

Your

WORD

Is

Strength

VOLUME TWO

A LIFE~APPLICATION DEVOTIONAL

BY BROTHER JONATHAN

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1. WHAT GOD HAS COVERED, LET NO MAN UNCOVER

“And Noah began *to be* an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Ja’pheth took a garment, and laid *it* upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces *were* backward, and they saw not their father’s nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him” (Genesis 9:20-24).

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This passage portrays more than just a historical event, it is also prophetic as it relates to the direction of the human race since the Fall. Even though “...Noah was a just man *and* perfect in his generations, *and* Noah walked with God (or if you prefer, *having integrity*)” (Genesis 6:9) and was delivered through the Flood (read Genesis chapters 7 and 8), he still failed. Likewise, each and every one of us are fallen as well. Thankfully, God in His great mercy has provided a way of redemption.

As “Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offering on the altar” (Genesis 8:20), God was pleased and in response, establishes that the earth would never again be destroyed by water, as the rainbow served as the sign (read Genesis 9:13).

The lesson we would do well to learn from the actions of Shem and Japheth as opposed to that of Canaan is tremendous. It has much far-reaching effects than most of us would realize. Ham and his fourth son, Canaan (as are their descendants), were cursed for allowing iniquity (may have even been a sexually immoral act committed by Canaan as

witnessed by Ham). On the other hand, Shem and Japheth as well as their descendants (which includes the population of Europe and America) were greatly blessed until recent history for exercising wise spiritual attitudes. I believe it shows us that the seeds we plant in terms of our actions, thoughts and words, whether they be good or bad, have the power to produce the fruit upon which future generations, if Jesus tarries, will eat. Even being silent when we know something needs to be spoken truthfully in love (according to Ephesians 4:15) is to leave people naked in their problems. However, it needs to satisfy Matthew 18:15-20 and Galatians 6:1 with every intention of submitting to one another in unity, clothing others in faith and encouragement; “Death and life *are* in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof” (Proverbs 18:21).

By the word of [our] testimony (according to Revelation 12:11), the Spirit of God answers the blood as it is applied to our life. Religion, church membership or even good works cannot cover our sins, only repentance and walking in the light through “the blood of Jesus Christ” can (read 1 John 1:7). As overcomers, we have victory over past bondages and generational curses which are broken in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. When “the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them [Adam and Eve]” (Genesis 3:21), it was a type or shadow of the then still-to-come shed blood of Jesus Christ. In essence, the garments God made for Adam and Eve was more than mere physical covering from nakedness, it was for spiritual protection as well. Under the New Covenant, we are given garments of spiritual life as we “...put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27) and “...put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24).

When we hear of someone in the Church (and it may even be someone we personally know) who has failed, what is our immediate response? Do we rejoice and gossip? Or will we weep with broken-hearted

repentance and cover the iniquity (by this, we do not mean to excuse or justify, but in the sense of restoring the one who repents)?

We do not need to know the details of the wrongdoing but we can pray, love and stand with the brother or sister who needs mercy as we ourselves receive mercy from the Lord and others too. God help us to “above all things have fervent charity (or if you prefer, *love*) among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8).

“God, help me show mercy to others as You have been merciful unto me. Give me a heart to hate evil and yet love the offender who turns to You. I ask this in Jesus name.”

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2. I AM NOT WORTHY

“I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies... ” (Genesis 32:10).

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Calling out to God with a contrite and humble attitude (according to Psalm 34:18; 51:17, Isaiah 57:15; 66:2) is not something to be despised. In fact, in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (read Luke 18:9-14), it was not the self-righteous but the broken individual who was willing to acknowledge one’s own unworthiness and then plead God’s mercy and grace whose prayer God accepts.

In the natural, Jacob was a man who was probably among the least qualified to find acceptance and favour with most of us. But not with God. Before his encounter with God, he was obviously a “Supplanter” or “Deceiver”, but his engagement in begging at the throne of grace touched God and as a consequence, his life and spiritual status was transformed.

Have we experienced the lovingkindness of the Lord? If not, we need to quickly acknowledge our transgressions and then trust in His sacrificial

death for the forgiveness of our sins, “*It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him*” (Lamentations 3:22-24).

“Lord, thank You for Your stedfast love. You are my portion and my salvation. In Jesus name.”

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3. SANCTUARY OF GLORY

“And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and *the tabernacle* shall be sanctified by my glory ... And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God” (Exodus 29:43, 45).

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In the days of the Old Testament, the tabernacle was the place designated by God whereby He could manifest His *Shekinah* glory. Detailed ceremonial pattern of entering into the place of the altar was specified as the revelation of God’s holy and awesome presence demanded proper preparation.

Annually, animal sacrifices were offered as a type of the then still-to-come shed blood of the perfect Lamb, Jesus Christ. The blood of these animals served as a provisional covering for man’s sin. The purifying fire of God literally destroys the abomination that was present.

Nevertheless, it was only until the coming of Jesus Christ whose shed blood on the cross could completely satisfy God’s holy and perfect requirement which was needed for the forgiveness of sins (read Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:14) and our justification (read Romans 3:24; 4:25; 5:1, 16, 18 and Titus 3:7) once and for all, opening a “new and living way” (Hebrews 10:20) whereby we can have direct access to the throne room of God. Under the New Covenant, once we receive the

new birth (read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:15), we become temple of the Holy Spirit, “in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:22).

As the house of God, we need to constantly guard our hearts against subtle idolatry, especially in areas such as money, power and sex and examine ourselves as we allow the Word to measure our lives and our words, “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Corinthians 6:16).

“Lord, create in us a sanctuary of glory for an habitation of God through the Spirit. In Jesus name.”

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4. MAJORITY DOES NOT ALWAYS WIN

“And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it” (Numbers 13:30).

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Faith is essential to the life of the church and of the individual believer. Without faith, all we see are natural appearances and very soon, our spiritual vision would be thwarted.

God never intended for us to just maintain a status quo. We are living in a day and age where despite all odds, we can see our generation won to the Lord Jesus Christ. The move of God is sweeping across the nations in gathering the harvest of souls as well as filling the spiritual hunger of believers. Unfortunately, whenever the Spirit of God moves mightily, there will always be difficulties and opposition. The spirit of religion

wants to kill those who will dare believe God for the things once thought impossible.

Like Joshua and Caleb, hearing from heaven may create conflicts with the giants of the land or even of the church but God's plan does not always fit with popular opinion. One of the true marks of godly leadership is to be able to move with God's vision without appeals to the majority. When the Holy Spirit calls an individual for a task, at times this person would face desertion or even rebellion from those who were previously associated with him or her. Many want the anointing and the touch of the Spirit, but precious few want to pay the price for waging and winning the powerful magnitude of spiritual warfare which often accompanies the call of God.

