious minds that creep up when the Spirit leads us into the revelation of the fear of God? Is it our pride, our arrogance, our stubbornness or simply our willingness to live for the Self and not for God?

It says in Deuteronomy 10 verse 12: And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

2 Chronicles 19:7 Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

Psalms 19:9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

Indeed, it is the beginning of wisdom to fear the Lord. Wisdom after all guides us on our path. Wisdom leads us in God's will and wisdom leads us to follow His Word and Truth. How can we know how to live, act, behave and speak without wisdom? Without wisdom how can we possibly live a life in the image of God? Solomon after all asked for wisdom from God and then the rest was added!

We need wisdom to deal with our finances, with our work, with our personal lives and with our ministry. We need wisdom from God in all that we do. But how can we walk in the wisdom of God if we are not prepared to take the first step of fearing the Lord? To be wise is to fear the Lord, and to be wise is to love the Lord and to obey His great commandments. To be wise means following in His footsteps and speaking His truth.

True wisdom is the cultivation of the alpha and omega and the journey in between – to be wise indeed is to fear and to love the Lord. Listen to Solomon's approach to wisdom in "Ecclesiastes 9: 13 I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me: 14 There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siege works against it. 15 Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man. 16 So I said, "Wisdom is better than strength." But the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded. 17 The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools. 18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good."

Ecclesiastes 10 says, “1 As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor. 2 The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left. 3 Even as fools walk along the road, they lack sense.”

In fact, the great news is that the Love of God reflected through Jesus Christ in the New Testament Scriptures has the power to cast out unholy and impure fear and set us free! Such an unholy fear is settled in the Self, and the Self breaks down God-consciousness and a deep desire to see God’s Kingdom manifested in every weary heart and soul.

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love (1 John 4:18).

It says in “1 John 4:7-12: Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). “Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (Jesus to His disciples in John 15:12-13).

However, we need to remain in Christ who is perfect love so that by that love we may know true wisdom and true reverence for His holiness.

Colossians 3 (NIV): 1Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Once we understand and accept that fear is the beginning and love the end of wisdom, then we can abide in the special appreciation of co-existing truths—the “Fear of God” and the “Love of God.”

It says in “Psalm 118:4 Let those who fear the Lord say: “His love endures forever”.

The Lord also delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love (Psalm 147:11).

Read “Revelation 14:7 He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water”

You see, we can only appreciate the depth of God’s love, spelt out 1 Corinthians 13 when we know the depth and the beauty and the majesty of God, and such a journey begins with the fear of God.

And indeed, to live in the fear of the Lord is truly a blessing. He desires and causes our good, for He is the source of all good. Unlike the world, He is without partiality and pure in His love and righteousness toward us. As Christians, we follow God’s Word and are sensitive to the leadings of God’s Holy Spirit. In this, we remain in the fear of the Lord.

For it says in “Psalm 25:12 Who, then, are those who fear the Lord? He will instruct them in the ways they should choose. 13 They will spend their days in prosperity, their descendants will inherit the land. 14 The Lord confides in those who fear him; he makes his covenant known to them.”

In other words, those who fear the Lord shall be shown the path that he should choose, and he shall enjoy lasting prosperity, and his children after him shall inherit the land. This is life!

It says in "Proverbs 14:26-27 (NIV): He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death."

If we, however, fear anything other than God, we are deceived. God is the only one in the universe worthy of fear. Satan, of course, would disagree and has made an industry out of generating pseudo fear. To be sure, Satan is truly a terrifying master to those under his care, but those "in Christ" have been purchased from his mastery and need not fear him any longer.

Isaiah 8:12-13 (NIV) ...Do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread.

Mathew 10:28 (NIV) [Jesus] "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

In Scripture and experience, the fear of God is also closely linked to the revelation of His sovereignty. Job 23:13-16 (NIV) "But he stands alone, and who can oppose him? He does whatever he pleases. He carries out his decree against me, and many such plans he still has in store. That is why I am terrified before him; when I think of all this, I fear him. God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me."

To fear God is pure and holy, for through that process we learn to love. And how else could we but not fear a God of love, whose love will never fail us, who is faithful, just and forgiving?

It is time that the Church becomes a place again where our relationship with God is not based upon a simple belief or a doctrine or on theology; it is God's burning presence in our lives. It is time for us to return to God who is mighty, holy and pure.

It is time that we act upon “Colossians 3: 12 Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

In our own capacity, we do not have the means to love as God desires, yet we can only do so when we abide in His love, which is one of the fruits of the Spirit (note, not our spirit). We need to truly cloth ourselves with love by clothing ourselves in His Presence, and we draw closer to His Glory by fearing and revering our Lord.



Cultivating a God-consciousness

TO ILLUSTRATE GOD'S desire to cultivate a God-consciousness, which will spark a bringing desire to love and fear Him, we return to the Old Testament laws and customs that have often been frowned upon, for they seem at times illogical, irrational and at times contradict common sense.

One such case is found in 1 Kings 6 where we read of King Solomon building the temple. In verse 7 it reads: "In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built."

In today's times, we can only frown at such a business practice. The reason why no hammer or chisel could be used was that it was deemed at the time that such practices resembled those of the pagan nations. In Exodus 20:25 we read: If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it.

When they were building the temple, the stones had to be cut at the quarry and not at the temple, lest they defile the stones and so defile the temple by engaging in pagan worship.

Should we fast forward to the year 2010 our initial reaction would be to scoff at such actions, wondering why on earth the Israelites were so inundated with such strict rules and regulations.

But with the Lord, nothing is minor or trivial. Everything the Lord does; in our lives, in society and in the world is for a very good reason. As we understand from the old customs, the law of not defiling a stone was so that the Israelites did not mimic pagan practices. What was the Lord therefore doing?

He was in His wisdom making the people conscious that there is a difference between right and wrong, between holy and unholy, between impure and pure.

And yes, the Lord may have used laws that seem trivial to us, but the Israelites became a people who were extremely conscious that God is a holy God and He alone should be served, even if it was brought about by reminding them of staying away from pagan practices in the way they prepared the stones.

God was therefore instilling a holy conscience, implying He was making them aware through their daily actions and by their behaviour so that they would be mindful of the God they serve and that He is a holy God and indeed, that it is right and wrong, that there is God's ways and then there are also the impure ways of the world.

We can only imagine how, through such a 'trivial' matter as cutting stones, the Israelites became aware [conscious] that they needed to adopt a holy conscience. Every time they took a stone from the quarry and laid a tool to it at the quarry and not the temple, they were reminded that they served the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And so when they used the hammer or chisel or an iron tool they were reminded that they were called to be set apart, to be holy and not to follow in the ways of the pagans.

As we look at our modern society set-up, how conscious are we really of the God whom we serve? How conscious are we regarding matters of what is right and wrong, between what is holy and unholy, and between what is pure and impure and what is immoral and moral?

For this reason, because we are no longer truly conscious of God, we no longer fear Him; therefore we walk in sin and rebellion. Disobedience is, therefore, no loving God.

When we arise in the morning and throughout the day, are we truly adopting a holy conscience, keeping our minds on heavenly things? How conscious are we of God's presence? How conscious are we of God's Spirit? How conscientious are we regarding God's word, His truth and His ways?

We may not be living under the law of cutting stones the proper way, but in whatever we do, whatever we say, whatever we see, is there a residing awareness inside of us fuelling a holy conscience? The Lord has called us, His children, just like He called the Israelites, to be set apart as a holy people and priesthood of followers.

For it says in 1 Peter 2:4-6: As you come to him, the living Stone - rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him - you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

We can see in the writing of Peter in the New Testament of how, thousands of years ago, the Lord taught the Israelites the importance of being holy and pure by keeping the stones undefiled.

Back then, even though they may not have known it, the Lord was pointing to a day when Jesus, the true Living Stone, undefiled and pure, will come and set us free from sin, so that we may also become living stones fitted together to form the Church of the Lord on earth.

Cultivating a God-consciousness by adopting a holy conscience helps us also to be vigilant against rebellion, idolatry, and becoming slaves of an unholy fear. When we walk in the power of God, we discern a false sense of security and an unholy spirit of fear.

For it is these three powers that lull the children of the Lord into a false sense of security, creating the illusion that everything is right or it causes extreme bondage or extreme spiritual blindness, deafness and muteness. It breaks down spiritual vision and purpose, performing a function of ensnaring the person into slavery of darkness. This three-stranded cord is rather difficult to break, yet we have to attack it with prayer, persistence in truth and walking in a righteous spirit.

God has always made it clear in Deuteronomy 28 that we have a choice between choosing life [God consciousness/holiness/purity] and death [worldly consciousness/impurity/immorality]. 1IF YOU will listen diligently to the voice of the Lord your God, being watchful to do all His commandments which I command you this day, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. 2And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you if you heed the voice of the Lord your God... 15But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God, being watchful to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command you this day, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you:

It has always been made clear – there is a choice. If we choose God, then blessings will come upon us and will overtake us. This speaks of favour and blessings. When we follow God fully, then blessings will overtake us! But behold, when we choose not to follow God's perfect will and way, then surely shall curses come upon us and overtake us.

God is a Sovereign Lord and we should stand in awe and fear of His divinity. And by that Sovereignty, He has shown us the path – choose Him then there will be favour and blessing. Choose Him not, then we shall experience misfortune.

And such misfortune is not by God's design but is simply an outcome and a manifestation of what happens when one does not follow God or heed His instructions. If we become intoxicated, and

then drive a car and get into an accident, are we cursed by God? God had told us through His Word not to become drunk with wine but only the Spirit. So the accident is a result of our carnal nature having its own way. Indeed, there may be things in life that don't make sense, but in general, most things make sense in terms of it choices and actions that we take that are contrary to God's instructions and commandments.

To walk in God's fear we become conscious of His instructions and commandments, seeking Him above all – if we do so, then our path is set and marked by His hand. How else but to be blessed if we follow Him and allow Him to lead and guide us in all things!

That is after all the right way and even the better way of doing things. If we do it our way, then that is rebellion and even stupidity, resulting in bad decisions and actions that benefit and prosper us not.

God has always presented man with the choice to serve Him or not. Since the beginning of time, He presented us with this choice, to either follow a righteous God or to follow the depravity of the cursed.

The Law of Moses was exclusive, yet under the covenant of grace, both Jew and Gentile have no more excuses. We can either continue to sin, ignoring God's truth, or we can choose life. You may now be wondering what Deuteronomy 28 has to do with us today since we are not living under the Mosaic Law.

Exodus 19:5-6 says: Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

The Israelites were therefore seen as a holy priesthood. Remember that we are also, by the Blood of Christ, built up to be a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:9-10). Our priesthood is spiritual, as are all special messengers of the gospel, for Jesus, who fulfilled the

Mosaic Law, has commissioned us to go into the world and preach the good news.

Therefore, just as God had placed before His holy priesthood the choice of life and death many thousands of years ago, He still places before His holy priesthood of today (us) the choice of living under the curse or His blessings.

In our days and times, we have to realize that the Lord has called us to walk in the fear of the Lord, which is nothing more than cultivating a God-consciousness.

We are called to be living stones, conscious of God's forgiveness and mercy, and may we remain aware that we are called to bring Him honour by adopting a holy conscience – and so we will be the light and the salt of the world so in need of God's love.

May we embark upon the journey of the Alpha and the Omega, learning to fear and to love the Lord by abiding in Him and Him in us. Then we shall walk in victory by His grace.



Strengthen the Church in unity

IT SAYS IN “ACTS 15: 32 Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words.” And also in the same chapter: “40 but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.”

To strengthen implies moving from a state of weakness to a state of strength. And I believe the church is finding itself in a state of weakness. The church can only be strong when it abides in the strength of God, thus moving in the power of the Holy Spirit. It can only be strong when moving in the conviction and assurance of the Gospel, in faith, in hope and in trust, which is only possible when surrendered, yielded and submitted completely and utterly to God.

The church has become weak not because God is weak but because the church has moved from a place of strength, into a place of doubt, fear and uncertainty. It has gradually and subsequently moved out of the position of operating in the Spirit to operate more in the flesh (Matthew 26:41: watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak); from a position of grace to a position of legalism; and from a position of truth to a position of deception.

We have moved from a position of victory to a place of defeat, yet such defeat rests in our soul. Reality is that in Christ we are more than conquerors!

Romans 8:26 declares that the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. Paul also wrote in “Colossians 1: 9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.”

The Church can only be strong when operating in the manifested strength of God, thus the inner working of the Spirit and the resurrected power of God. Weakness is a result of man’s endeavours and efforts, driven by the Self thus the own spirit, seeks to transplant the work of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, this is when man seeks to become ruler of the harvest instead of worshipping and serving the Lord of the Harvest!

The church has become weakened because of division driven by man-made agendas, programmes, ideas, traditions and religion. It has become weakened by the growth of false doctrines, prophecies, and fables pretending to be true. It has become weakened because men have become lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God and they having a form of godliness but denying its power (2 Timothy 3). The church has become weak because it has allowed for doctrines of demons to slip in (1 Timothy 4:1),

Yes, the church has become weakened because of the dreamers that defile the flesh, reject authority, who are spots at the love feasts, clouds without water, raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own

shame and thus wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever (Book of Jude).

Paul wrote in “2 Timothy 4:17: But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.” We read in Luke 43 of Jesus: “Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.” Yes, Jesus and Paul needed to be strengthened, and more than ever I believe the Church needs to be strengthened and this can only happen by preaching and teaching the truth, thus edifying, uplifting, encouraging and exhorting in the power of God. This is a time for real, authentic, genuine and sincere prophetic and apostolic guidance, and for Church to be strengthened in the fear and faith of God again. This is a time for the Church to arise from her slumber and to be strengthened to arise from the coma to become the bearer of Christ’ light and truth.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:16 as a prayer “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.” Jesus said to Simon, also known as Peter in “Luke 22: 32 But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” Simon betrayed Jesus three times, but he was restored in ministry when the resurrected Jesus met him on the shore. And the mandate to Peter was to strengthen his brethren.

Indeed, I believe this is a critical time to strengthen the brethren as worshippers in Spirit and truth. This is a critical time to counter the darkness with the true light of God, to continue uplifting, so that the Church may know the reality of Isaiah 40 which says: “Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing.”

In such revelation of God and His might and glory, truly the following shall manifest: 31 But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

May the Church be strengthened in unity, and such unity comes from fellowship. This is demonstrated in “Acts 2: 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

Acts 2 is a powerful demonstration of a church living in victory, of a church abiding in a place of strength and hope. Victory flowed from unity, for they had all things in common. The Body of Christ can only be strong when united in purpose, in conviction and intent.