The Scripture says that the unbelief of the ten spies "brought up an evil report of the land" (Numbers 13:32). What is this "evil report"? I believe it is looking to natural circumstances instead of walking by faith and trusting in the faithfulness of God.

While we should not deny the existence of obstacles in our lives, we must declare the power and victory of God to overcome the problems. No matter what the majority or the mighty may say, we must not assume they are always right if they do not stand on God's Word. Majority does not always win but victory always belongs to the Lord! Hallelujah!

"Father, let faith arise in me as it did in the lives of Joshua and Caleb. I come under Your hand and submit to Your authority. As I do, I will see the giants of my life, the church and the land defeated in the mighty name of Jesus Christ."

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5. THE BATTLE IS THE LORD'S, YOU JUST OBEY HIS WORD

“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God *is* with thee whithersoever thou goest” (Joshua 1:9).

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Life is often difficult, if not impossible. Although God allows us to face problems, His grace will carry us through, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4).

The key to victory, however, is to be found in obedience to His Word. Though Joshua was a mighty man of war, his strength lies in his dedication in keeping his eyes on the ark of the covenant, “And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it” (Joshua 3:3). Likewise, God’s Presence reflected in our lives is the only valuable treasure that we have. We must keep our eyes on Jesus, “the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

As God works through “apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers” (according to Ephesians 4:11), they are meant to bring the plan of God to fulfillment in the church, “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13). When we follow godly leadership as they follow the Holy Spirit, I believe we will see this, “...tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you” (Joshua 3:5). The

outpouring of the Holy Spirit will result in the harvest of souls such as never before. On the other hand, we will suffer spiritual backsliding if there is disunity and rebellion against the anointed man or woman of God.

Because spiritual leadership demands consecration, the call to “sanctify yourselves” (Joshua 3:5) involves the willingness to walk holy and blameless before the Lord, “Ye *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:10). If you are a leader called of God and yet people turn against you, please do not resort to the flesh and fight back. Do not allow the spirit of revenge to take hold of your spirit. Instead, go into your prayer closet and let God bury the hurts behind you and I believe the greatest days of ministry still lies ahead of you! Like Joshua of old, you must put the wilderness years under the feet of Jesus and the Holy Spirit will launch you to even greater dimension of victory as carriers of His anointing and glory, “Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:20-23). Hallelujah!

“Father, I pray for the spiritual leaders and shepherds who follow after the Shepherd’s own heart. Anoint them mightily by the power of Your Spirit. In Jesus victorious name.”

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6. SCRIPTURAL ELEMENTS OF PROPHETIC REVELATION IN INTERCESSION FOR REVIVAL

“And E-li’jah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for *there is* a sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And E-li’jah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, *There is* nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare *thy chariot*, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jez’re-el. And the hand of the LORD was on E-li’jah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jez’re-el” (1 Kings 18:41-46).

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Revival praying is about crying out to God for the outpouring of the fire and the rain of the Holy Spirit to fall on entire nations.

God has sent His Spirit primarily to convict “the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not of me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more: Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” (John 16:8-11). Repentance always precedes the rain of true blessing! Like Elijah, we are to pray not for the destruction of precious souls, but for the revelation of God’s glory to where sinners will cry out, “What must [we] do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30).

While God is against all idolatry and paganism, His love and mercy still reaches out to the wicked, “BEHOLD, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:1-2). As God is willing to save, we must not give up hope. When we pray, we ought to pray with faith. In fact, the more hardened the sinner is, the more it pleases Him to have us believe the impossible, “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jeremiah 33:3).

Even after we have received a word of prophecy or wisdom, we must still persist and prevail in prayer until the promises are fulfilled. This is not because God is slack or slow in keeping His promise, but that He wants us to be consumed with the revelation of the deeper things of His heart, “Where *there is* no vision, the people perish... ” (Proverbs 29:18). The often delayed answers to promises are meant to train us to “always to pray, and not faint” (Luke 18:1); “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9). As long as we know we are living and praying within the will of God, we must not quit or relax trusting God even when His answer do not come forth immediately. Even the prophet Elijah had to hold on in faith and in prayer before the Spirit of God moved!

Another purpose of warfare prayer is to stand against the forces of the enemy. Just because a word of the Lord has been released does not mean that Satan will leave us alone. Rather, it is likely that he will hinder and oppose the plan of God from being realized before its due time. We might even be keenly attacked and threatened by the evil one but we are destined to win as we proclaim the Word, come under the blood of Jesus, lift up His mighty name and walk in the Spirit, “This charge I commit unto thee, son Tim’o-thy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare”

(1 Timothy 1:18). There is something active about faith that God honors even when we are being tested, “NOW faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is just cliché if it is not put to the test. There is great victory as we “fight the good fight of faith...” (1 Timothy 6:12) and when we do not give up hope in times of distress. The heroes of faith we read in the Bible were not guaranteed from afflictions (read Hebrews 11:37-38) but by God’s grace, they certainly did “obtained a good report through faith...” (Hebrews 11:39). When God is for and with us, we can, “through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens” (Hebrews 11:33-34).

True, God’s character will never change, but His revelation methods do progress according to His own time and way. According to our faith in God, we will receive the revelation to change the world and God will not fail “to open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in [Jesus]” (Acts 26:18). When we use the word “revelation”, it is about God’s *rhema* (specific and living) word for the hour (or what is going to happen shortly) and must always submit to the authority of Scripture and the counsel of mature pastoral leadership. It is still important to test prophecy, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). If it contradicts Scripture and disregards the Lordship of Jesus Christ, then it must be rejected immediately!

For our intercession to be effective, we need more than natural, perceptual knowledge. As we allow the Holy Spirit to intercede through us, we will receive supernatural prophetic and revelational insights, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession

for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*” (Romans 8:26-27); “Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:6-10).

Before we can experience the rain of God’s precious anointing in a great measure, we have to first undergo a fiery baptism whereby He burns up the dross in our lives. Then He will pour out a fresh anointing as we prepare and pray, “Behold the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them” (Isaiah 42:9). Trials of refining ascribes us times of refreshing!

Is our prayer life a dry and empty desert? Then we need to surrender our selfish supplication of personal plans and desire nothing but a touch of His glory! And with His divine breath, He will send forth the rain of His Spirit upon us! Praise the Lord!

“Lord, let Your glory be in this place. Let the rain of the Spirit break up the fallow ground. Fill me with Your resurrection power this hour. In Jesus glorious name.”

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7. IF GOD CAN USE ME, HE CAN USE ANYONE JUST AS WELL

“And David the king came and sat before the LORD, and said, Who *am* I, O LORD God, and what *is* my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto (this far)?” (1 Chronicles 17:16).

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To be used of God is my desire. I stand in awe that I am nothing but just an empty vessel that only God can work. There were and are still so much wrongs with me that even my existence is through the tender mercies and lovingkindnesses of God, who “remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness’ sake, O LORD” (Psalm 25:7).

When David desired to build the Lord a house, the Lord ignored his desire and said instead, “...the LORD will build thee an house” (1 Chronicles 17:10). Because David was a man of war and “hast shed blood abundantly” (1 Chronicles 22:8), he could not build God’s physical house.

Truly, God is more interested in building His own house than any of us could ever perceive. But it is not accomplished through mere aspiring projects we promote in church as much as it is through the glory and Presence of God who lives in and through us as we are the tabernacle or temple of the Holy Spirit. Although loafers have no place in the work of God, the Master desires His servants to labour from a position of joy and rest, ceasing from needless struggles to impress, “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (Hebrews 4:9-11) and “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall

find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

Likewise, the Lord does not need Jonathan to strive to achieve spirituality by my own efforts, but to learn dependence on the Holy Spirit. I am insignificant. I have no treasure to offer him. I am still as flawed as ever. Yet it is an honor and privilege on my part that I am ever in the process of His construction, that “God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in [me], the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). In all of my life, I pray that I am and will always be reduced to saying this, “If God can use me as a vessel He works through, He can use anyone and many others just as well!”

He is the Potter working on the wheels, we are just clay in earthen vessels, “But now, O LORD, thou *art* our father; we *are* the clay, and thou our potter, and we all *are* the work of thy hand” (Isaiah 64:8).

“O God, I stand in awe of Your mercy and grace. Holy Spirit, transform me until Your will is accomplished through me. In Jesus mighty name.”

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8. THE NECESSITY OF HUMILITY AND REPENTANCE IN PRAYER

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chronicles 7:14).

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Intercessory prayer is the key to the revival of the nation and the ingathering of the harvest of souls. We need to plead with God on

behalf of our land, for the healing and salvation of the unsaved. There is no greater need on the face of the earth than the need to turn the hearts of men and women everywhere to receive the Gospel, the good news that Jesus saves, heals, baptizes in the Holy Ghost and is coming again! Even with all the education, ideas, programs and ministries we have, they mean nothing until there is a total surrender of our abilities before God. We need to repent of all forms of idolatry and recognize our spiritual bankruptcy and utter helplessness. And prayer reduces us to that level where we will sense that no amount of human strength could accomplish God's work, only the anointing of His Spirit can bring forth the results of world evangelism, " ...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

Is there a hunger and poverty in our spirit for a mighty move of God? Then the desire and grace to pray in the Spirit like never before will come!

However, when the spirit of intercession comes upon our lives, there will also be a powerful purging of everything in our life that is so unlike Jesus. We will even repent of our good works and righteousness when they are full of self-will. Turning from "[our] wicked ways" include repenting from having "a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:5).

Beloved, it is better to touch God's heart through fervent intercession than to be successful by going our way of fleshly zeal, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:6-7).

"Father, forgive me for the lack of prayer. I have no might and no power within myself, only let Your Spirit pour out the oil of compassion over me to touch other souls. I surrender and depend on You. In Jesus gracious name."

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9. A CALL TO STAND IN THE GAP

“And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my kness, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God. And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over *our* head, and our transgress is grown up unto the heavens” (Ezra 9:5-6).

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God is looking for a people who will stand in the gap for the church and for the nation, who will grieve with a portion of the Father’s heart concerning all the uncleanness, idolatry and mixtures that have penetrated into our lives, “And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none” (Ezekiel 22:30).

Now Ezekiel, as are other righteous men of God like Ezra, Isaiah and Daniel, had such sensitive heart that even though they were devout and holy, so identified with the horrible sins the people committed even if they had not personally compromised with them. As Christians, are we merely satisfied that we have a right relationship with God while everybody around us are living in disobedience and are on their way to hell? Are we so deceived that we could not careless that if God’s fire of wrath fell, our hands are clean?

No, beloved of God, we have a part in sharing their shame! Like Ezra, our hearts must break over the worldliness and spiritual decay that spread across our land and even in the house of God. Every one of us is affected unless and until we confess both personal and corporate sins, repent and interceed for revival and for the turning away of God’s

judgment! And when the consuming fire purges us and His glory is manifest, then we should be able to laugh all night long! Glory! Amen!

“Father, give me a portion of Your heart. I pray for revival and for a fresh visitation of Your Spirit in the church and in the land. In Jesus glorious name.”

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10. THE SECRET PLACE

“HE that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (Psalm 91:1).

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There is a place in the world like no other! It is not restricted by geographical barriers. It is not necessarily an exact physical location.

The Psalmist, under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, calls it “the secret place” (according to Psalm 91:1). It is the place where hidden, humble and hungry people shut themselves in seeking the face of God. It is from within the back closets of prayer that our character takes root, “BLESSED *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalm 1:1-3).

Public opinions do not matter any longer, only a desire to respond to God in total transparency and purity. It is a life in the anointing and Presence of Jesus that even the slightest dirt of sin will make us afraid of being seen in our spiritual nakedness. We cannot remove the guilt of some past wrong actions by some kind of religious activities or

traditions, only a steady walk of victory over the daily temptations in a hidden relationship with God can.

God is looking for people who will take time to commune with Him in the throne room of His grace. As He becomes our dwelling place and refuge, we will experience an even greater intensity of the anointing of the Holy Spirit in intercessory prayer and worship that flows over and through us in power and purity, “IF ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:1-3).
“Rock of Ages, let me hide myself with You. In the mighty name of Jesus Christ.”

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11. THE LORD IS COMPASSIONATE AND PLENTEOUS IN MERCY

“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12).

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All sin leads to death and destruction. Within ourselves, there is nothing we can do to stop the influence of sin. We think we are living in the age of liberation but God’s Word declares that outside of the salvation of Jesus Christ, we are actually prisoners of condemnation, “For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things” (1 John 3:20).

There is no amount of good works or religious practices that can save us from the judgment and wrath of God. Only belief and trust in Jesus Christ and what He did on the cross can redeem us from the penalty of sin, which is eternal separation from God (read Romans 3:23; 6:23).

Though salvation is free in the sense that there is nothing we can do to deserve, earn or merit it, Jesus paid a high price for it. He took our place, “for even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

When God forgives, He also declares us righteous, “for he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Unfortunately, our fallen world is full of people who reminds us of our shortcomings, whether past or present. Though we should not be in the habit of excusing or justifying our faults, God wants us to know that “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psalm 103:10). The painful irony is, though humans are all guilty of offenses, they often, in essence, “trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others” (Luke 18:9). But the consolation is, even though God is intolerant about sin, He actually forgets when He forgives (read Jeremiah 31:34).