Paul writes in “Ephesians 4: 1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

Psalm 133:1 says “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

Unity is the key to a victorious Church and for believers to lead a victorious life. In unity, we stand our ground against the worldly

onslaughts and demonic attacks. Yet these days the Church is divided, and a house divided against itself cannot stand (Matthew 12:22-28).

The church is struggling to stand as admonished by Paul in Ephesians 6 because of division. Yet such division was not really seen among the early disciples to the extent of what we witness these days. Sure, there were debates around the Law and the New Covenant, but today the Church is terribly divided and not moving into a common position of strength and victory. We are divided on so many social issues as well, not just doctrine.

Again take note that in Acts 2 the Lord added to the church those who were being saved because they were walking in unity!

The saying goes a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. The church at the moment is not strong because the devil has exposed so many weak links, which results from believers seeking after their own agendas, chasing earthly desires, dreams and treasures.

We are divided because some are truly Christ-focused and some are focussed more on the Self. Yet unity is of utmost importance for victory as demonstrated in “Acts 4 (following continuing persecution against the disciples) 24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: “Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: ‘Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? 26 The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.’ 27 “For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be

done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.” 31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”

May we strive for unity, which comes from first being united with God. For those who are united with God first and foremost and then united with those who are also united with the Master. In such unity is a blessing, a victorious assurance of hope and strength!



Paul's victorious life and love for the brethren

WE READ OF WHAT PAUL wrote in “Philippians 3: 2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! 3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, 4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

Paul's focus was clear. It is all about Jesus and nothing else. This was the secret to his victorious living. The message is Christ, nothing else. He was only interested in being found in Christ. Such should be the focus of the Church again. And our message should be purely

Jesus and nothing else. For in Christ, we attain real righteousness which is His not found through working hard at man's rules. The good news is Christ gives His people His righteousness which meets God's requirements. Our message and focus thus should only be Jesus!

Paul had a passion for fellow believers (1:3-5). Paul was not a heartless theologian but a passionate lover of God's people. And this is important. For if we truly are focussed upon God and love God above all, we shall love those who follow Him for we are then brothers and sisters in Christ. Indeed, Paul cared for them very deeply. He loved them and even placed himself in danger for them. His relationship with them caused him to be thankful every time he prayed for them. He was thankful for the news he had been given that even under difficult times, they remained faithful. He loved them because they loved God. That's really what the letter to the Philippians is all about; fellowship in the Gospel. Paul was passionate about Christ and the Gospel and so were those in Philippi. They shared a special relationship that had as its common denominator Christ. Yet our fellowship should be based on our love first and foremost for Christ, for out of our love for Him we shall love each other as followers of the Lord.

After all, the Gospel is a message of real life. It's not some philosophy or grand idea, it's not positive thinking or positive living. Paul simply wanted to see his friends. He loved them dearly because they loved the same Savior he loved and that was their connection. This is a real Church – a common love flowing from a common love with a great and almighty God. A Church that is united in such love, in such fellowship and in such truth.

Paul demonstrated his love for the brethren (because of their pursuit and love for God) in several Scriptures such as "Romans 9:2-4 I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for

the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites..." and also "Romans 10:1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation."

Paul was willing to sacrifice, suffer and die for Jesus and for others. Jesus was also willing to sacrifice everything for the good of others, thus His sacrifice on the cross. And this should be our focus and message as well – denying the self and carrying the cross for the sake of the Kingdom. And when we live for the Kingdom, we seek God to be glorified, for the lost to be found and our brethren in Christ to be strengthened, edified and uplifted. Indeed, we read in Acts 9:15-16 "But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." Paul was willing to suffer, for the Gospel is life and the eternal hope for all of those who are lost and spiritually dying. Is this still the passion of the Church today? Are we still willing to lay down it all so that a broken world may know Christ? Are we willing to suffer so that our brethren in Christ may be edified and exhorted?

His third passion was a passion for the message of Grace (1:6-7). After all, we have all been saved by grace. Paul prayed for the brethren because they all shared in the wonderful work of Jesus on the cross, and such work is one of grace. Paul rejoiced in his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ because he saw evidence that their conversion was real. He witnessed first-hand the fruit of the Spirit exhibited in their lives. He had reason to be confident that their Christianity was genuine.

He wasn't confident because they had done something incredibly religious, no, they exhibited a consistent walking in the Spirit. Paul had every reason to be confident in those Philippian believers because the Holy Spirit took up residence within them. Indeed, Paul knew God was the One working in their lives, and so

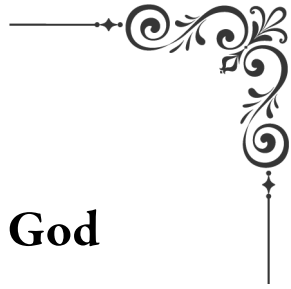
Paul rejoiced in grace, thus in Christ. For God alone is worthy of our trust. Ephesians 2 says “4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).”

God alone does the work of regeneration or bringing the dead sinner to life. It's completely a work of God to bring the spiritually dead to spiritual life. God alone makes dead things live. God's work brings spiritual life and spiritual life brings a renewed mind, which leads to the spiritual fruit of good works.

Paul knew that God would finish what He started because of grace. They were partakers of grace like Paul was, and thus Paul rejoiced and found strength in their companionship. This reality should be our focus and our message, for by grace we are saved, but such grace is the work of God who is the author and finisher of our faith.

Thus the message and focus of the Church should be on grace, but not grace at the expense of obeying God. Not the grace at the expense of worldly liberty or carnality. We can be united by grace, but then it must be a genuine grace flowing from a true and real relationship with God. And in such fellowship and unity, we can garner strength and confidence from each other in our pursuit of the living Lord, to His Glory and for His Glory. By such grace, we are strengthened in love and hope as disciples.

Our focus should also be on loving our brethren, but as mentioned, above all, loving Christ no matter the cost. For this is victory in demonstration.



Turn your ear to God

IT SAYS IN “ROMANS 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Throughout the world, there has been an incredible rise in fear, not only among those in the world but even among children of God. There has been a definite increase in anxiety, doubt, confusion, and uncertainty. So many, even believers, have succumbed to all kinds of fear.

Fear is the opposite of faith. If there is a marked increase in fear, it is because there is a decline in faith. And why is there a decline in faith? Because we are not listening to God. Our ears have turned away from His Word, and we are listening more to what the world says and included in that myriad of voices is the voice of the devil. We are no longer led by faith but by sight, and what we see and hear has now determined our reality, instead of God to determine our reality and the truth.

Of late there has been so much word coming from the church regarding conspiracy theories, about one world order, how vaccines are actually a cure from the devil, and so the list continues of calamity, strife and danger. Granted, we are living in times of great ordeal, threats and demonic agendas, but what is God saying to us? So much of the news filtering through from believers is definitely not from God but is spread by the voices of the world, and even the media, which by the way has, sadly and also mistakenly, been labelled across the board as the devil's puppet.

The reality is if we continue to turn our ears away from God and from his Word, then fear, trepidation and a tormented soul will surely overtake us and cause spiritual blindness. Fear drives us further away from God, His Truth and Purpose, and so we end up on the path where we forsake life yet choose death, and where we forsake the glory of God for the corrupted and the tangible. And such a path eventually becomes dark, and so we are led from the light.

Do we truly know the voice of God anymore? Only when we know Him shall we be led by His Voice, thus His Word, and we shall know His path, His will and the path to follow. Are we yielded and submitted to the Spirit of God, which leads us in all truth? When we listen to Him and abide in His Voice, then shall faith arise and we shall walk in wisdom, discernment, knowledge and understanding, not just for this spiritual season, but for all seasons so that we are prepared to preach the Good news in and out of season.

Right now many parts of the world there is continuing pressure to control the Church through legislation, just as the Roman Empire legalized and controlled the church. In many parts of the world, it is just straightforward persecution of the vilest kind, reminding us of the arrogance and the audacity of the enemy. But yes, persecution, manipulation and control have always been a tactic of the enemy, and thus we need to listen very closely to God and do only what God commands. Our actions and the course we set upon must only be guided by Him in the midst of such storms and threats. We cannot allow our path to be determined by this world, for then our ears will remain turned away from God and our actions shall be marred by fear, and a terrible calamity of ill-purposed plans shall prevail.

We are called to overcome, to be triumphant, to thrive and to prosper in fulfilling the Great Commission, no matter the threats and dangers posed by the enemy. For our path and action should not be determined by what the enemy does, but solely by what God says! For we should be led by the Spirit of God and allow His power

to quicken in us like liquid fire so that God's love, His Truth and Glory shall be manifested in a world that has embraced the cold and the dark. In Acts 4 we read when the disciples' appeared before the Sanhedrin: "18 So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Indeed, we are called to do as the Lord commands, which always remains to fulfil the Great Commission. Indeed, as children of God, we cannot but speak His Word.

And yes, we also need to be wise in the Lord, for it says in "Matthew 10:16 "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."

We after all cannot determine our own path of action in the midst of the growing crisis to silence the Church, and we cannot allow fear to rule our hearts and so cause a bewilderment of heart. The Reformation teaches us great lessons of a conquering spirit and overcoming by the word of testimony and the blood of the Lamb if we remain obedient and faithful unto God.

Only when we listen to God, trust Him and stand in faith, can we walk in such a manner where our hearts are not troubled, and where the peace of Christ rules in our hearts (Colossians 3:15). Indeed, by turning our ears away from God we allow the fear to steal our peace and joy, and we will become blinded to our purpose, to our hope, to our mission, to God's vision and to God's plan.

Yes, many are the plans of man but only the plan of God shall prevail, so we need to listen to God, and then our faith, which only needs to be like a mustard seed, will arise to drive back the darkness as we arise as the children of God to the glory of God.

So turn your ear to God. Listen, and let Him speak and guide. If not, we shall be ruled by fear, and by fear, we shall become spiritually

paralyzed, double-minded and led astray by the voice of deception. Many times such a voice will sound like a lion roaring, but woe indeed for you shall find one that devours and pretends to be such of a nature. Follow only God, the true lion of Judah, and may His voice be a roar in your spirit. Listen indeed to God, and be not led astray by the false voices.



Walking in the fullness of the Spirit

A LOT HAS BEEN WRITTEN on the Holy Spirit, who is the Holy Spirit and how the Holy Spirit works. Much has been written on this subject, but it remains so vital for us to know the Holy Spirit, and to move with the Holy Spirit. For it seems these days that believers still know little about the Spirit, or how to move with the Spirit or how to discern when the Spirit of the Lord is moving compared to a counterfeit movement.

It is no mystery that we live in a time of great confusion and deception in the world. And we see such confusion and deception also in the churches, where the move of the Holy Spirit is confused with emotionalism, or even, in the worst case, with the move of a demonic entity.

More than ever we need to know who the Spirit of the Lord is, and what is His purpose. After all, as we will see in this course, He leads the believer to be an effective witness for the Kingdom of God, to walk in Truth, to walk in the nature of the Lord, to be Christ-cantered, Kingdom-cantered and to be a true worshipper in spirit and truth.

As believers, we cannot understand the ways of the Spirit, the writings of the Spirit, or the voice of the Spirit, without having the Holy Spirit. Our natural reasoning will never lead us to spiritual truth. For this reason, we need to be reborn in the Spirit according

to John 3 by being baptised into the Spirit so that we may be worshippers of spirit and truth.

Before we can understand the truth, we need our minds transformed from their natural, earthly perspective, until we can see with the eyes of Christ, hear with His ears, and understand with His heart. For true disciples, this is the ultimate pursuit.

More than ever we need to know the Holy Spirit, how He works, who He is and how He is not a mere force but part of the Trinity. Indeed, He is the conformer of our morals, He is our parakletos, He is the activator of the power of the Lord, and He leads us in all truth.

And so the words of Jesus when He says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”, should jolt us to realise the absolute importance of walking in the Spirit.

Ephesians 5: NKJV 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

In our pursuit of the Lord and knowing His voice, we must always keep in mind the basic truth in “1 Corinthians 2: Spiritual Wisdom: 6 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God

except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. 13 These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. 16 For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ."

For us to follow God, to live out our callings, we need to be reborn in the Spirit. For then we shall have the mind of Christ, which means we shall know the will of God and we shall move in obedience.

We cannot grow into spiritual maturity without the Holy Spirit. We cannot draw closer to God or be conformed to His image without the Holy Spirit. We cannot minister and be servants of the Most High without the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit, we will follow a religion, and a not relationship. Without the Spirit, we will continually battle the flesh and operate under the dominion of the flesh.

Only through birth in the Holy Spirit and a submission unto the Lord can we truly walk in love, fear, obedience, truth and glory.

2 Corinthians 3: 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Only the Spirit of the Lord can unveil us by stripping away the bondages of religion, tradition, legalisms, old habits, and the strongholds of our spirit and soul. Only in the Spirit of the Lord can

we walk in the freedom of a relationship – a freedom from religion, from man-made rules and regulations. We find freedom from fear, from sin and from the influences of the world. Such is the manifested work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We become free from traditions and legalisms to walk in the Truth of the Lord. And yes, it says there is liberty where the Spirit of the Lord is. Why? Because John 16 says the Spirit of the Lord leads us in all truth, and such truth sets us free according to John 8:32.

As we will see, one of the works of the Holy Spirit is to lead us in all the truth, and since the truth of the Lord sets us free, then this is why it is written the Spirit brings liberty. Indeed, life in the Spirit is a life of liberty and freedom!

We can only be led by the Spirit if we hear the Spirit, and we can only change and be transformed by obeying what we are hearing. We need to be reborn, and we need the Spirit of the Lord to strip away our stubbornness, pride and arrogance to walk in His Glory.

Let us read “John 3: 1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” 3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”

To be reborn in the Spirit, or in other words to be baptised in the Spirit, was according to Jesus of vital importance and if we are not, we cannot ‘see’ the kingdom of God. We are on numerous times reminded that if we truly love the Lord, then we are called

to obey His commandments and His full doctrine. To be filled by the Spirit is of such a matter – it is not optional like fashion, but of dire necessity. To ‘see’ implies the manifested reality and truth of the Lord’s Kingdom here on earth.

There is the debate whether we are already filled by the Spirit once we accept our Lord Jesus as our Saviour. If this is so, what would be the point of John 3? We need to understand there is a difference between someone who is merely following the Lord, thus who can easily follow a religion, compared to someone who has been baptised and filled by the Holy Spirit. For those who are Spirit-led and Spirit-filled are reborn. So yes, you must yield to the Lord, submit to Him and let the Spirit of the Lord come into your life and lead you completely.

There is after all a difference when the Spirit comes upon you compared to when the Spirit dwells within. In the Old Testament, the Spirit only came upon God’s servants, but with the Pentecost and the outpouring the Holy Spirit seeks to make his home in our lives.

So in essence, a great problem with Christianity today is that all believers are considered children of God. There is, however, a difference between those who follow Jesus by worshipping in spirit and truth and those who simply believe in His divinity. One is the true believer who lives for God completely, the other ends up following a religion designed to worship Jesus.

Galatians 5 makes it clear that there are different ways of the world/flesh compared to the path of the Spirit. And those who walk by the Spirit (Romans 8) will not walk in the ways of the flesh, and for those who are in the Spirit, for them, there is no condemnation. Therefore Paul also draws a distinction between walking according to the Spirit and the flesh; therefore for him as for John (see 1 John 2) there are two distinct paths – the path of the Spirit and the path of the world. Thus, there is a distinction between walking the two paths, but you cannot walk both. This implies there is a path of

holiness [a life in the Spirit] and a path of the flesh [life in the world, thus death].

This reminds of the teaching of Jesus about the two paths – the narrow and the broad road. The reality is, there is no middle path. We either walk the road of God or the road of this world. So we need to choose.

It is also written that the Spirit of the Lord provides life, yet the letter kills (2 Corinthians 3:4-6). In other words, true faith in the Lord gives life by the Spirit, yet the religions and traditions of this world (the letter) deadens our spiritual walk. And so the words of Jesus when He says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”, should jolt us to realise the absolute importance of walking in the Spirit.

We read of Jesus’ baptism in water and Spirit in “John 2: 29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ 31 I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.” 32 And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. 33 I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ 34 And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”

Jesus Himself was baptised in the Spirit, and only after this momentous event did Jesus walk in the fullness His ministry. Jesus was indeed the Son of God, and He was the Anointed One to reconcile the world to the Father, but His teachings and miracles flowed from the work of the Holy Spirit. If Jesus ministered in the power of the Spirit, how much more do we not need the Spirit today as mere mortals?

The Church only got birthed on the day of the Pentecost at the outpouring of the Spirit, and subsequently, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel has over the last 2000 years or so been spread throughout the world. We are only reborn as children of God when we are filled by the Spirit. The truth is simple – without the Holy Spirit, we as Christians are lost on our spiritual journey.

A Christian faith without the Spirit is a religion of dead rules, regulations and customs. Without the Spirit, we will but continue to flounder in our spirit, in our character, in our daily lives and in our ministry. Without the Spirit, we remain self-conscious, sin-conscious, world world-conscious instead of God and Word-conscious.

Without the Spirit, we are subjected to a time where we remain in bondage to the fears, the uncertainties and the perplexities of life, instead of being set free in the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit, we remain wandering according to our own self-worth and self-image, instead of seeing ourselves in Christ and being raised anew in the truth and reality of the Lord. Only in Spirit does our self-worth and self-image change into the image of Jesus. Indeed, without the Spirit, we “cannot enter the kingdom of God”.

The question has been raised what does it really mean to walk in the fullness of the Spirit? What does it mean to walk in the guidance of the Spirit? Some will answer this implies walking in the gifts of the Spirit. Others will point to the fruits of the Spirit. There are those who refer to the Spirit’s wisdom and council and being able to speak in tongues.

When you, however, consider the true work of the Spirit in the life of the believer, then you realise that without the Spirit we are like a cork drifting on the ocean hoping to find a distant shore. The fullness of the Spirit extends way beyond mere gifts or callings; it deals with our fundamental essence of being a follower of the Lord.

The Spirit of God, referred to as Elohim Ruach in Hebrew implies He is like the Breath and Wind of the Lord. In other words, the Spirit as the Divine Breath is the divine life of Christianity. Without the Spirit, we are walking in the carnal, in the flesh and in the world.

And so, contemplating the fullness of the Spirit, we have to consider the following:

- The Spirit is the conformer of our morality and character
- The Spirit awakens us to become spiritually conscious and conscientious and no longer carnal and worldly orientated
- The Spirit is the One who equips, empowers and strengthens us for ministry
- The Anointing of the Spirit destroys our flawed ways of thinking and perceptions that translate into our negative behaviour, our habits, our emotions and our actions
- The Spirit brings us into alignment with the will of God through the truth
- In all, things, from day to night and from night to day, the Spirit is our guide, advisor and counsellor when it comes to our daily lives.

In a nutshell, the Spirit of the Living God works in our spirit, He works in our soul (emotions, character, mind-sets, morals, values), He trains and equips and empowers us for service and He works in Truth and Power to set us free from negative strongholds of thoughts and emotions and behaviour that dictate our lives. The Spirit is the Anointing that breaks our yokes and burdens.

Without the Spirit, therefore, we will not be renewed by in our minds and in our character to become more like God.

Without the Spirit, we will stay worldly and carnally-minded instead of being spiritually orientated.

Without the Spirit, we will remain in bondage to our emotions, thoughts, behaviour and habits, which have not come under the liberating power of the Blood.

Without the Spirit, we will try to be in service of God without the anointing and the wisdom.

In the end, we cannot minister and be unto the service of the Lord unless we become spiritually conscious and conscientious. This calls for the work of the Holy Spirit.

We cannot become spiritually liberated to grow closer to God unless our emotions, thoughts and habits come under the Lordship of Jesus. This calls for the work of the Holy Spirit.

We cannot become more like God in character and in our morals and values while our spiritual man remains dormant and we haven't submitted ourselves completely to the freedom of the Truth.

The work of the Holy Spirit in our lives in all its dimensions is interconnected and intertwined.

We are reminded in Romans 8 that there is life in the Spirit. "11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you. 12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live."

Indeed, if we live according to the Spirit and not the flesh (carnality) we shall live, for the Spirit quickens life within us, and not just our bodies, but our spirit and soul! There is indeed life when we abide and walk in Spirit, for the Spirit quickens within the believer so that we walk from glory to glory!

It also says in the same chapter: "15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship."

To therefore walk in the fullness of the Spirit implies being liberated and set free from the carnality and the depravity of the world that brings death. Yet it calls for complete submission to God

in order for Him to work in us, be it in our spiritual man, be it in our soul, be it in our ministry or be it in the liberating truth of divine deliverance. Only then, indeed only then when we have submitted completely in the all-encompassing work of the Spirit, will we be able to move in greater power and authority to do God's work for then we will flow in His will and in His Sovereignty.

It says in "Ephesians 3: 14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

What is Paul saying? That only when the Spirit works in our inner man, then Christ will dwell in our hearts through faith so that we can be rooted and grounded in love, so that we may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

So Paul is talking here about being rooted and grounded in love through the Spirit. God is love, and the greatest commandment is to love the Lord and then our fellow man. How can we truly love therefore without the inner working of the Spirit?

Paul is talking about knowing the fullness of Christ, which means walking in Truth in our spirit and soul – this truth comes by the Spirit. We are after all admonished to do all things out of love, and it is the Spirit who grounds us in all love. Therefore, take the Holy Spirit out of the equation, with what are we then left? How can the Church function without the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is pure and true – there are no lies and deception. He should be the reformation and mild revolution of our spirit and soul away from deception and towards the divine truth of the Lord. Let us then draw closer to the Holy Spirit, and let our knowledge and faith be certain and let the assurance of His touch and Word guide us in the eternal way of Jesus.



The Dunamis from above

ACTS 1:8: 8 BUT YOU shall receive power (ability, efficiency, and might) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends (the very bounds) of the earth.”

The Greek word for power as used in Acts 1 is “dunamis” from where we get the words dynamite and dynamic. Thus, the power we receive “from above”, thus from the Lord, is dynamic and explosive.

Dunamis means in essence: “act of power” (Young’s); “miraculous power, ability” (Strong’s); “natural capability, inherent power; capability of anything, ability to perform anything; then, absolutely, not merely power capable of action, but, power in action” (Bullinger’s).

The word dunamis is also used in numerous other Scriptures in the New Testament where the word “power” is mentioned. For example in Luke 1:35 when it comes to the supernatural birth of Jesus in the womb of Mary: “35 Then the angel said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you [like a shining cloud]; and so the holy (pure, sinless) Thing (Offspring) which shall be born of you will be called the Son of God.”

So when the power of God – dunamis – overshadowed Mary the supernatural became reality in her life. This is surely what we need more than ever in the Church – for the power of God to

really overshadow us so that we can walk in His glorious supernatural ability to His glory.

We read in “Ephesians 3:20 when Paul speaks of Jesus: 20 Now to Him Who, by (in consequence of) the [action of His] power that is at work within us, is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly, far over and above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams]. Ephesians 3 speaks about a power that is at work within us to do superabundantly, far over and above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams].” And what is this power within us? The Holy Spirit – who grants us “dunamis” from above to function supernaturally and to believe in the reality of a supernatural God.

It is so important that when we are dealing here with Dunamis to keep in mind it comes from above. Throughout history, man in his own arrogance and pride have tried in his power and intellect to rule the world, yet we are reminded in Acts 1 that we will be wise when we allow the power of God and the wisdom of God to rule our lives so that we may exist by such divine guidance.

This power can also not be detached from the Lord, or be wielded separately without the Lord. Such power never comes from man, or can be harnessed by man, or be manipulated by man. God is the Power from above and such power works in those who abide in the Lord.

Thus, Paul reminds us in his epistle that the “dunamis” has already been given, but it is only beneficial when it is working in us. Therefore, we are reminded of John 3 when Jesus says the following: “3 I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, that unless a person is born again (anew, from above), he cannot ever see (know, be acquainted with, and experience) the kingdom of God.

We can only walk in the power of God, thus walking in His dynamic and radical nature, when we allow ourselves to be

submitted to the inner workings of the Holy Spirit. This therefore requires one to be reborn in Spirit, which simply means a complete submission unto the Holy Spirit and to allow God to be the king, ruler and master of our lives. For then through obedience, faithfulness and loyalty unto God shall the “power from above” be manifested in our lives.

It says in “Philippians 4:13: I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me [I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me; I am self-sufficient in Christ’s sufficiency].”

This dunamis – the power from on high – was already manifested during the first miracle performed by Jesus when water was turned into wine. The story is told in John 2. At this time Jesus was already baptized in the Spirit and was empowered by the “power on high”. Yes, Jesus is the Son of God, but He still was baptised in the Spirit who is the “power on high” so that we can walk in the power of the Kingdom.

It says in “Acts 10:38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.”

In order to walk in the power of God, we need to remain in God and God in us, which comes by a proper relationship forged by the Covenant of Blood. This is the teaching of Jesus in “John 15: 1 I am the True Vine, and My Father is the Vinedresser. 2 Any branch in Me that does not bear fruit [that stops bearing] He cuts away (trims off, takes away); and He cleanses and repeatedly prunes every branch that continues to bear fruit, to make it bear more and richer and more excellent fruit. 3 You are cleansed and pruned already, because of the word which I have given you [the teachings I have discussed with you]. 4 Dwell in Me, and I will dwell in you. [Live in Me, and I will live in you.] Just as no branch can bear fruit of itself without abiding in (being vitally united to) the vine, neither can you bear

fruit unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in Me and I in him bears much (abundant) fruit.”

Let us therefore understand, the Spirit of the Lord is the ACTIVATION OF POWER. What God the Father speaks and wills, the Spirit of the Lord will activate in a manifestation of power. We see the reality of this activation of power in “Genesis 1: 1 In the beginning God (Elohim) created [by forming from nothing] the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was formless and void or a waste and emptiness, and darkness was upon the face of the deep [primeval ocean that covered the unformed earth]. The Spirit of God was moving (hovering, brooding) over the face of the waters. 3 And God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.”

You see, the Spirit of the Lord was hovering. The Spirit of the Lord was WAITING for the command of the Father. Once God spoke, then the Spirit of the Lord moved and there was an activation of power, which resulted in the creation of earth as we know it. We need to note here that the Spirit of the Lord was “hovering”, and clearly the Spirit of the Lord was not acting according to his own purpose. So the Spirit of the Lord will activate through power what the Father speaks and desires.

But what is the purpose of receiving such “power from above”? Is it for self-exaltation, self-glorification or self-empowerment? No. God empowers spiritually those who follow Him for the purpose of His glory and Kingdom being manifested and established on earth. God grants “dunamis” through the infilling/baptism of the Holy Spirit so that we may be able to complete the Great Commission and also the general commission of the disciples.

We receive “dunamis” to see the fulfilment of Mark 16: 15 And He said to them, Go into all the world and preach and publish openly the good news (the Gospel) to every creature [of the whole human race]. 16 He who believes [who adheres to and trusts in and relies on the Gospel and Him Whom it sets forth] and is baptized

will be saved [from the penalty of eternal death]; but he who does not believe [who does not adhere to and trust in and rely on the Gospel and Him Whom it sets forth] will be condemned. 17 And these attesting signs will accompany those who believe: in My name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new languages; 18 They will pick up serpents; and [even] if they drink anything deadly, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will get well.

And also the fulfilment of Matthew 28: 19 Go then and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 Teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you all the days (perpetually, uniformly, and on every occasion), to the [very] close and consummation of the age. Amen (so let it be).

We see throughout the Book of Acts the constant demonstration of how the disciples were empowered to fulfil Mark 16 and Matthew 28. They were able to do so because of the “power from above”, which made them bold, brave and courageous to preach the Good News and to minister the Word of God no matter the dangers or challenges.

In Acts 2, following the outpouring of the Spirit so that the disciples may receive the “power from above”, we read of how Peter boldly addressed the crowd. Remember, this is the same Peter who betrayed Jesus three times out of fear of being persecuted and most likely being crucified.