“Lord, have mercy on me. Cleanse me, renew me, restore me. In Jesus name.”

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12. THE BEAUTY OF UNITY

“BEHOLD, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1).

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The unity of fellowship in the Body of Christ cannot be manufactured. It must be established in love and holiness as led by the Spirit and not through human organizations, “I THEREFORE, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, and longsuffering, forbearing

one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-3).

Though there are in existence so many Christian churches, denominations, ministries and organizations around us, spiritual unity can still function as long as we abide in Him, receive the sanctification and truth of His Word, are separated from worldliness and obey the call to win the lost. When any one of these factors are missing, then we cease to exist in the unity of the Spirit. Instead, we become nothing more than a Babylonian religious institution, even a false cult.

The true Church of Jesus Christ consists of followers who are devoted to the Person of Jesus Christ, obedient to the Word of God, living a life of fruitfulness, holiness and power in the Spirit and are reaping the harvest of souls. When we have a common relationship to the Father and to the Son, then we also have precious grounds for fellowship and unity with one another. Jesus said, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21).

“Holy Spirit, we need a touch of Your hand. Heal us, restore us in holiness, love and unity. In Jesus precious name.”

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13. HAVE A GOD~CONTROLLED GATE FOR A DATE

“Don’t let your desires get out of hand; don’t let yourself think about her. Don’t go near her; stay away from where she walks, lest she tempt you and seduce you. For she has been the ruin of multitudes ~ a vast host of men have been her victims. If you want to find the road to hell, look for her house” (Proverbs 7:25-27; TLB).

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Even though this passage is about the horrific consequences of adultery, it also serves as a warning for us who might be tempted to consider having emotional and romantic dates with unbelievers.

One of the most subtle lies from hell is to deceive Christians into thinking that one area of their “missions field” in seeking the lost is by having serious relationships with the opposite gender who are not in the faith. To suppose that we could “claim” him/her for the Lord after going steady or even through entering marriage is not based on faith and love, but lust. If he/she will not serve the Lord now, chances are that he/she will not either in the future. Any occurrence proven otherwise are exceptions rather than the rule. Because the foundation of any strong and successful relationship must be birthed out of spiritual intimacy, attractions due to physical proportions alone are doomed to fail. However, if it is a case of one partner receiving the Lord Jesus only after marriage, then the plan of God is that this individual should continue loving and staying with the unsaved spouse and help win him/her to Christ as well.

Physically-speaking, because the eye is the gateway that opens our bodies either to the influence of love or lust, it is important that we guard ourselves against even heart-committal adultery, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her

hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell” (Matthew 5:27-30) and “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness!” (Matthew 6:22-23). Unfortunately, this brother here has engaged in compromising thoughts before and I had to ask the Lord to forgive and cleanse me from deep within, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Psalm 51:7).

I realize that no matter how godly we are, *all* of us still *do* and will experience sexual temptations. This is normal. However, it is the desire for immediate self-gratification and stimulation that must be controlled. Otherwise, it will result in lustful habits like homosexuality or lesbianism, masturbation, necking and petting. Once ignited, it becomes a battle that only determined abstinence can break. But there is good news for us! Jesus can set us free from all forms of adultery and sexual immorality!

By the grace and power of God, He can remove the guilt and stain of our past. Whether it was physical, emotional or mental, it does not matter what we have done previously. What is important is that we are willing to honestly confess our sin and turn to God for deliverance. When we repent, He gives us strength to control our sexual desires, “And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine

ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God” (Ezekiel 11:19-20).

“Father, give me strength to control my sexual desires. Fill me with Your precious Holy Spirit. In Jesus victorious name.”

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14. MY ADDICTIONS TO GLUTTONY

“Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines *have* tender grapes” (Songs of Solomon 2:15).

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Even though I am underweight (as I write this), I am guilty of having passions for certain food and drinks (by this, I do not mean alcohol). For example, there are days when I would indulge in fast-foods (like hamburgers and instant noodles), sweets (like chocolates, ice-cream and pastries) or else be “intoxicated” with caffeine (in drinks like coffee, tea and Coca-Cola).

I am not against such food and liquids and I do not want to put any one (including myself) on a guilt trip whenever we enjoy the legitimate appetites God has given us. And I do not want to be legalistic over what quantitative amount constitutes gluttony either (only the Holy Spirit can define this for each and every individual as he or she is sensitive to Him). But it is the problem with the lack of self-control that I wrestle with so frequently that I feel I need to conquer, “Do you like honey (or in my case, chocolates and coffee)? Don’t eat too much of it, or it will make you sick!” (Proverbs 25:16; TLB) and “Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags” (Proverbs 23:20-21; NIV).

As vessels of the Holy Spirit, our bodies will be destroyed if we do not control our appetites. We are not just talking about the physical health. Even the growth of our spiritual lives are affected according to how and what we regularly consume in the natural.

Show me a Christian whose appetites for food and fluids are out of control and I will show you one who is probably out of control with certain spiritual (as well as emotional and physical) disposition as well (I am so prone to this sin too and so I am not pointing a finger at any person). I am persuaded to believe that is why some of us still have besetting problems such as bad temper, depression, fear, lethargy, lusts, pride, sickness, stubbornness, unbelief and withdrawal symptoms even after many months or years as Christians. These are the “foxes” that “ruin the otherwise blooming vineyards of our spiritual field”. As far as God is concerned, there is no compartmentalization with what is physical and spiritual in our lives. Our eating, drinking and sleeping should be as much as “to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31) as our worship in church or efforts in evangelism. We are to be sanctified wholly, that “[our] whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23) and “in view of God’s mercy, to offer [our] bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God ~ this is [our] spiritual act of worship” (Romans 12:1; NIV).

I have no qualifications in psychology or the medical sciences, but as a student of God’s Word, it is plain common and spiritual sense to see how the lack of self-control in our natural and physical appetites can even cause backsliding in our walk with God. The Holy Spirit is showing what is wrong with me as well as revealing the truth that can set me free from the bondages I need to defeat. Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). Prayerfully, for the benefit of you, the reader, I trust that this message

has given you some insights on how to obtain victory from the addictions that you need to overcome as well. Hallelujah!

“Father, deliver me from sinful addictions. By Your Spirit, I receive the power to set me free. In Jesus victorious name.”

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15. ARE YOU A PASSIONATE LOVER?

“BY night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: *to whom I said*, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? *It was* but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go...” (Song of Solomon 3:1-4).