We read for example in this chapter (this follows people mocking the disciples for speaking in other tongues and languages following the outpouring of the Spirit): 13 But others made a joke of it and derisively said, They are simply drunk and full of sweet [intoxicating] wine. 14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: You Jews and all you residents of Jerusalem, let this be [explained] to you so that you will know and

understand; listen closely to what I have to say. 15 For these men are not drunk, as you imagine, for it is [only] the third hour (about 9:00 a.m.) of the day; 16 But [instead] this is [the beginning of] what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, God declares, that I will pour out of My Spirit upon all mankind, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy [telling forth the divine counsels] and your young men shall see visions (divinely granted appearances), and your old men shall dream [divinely suggested] dreams. 18 Yes, and on My menservants also and on My maidservants in those days I will pour out of My Spirit, and they shall prophesy [telling forth the divine counsels and [predicting future events pertaining especially to God's kingdom]. 19 And I will show wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth beneath, blood and fire and smoking vapor; 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the obvious day of the Lord comes—that great and notable and conspicuous and renowned [day]. 21 And it shall be that whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord [invoking, adoring, and worshiping the Lord—Christ] shall be saved.

Peter, whose courage betrayed him, now boldly declared his loyalty to Jesus, despite facing persecution! That I what happens when the “power from above” comes upon us and empowers us for ministry. The crowd could not understand what was happening, for they had not been touched by God. They mocked the signs and wonders they witnessed, mocking the disciples who spoke in other tongues and declaring them drunk. Still today, the world will never understand the disciple of God who really moves in dunamis – for such power from above radically changes a person and causes a disciple to operate supernaturally and not merely naturally. Yes, with God all things are possible!

In Acts 4, Peter also challenged the Sadducees, who upheld the Law of Moses. They after all rejected the New Covenant of Jesus.

Peter was summoned to appear before the Sadducees following a healing that was performed – once again, *dunamis* in action.

Peter then says the following: 8 Then Peter, [because he was] filled with [and controlled by] the Holy Spirit, said to them, Rulers of the people and members of the council (the Sanhedrin), 9 If we are being put on trial [here] today and examined concerning a good deed done to benefit a feeble (helpless) cripple, by what means this man has been restored to health, 10 Let it be known and understood by all of you, and by the whole house of Israel, that in the name and through the power and authority of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Whom you crucified, [but] Whom God raised from the dead, in Him and by means of Him this man is standing here before you well and sound in body. 11 This [Jesus] is the Stone which was despised and rejected by you, the builders, but which has become the Head of the corner [the Cornerstone]. 12 And there is salvation in and through no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by and in which we must be saved. Take note of verse 8: Then Peter, [because he was] filled with [and controlled by] the Holy Spirit. Indeed, Peter had changed into a dynamic and explosive disciple for God because of the “power from above” – the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Again, we read of this mighty power manifested in the Lord’s disciples in “Acts 5: 12 Now by the hands of the apostles (special messengers) numerous and startling signs and wonders were being performed among the people. And by common consent they all met together [at the temple] in the covered porch (walk) called Solomon’s. 13 And none of those who were not of their number dared to join and associate with them, but the people held them in high regard and praised and made much of them. 14 More and more there were being added to the Lord those who believed [those who acknowledged Jesus as their Savior and devoted themselves to Him joined and gathered with them], crowds both of men and of

women,¹⁵ So that they [even] kept carrying out the sick into the streets and placing them on couches and sleeping pads, [in the hope] that as Peter passed by, at least his shadow might fall on some of them. ¹⁶ And the people gathered also from the towns and hamlets around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those troubled with foul spirits, and they were all cured.”

Acts 4: ²³ After they were permitted to go, [the apostles] returned to their own [company] and told all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. ²⁴ And when they heard it, lifted their voices together with one united mind to God and said, O Sovereign Lord, You are He Who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything that is in them, ²⁵ Who by the mouth of our forefather David, Your servant and child, said through the Holy Spirit, Why did the heathen (Gentiles) become wanton and insolent and rage, and the people imagine and study and plan vain (fruitless) things [that will not succeed]? ²⁶ The kings of the earth took their stand in array [for attack] and the rulers were assembled and combined together against the Lord and against His Anointed (Christ, the Messiah). ²⁷ For in this city there actually met and plotted together against Your holy Child and Servant Jesus, Whom You consecrated by anointing, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and peoples of Israel, ²⁸ To carry out all that Your hand and Your will and purpose had predestined (predetermined) should occur. ²⁹ And now, Lord, observe their threats and grant to Your bond servants [full freedom] to declare Your message fearlessly, ³⁰ While You stretch out Your hand to cure and to perform signs and wonders through the authority and by the power of the name of Your holy Child and Servant Jesus. ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were assembled was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they continued to speak the Word of God with freedom and boldness and courage. ³² Now the company of believers was of one heart and soul, and not one of them claimed

that anything which he possessed was [exclusively] his own, but everything they had was in common and for the use of all. 33 And with great strength and ability and power the apostles delivered their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace (loving-kindness and favor and goodwill) rested richly upon them all.

Sadly, this great “power from above” has for thousands of years been ridiculed by men, who have even tried to exploit the Lord for their own gain and benefit. We are dealing here with God and not man. God should always be respected, and as such, how we conduct ourselves in the Spirit should be out of reverence.

We bear witness to the exploitation of the Holy Spirit in “Acts 7: 18 However, when Simon saw that the [Holy] Spirit was imparted through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he brought money and offered it to them, 19 Saying, Grant me also this power and authority, in order that anyone on whom I place my hands may receive the Holy Spirit. 20 But Peter said to him, Destruction overtake your money and you, because you imagined you could obtain the [free] gift of God with money! 21 You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is all wrong in God’s sight [it is not straightforward or right or true before God]. 22 So repent of this depravity and wickedness of yours and pray to the Lord that, if possible, this contriving thought and purpose of your heart may be removed and disregarded and forgiven you. 23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in a bond forged by iniquity [to fetter souls]. 24 And Simon answered, Pray for me [beseech the Lord, both of you], that nothing of what you have said may befall me!”

Indeed, we need the fear of the Lord back in the churches, and for religion and tradition to stop confusing the walk of the disciple! The “power from above” has after all been quenched for too long by the ways of man. Indeed, the *dunamis* would continue to influence the disciple of the first Church, turning them from being spiritual

lambs into lions. We read for example of Stephen (Acts 7) who was martyred for His undying faith in God. We need this again in our churches! We need servants of the Lord who move in His power to His glory!

Paul is a disciple who demonstrates what happens when *dunamis* takes hold of you. Once known as Saul, he persecuted the Christians. Paul had a powerful encounter with God on the road to Damascus. Subsequently, he was no longer Saul the murderer of Christians but Paul who became one of the greatest evangelists and teachers in the way of Jesus!

In his great humility, Paul writes in “1 Corinthians 2: As for myself, brethren, when I came to you, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony and evidence or [mystery and secret of God [concerning what He has done through Christ for the salvation of men] in lofty words of eloquence or human philosophy and wisdom; 2 For I resolved to know nothing (to be acquainted with nothing, to make a display of the knowledge of nothing, and to be conscious of nothing) among you except Jesus Christ (the Messiah) and Him crucified. 3 And I was in (passed into a state of) weakness and fear (dread) and great trembling [[c]after I had come] among you. 4 And my language and my message were not set forth in persuasive (enticing and plausible) words of wisdom, but they were in demonstration of the [Holy] Spirit and power [a proof by the Spirit and power of God, operating on me and stirring in the minds of my hearers the most holy emotions and thus persuading them], 5 So that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men (human philosophy), but in the power of God.”

Paul could never have endured all the suffering and hardship (2 Corinthians 11) while courageously proclaiming the Good News if he was not empowered and bolstered by the “power from above” – the Holy Spirit. In other words, we can never truly serve God in a

dynamic and powerful manner – beyond fear, doubt and trepidation – unless we walk in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Following the brave and powerful declaration of Peter in Acts 2, we read in verse 41 how 3000 souls accepted and welcomed Peter’s message. They were also baptized. This is the result of when we walk in dunamis – which comes through submission to the Holy Spirit and being baptised in the Spirit.

Of these 3000 souls, who numbered among the first disciples at the birth of the Church, we read: 42 And they steadfastly persevered, devoting themselves constantly to the instruction and fellowship of the apostles, to the breaking of bread [including the Lord’s Supper] and prayers. 43 And a sense of awe (reverential fear) came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were performed through the apostles (the special messengers). 44 And all who believed (who adhered to and trusted in and relied on Jesus Christ) were united and [together] they had everything in common; 45 And they sold their possessions (both their landed property and their movable goods) and distributed the price among all, according as any had need. 46 And day after day they regularly assembled in the temple with united purpose, and in their homes they broke bread [including the Lord’s Supper]. They partook of their food with gladness and simplicity and generous hearts, 47 Constantly praising God and being in favor and goodwill with all the people; and the Lord kept adding [to their number] daily those who were being saved [from spiritual death]. Talk about a powerful ministry! Surely these men were not only baptized in water but also by the Spirit, for they received dunamis to preach the Good News boldly.

Now, let us see how Isaiah’s prophesy came true. When Jesus came out of the wilderness, having defeated Satan’s subtle attempts of deception, He spoke of the Beatitudes (witness how everything He says lines up with Isaiah 11 and 61): “The Beatitudes: 1Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down.

His disciples came to him, 2and he began to teach them saying: 3"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. 10Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Glory to God! Didn't we read the following out of chapter 61 - to proclaim liberty to the [physical and spiritual] captives and the opening of the prison and of the eyes to those who are bound? How many times did Jesus not heal, or deliver or set someone free from the bondages of spiritual deception? Isaiah spoke about the opening of the eyes to see; how little he knew Jesus would be doing this literally as well (John 9).

In Acts 12 we see the *dunamis* in action when it comes to physically and spiritually setting the captive free: It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. "2 He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. 3 When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. 4 After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. 5 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him. 6 The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. 7 Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists. 8 Then the angel

said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. 9 Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. 10 They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. 11 Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen."

There is power from above, yet we need to walk in faith to see such power in action. As Jesus said, we simply need to believe, yes just believe, for in the power of God all things are possible and in the power of God we become spiritually bold and enflamed for His glory! Just believe; just believe, for His power works within all believers who seek to worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. It is also interesting to note that when the "dunamis" of God is working in our lives it will also produce holiness unto God.

The "dunamis" power of God sets God's standard within us so that all we do and are reflects back to God's honour and glory. True "dunamis" is that inner working to mould our character in the image of God.

Just believe in the power from above so that we may be effective ministers and servants unto the Lord to His Glory and for His Glory!



Standing strong in the Lord in the midst of the storms

ISAIAH 25:4 FOR YOU have been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, A shade from the heat ...

The world is engulfed in storms - be it spiritual, emotional, religious, psychological or physical. We live in a world of economic storms, of storms that take the shape of war and conflict, of storms over right and wrong and storms of fears, doubt, and confusion. All around us, there are storms - and many storms are right now blowing in the heart of man, in the heart of families and in the heart of the home. It is raging against the youth, and it is dismantling the moral fabric of society across the globe.

Many are the storms that are blowing in the hearts of the believers. We live in a time and age where a lot of believers are dealing with all kinds of storms. They are engulfed by a flood of worldly visuals, knowledge, temptations and desires. It is a superstorm of epic demonic proportions, leaving the believer shocked and drained emotionally, spiritually and psychologically. It is a storm of false word, teachings and prophecy (2 Peter 2, 2 Timothy 4).

Believers are dealing with storms over God's Word (there is great confusion right now in the churches regarding God's 100 per cent truth), dealing with storms of inner demons (many believers have never truly dealt with issues such as unforgiveness, rejection, being

unloved) and dealing with the onslaughts of the world that demands compromise and to yield to the pleasures of the flesh, to the gratification of exalting of the Self and to the temptations that come rolling in with the spiritual darkness.

It seems daily we read and hear of how believers are collapsing under the storms - they give in to the pressure, they give in to sin, they give in to rebellion, they give in to fear, they give in to doubt, they give in to the deception, they give in to the temptations and so eventually they give in to the world that becomes their biggest idol along with the Self. Almost daily we read and hear of believers lusting after earthly wealth, earthly flesh and earthly desires.

Paul warns us in 1 Timothy 4 about seducing teachings that are taught by demons. This too is a spiritual storm on its own. Those who discern will know this world is in the grip of spiritual darkness - people are constantly lured away to the shores of occult practices and teachings, to the way of the New Age, and to the way of cults and sects. And sadly, there are believers who have allowed the storms to blind them to reality and so they have become sucked into the vortex of deception and divination.

Because of the storms, idolatry is rife in churches (just check out all the golden calves), spiritual apostasy has accelerated and spiritual adultery is no longer frowned upon. Sin is no longer sin, hell has become obsolete, false prophets and teachers preach and speak untouched and through it all, the devil is laughing because the church is ill equipped to deal with him anymore. And so as the Lord speaks, the people of the Lord indeed perish because of a lack of knowledge.

Indeed, there are many storms faced by the believer today, and such storms blow in homes where marriages are threatened by the demands of life, where good old-fashioned parenting collides with the youth's desires of the modern age, where the individuality and sexuality of the man and the woman become blurred by the

ever-changing social norms and where family life and marriage is no longer an institution but rather an entrapment for many.

The Lord has shown how the enemy has come against the believer with such lethal storms of deception, temptation, confusion and bewilderment, leading to disillusionment, discouragement and eventually defeat. Such storms are designed to enslave, entrap, destroy and eventually lead the believer on a path of self-destruction. It is the path of the flesh, it is the path of the father of lies and it is the wide road. This is not the way of the Lord, which leads us from glory to glory.

Let us again be reminded of “Matthew 8: 24 And suddenly, behold, there arose a violent storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered up by the waves; but He was sleeping. 25 And they went and awakened Him, saying, Lord, rescue and preserve us! We are perishing! 26 And He said to them, Why are you timid and afraid, O you of little faith? Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great and wonderful calm.”

Take note, the storm came up suddenly. This is how the world works and this is how the devil operates. For suddenly the stock market crashes. Suddenly sickness hits us. Suddenly we are faced with indecision. Suddenly we are faced with great spiritual onslaughts.

Suddenly we do not know the true way of the Lord. And before we know it, and no longer suddenly, we are engulfed by waves and by rain until we are spiritually blinded, our minds are reeling with unholy fear and our hearts are tormented by guilt.

We are reminded that there is only one answer and one solution lest we are swept aside by the storms of life. That answer is Jesus. The storm of Matthew 8 followed the teaching of Jesus in “Matthew 7: 4 So everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts upon them [obeying them] will be like a sensible (prudent, practical, wise) man who built his house upon the rock. 25 And the rain fell and the

floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them will be like a stupid (foolish) man who built his house upon the sand. 27 And the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great and complete was the fall of it.”

It is quite simple at the end of the day - we cannot remain standing in God's way and truth unless we are truly standing upon the Rock of Jesus. It does not help if we have one foot on the rock and one foot on quicksand. It does not help if our hearts long for the Lord but it also longs for the world. It does not help if our mind is full of God's delight yet we dwell on carnal pleasures.

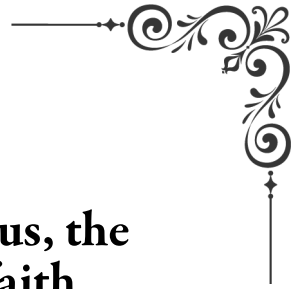
We need to get back to the Holy Spirit to clear away the doubt, the confusion and the chaos. We need the strength and authority of the Lord to calm down the storm so that peace will again reign in our hearts. We need to allow the Spirit of God to advise us, lead us, counsel us, and teach us and lead us through the storms.

Of the judgment against Israel, it says in "Hosea 8: 7 For they sow the wind and they shall reap the whirlwind".

Indeed, if we walk not in complete surrender to God's purity and holiness by holding on in faith in times of storms, relying on and trusting completely in God (Proverbs 3) then we are in danger of being swept away by the whirlwinds of this world and by the demonic storms that are waging on earth.

Let us stand upon the Rock of Jesus and have faith in the Lord through our obedience and faithfulness. God never guarantees us that we will go around the storm, as evident in Psalm 23 that He prepares a table for us in the midst of our enemies, but what He does do is He gives us the strength, the wisdom, His Presence and His Power to remain standing in the storm.

This is after all what Paul wrote in Ephesians 6 when he calls upon the believer to stand – to stand our ground as the storm blows, to stand upon the Rock of Jesus, to remain standing in faith and truth for our God, who is our refuge, will indeed carry us through any storm.



Hold onto the Jesus, the anchor of our faith

THE TEACHING OF JESUS in Matthew 7 should be well known regarding the wise and foolish builders. There is much wisdom to be gained from our Lord's teaching.

It says: "24 Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. 26 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." 28 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, 29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

It should be noted that when the Lord teaches about the house built upon a rock, we have to take note that the house is not immune to any storm, wind or rain. Yes, even this house is vulnerable to the elements.

The only difference between a house built on rock and a house built on sand is that one will completely collapse. There is the notion that disciples will be spared from the trials and tribulations. Consider Paul who endured multiple hardships (2 Corinthians 11), but he endured until the end because his life was built upon the rock

of Jesus. Too often disciples want the simple life, but we are called to be a light in the darkness (therefore we are surrounded by darkness), to be the salt when the world has chosen wickedness and to endure in times of persecution.

Disciples of the Lord are not immune to this world. They are not immune to its storms. The disciples in the boat realized this reality when the storm waged around them and so in fear cried out to Jesus to help them. And with one word the Master had calmed the waves. Yes, we are not immune to the ups and downs. Jesus may have died for our trespasses and secured our healing, but the reality is believers are not gods or super-human, merely vessels of flesh and blood trying to be worthy vessels of His majesty. King Solomon understood this truth that the sun shines on both the wicked and the good when writing Ecclesiastes. Many times it seems God does not care or has abandoned us when the storm hits and when the wind blows, but eventually those who remain in the Lord will remain standing while those who continue in their evil ways will be toppled.

This is the crux of David's message in "Psalm 1: 1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper."

Psalm 1 speaks of a tree that is planted, which speaks of a system of being rooted, which is the same as being grounded on a rock. A tree will not topple when the roots are healthy and strong, meaning we as His disciples will endure the rain and the wind but we shall not topple if we are grounded and rooted in His Presence.

After all, we shall be known for our roots, meaning those who truly serve the Lord are those who obey Him and have submitted to His ways, truth and life. Such disciples walk in Spirit (Romans 8,

Galatians 5), thus manifesting the fruits of the Spirit and they avoid evil and walking in the carnal nature of the flesh. Those who are grounded in Jesus truly find they are a new creation by His strength and might.

In John 17, we are reminded we are not of the world but in the world. It means while we are not immune to the storms of the world as we are IN this world, we find our strength, help and deliverance comes not from the world but from God. So the house in Matthew 7 is a house that remains in the world, but it shall not be toppled because it is built upon a rock that is not of this world!

Now, also understand the wonderful truth of “Hebrews 6:20 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, here the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

Praise God! Jesus, the Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world and who has paid the price for our sins and who has conquered death, is indeed forever the ANCHOR of our soul and the hope of our glory (Colossians 1:27). He is the one who has made a way for us to be in a relationship with divinity, and to become sons and daughters of the eternal King. He is forever our Hope for He shall forever endure and He shall forever sit on the throne!

Of this eternal King, it is also written in “Hebrews 4: 14-16: Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

We are called to hold onto Jesus who is our anchor and our hope in times of storms, trials and tribulations. And we can trust Him, and have faith in His ways because we have a High Priest who can

sympathize with our weaknesses, and who was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Glory to God!

It should be noted, that hundreds of years ago, an anchor was basically a large rock or a stone. So when we read of Jesus being the anchor 2000 years ago, we think of an anchor as being a stone, just as Jesus is our Rock and the Capstone of the Kingdom on earth. He is the Stone according to the prophet Daniel that will eventually smash all kingdoms apart.

The beauty of an anchor is that a sailor on a ship does not have to worry about the anchor doing its job. An anchor will do what an anchor has been designed to do. A sailor will not now and then jump in the water to check on the anchor. The sailor can therefore rest in the knowledge that the anchor will keep the ship secure and safe when the storms come. This is how it is with Jesus being our anchor. We can rest in the truth that He will keep us safe, secure and rooted no matter how circumstances and situations. We do not have to question Him and wonder if He will keep us anchored. He is God. We just need to trust and have faith in Him.

We can also apply the image of a ship to the image of the house. Just like a house being vulnerable to the elements, just so any ship is vulnerable to the storms. Yet, the ship will remain grounded and will survive shipwreck because of the anchor. Let us hold onto the anchor of Jesus!

But it is also important to be reminded of John 15 when Jesus said that we need to abide in us so that we may abide in Him. An anchor can only do its work if it remains fastened to the ship or boat. Jesus can only be our Lord, King, Master and Saviour when we are built upon Him so that we are anchored by His Almighty Glory.

Matthew 7 also reminds us that it is wise when you not only know the teachings and commands of the Lord, but actually follow them. This calls for obedience and faithfulness. In churches across the world the importance of obedience unto the Lord has been

watered down by erroneous teaching on hyper grace, the exaggerated yet also false emphasis on legalism and the complete dismissal of God's law and order. For the Lord Himself said those who love Him will obey Him (John 14:23).

It is wise to hold onto Jesus no matter what life throws at us. It is wise to trust in Him and not this world. For Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 1 that the Lord brings low the wisdom of the world yet those who are truly wise will place their hope and faith in the cross. Indeed, if we wish to survive this world and its storms, we need be wise by staying faithful unto the Lord and build our lives upon His wisdom, teachings and commandments. If we obey Him, we shall remain grounded and anchored, even when it seems everything around us falls apart.

We after all walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). We are called to completely surrender unto Him for then as Psalms 91 states we shall find our rest under the shadow of His wing.

For those who walk by spirit and truth, shall know the truth of Psalm 37 when David wrote: "18 The Lord knows the days of the upright, And their inheritance shall be forever. 19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time, And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. 20 But the wicked shall perish; And the enemies of the Lord, Like the splendor of the meadows, shall vanish. Into smoke they shall vanish away. "

Indeed, let us be wise and not foolish, for indeed we live in foolish times, by building upon the rock of Jesus and trusting our ways to Him. Only the foolish abandon the ways of God and seek their own path and truth. For indeed, it does rain on the righteous and the unrighteous, but our Lord returns soon and I will want to be found on the Rock that never moves and I shall strive to be found by His side when my name is called at the separation of the sheep and the goats.

A time like this of many storms – natural and supernatural - calls for wisdom and not for foolishness, otherwise we shall drown in the flood of iniquity, darkness and chaos. For those who walk in the Lord's wisdom, as mentioned in Matthew 7, will truly walk in authority, for such wisdom is not based on religion but a true and personal relationship with our Lord Jesus.



Restore the altar for a life of victory

IN JUDGES 6, WE READ of how the Midianites oppressed Israel. Subsequently, God raised up Gideon, and we all know of the tale of Gideon how God supernaturally routed the enemy with only 300 men. Yet, before the victory was secured, something very important happened, and it tested Gideon's obedience, commitment and dedication to the Lord.

And so we need to hear what the Lord is saying to His Bride, who carries the light of Jesus, the Truth of Jesus and the solution to the world's depravity, carnality, apostasy and rebellion. We live in a world of great darkness and great spiritual impoverishment because the world is drifting further away from the Lord and His Truth. We live in a world of great idolatry, thus the lands across the world are covered with 'false altars', meaning so many people in the world bow before 'gods' of their own design and choosing, be it money, fame, fortune, the Self, greed, and yes, even before demons posing as gods and yes, we even bow before man as we worship and adore flesh and blood (the cult of the celebrity). Thus altars of false worship.

The Bride of the Lord needs to show the world Jesus, and that only when we truly love Him, follow Him and adore Him above all else, thus true worship, can we walk in life, in hope and in redemption. This calls for the false altars of our beliefs, adoration, ambitions, mindsets and our walk in this world to be broken down.

In its place we need to rebuild the spiritual altar of God in our lives – where we worship again the Lord, follow in His ways, follow His Truth, and where we seek to commit to the Covenant and to His Kingdom. This process of breaking down has to happen in churches as well where idolatry and spiritual apostasy are rife, and we have to get back to God and worship Him above all else once again.

Of Gideon, the Lord said the following: 14 Then the Lord turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?” 15 So he said to Him, “O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.” 16 And the Lord said to him, “Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat the Midianites as one man.”

The words spoken by the Lord over Gideon echo what the Lord spoke to Joshua before he entered the Promised Land, facing seven stronger tribes:

Joshua 1: 5 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. 6 Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

In Deuteronomy 28, Moses spoke over the people regarding being blessed the following: 13 And the Lord will make you the head

and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them. 14 So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right or the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

So what Moses spoke over the people is what the Lord spoke over Joshua – obedience, and not turning right or left when it comes to God’s Truth, following His Path, and seeking above else His righteousness and Kingdom. If we do so, thus standing true to God’s Word and honouring the Covenant, thus building the true altar of God as we truly lay down our lives as living sacrifices to His Glory, then God shall bless us and keep us, and the Lord shall give us victory.

Now, coming back to Gideon, the Lord then gives Gideon the following instructions in “Judges 6: 25 Now it came to pass the same night that the Lord said to him, “Take your father’s young bull, the second bull of seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image that is beside it; 26 and build an altar to the Lord your God on top of this rock in the proper arrangement, and take the second bull and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image which you shall cut down.” 27 So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the Lord had said to him.”

God thus instructed Gideon to first break down the false altar and then to rebuild the altar, this time dedicating it to the Lord. He had to rebuild in the “the proper arrangement”, meaning he had to follow God’s instruction, God’s order and God’s plan, not his own. Gideon also made a sacrifice upon it, as he obeyed the Lord.

We then read of the people’s reaction: 28 And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal, torn down; and the wooden image that was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was being offered on the altar which had been

built. 29 So they said to one another, "Who has done this thing?" And when they had inquired and asked, they said, "Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing." 30 Then the men of the city said to Joash, "Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that was beside it." 31 But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning! If he is a god, let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!" 32 Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, "Let Baal plead against him, because he has torn down his altar."

Joash made it clear that there is no other living God except for the Lord, as no other god can speak for all other gods are but dead, and non-existent. Thus to bow before any false altar is sheer folly, for there is no true power in man, or in fame, fortune and whatever other idol or 'god' we cling to.

The words of Joash echo what happened on Mount Carmel in "1 Kings 18: 6 So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, "O Baal, hear us!" But there was no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made. 27 And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened." 28 So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with [i]knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. 29 And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention."

Indeed, Baal was deaf on Mount Carmel, as he was deaf and lifeless to defend himself when Gideon broke down the altar. There is no other god except the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and

no one else deserves all our praise and honour and glory! It is time again to fear the Lord, to fear Him only, and to fear man and man's so-called idols and gods.

It is time to take a stand against all things false, foolish, and everything that stands against God. It is time to build the altar of God again, meaning that we as the children of the Living God need to stand up for the Truth, declare His Word, and take a stand against all idolatry, deceptions, immorality and injustices, and it is take that we preach and teach uncompromisingly the intended wisdom of God! It says in "Luke 12:4-6: "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!" And also "1 Samuel 12:24: Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you."

Indeed, it is time to heed God, obey God's plan, His instructions and to return to God's order, just as He told Gideon to build according to the proper arrangement. We cannot build "Church" the way we want to build it. We cannot build our lives as we see fit. No, we construct and build His Kingdom on earth as worshippers in spirit and truth according to His way, His order, His plan, and His purpose and according to Hill.

And so we pray Lord that His will be done, not ours. And so, because Gideon obeyed and destroyed the false altar and build the true altar, we read in Judges 7 of Gideon's valiant three hundred and how they routed the Midianites! There is victory in obedience, and victory when we place God first again.

Of King Josiah in 2 Kings 23 we read: "25 Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him." Josiah was a man who

implemented sweeping reforms, which included destroying every false altar and everything that was erected in the land that stood against God. What Josiah did is what is needed more than ever in churches, where every idol and anything that exalts itself against God, be it thought, deed, action or word, must be torn down. This needs to happen in countries, for the Bride of God needs to stand up as watchmen and cry out, yet cry out, against the immorality, the godliness and the unholy behaviour from coast to coast, from north to south, from west to east, yes over the valleys and in the mountains!

God will indeed give victory, and He is indeed with those who turn to Him and who stay true to the path by not turning to the left or to the right. Yet He calls for those who are dedicated, committed, and who will without fear obey Him, who will yield and submit. He is calling for those who will submit and yield, and who will obey without fear for the fear of God is truly the beginning of wisdom and knowledge!

May we be like Gideon, like Josiah, and like Joshua, for let us be courageous and brave. Let us restore the altar of God, thus return to true worship, and stand against the forces of darkness as urged by Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6.

The first disciples were courageous and brave, obeying God with fear as so we read in “Acts 4: 25 Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? 26 The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.’ 27 “For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.” 31 And when they had prayed, the place

where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”

May we break down every false altar, firstly in our own lives, and then declare the Word of God against every other false altar in the church and in the country. For then we shall honour the Lord! Let us seek true worship again, and let us seek to declare His Truth above all, seeking purity and holiness of heart, for then we shall ascend the hill of the Lord.