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The Bride of Jesus Christ needs to get desperate! We are speaking of having a consuming passion after God’s own heart more than anything. You can be a “walking Bible” pouring out a stream of spiritual knowledge and yet a complete bore. You can be educated in the best of Bible schools and still be dull in your spirit. The greatest measure of being a witness unto Jesus is not really having vast knowledge of Him. Rather, it is characterized by such love for Him that you are so homesick and lovesick for His Presence. The effects of true faith does not reside in comprehensive understanding of Scriptures alone, it must also produce a lifestyle of fervent affections for the things of God and intimacy with Jesus. As in the case of David, we are told that he was “a man after [God’s] own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14), not intellect.

Being a single young person as I write this, I know that it is so human to want to have a mate sometime, if Jesus tarries. However, if I do not

depend on Jesus Christ as my complete satisfaction now, it is likely that I will only bring in more loneliness and misery to any relationship that might cross my path.

Friend, there were occasions when I have depended on unworthy feelings and moods instead of rising up in active faith. There have been days when I got depress and felt the blues. I do not always have mountaintop experience when I am in my prayer closet. On the other hand, some of the most powerful moments when the Spirit of God moved upon my heart were times when I was in the midst of necessary activities like eating or travelling, when such joy and peace floods my soul like a river. I am still learning that nearness to Jesus must be maintained by faith, not circumstances.

Actually, the greatest test of devotion and love for the Lord are times when we are in the heat of the battle. When nothing on this earth will bring us happiness, the joy of the Lord in His Presence is still our refuge and strength. Hallelujah!

“Lord, I long for You like the Shulammite who longed for her beloved. I keep You precious in my sight as I am precious in Your sight. In Jesus lovely name.”

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16. JESUS STILL HEALS TODAY

“But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

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God’s heart and will concerning healing is included in the atoning work of Christ on the cross, “ ...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8)

and “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8).

The power and authority to preach the gospel also carries with it the gifts of healing, “And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:2); “Behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Luke 10:19) and “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaketh by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit...” (1 Corinthians 12:3-9).

I realize that sometimes there are hindrances to receiving supernatural healing such as unbelief (read Mark 6:3-6; 9:19, 23-24), oppression or bondage (read Luke 13:11-13) and unconfessed sin (read James 5:16), but these factors do not negate the desire and will of God to heal. If we do not find immediate results of healing, we should still continue to abide in Him (read John 15:1-7). Though God uses doctors and medicine (read 2 Kings 20:4-7), our faith must be on the Great Physician Himself.

Whether it is physical healing or the healing for our soul, we must recognize that it is a gift of God. None of us deserve it. There is nothing we could ever do to “purchase” it. We can only stand in awe of God’s love for us, “BLESS the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, *bless* his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things; so that* thy youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Psalm 103:1-5).

Praise the Lord!

"O Lord, I just want to bless You. Thank You for the grace of healing and salvation. In Jesus lovely name."

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17. WHEN OUR PRESIDENT OR GOVERNOR IS MORE HONOURED THAN THE KING OF KINGS

"A son honoureth *his* father, and a servant his master: if then I *be* a father, where *is* mine honour? and if I *be* a master, where *is* my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD *is* contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, *is it* not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, *is it* not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 1:6-8).

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There is a message that convicts me deeply. It involves the portion of Scripture that says, "*Ye* hypocrites, well did E-sa'ias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me" (Matthew 15:7-8).

During church worship services, there have been times when though my lips were moving with words of praise, my thoughts were

elsewhere. I have been guilty of hypocritical worship! I have brought blemished sacrifices of praise in the Lord's Presence!

What the Holy Spirit has convicted me is something that I still need to fight off constantly. How I need to cast down "imagination, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Entering into the Presence of God is an awesome and holy thing. It is not to be taken lightly. When Uzzah took lightly the ark (which represented the Presence of God), he was struck dead on the spot! If we are still living in the days of the Old Testament, I wonder how many of us in church would be physically alive today!

Even though we are now living in the day of grace, we will still need to stand before the judgment seat of Christ one day and answer for every careless word and vain action, "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Exodus 20:7). If we do not repent, we will eventually die spiritually! None of us in our right frame of mind would dare behave flippantly if we are invited to some function hosted by the President or the governor and yet, some of us think little or nothing if we worship and listen to the service half-heartedly, before the King of kings at that. What blasphemy our generation of Christians have become! God, have mercy on us!

"God, I know I have drifted in coming into Your Presence. I am not always where I should be. Forgive me. Cleanse me. Consume me as an offering of praise unto You. In Jesus holy name."

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18. DO YOU KNOW YOUR BROTHER AND SISTER AND MOTHER?

“While he yet talked to the people, behold, *his* mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Matthew 12:46-50).

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The fruitfulness of spiritual relationships must be based on the single-minded passion and vision to know God and to do His will, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings... ” (Philippians 3:10). Which is why our family consists not only the kin who are related to us in the natural, but it includes those who are our elders, brothers and sisters in the Kingdom of God as well. In fact, we need to find like-minded believers in the house of God who have sold-out relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ as our most productive circle of all human relationships, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10) and “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19).

We cannot take sides with evil. We must decide where to draw the line. There is no room to sit on the fences. The people we relate to are either on the Lord’s side or the enemy’s territory. If they are with God, then we are joint-heirs with Christ. If they are lost or living in willful sinning, we must win them to Christ.

If you are an evangelist or a pastor (or *any* Christian, for that matter), you must be true to God and preach the Word uncompromisingly, “...be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2) even if you have friends or loved ones who are not living right with God. You must do it in humility and love, but you must not dilute the message that burns within your heart. If they are offended, the problem is theirs, not yours. On the other hand, if you are in disobedience and rebellion against God, depending on the relationship you have with your godly mother or minister will not help you. They may pray and weep over you, but you must return or turn to God yourself. Though God hates sin, yet He loves you. Jesus is calling you to come home to where there is hope for you. To be included in this invitation, you must have a relationship with Jesus Christ. The choice is yours. If you say “yes” to Jesus, here’s what you must do,

Admit the fact that you are a sinner, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23);

Be willing to repent from disobedience and rebellion against God, “...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3);

Believe that Jesus is your only Saviour, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16);

Confess, trust and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10).

Please pray this prayer and do mean it with all of your heart:

“Dear Lord Jesus, I now recognize that I am a sinner and I am in need of salvation. I accept the sacrifice You paid for me on the cross of Calvary and I allow Your precious shed blood to cleanse me. I now surrender

myself to You and invite You to be my Lord and Saviour. Please come into my heart. Take full control of my life and help me to live and serve You from this moment forward. I ask in the name of Jesus. Amen.”