For then we shall cry out according to Romans 8: In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us! Yes, the Lord shall give us victory, but then we need to abide in Him, trust Him, obey Him, fear Him and stay true to the narrow road.

God is calling for worshippers of spirit and truth, who will lay down their lives and carry the cross, which calls for sacrifice (thus the altar of worship) and seeking God above all.

We cannot remain silent, we cannot fear anymore, but like Gideon trust in the hand of the Almighty, who shook Egypt with the 10 plagues, crushed Goliath, crushed the Assyrian Empire and overthrew every kingdom, empire and nation that has every exalted itself against God!

Fear not, be courageous, for God is with us! Cry out, yet cry out in the Spirit against all things false and deplorable, for God shall give us victory by His mighty arm.

Tear down first the false altars for your victory

GOD IS CALLING US TO a sacred duty of worshipping Him alone and certainly no other. When we idolise other ‘gods’, including exalting the self, then we are in the process of setting up false altars in our lives. Such altars only bring bondage to such an altar, which serves as an open gateway through which the enemy can work. We

simply cannot worship God while false altars are still erected in our lives.

When it comes to deliverance, it is of vital importance that we address any false altar or covenant in our lives. Such things we must tear down and uproot out of our lives. If we read 1 Kings 18: 17-39, for example, we understand that under the Law of Moses, and still under the New Covenant, we are called to be set apart, to seek to worship God alone and to sit with no false altars to our lives. It is because idolatry was so rife that the Lord “gave them into the hands of Midianites” for seven years (Judges 6:1). When Israel cried out to God for help (verse 6), He sent a prophet who reminded the Israelites of God’s past deliverance and God’s commands against honouring false gods (verse 10). Israel had disobeyed, and Baal and Asherah worship was rampant.

We all as children of God and those who come to the Lord need to address any altars in our lives which offend God. We need to seriously address the issues of false covenants. If we don’t, we are in bondage, and we cannot live in the freedom that God has so desired for our lives.

Deuteronomy 7: 1-6 tells us that God chose the Israelites over many other nations because they were His chosen people. The command was to destroy the Canaanites and their altars. This destruction was necessary because of their worship practices. Exodus 34: 10-14 speaks of the renewal of the covenant made with the Israelites. God planned to glorify Himself to all nations through Israel and to show His glory. When we erect those false altars, we engage in idolatry and we violate the covenant with God. Indeed, the Promised Land had become infested with the worship of false gods. God’s children had become a part of the problem instead of being the solution. They had rejected Yahweh, their Covenant God, and joined in the worship of Baal and other false gods. The result was divine wrath which brought great suffering to God’s people and

much pain to God's heart. God could simply not stand the pain from the cry of His children so He empowered Gideon to lead Israel in battle against their enemies. What a merciful God!

Sandwiched between the call of Gideon as Israel's deliverer (Judges 6:11-24) and his dramatic victory over the vast Midianite army (Judges 7:9-25), Gideon is commissioned by God to eradicate idolatry out of his father's house. In the story of Judges 6 we read of Gideon who tears down a false altar to rebuild an altar to the honour of God. Yes, his father had violated the covenant because of idolatry. "...Throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it:" "And build an altar unto the LORD thy God upon the top of this rock...and offer a burnt sacrifice..." (Judges 6: 25-26).

In Judges 6: 27, we see Gideon respond in bold faith to God's assignment despite his fears. "Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night." Take note, Gideon could not build the altar to God before the false altar was destroyed. This serves as an important lesson in our lives as believers. We cannot seek to serve a holy God before we get rid of all the false altars in our lives first. This means eradicating all forms of false worship that violate the Covenant with God.

In the aftermath, the men of the city are enraged, saying to Joash "Bring out thy son, that he may die..." (Judges 6:30). It takes faith to live for God. It takes faith and boldness to live for God's holiness in a world of so much darkness. They renamed him Jerub-Baal, saying, "Let Baal contend with him." The men truly thought Gideon had angered Baal, yet they had not considered how they had offended the one and true living God! Gideon, however, prevailed in his risky mission and experienced God's faithfulness both in enabling him to

complete his assignment despite his fears and protect him from the expected consequences.

Gideon remained faithful and obedient, reminding us that God calls us to action when it comes to serving Him. We cannot flirt with the world and want to walk in God's holiness. We cannot drink from the cup of the devil and the cup of the Lord. We cannot have a false altar in our lives while still bowing before the true altar before God. If we want to walk in God's blessings and power, we need to get rid of what offends God and violates the Covenant.

We learn that before the victory could be secured, a proper spiritual foundation had to be laid. We read that Gideon built an altar to the LORD and called it "The LORD is Peace". Take note, he had to build a "proper kind of altar to the LORD your God". The despicable altar of Baal had to be torn down and a proper altar set up in its place to honour Yahweh. Remember, God directed Gideon to start by tearing down the altar in his own father's house. Oh yes, we need to make sure we get our house in order first before we start instructing others in the Body of Christ to consider their false covenants! We need to make sure our foundation is secure and built upon the Rock of Jesus (Matthew 7).

Many of us desire to be used by God to make a difference in society, but we are not willing to pay the price. God was ready to change the deplorable conditions of His children in Canaan but Gideon had to be willing to confront the false gods and tear down their false altars at the risk of his life. King Josiah also had to take such drastic action to usher in revival (2 Kings 22 and 23). Gideon had to start with his own father's house. Genuine change always starts with self! Are you willing to be confronted and discredited by society? Are you willing to incur the wrath of people? If yes, then be prepared to be used by God. The good news is that the Almighty Himself will contend with those who contend with you! God will shield you and use you for His divine purposes.

Before Gideon was instructed to tear down the altar, the angel said to Gideon, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior” (Judges 6:12). The Lord then commissioned Gideon to “save Israel out of Midian’s hand” (verse 14). The angel confirmed God’s Word with a miracle (verses 20–22) and gave Gideon a promise: “I will be with you” (verse 16). It reminds us of how God encouraged Joshua to be bold and courageous when they took possession of the Promised Land under the instructions to get rid of all pagan tribes and customs. Gideon not only contended with Baal but also with the Midianites. God was true to His promise, and Gideon won a decisive victory over the enemy. Later, Gideon is still being called Jerubbaal (Judges 7:1; 8:29; 9:1). Scripture uses the names Gideon and Jerubbaal interchangeably in those passages. Baal never did exact vengeance upon Jerubbaal; rather, God poured out His blessing on Gideon.

Remember, the altar in the Old Testament was seen as a place of consecration and a place of sacrifice. Before God gave His Law to Moses, men made altars wherever they were out of whatever material was available. An altar was often built to commemorate an encounter with God that had a profound impact upon someone. Abram (Genesis 12:7), Isaac (Genesis 26:24–25), Jacob (Genesis 35:3), David (1 Chronicles 21:26), and Gideon (Judges 6:24) all built altars and worshipped after having a unique encounter with God. An altar usually represented a person’s desire to consecrate himself fully to the Lord. In the broadest sense, an altar is merely a designated place where a person consecrates himself to someone or something. There are over four hundred references to altars in the Bible. The word altar is first used in Genesis 8:20 when Noah built an altar to the Lord after leaving the ark.

During times of Israel’s rebellion and idolatry, the Lord’s altars fell into disrepair. The prophet Elijah, confronting the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, “repaired the altar of the Lord, which had

been torn down” (1 Kings 18:30). Elijah’s restoration of the altar was significant, given the rampant paganism of his day. Also, even though he was living in a divided kingdom, the prophet symbolized the unity of God’s people in his construction: “Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, ‘Your name shall be Israel.’ With the stones, he built an altar in the name of the Lord” (1 Kings 18:31–32). It was on this rebuilt altar that God rained down fire and put the Baal worshipers to shame (verses 38–39).

We need to understand a broken altar in the days of the Old Testament spoke of a broken relationship with the Lord, caused by idolatry, backsliding and neglecting fellowship with the Lord. For this reason, Israel endured judgment at the hand of the Lord. They had forsaken the ways of the Lord. They had forsaken His Truth and His Law. Considering the altar is a place of sacrifice and consecration, it means we need to get back to a point in our relationship with the Lord of submission, where we yield, where we surrender and we die to the self. It is about consecration by the Blood. An altar means that we do not keep anything for ourselves. An altar means that we realize that we are here on earth for God. An altar means that our life is for God, that God is our life, and that the meaning of our life is God. So we put everything on the altar. We are not here making a name for ourselves; we are putting everything on the altar for the sake of His name.

Whether you are tearing down an old altar, or building a new altar, God has promised to give you the strength you need. If you will simply come to Him, He will give you the faith required to forge a brand new relationship with Him. Then build a proper kind of altar to the Lord your God on the top of this height. Take note of the word ‘proper’. There are no shortcuts with God. It calls for complete submission and surrender. We follow God’s will, not ours. We abide by His truth, not ours.

If we truly want to be free from the seductions of the devil, we need to take action by tearing down these altars and covenants. Both of them act as legal doorways through which the enemy can operate and destroy our lives. Again, it should be noted we cannot walk in the fullness of God's victory unless we first deal with what is profane and unholy in our lives. We need to address idolatry and sin to walk in deliverance.

The great seduction is, however, to build the altar to the living God alongside the altar to the dead god (aka the idol). It's easy to build an altar to God alongside the other shrines in our lives. It takes enormous courage to tear down our altars to the 'lesser gods' and to build a proper altar to the Lord your God. What a sign it is, though, when the stuff of the old altars becomes the fuel for the flames of the new altar. These become the fires of great awakening, one by one, heart by heart, home by home, church by church, and city by city. We cannot compromise and we need to make a choice! Let us serve the Lord with boldness and courage, taking action like Gideon and Joshua to stand against idolatry, sin, evil, and all other manners of abominations. For then we walk in the victory of Christ, and the blessed assurance of our deliverance.



Hope, faith and love

1 CORINTHIANS 13: 11WHEN I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 12Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 13And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love

We must remain mindful of the author's background when we read the Book of Corinthians. Consider how the Apostle Paul had managed to raise up a congregation in a strange land, preaching to hostile Gentiles, and this after he had to months on end travel away from Jerusalem for his God-inspired mission.

Paul had already faced persecution back home when he first arrived in the Greek city of Corinth after also having gone through Asia Minor (today modern Turkey), where he led many Gentiles (Galatians) to the Lord.

Here was a man who was a pioneer at his time in preaching the Gospel to a strange audience, a man who endured countless hardships and troubles, so it stands to reason that this is also a man who knew the power and importance of holding firm and fast to love, hope and faith in Jesus.

Jesus came to show us true love, true hope and true faith. He came to show that hope and faith could not be found in this world but only in God, and He came to show that unconditional love (so

displayed on the cross) is the true answer to a broken world filled with darkness and hate.

Paul understood this powerful concept that the only way that the Gentiles would grasp the power of Salvation is through love! He understood that the only way he was going to succeed in his arduous and difficult task in the midst of heartache was to place his hope, trust and faith not in Jerusalem or in man, but in God and in God alone!

Paul endured and ran the race until the end for he was settled in love for he was settled in Jesus. Day and night and night and day Paul was harassed, yet he stood firm when he travelled to strange countries of strange pagan beliefs because he grasped the TRUTH that we can only truly stand firm in this life if we allow ourselves to love like Jesus loved, and if we hope and have trust in Him who is the eternal and beautiful God and King of all heavens.

And Paul in his letters to the Church of Corinth placed emphasis on the truth that as Christians we don't always know the answers, we don't always know why we suffer or go through tribulations, we don't always have to be fully informed, but that the true sign of those who walk in maturity and those who overcome this world are those who walk as Jesus did – in complete trust, faith and love under the authority of God.

We also face harsh and difficult times, and often we feel like we are also being overwhelmed by this strange world of strange practices and crazy rituals of want and need. We are commissioned by the Lord to carry the Gospel to the lost who are at times hostile, but we shall and we will overcome and be gloriously victorious if we remain true to the Lord by standing firm in His love, hope and faith.

We love for God is love. We hope that our hope is settled in heaven. We have faith because God is always in control and He is mighty, and full of love, grace and mercy. Why then shall we despair?

Shall we rather not let our light shine and let love conquer where hate has failed?

Remember, to have faith is to know God can do something, yet to have trust is to believe God will do something. So hold onto faith and trust. For God is faithful. For God is trustworthy. And in God, we find our strength to overcome, for He will not leave or forsake us. Glory to God.

Lord, teach us to truly walk as Jesus did – in love, hope and faith. Lord, just as Paul overcame and stood firm in the face of many dangers, trials and tribulations, so may we stand firm in Your will, in the face of toil and labour, in the times of storms and sunshine, as we hold firm to Your promises for by faith we are Your children, and You are our portion and in You, we find true love.

Lord, guide and lead us to be bold and true for You are always with us.



Legal victorious right in Christ

AS CHILDREN OF GOD, we can rejoice for in Christ is our victory, hope, healing and deliverance. In Christ, we are redeemed, restored and saved. We can walk in such victory, and the reality of our deliverance and salvation, because we have a legal right in Christ. We must set our minds on Christ, for He is the answer, the solution and the hope for all those who are needy, tired, broken and weary.

John 15 states: “1 I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

We are called to abide in the Lord. In the Lord, we bear fruit, which is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5). It is about walking in God’s light, love and beauty. In Christ, we can be the light, for He

is the light of the world. We have a legal right to our victory and redemption because of our legal right in Christ as established by the New Covenant sealed by the Blood of the Lamb.

We as disciples of God are co-crucified in Christ. Luke 9:23 says,²³ Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." And also "Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Galatians 5:24 says, "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires," while Hebrews 2:14 declares "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Since we are co-crucified with Christ, we now enjoy the life that the power of the Blood brings and promises. We live for Christ and Christ alone. As we are in the Lord, we live by faith. We are no longer living in the dark, but we are living in the beauty of a risen Lord.

We also enjoy our co-resurrection in Christ. Romans 6 says, "3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live

with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Colossians 2: 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Ephesians 2 declares, “1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).”

In Christ is our freedom. In Christ we live, for He lives! In Christ, we are free from the bondages of sin and death because our God has been raised from the dead and ascended to sit at the right hand of the Father. As it says, “Life that He lives, He lives to God.” The life we live as we abide in the resurrection and the crucifixion of Christ, is a life to the glory of God. Death no longer has dominion over us for it has no dominion over Jesus. In Christ, our trespasses has been removed so that we are no longer subjected to the seductions and manipulations of the forces of darkness.

Here is a thought for us to ponder. Have we forgotten who we serve? Have we forgotten who this great and mighty God is? If we do, we shall surely not fear or be in distress, no matter the storms, the troubles, the anguish or the darkness. We need to realise our legal right in Christ, and our protection, provision and favour as sealed by the New Covenant. By the Blood of the Lamb, we live in the reality of Psalms 23 and 91. John 14:1 says (Jesus speaking): "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me." We need to think of those things that above, meaning our thoughts must not be on the world's ways. Our hearts must beat in synch with God, so that we love what He loves. In God is our victory, because we are dead to sin and our carnal desires! We are alive to glorify God!

The woman who had the issue of blood only had the word of God in her heart. "If I could only touch the hem of His garment I will be made well" (Matthew 9:21). She cast her care and condition at Jesus' feet. She knew if she only got to Jesus she would be healed and delivered. Glory to God, there is power in the Blood of Jesus! There is a mighty working power to heal, save and deliver! We need to touch the hem of His garment! Yet Jesus poured out all His Blood for the Covenant so that we may walk in victory! The Blood still redeems and delivers us from our calamity and troubles, for God is still on the throne. We must just believe, yes just believe in God. Nothing in this world will save or deliver us, only Christ! In Christ, there is power, for He died for our sins, He was resurrected and ascended in victory.

In Christ is our victory, for we have a legal right to abide in Him by the Blood of the Covenant. So just believe in that victory! Believe in the Blood. Believe in His healing. Believe in His power! Ephesians 1 reminds us of our co-exaltation in Christ: "17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, 18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know

what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

Let us remember, because of our position in Christ, we have also been raised far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. Take note, the Word says “far above.” This is because nothing in the demonic realm or in the world can even come close to God’s greatness, goodness and majesty. Nothing can harm Him, for He is powerful and mighty! Yes, who can stand against the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

When we abide in Christ He abides in us (John 15). As we abide in the Vine, we abide in His victory and in the truth we have been raised above all demonic or earthly powers. God is supreme, and nothing is impossible for Him! When we grab hold of His garment, saturated by His precious Blood, we shall not fear the principalities, powers and authorities (as spoken about by Paul in Ephesians 6) that seek to destroy us. We belong to Christ, so let us rejoice! Verse 22 says that God put all things under His (Jesus) feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church. As Christ is exalted above all powers and exalted as the King and Lord of His spiritual children, so we are exalted above spiritual darkness, demonic onslaughts and devilish sicknesses because we are in Christ!

Ephesians 2 reminds is the following: “6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ

Jesus.” Glory to God! Why then fear? Do you realise in this day where you sit? Do you realise you sit WITH Christ in HEAVENLY PLACES? We serve a mighty God by whose stripes we HAVE BEEN healed and delivered. We are not called to dwell in the valley of beggars, subjected to slavery and the abuse of the devil and the world.

Romans 8 says that “in all things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (vs. 37). Paul’s use of the phrase “more than conquerors” only appears here in the New Testament. It refers to those who “gain a surpassing victory” meaning “to be completely victorious; to carry away an overwhelming victory.” He’s saying the reality is this; we “are” more than conquerors...“present tense, active situation” in other words, Christians “keep on winning a glorious victory.” The fact is that even when all of life is against us, we are still “more than conquerors” and God will strengthen us to live out that glorious victory every day, despite how things look to us, or how we feel about our circumstances. Glory to God!

Being more than a conqueror in Christ means that you have the power to resist him and stand firm in the faith. Being more than a conqueror in a battle means you achieve overwhelming victory.

The enemy might put up a fight, but he is no match for Christ in you. Let this sink in: we not only achieve victory, but we are overwhelmingly victorious.

There are many illustrations in the Old Testament of God bringing miraculous victory to His people, Israel. Humanly speaking, Israel was no match for their enemies. But God cautioned them not to be afraid, that He would fight their battles for them. Exodus 14:14 says, "The Lord will fight for you, you need only to be still." The Lord told Jeremiah that He was bringing armies against the rebellious Israelites as punishment for their disobedience, but even then, "'They . . . will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you,' declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 1:19). In one instance,

an entire army fled their own camp when God caused them to hear the sounds of a great army coming. The famine-racked Israelites were able to plunder the enemy camp and provide for their families through no act of their own (2 Kings 7). Not only were they saved from an approaching army, but they benefited from the threat. They were "more than conquerors."

Satan is our adversary. He sends all kinds of life-defeating, joy-stealing attacks to threaten the well-being and faith of God's children. Many of those attacks are listed in Romans 8:35–39: trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, and sword. Paul is encouraging us to stand firm in our faith when those attacks come, reminding us that not only will we win in the end, but Jesus enables us to win now. Satan lacks the power to steal our eternal destiny, and he cannot separate us from the love of God right now. Nothing we face worries God in the least. If we are His children through faith in His Son, then we have His pledge of love and protection. In John 10:27–29, Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand."

To be more than conquerors means we face the trials of life with the certainty that we are not alone. We have a mighty Father who fights for us. We approach the darkest valleys with confidence, knowing that nothing can happen to us that is not permitted by our loving Father for our good (Psalm 23:4; Romans 8:28). We have His promise of eternal life (John 3:16; Titus 1:2; 1 John 5:11) and the presence of Almighty God every moment of every day until we see Him face to face (Psalm 139:7–12; Deuteronomy 31:8; Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20). No sin of ours and no attempt of the enemy can steal the loving care of God from our lives, and that makes us more than conquerors through Christ who loves us.

Why then fear, for God is with us and unto Him belong all power and glory! 1 Chronicles 29 says, “11 Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head over all.” Revelation 5:13 says, “And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!” Revelation 7:12 declares, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever.”

Colossians 3 reminds us as children of God that we share in the victory and glory of His coming. It says, “4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” Yes, this is our victory in Christ! We are destined to reign with Him as declared in “2 Timothy 2:12 If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.” Colossians 3 says, “4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” Glory to God, there is victory and life in Christ!

Revelation 22:5 says, “There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.” Christ will reign forever. Nothing can stop God. Unto Him is subjected all power and dominion! 1 Peter 3:22 says, “Who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.” Philippians 2 says, “9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Give the Lord praise on this day! In Him, we are more than victorious! We can rejoice for we have a legal right in Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. We shall reign with Him forever more. We do not have to fear! What God says shall be. Unto Him belongs the end-time harvest. As all powers, authorities and demotions bow before God, so they are subjected to the authority and power that rests in the believers of God. Oh yes, we are certainly not gods, but we abide in a mighty and powerful eternal God to whom belongs all victory and glory! So rejoice, yes rejoice, and believe that no matter what is thrown against us, we can surely be victorious! We are secure and settled in our legal position in Christ, and if we remain in Him, then there is nothing legally that the devil can do about it!



Positioned in Christ according to His will

IT IS IMPORTANT TO be ALWAYS at the right place at the right time when it comes to our spiritual walk, therefore, be positioned correctly according to God's will. If we are positioned as God declares and mandates, we walk according to His will and will find our rest, peace and joy.

Adam and Eve were enjoying the abundant life in Paradise. They were positioned in the Garden that overflowed with blessings. Genesis 2 says, "8 The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. 9 And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. 10 Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads."

Adam and then Eve understood that of every tree of the garden they may eat from, but not of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. So what did the devil do? He tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God and eat from the wrong tree. In chapter 3 we read, "22 Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever" — 23 therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. 24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim

at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.’

Adam and Eve, because of their disobedience, found themselves no longer in the Garden. They had rebelled against God’s will. The devil had succeeded in moving them out of their blessed position as determined by God’s will. We then read: “17 Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: “Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. 19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.” Adam and Eve had everything they desired in Paradise, yet allowed the devil to seduce them to forsake their position by listening to lies.

The devil always wants to get us out of our spiritual position of blessing and peace, meaning, out of God’s will. He will tempt us, seduce us or lie to us to make the wrong decisions and choices. It is that simple. In Genesis 12 we read, “1 Now the Lord had said to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. 2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Abraham had to reposition Himself according to God’s will, so that God’s masterplan for Israel could be set in full motion. He had to be positioned correctly so that God could make of him a great nation and his name great. This would not have happened unless Abraham took the necessary action to move where God’s will directed him.

In Judges 6 we read, “11 Now the Angel of the Lord came and sat under the terebinth tree which was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while his son Gideon threshed wheat in the

winepress, in order to hide it from the Midianites. 12 And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him, and said to him, “The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor!” Gideon was not positioned correctly according to God’s plan and will. The angel had come with a mandate for Gideon to set Israel free from the Midianites. At times God deals with our subtly, and other times more directly, to reposition us according to His will and mandate. We need to always be correctly positioned to walk according to God’s victory.

We then read: “25 Now it came to pass the same night that the Lord said to him, “Take your father’s young bull, the second bull of seven years old, and tear down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the wooden image that is beside it; 26 and build an altar to the Lord your God on top of this rock in the proper arrangement, and take the second bull and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the image which you shall cut down.” 27 So Gideon took ten men from among his servants and did as the Lord had said to him. But because he feared his father’s household and the men of the city too much to do it by day, he did it by night. 28 And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, there was the altar of Baal, torn down; and the wooden image that was beside it was cut down, and the second bull was being offered on the altar which had been built. 29 So they said to one another, “Who has done this thing?” And when they had inquired and asked, they said, “Gideon the son of Joash has done this thing.” 30 Then the men of the city said to Joash, “Bring out your son, that he may die, because he has torn down the altar of Baal, and because he has cut down the wooden image that was beside it.”

We always need to take action according to God’s Word to remain in God’s Word and Will. Gideon had to tear down his family’s altar to be in right standing with God. Only then could God use Gideon mightily to deliver the people. It was because of obedience, no matter the cost or the repercussions of his actions, that

God could position him to fulfil his mandate. Following God's will is not always easy, just like Gideon or Abraham. Yet it needs to be done.

In 1 Samuel 16, we find Samuel the prophet going to the house of Jesse the Bethlehemite. He was made to understand that God had provided a king in light of Saul's failure. When all the sons had seen the prophet, we read: "11 And Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all the young men here?" Then he said, "There remains yet the youngest, and there he is, keeping the sheep." David as a young boy was about to be moved out of his current position of attending to the sheep to be repositioned as the king of Israel! Yet David had to react by allowing Samuel to anoint him. He also had to subsequently embrace his mandate to be the next king of Israel.

We never know what God has in store for us, this is why it is so important to remain obedient to God. David surely would not have known God's plans while he attended to the sheep. He was most likely comfortable in his position of attending to the flock. We must be comfortable being so comfortable in our position that we fail to allow God to reposition us. God might just want to use us mightily for a great purpose!

Joseph, son of the patriarch Jacob and his wife Rachel, would become one of the most powerful rulers in Egypt. Yet his entire story is about being constantly repositioned even though he could not understand the will of God. We read of how Joseph, the most beloved of Jacob's sons, is hated by his envious brothers. Angry and jealous of Jacob's gift to Joseph, a resplendent "coat of many colours," the brothers seize him and sell him to a party of Ishmaelites, or Midianites, who carry him to Egypt. He was sold to Potiphar, one of King Pharaoh's ministers. Joseph was repositioned from being a brother to land up in a pit and then in prison! Yet God had a plan.

Joseph would eventually gain the favour of the pharaoh of Egypt by his interpretation of a dream and so obtained a high place in the

pharaoh's kingdom. God repositioned Joseph out of the prison and into the courts of a powerful ruler! This was not just about blessing Joseph for God had a plan. His acquisition of grain supplies enabled Egypt to withstand a famine. Joseph was able to act in such a wise manner because he was correctly positioned according to God's will. Driven by the same famine, his brothers journeyed from Canaan to Egypt to obtain food. They prostrated themselves before Joseph but did not recognize him. After Joseph achieved a reconciliation with his brothers, he invited Jacob's whole household to come to Goshen in Egypt, where a settlement is provided for the family and their flocks. This is, of course, where the entire story of Israel starts in earnest, as the family's descendants grew and multiplied into the Hebrews, who would eventually depart from Egypt for the Promised Land. And it all happened because God had to reposition Joseph! Out of Israel would be born the Son of God – Jesus! Glory to God.

When we talk about being positioned, let us consider Moses. He was positioned in a basket as a baby on the River Nile by his mother, defying the order to kill Hebrew boys. He was rescued from the river and repositioned to grow up in the Egyptian palace for 40 days. After killing a fellow Egyptian, he fled to the wilderness for 40 years to attend to sheep. God then repositioned Moses as the burning bush by sending him back to Egypt at the age of 80 to lead the enslaved Israel out of bondage and to the Promised Land. Moses would become one of Israel's greatest prophets and the receiver of the Covenant of the Law. All of this happened because Moses was correctly positioned throughout his life according to God's will. Moses never saw the Promised Land, but at the end of the day, this was most likely God's intended will all along.

God had a great plan for Israel. God sustained them while in slavery, yet they were not blessed. They suffered cruelty for over 400 years until they were set free and repositioned in the wilderness. Again, God sustained them, yet they were not blessed. Repeatedly

in the Old Testament, God describes the Promised Land as “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8; Numbers 14:8; Deuteronomy 31:20; Ezekiel 20:15). This poetic description of Israel’s land emphasizes the fertility of the soil and bounty that awaited God’s chosen people. In Exodus 3:8, God says to Moses, “I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.” God’s description of the Promised Land as “a land flowing with milk and honey” is a beautifully graphic way of highlighting the agricultural richness of the land. God brought His people out of slavery in Egypt to a prosperous land of freedom, blessing and the knowledge of the Lord. Israel needed to be repositioned – first out of Egypt, then the wilderness and then into the Promised Land.

While we all tend to go astray, God will sustain us to get back on the right track. When we are in the right position according to God’s will, we find ourselves dwelling under the shade of the Almighty God (Psalm 91). We then enjoy the ‘land of milk and honey’. After all, Matthew 6:33 is the promise of no lack who seeks God’s Kingdom and His righteousness. This implies walking in God’s will and being positioned according to His will in every season of our lives.

Saul for a long time was positioned in religion and law, hell-bent on destroying the Jewish Christian converts. Yet God sustained him until Saul was repositioned in Christ and his calling. This happened on the Road to Damascus, and subsequently, he was known as Paul. For a long time, Saul was a murderer and a man to be feared (Acts 8:3), yet once he was repositioned in Jesus he was transformed into a man of love, grace and mercy. To be positioned and repositioned calls for humility, and the strength of character to allow God to move us from a state where we are only sustained to where we are blessed abundantly.