If you prayed this prayer in all sincerity, you are now a child of God. We encourage you to find fellowship in a Bible-believing, Spirit-filled church and obtain a copy of the Bible and that you read it diligently so that you will be the kind of Christian God wants you to be.

“Father, I thank You for the elders, brothers and sisters who love and serve You. Let Your will be done as we bring the lost into Your Kingdom. In Jesus name.”

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19. THE CHURCH ON TRIAL

“For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend *to them* of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and *to* the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6:32-36).

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The Church of God is a house of cleansing, love and restoration. We can pray for revival every day but if there is judging and pride in our spirits, we will not see a harvest of souls.

The mass media has gone crazy with slander! Television talk shows digging some dirt out of people’s lives, the press featuring gossip and

thrills, possessed with the spirit of murder - character assassination and the destruction of families!

The House of God ought to be different. Unfortunately, we are often just as guilty of spreading dirt when we hear another Christian fall into moral transgression. Beloved, there are many Christians who are overtaken by sin who needs friends, not lecturers. We are not talking about those who persist in winking at sin or calling evil good. Rather, there are those who are repentant and yet devastated. We see their brokenness and humility. They know they have grieved the Lord and are overwhelmed with guilt and rejection. Yet their hearts are still in love with Jesus. It is to these individuals we need to minister comfort to, that “they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil...” (2 Timothy 2:26).

Friend, it is ungodly for us to criticize another believer who has confessed his or her sins and are already forgiven and forgotten by the Lord. Instead, we are to “be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32) and “So that contrariwise ye *ought* rather to forgive *him*, and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would conform *your* love toward him” (2 Corinthians 2:7-8). You see, when we fail to reach out in love and mercy to the repentant, who are not even considered our enemies, we are actually worse than the unsaved sinners (read Luke 6:32-36). It is the Church who is now on trial to a watching world, and not really the offender any more.

“Father, let me stand with the fallen and the hurting. let me be a godly vessel of love and hope to the repentant. In Jesus name.”

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20. WHEN WILL THE ELDER BROTHER EVER CELEBRATE THE HOMECOMING?

“For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry” (Luke 15:24).

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A life without God is a life of waste. As we observe the life of the prodigal son, there are no doubt pleasures of sin to be enjoyed but they only last “for a season” (Hebrews 11:25).

In the midst of a wayward child’s slavery to sin, the Father’s heart desires to reach out to “seek and save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). There is no greater rejoicing in heaven than “over one sinner that repenteth...” (Luke 15:7). When the lost child turned his heart toward home, his father was all ready to forgive and restore him. He even called for a celebration of joy.

However, the elder brother in this family was not pleased with the reception of his father given in joy to his backslidden brother, saying, “...Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf” (Luke 15:29-30). To the religious, self-righteous person, such a feeling might seemed to be quite justified and understandable, but we better know it was not the way God intended. This parable teaches us that God is actually more pleased with a repentant sinner than someone who thinks he has some form of righteousness on his own (which are “filthy rags” anyway in the sight of God, according to Isaiah 64:6). In another instance, Jesus Himself said, “I tell you, this man (speaking of a repentant publican or if you prefer, “tax collector”

or “extortioner”) went down to his house justified *rather* than the other (referring to a proud, self-righteous Pharisee): for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased: and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 18:14). Will the elder brother ever celebrate his lost brother’s homecoming? Though we cannot answer for him personally but we can and must answer for the many spiritually lost children who comes our way.

Are there lessons we can draw today as well? Tremendously so! We can be in church for ten years (and plenty more for others) and think that we have got it made spiritually. But when God begins to save and bless those whom we thought were vile sinners, we possibly judged them and say they will not amount much in the Kingdom of God. Yet some of the mightiest churches and ministries are actually pastored or led by these previously ruined lives. And by the power of God, they are going after lots more prodigal sons and daughters! Hallelujah! Glory be to God!

“Father, thank You for Your forgiveness and grace. I ask for compassion for the lost even as Your heart of love for them is so great. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Saviour and Redeemer.”

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21. DEVELOPING A FOOT WASHING ATTITUDE

“If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14).

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We have probably heard of Christians who practise literal “foot washing” services sometime and somewhere in the course of the church age. While this is highly commendable, the real lessons are primarily spiritual in nature.

Besides the obvious example of humility and servanthood, I believe we must also avail ourselves to comfort and restore the brother or sister who is fallen in sin, when there is an attitude of repentance on his or her part, “BRETHREN, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1). Sometimes, the “fault” may even be a moral failure or transgression.

Now, I believe it is possible to love the Lord passionately and yet have secret sins, such as alcoholic or sexual addictions. I know this might shock some of you but such failures have happened not only with new spiritual babes, but godly and mature Christians too. Like Samson, though the “Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon [them]” (Judges 14:6), they can still be as “weak as any man”.

When I hear of someone fallen in sin, it is not my business to find out what’s right or what’s wrong. Rather, by God’s grace and mercy, I want to be able to stand with and comfort the fallen one, “So that contrariwise ye *ought* rather to forgive *him*, and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm *your* love toward him” (2 Corinthians 2:7-8). I want to restore and serve the hurting friend in love and humility, to do everything within my power to keep him in faith and hope! I simply refuse to lose him to Satan’s accusations and condemnation (unless the offender is impenitent and recalcitrant)!

Beloved, if I am ever used of God at any time, I personally consider it a greater privilege to be able to care and restore fellowship with a fallen but repentant Christian friend in the time of need than to accept invitations to public meetings or ministry, unless the Spirit of God directs otherwise. Praise God!

“Father, let me be a minister of Holy Ghost comfort to the Christian friend who is repentant. In the name of Jesus Christ, let Your church rise and walk in faith, love and unity.”

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22. BETTER TO BE A “SPIRITUAL FREAK” THAN A FOOL

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).

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The message of the cross has created much antagonism through the centuries and ages. The wisdom of the world in philosophy and science may be lifted up in our public institutions, but it will not deliver us from the terrible bondage of sin.

Unfortunately, even in many religious circles, the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified is also offensive. It has turned many prideful self-righteous people into a rage and “religious wars” have been fought as a result.

The Church of Jesus Christ often stands in danger of two extremes. It is either too legalistic or too liberal. The apostle Paul warned us of being the Church who may have “a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:5).

There is no way we could earn righteousness or holiness, it is freely given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ. We have to identify with what Jesus did on Calvary in order that we are saved. By faith in Christ and Him crucified and resurrected is the basis for our justification and salvation, “THEREFORE being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

Yet, after many of us are saved, we subtly fall and backslide into the position whereby we try to maintain our relationship with God through many “good works” and we are then “entangled again with the yoke of bondage ... Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are

justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:1,4). To be sure, there are teachings of the law (read 1 Corinthians 10:23) and demands of morality we need to abide as Christians, but they are not the qualifications for our salvation. Good works are tremendously important. But they should be the effects and fruits of the grace of God, not cause for our justification.

What happens then when we commit sin (even many times) after we become Christians? Does it mean that we have to be saved all over again? Now, this is not what the Word of God teaches.

Instead, listen to what the Bible has to say, “MY little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1) and “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). What is important to realize is that even though we are strongly exhorted NOT to make sin a habit of our lives, we are still capable of falling into weaknesses. And when we *do* sin (and even many times for certain kinds of sin), we need to “confess our sins”, hate the wrongdoings and not justify them. Realistically, I know that all of us have problems with certain types of sin more than with some other areas but our attitude must involve a willingness to forsake that sin or those sins. If we are truly born of the Spirit, we will be so sensitive as to turn to God in repentance each time we fail. We are more overwhelmed by the fear of breaking the heart of God than the fear of losing our position or friends in church. If you know that Jesus can forgive you and yet not your so-called Christian friends, then you might better flee from these “false brethren” (please read Galatians 2:4). Jesus Christ is the only answer and Calvary’s our only cure for sin! Praise God!

“Father, thank You for the mighty cross. Thank You for bringing me to the feet of Calvary. Thank You, Jesus, my Lord.”

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23. THE FRUITS OF GIVING

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

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When we give ourselves “first to the Lord...” (2 Corinthians 8:5; NIV), we will find ourselves seeking “first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto [us]” (Matthew 6:33).

When the rule and reign of God is demonstrated in our lives, we will partake the character and nature of Christ where “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17) prevails. When we give and pray for things close to His heart, we will also have compassion for others. We will cheerfully and generously support those who labour in the Gospel and whose ministries bless us spiritually, “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:14). Though the quantity of our gifts are important, the Lord is also looking at the motives of our giving. Amidst the rich men who cast their gifts into the treasury, Jesus said this of a certain poor widow who put in two mites (or very small copper coins), “I tell you the truth,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on” (Luke 21:3-4; NIV). This principle must be applied to our love for Jesus. Do we give only because we desire influence or reciprocity? Then we have missed the whole point of giving!

It matters to God not just the amount of gifts, but the fruits of our hearts as well. When Ananias and Sapphira gave deceitfully and lied to the

Holy Spirit, God's judgment fell and resulted in their deaths (read Acts 5:1-11). This sober account must lead us to a rightful perspective of giving, which includes the proper fear of the Lord.

Beloved, there is no way we can outgive God. When we realize how much we are forgiven and loved of God, we will walk in this dimension, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8). The desire to give must spring primarily "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5). Praise God!

"Master, let my heart be rich in sincere love for You and compassion for others. Thank You for Your grace and salvation, which You gave sacrificially. In Jesus blessed name."

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24. YOU ARE EITHER A CHILDBEARER OR ELSE AN UNDERTAKER

"My little children, of whom I travail in birth until Christ be formed in you" (Galatians 4:19).

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True and lasting revival must be birthed in the Spirit and caught in prayer, not in the flesh, resulting in obedience and dependence on God. Merely sitting under good preaching and having anointed people pray for us will not carry us very far, as precious as these blessings are. We must follow the cloud of glory and hear the gentle dove-like voice of the Holy Spirit, not merely look for manifestations. Signs and wonders are for the purpose of bringing in the harvest of souls. When there is dancing, laughing, falling out under the power of God, weeping or any other manifestations, they must be followed by the Word and the Spirit. Do not compare yourself with others or try competing to be the best

musician or the most talented preacher in church. Popularity with the crowds does not necessarily mean approval by God. You must be what God wants you to be. Do not blindly “borrow” or copy somebody else’s ideas. Do not extend certain practices others might do unless the Spirit of God says do. In the midst of all your busy activities in church, you must not lose sight of the one single purpose that really matters and it is this, intimacy with Jesus. If there is truly a great move of the Spirit, the evidence will be such devotion and focus on Christ as expressed by the apostle Paul, “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you* as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtility, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2-3).

Revival often involves crisis. It is not popular. It reproves sin. It brings conviction. It demands change. It provokes righteousness. It cries for lost souls with compassion. It goes against the tide of the spirit of the world. It is more than enthusiasm and zeal. It is being tough and yet teachable. It starts when we realize our barren spiritual condition and keep travailing in pain until we give birth to much spiritual fruit.

What is the fruit of our womb? Are we carrying the seed of the Gospel and producing spiritual babies? Are we fathers and mothers to children who are spiritually hungry? Let us be mentors who have listening ears, nurturing hands and opening hearts to those who need God.

“Lord, I hunger still for more of You. I ask this in Jesus name.”

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25. AFFECTIONS CAN EVEN BE NOBLE DESIRES OR LEGITIMATE PASSIONS

“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Galatians 5:24).

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Most of us, if not all, understand that “lusts” are the abominable sins that God does not accept, such as gambling and sexual immorality. However, while the Church at large cannot (and rightfully so) accept such actions in the lives of the believers, it less commonly speaks clearly against “affections”, which are the noble desires or even the legitimate passions that many Christian are under the influence of.

What are the “affections” or the “good desires” we are speaking of? They include the pursuit of higher education, career, family and friends at the expense of listening to God or serving Him.

The counsel Jesus gave to the rich young ruler (please read Matthew 19:16-30 and Luke 18:18-30) is a powerful teaching which warns that we can make an idol of wealth or even family commitments. Is Jesus against us having material possessions or providing for the needs of our families and friends? No, but it is our attitude when we esteem wealth or even our loved ones above our commitment and love for Him which becomes idolatry. Though the rich ruler was not engaged in sensual lust or serious immorality, he failed in putting the call of God above all else. This man had “affections” which were not eternal, but temporal. It is not good enough to merely subdue lusts, we need to even resist the “affections” (boasting of what we have or do, according to 1 John 2:16) that comes alongside with our achievements, status and talents. When we begin to rest on some past experiences or laurels of success, they become pride of life and God resists us, but “giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6).

Are we trusting in our abilities, career, education or even human relationships as our security? Can we say like the Psalmist said, “Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire beside thee?” (Psalm 73:25).

“O God, deliver me from affections, lusts and pride. In You, I crucify the sinful nature with its passions and desires. In Jesus name.”

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26. AN INVESTMENT THAT IS IMMEASURABLY BEYOND IMAGINATION

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Ephesians 3:20).

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According to the system of the world, money and time are two of the most precious commodities that many people want to be in control of. The worth of an individual is often measured in terms of his or her rein over them.

As Christians, God also holds us responsible for how we invest our money and time. Unlike the world, however, our greatest business is not the laying up of “treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Matthew 6:19-20).