In Acts 1 we read, “4 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; 5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” 8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” The followers of Christ did not know what Jesus was talking about when it came to the Holy Spirit, but they were commanded to position themselves in the city, specifically the Upper Room. They obeyed, and because they were waiting and holding fast to their position, they experienced the Pentecost. Because they obeyed and were correctly positioned, the Christian faith grew rapidly throughout the world up to now!

It is so important for us to stay in God’s will by remaining in the right position when it comes to our lives and ministry. We must be careful of moving out of position because of desperation, or taking decisions based on our pride, wisdom and knowledge. We need to abide in God, listen, pray and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We stay in the right position when we allow ourselves to be bent to His perfect and commanded will. We all go astray, therefore, out of position regarding God’s will, but praise the Lord He sustains us to lead us back on the right path. When we are positioned and aligned correctly according to His will, this is when we dwell in His presence and enjoy His blessings, truth, joy and peace.

To follow the will of the Lord is of utmost necessity. And this also pertains to when we seek the Lord in prayer and supplications. We love to quote “John 14: 13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.” And with this, we also stand upon Luke 11:10-12: 10 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will

be opened. 11 “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?”

Based upon these Scriptures, we are under the impression that we can simply ask ANYTHING of God, even if it is out of His will or plans and purposes of the Lord to exalt the Self and our selfish agendas and desires. We, however, forget “Matthew 6: 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” and also “Luke 9:23: Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

Jesus teaches us how to pray in “Matthew 6: 9 “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Let us then connect the dots, because so often we love to take Scripture out of context to support our doctrine or ideas. After all, we have made God into Father Christmas who must simply give whatever we want! If we consider Mathew 6 verses 9-10 and 33, along with Luke 9, we see that Jesus also teaches about submission and yielding to the will and purpose of the Lord. He talks about denying the self [our desires, plans and purposes and old nature] to follow the Lord to His Glory.

Therefore, if we truly follow the Lord and thus obey Him, His Kingdom will become our highest priority. If we truly follow Him, then our character and nature will come into alignment with God’s nature and order.

If we, however, say we follow the Lord but still follow our agenda, plans and purposes, thus exalting our own will, then we are not following the Lord as His disciple. If we then are truly following Him, we will deny ourselves and seek His Truth above all. What will then be the result?

If we then ASK, according to John 14 and Luke 11, we will be ASKING according to His will, plan and purposes to and for His Glory. And then what we ASK will be to His Glory shall also be granted, for it will then be to glorify the Lord. But we err if we think we can simply ask and demand from the Lord if we are strangers to Him, instead of serving Him as His obedient children who seek His Kingdom above our own. So yes, let us ASK for we shall receive IF our intentions and motivations are conformed to God's Kingdom, His values and truth.

And yes, let us also ASK in faith and trust, but this is far removed from the modern-day teachings of "name it and claim it" notion where we ASK and RECEIVE even if do not deny ourselves if we seek Him not above all and if we simply seek our own glorification and exaltation.

God cannot be fooled or mocked, and He knows who His true children are. He knows our motives and intentions, so let us earnestly seek His will.

When it comes to walking in God's will and seeking His will, we need to consider the life of Hezekiah. There are a number of lessons to be learned. In Isaiah 38 New King James Version (NKJV) we read how the king wept for God to extend his life as he faced imminent death due to sickness. God granted his plea, extending his life by 15 years. This of course shows God's mercy and kindness, but was Hezekiah in God's perfect will to pray and ask for his life to be prolonged?

First, let us consider his life before his prayer was answered. In the first month of his reign, Hezekiah immediately got to work and smashed down all the pagan altars and wooden images throughout the hills of Judah. He thus sought after the Lord. He also began to clean out and repair the temple and restore temple worship. The temple had been neglected for many years to the point where the rooms were full of junk and rubbish, including idols in the sanctuary.

In 2 Kings 18:5-7, we are told, “He (Hezekiah) trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he held fast to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses. The Lord was with him; he prospered wherever he went”

Hezekiah thus was a man who truly sought God and His Will. But then came the sickness, and seeking God to be healed. Was Hezekiah seeking God’s will or merely his own will? In 2 Kings 20:12-19 we see that Berodach-Baladan, son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, and the Bible says that Hezekiah was responsive to this attention. So much so that Hezekiah welcomed him without regard to intent or purposes, and readily showed him everything he had in his treasury house, his entire armoury, and all within his dominion. In fact, there was nothing that he did not show Berodach-Baladan.

We read in 2 Chronicles 32 of Hezekiah’s wealth but also his pride. 27 Hezekiah had very great riches and honor. And he made himself treasuries for silver, for gold, for precious stones, for spices, for shields, and for all kinds of desirable items; 28 storehouses for the harvest of grain, wine, and oil; and stalls for all kinds of livestock, and folds for flocks. 29 Moreover he provided cities for himself, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him very much property.

Remember the Babylonian envoy would not have visited Hezekiah if the king had remained ill and had abided by God’s will. Instead, Hezekiah was recovering from his sickness and obviously, it was not a wise thing to do to show the envoy all his riches. Hezekiah got caught up rather naively in thinking that the king of Babylon and his son meant well and wanted to bring gifts as part of his genuine concern for his health and well-being and to show kindness and peace.

It would appear that Hezekiah was caught in a weak moment of pride while abundance and peace prevailed. God allowed Hezekiah to be tested so he would know exactly all that was in his heart. In 2 Chronicles 32:25-26 we are told that Hezekiah's heart was lifted up and that wrath was impending over him, Judah and Jerusalem. But "then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that the wrath of the Lord did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah."

When Isaiah confronted Hezekiah by asking what the visitors had seen in his house, Hezekiah responded truthfully and told him that not one thing was held back from their sight. Isaiah then declared from the word of the Lord that everything Hezekiah and his fathers had accumulated until this time would be carried off to Babylon. Not only that, but some of Hezekiah's sons would become eunuchs in the king of Babylon's palace.

Hezekiah's prayer for healing serves as a lesson that there are always consequences to each and every decision we make, especially if it is not at all times in the will of God. After all, Hezekiah wanted to live longer and now was faced with such a prophecy of doom. Indeed God chose not to punish Hezekiah directly because of his repentant attitude, but the consequences would be put onto the forthcoming generations. Such consequences are most likely the result of Hezekiah not allowing God's will for his life to take its course.

But this was not the only consequence of Hezekiah's prolonged life. The last son to be born to him was Manasseh. This child was born during the king's prolonger 15 years. The biblical account of Manasseh is found in 2 Kings 21:1-18 and 2 Chronicles 32:33-33:20. He is also mentioned in Jeremiah 15:4, where the prophet Jeremiah predicts "four forms of destruction" for the people of Judah because of the evil done by Manasseh in Judah. Manasseh re-instituted polytheistic worship and reversed the religious changes

made by his father Hezekiah, for which he is condemned by several biblical texts.

After a reign of 55 years, the longest in the history of Judah, he died in c. 643 BC and was buried in the garden of Uzza, the "garden of his own house" (2 Kings 21:17–18; 2 Chronicles 33:20), and not in the City of David, among his ancestors. It was a reign of more than five decades of wickedness, which all flowed directly from Hezekiah praying for God to grant him more years. So what would have happened if Hezekiah had succumbed to the illness, and Manasseh was not born? Makes you think and again realise there are consequences to our actions.

Hezekiah reminds us how in the post-modern world mankind still loves to be in control of his own destiny and fate, labouring daily to build his own empire or kingdom. We also pray and seek God for things, but many times it is not His will but our own will. We can only find our true purpose, peace, security, hope and future in the will of the Lord. No matter how intelligent, wise or clever we think we are we will cause greater wear and tear to our spirit, soul and body when we keep walking in our will and not the will of the Lord.

Now, consider the life of Paul and the lessons we can learn from God's Will. Remember the apostle's third missionary campaign ended in Jerusalem, as he, along with other brethren (cf. Acts 20:4), brought to the holy city a contribution for the poor of that region (cf. Acts 24:17). In Acts 20 we read what Paul says of this pending journey: 22 And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. 24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

So here Paul feels he is compelled to go to Jerusalem. Paul was of course not afraid to suffer for the Gospel, as we read in 2 Corinthians 11. But was it truly God's will for him to be imprisoned and to go to Jerusalem?

We read for example in Acts 21 New King James Version (NKJV): 21 Now it came to pass, that when we had departed from them and set sail, running a straight course we came to Cos, the following day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. 2 And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. 3 When we had sighted Cyprus, we passed it on the left, sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload her cargo. 4 And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. 5 When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed. 6 When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home. 7 And when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day. 8 On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. 10 And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" 12 Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at

Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” 14 So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, “The will of the Lord be done.”

So in Acts 20, we find that Paul felt he needed to go to Jerusalem, yet in Acts 21 he was warned not to go. So was Paul following his own will, and would his own will get him into trouble despite his good intentions? And because Paul still wanted to go to Jerusalem, we can clearly see the consequence was his imprisonment. Despite the prophet also telling Paul that he would be bound, Paul simply said he was ready to die for the Gospel. And so everybody present decided this is now the will of the Lord. But was it really? Was it God’s intention for Paul to be imprisoned and suffer even more, or were Paul’s good intentions serving his own will and agenda?

Remember, prisoners in the ancient world were rarely sent to prison as punishment. Rather, prisons typically served as holding cells for those awaiting trial or execution. We see this throughout Scripture. Mosaic Law made no provision for incarceration as a form of punishment. Joseph languished in an Egyptian prison for two years, presumably awaiting trial before Pharaoh on a charge of rape (Genesis 39:19–20; 41:1). Jeremiah was imprisoned under accusation of treason (Jeremiah 37:11–16) but was transferred to the temple guardhouse after an appeal to King Zedekiah, who sought to protect the prophet (37:17–21). And though Jeremiah was later thrown into a cistern, the purpose was to kill him, not imprison him (38:1–6). So Paul could have escaped lengthy imprisonment, but it seems he chose to put a chain of events into motion.

Paul was of course first happily embraced by the brothers in Jerusalem, but they presented him with a problem. His reputation had preceded him. The report had spread abroad that the apostle was antagonistic to the Jewish system. To disarm a volatile situation, Paul agreed to submit to a ceremonial “cleansing” in the temple as was the custom for Jews who had travelled among the Gentile

lands (Acts 21:26). This act of benevolence hardly appeased the Jews. Paul had already been seen in the city with Trophimus, a Gentile from Ephesus. So a rumour quickly spread that the apostle had taken Greeks into the temple and defiled it (Acts 21:28), which was a capital offence. Before long, the city was aflame with the lynch mob mentality. Paul's life was saved only when Roman officials intervened and removed him to safety.

Eventually, under heavy guard (Acts 23:23), the apostle was taken to Caesarea over on the coast, where he was confined in Herod's palace. Over some time, Paul was subjected to a series of interrogations. Finally, after two years had elapsed and it appeared that "justice delayed is justice denied," the noble preacher concluded that he would never receive a fair hearing under the present circumstances. And so, exercising his right as a Roman citizen, he appealed his case to Caesar (Acts 25:11-12). The harrowing voyage to Rome is graphically detailed by Luke in Acts 27:1-28:16. This is the most remarkable account of ancient sea navigation in the annals of history.

Thus, in summary, during Paul's first imprisonment, he awaited trial before Roman governors Felix and Festus (Acts 24-26). He then was under house arrest in Rome for two years (28:30), awaiting an appearance before Nero. Scholars believe Paul was released sometime in AD 62 because the Jews who had accused him of being "a real pest and a fellow who stirs up dissension" (24:5) didn't press their case before the emperor. However, during Paul's second imprisonment in the Mamertine dungeon, he received a preliminary hearing and was awaiting a final trial (2 Timothy 4:16). He didn't expect acquittal. Paul writes in "2 Timothy 4: 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me

on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

Despite ending up in prison in Rome for about three years, Paul had fought the good fight. He had endured on the course. Seven letters in the New Testament were credited to Paul on the assumption that he wrote them while a prisoner in Rome. These include 1 and 2 Timothy, Philippians, Philemon, Colossians and Ephesians.

As a prisoner himself, Paul reiterated the power of the Gospel in overcoming sociological barriers. He didn't defend slavery, nor was he directly attacking it in either. Paul instead spoke to the power of forgiveness and the impact of grace, both of which had life-changing effects on society and the individual. Paul's letter to Philemon demonstrated, as his Prison Epistles also confirmed, that a Christian's place in the kingdom of God is not determined by their physical circumstances. In many of his letters, Paul often referred to himself as a “prisoner of Christ” (Ephesians 3:1, Philemon 1:1, 9), a position he willingly embraced. Even while imprisoned, Paul still carried the authority of Jesus Christ and ministered to those he was called to. Whether in person or via letter, Paul's ministry was purposeful and profound, and his writings are impactful and instructional for the global church today.

So while God used Paul still mightily to teach, preach, encourage and edify, even in prison, was his final imprisonment truly God's will? Remember when Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, he expressed hope that he would visit the church in that city as soon as arrangements could be made following his journey to the city of Jerusalem. The visit to Rome was delayed for about three years, but when he finally reached the city, he arrived as a prisoner awaiting trial before the court of the emperor. Paul wanted to visit Rome, so did he by any chance choose to hasten his imprisonment or was it truly the will of the Lord?

This is why we need to listen so closely to God and what the will of the Lord is for our lives. Many times our will may seem to be God's way, but maybe it is only our agenda and desires coming to the fore. At the end of the day, when we walk in the will of the Lord we walk in His footsteps and we, therefore, walk along a path made straight and the rough ways smooth. The Lord will go before those who follow His will and seek His glory. He knows what is best for us.

He must be in control to keep us straight on our course through life. We, however, have to submit and come under His complete sovereignty and authority.

REMEMBER! NOT KNOWING and DOING the WILL of God (Matthew 7.21) could land you in Matthew 7:23, which speaks of ETERNAL SEPARATION from God! The enemy will, therefore, never want you to come to the core KNOWLEDGE of the WILL of God.



About the Author

Ps Riaan Engelbrecht is the founder of Avishua Ministries, the vice-president of Lighthouse Ministries International and the station manager of Lighthouse Radio. His ministry deals primarily with the prophetic, but he also has a passion to teach the Truth of the Lord Jesus and His Kingdom for only the Truth of the Lord sets us free (John 8:32). He is also a qualified and seasoned journalist.

Read more at <https://avishuaministries.wixsite.com/avishua>.