The parable of the talents (according to Matthew 25:14-30) serves as a foundation that in order to increase the fruitfulness of the Spirit in our

lives, we need to invest our gifts and time in “...the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and have committed unto us the word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).
“Master, I ask for wisdom in investing in the treasures of heaven. Give me a heart that seeks after Your kingdom. In Jesus name.”

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27. THE PRICE FOR THE PRIZE

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:12-14).

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Athletes know that it takes sheer discipline and perspiration to win medals. Hours, days, months and even years of training are required to compete successfully in any competition. Winners are not discovered randomly. They pay a price for the prize for which few of us are willing to afford, such as braving harsh weather conditions and sustaining injuries.

If natural people can be so determined to achieve success in their field of accomplishments no matter the cost, how much more should we be challenged to press in and press on for the Lord. Our focus and goal are eternal. Fixing one’s eye on the finishing line and straining to reach it is the only way to make it, “WHEREFORE seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight,

and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 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 is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Another lesson is not to be deterred by obstacles in the course of the way. Rarely, if ever, persons always score goals or win victories. Even if we are wounded in the conflicts of life, we are not failures unless we give up or allow “any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled” (Hebrews 12:15).

However, there is a need to not only forget past failures, but also the successes that might prevent us from being continuously on the “cutting edge”. Boasting or resting on yesterdays’ victories will not guarantee the achieving of present or future goals. In fact, it is utterly impossible for us to live the Christian life on our own in the flesh. Everything that God expects us to do has to be accomplished through the power and “...the sword of the Spirit...” (Ephesians 6:17), which is the Word of God testified in our mouths and believing by faith in our hearts.

“Lord, I press in and lay hold of You. In the Spirit, I press on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in the name of Jesus Christ.”

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28. THE VALUE OF A STRONG LOCAL CHURCH

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

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Admittedly, there are no perfect churches as long as there are imperfect humans like us in them. Nevertheless, the local church is tremendously important in the plan of God, “Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end” (Ephesians 3:21). What an impacting revelation!

Actually, what is the church? It is the assembly or congregation of called-out body of believers. It has nothing to do with physical buildings and walls. Rather, it has everything to do with the *foundation* where spiritual relationships are established, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22). The characteristics of a good church must include solid Bible preaching and teaching, developing the members to grow and serve the Lord in ministry, allowing the Holy Spirit to flow in worship and of course, helping to spread the Gospel and winning souls. In determining God’s desired pattern for us to move and operate today as it was in the early church, there is perhaps no better yardstick than to study the book of Acts, especially Acts 2:41-47.

While attending or joining a church does not save our souls (only obedient faith and trust in Jesus Christ does!), it is *inevitable* that we still need a strong spiritual home for us to be productive in the work of God. To merely sit at home and not associate with other Christians is plain foolishness. I am painfully aware that there are churches that teach false doctrines and are leading people astray. I also realize that there are yet others that are devoid of the glory and Presence of God, where the Holy Spirit is being grieved or quenched. But these

unfortunate factors are still no excuse for us not to relate to a good local church and support it. No matter how anointed or effective we are in our personal evangelism or ministries, we must be subservient to the local church in one way or another. There is something about the bond of fellowship and unity that represents greater effectiveness for the work of the Gospel that could not be wrought otherwise. As Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18: 20). Praise God!

“Father, continue to raise strong Christians in strong local churches. Holy Spirit, move mightily in these lives for eternal purposes. In Jesus glorious name.”

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29. HOW TO INSULT GOD

“But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

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Many Christians do not receive from God because of unbelief. We think we are very spiritual when we pray “Lord, if it be Thy will...” when we should be digging into His Word to know His revealed will.

There are situations where there is no error (and actually, commendable) adding such a phrase to our prayers though, but it is usually with regards to *specific* directions to where we should go to reach the lost. What I am saying, however, is when we approach God praying, “Lord, if it be Thy will, save my friend” or “Lord, if it be Thy will, heal sister X” or “Lord, if it be Thy will, fill brother Y with the Holy Spirit” when God’s answers to our doubts and questions are already given in Scriptures such as 2 Peter 3:9, Isaiah 53:5 and Acts 1:8. Our

response to God's clear promises are not matters of "Ifs", but holding and standing on them until they become established in the lives of others we are praying for, "God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged" (Romans 3:4). Now, this is NOT saying that we are to bear false witness, but what is implied is that if God's Word says something while a million people insist otherwise, then we are to believe God's report.

There is no greater insult to our Heavenly Father than to approach Him like beggars when we are actually children of the King of kings! If we truly know His heart, then we must be fully persuaded that He is more than able to meet us, whatever our circumstances!

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matthew 7:11) gives great confidence that if He can give us the Holy Spirit, who is our Comforter, Counselor and Helper (read John 14:16-18), we can indeed believe Him to provide us what is good. With simple, childlike faith, let us "therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). Because Jesus is our Great High Priest and Intercessor who knows our weaknesses (read Hebrews 4:15), we can confidently approach the Father and receive the help and strength for all we need as faith is planted in our hearts. Praise God!

"Father, I abide in You as Your words abide in me. Set me apart to do Your will as I receive Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus holy name."

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Your WORD Is Strength

The Bible is the most important book in the entire world.

Though authored by men, it is the Holy Spirit who inspired every thought and word, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21).

It is God’s letter to us, the book of divine instructions. Through its pages, we find rebuke for our sin and comfort in times of sorrow, “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It is the means to know the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, “IN the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

As we walk with the Lord, we will learn to hear His voice and seek to do His will, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Unfortunately, many believers neglect faith, prayer and the study of God’s Word. This results in boredom, dryness and emptiness, etc. There are no “quick fixes” in receiving from God. We need to wait in His Presence and devour His Word, not just read “how to” books on Christian living. I ask that the Holy Spirit will awaken you to “draw nigh to God” (James 4:8) and know the true source of strength for your every need as I say this, “As precious and as important as it is, it is not enough to just hear sermons from some great preachers or read books of some dedicated men and women of God telling us about their experiences, we need to be lost in the awesome wonder and glorious riches of Christ ourselves as we feast at His table in the secret closet of prayer”. He is the manna from on high, the Bread who satisfies us completely.

Birtherd out of my own desperate cry and need for more of Him, I pray that this volume of writings will encourage you to enter into “the school of the Holy Spirit” yourself. Don’t depend entirely on some book, tape, counsellor, shepherd or pastor for answer and wisdom. Instead, get on your face before God and the Holy Ghost will be your true Comforter and Preacher. It is He who brings the Scriptures alive to you and enables you to apply His truth in your everyday life as you hunger for Christ and Christ alone.

Jonathan

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