

The Sword Of The Spirit

*Exploring the Armor of
God and why we need it*

*“Put on the full armor of God, so
you can take your stand against
the devil’s schemes” Eph.6:11*

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Dedicated

**To
Maikel
&
Samuel**

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Acknowledgements

I wish to express my deep appreciation

to

Jean Ely, Joan Finaly and Marian Reale

Who kindly made helpful suggestions and
their labour in correcting and editing this booklet.

Soli Deo Gloria- To God Be the Glory

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Reformation Day 2019

Chapter One

We Are In A Spiritual Battle

Whether we like it or not, we are in a spiritual battle with the devil and his forces. The Bible clearly says, *“Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground”* (Eph. 6:10-13).

Accused of sedition, beaten, arrested, shipwrecked, attacked by a snake and imprisoned in Rome for two years under the watchful eyes of Roman soldiers, the Apostle Paul was led by the Spirit of God, during these two years to write the four letters of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon and continue preaching *“the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ to all those who came to hear him”* (Acts. 28:30-31).

Living in prison for two years, he become well acquainted with the Roman soldiers' armor and at some point, a God-inspired analogy began to form in Paul's mind as he appreciated the function and purpose of each piece.

Just as the Roman soldiers required physical armor to fight their wars, we Christians require spiritual armor to fight our spiritual war. As the pieces fell into place, Paul saw that each piece of Roman armor had a powerful connection with our own spiritual defences.

What Do We Need Armor for?

The apostle Paul says in 2 Cor. 4:8-9, "*We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are puzzled, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed*". How is it that, as Christians, we are expected to stand against incredible pressures and overcome all odds? How can we possibly stand up against everything the world has to throw at us?

The answer lies not in ourselves, but in a spiritual armor of God which we have to put on at all times.

What is the Armor of God?

The Armor of God is an amazing metaphor for action we need to take in our spiritual lives. Paul sets the scene for us: we are fighting a war, and our enemy is not human foe. We fight against Satan, and his spiritual forces of evil that have a single, driving purpose; to destroy our faith in our God. What can we do in the face of such overwhelming odds? Is there any hope? Yes there is. Paul has the answer.

In Ephesians. 6:13, he gives the call to arms. By putting on all of God's armor, we will explore it piece by piece. We have to put on the whole armor of God. Not just one piece and not whatever we feel like, but ALL of God's armor. The word "take" in verse 13 is a command telling us to take it up and use it.

It consists of seven pieces; belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet sword and prayer as our secret invisible weapon. The apostle Paul, led by the Spirit of God, transformed this Roman Armor into spiritual Armor that we as Christians can use to help us "*stand against the schemes of the devil*".

All the pieces of this armor are for our defence, and we are *never* to take it off. The apostle Paul says, “*Stand firm then, having the belt of truth around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the shoes of the gospel of peace. Above all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints*” (Eph.6:10-13).

Q: Why is the devil our enemy?

According to God’s Word, there is battle going on between two spiritual kingdoms. The kingdom of Satan which is the kingdom of *darkness*, is fighting against the kingdom of God in Christ which is the kingdom of *light*. We as Christians are used to being subjects of the kingdom of darkness, as the Apostle Paul says, “*We were dead in our transgressions and sins, in which we used to live when we followed the ways of the ruler of the kingdom of the world, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient*” (Eph. 2:1-2).

As Christians, we were living under the dominion of Satan, but thanks be to God, by His grace through Jesus Christ our Saviour; He has saved us and translated us from Satan's kingdom into the kingdom of light. For that reason the Apostle Paul gave thanks to God and said, “*Giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins*” (Col. 1:12-14).

Because we became children of God and Christ Jesus is our Lord and Saviour, Satan became our enemy. Day by day, hour by hour, he wants nothing more than to bring defeat and destroy our faith and stop us from being the light of Christ to the world. His war against us never stops. His forces of darkness are determined and cunning; they don't wait for us to be ready for their attack. The Bible says, *“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith”* (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Q: What is Satan’s strategy against us?

In his war against us, we are not to fear Satan, but we are not to be ignorant of his schemes either (2 Cor. 2:11). God’s Word instructs us about the devil’s schemes, so there is no reason for us to be caught off guard. We must be aware of his strategy, his influence in our lives, and in the lives of others!

The Bible reveals to us three things about Satan’s strategy against us: (i) the targets he aims at in our life, (ii) the weapons he uses to attack us, and (iii) the purposes that he wants to achieve. Praise God, He has provided us the armor that we can use in this battle and be victorious over Satan and his allies.

Let us make no mistake however, never underestimate the power of the devil. He is compared to a serpent, a lion, a tempter and accuser. Unless we know what our enemy can do, we have a difficult time defeating him

Satan as a Serpent’s first target is our mind. His attacks do not always come in open and easily observed forms. They are usually subtle and crafty. Deception is always his first act.

Satan deceived Eve with his lies as the Bible describes him as “*father of lies*” (John 8:44), and he appears as “*an angel of light*” (2 Cor. 11:14).

His purpose was to let her doubt God’s love, and disobey His revealed will. As he achieved his goal with Eve, he tries to do the same with us. Our defence is to put on the armor of God.

The Bible also describes Satan as a lion in 1 Peter 5:8, and in John 10:10, as a thief who comes “*to steal, and to kill, and to destroy*”. Satan targets Job’s body, home, wealth, and friends. He used suffering as his weapons to try to destroy Job’s faith in God. Job looked around and saw his situation was painful. When he looked up, it seemed that God had forsaken him. But Job maintained his faith in God. He did not give up his faith in God, and said, “*I know that my Redeemer lives and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!*” (Job. 19:25-27). That was his shield against all that happened to him.

Satan, also described as a tempter, targets our will as he did with Peter. The weapon he used against Peter was pride. His purpose was to make Peter fall easily into sin. Remember what the Lord said to Peter, “*Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers*”. Peter replied, “*Lord, even if all fall away on account of you, I never will*”. The Lord answered, “*I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me*”, Peter replied,

“Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you” (Luke 22:31-34; Matthew 26:31-35).

We know what happened; Peter, in his pride, depending on his own self, fell into the sin of denying His Lord three times. If Satan fails to deceive our mind with his lies, fails to destroy our faith through suffering, and fails to make us sin, then his last weapon is to attack us as the accuser and targets our conscience with false accusations. He attempted to do so with our Lord Jesus in trying to stop him from doing His great mission to save mankind from their sins. But we know what happened; all false accusations against our Lord did not stop him. He fulfilled his mission and endured the Cross for us, and the plan of salvation was completed.

Q: How can we defeat the devil and his allies?

Our battle with Satan is spiritual; no physical weapons can be used against him. The Apostle Paul says, *“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every high thing that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ”* (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

In this battle, God expects us is to be wise, strong and use the armor He provides for us, overcoming the devil regardless of the tactics he uses against us. The Bible says in James 4:7, *“Resist the devil and he will flee from you”*. The Apostle Paul also says, *“Do not give the devil a foothold....Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes”* (Eph. 4:27; 6:11).

Chapter Two

Exploring The Full Armor of God

1. The Belt of Truth

Q: What is the belt of truth? What purpose did the belt serve for a Roman soldier? What purpose does the belt of truth serve for us? What is the truth?

The first piece of the armor of God is the belt of truth. The belt of a Roman soldier in Paul's day was not a simple leather strap such as we wear today. It was thick, heavy leather and metal band with a protective piece hanging down from the front of it. The belt tightened about his waist to hold his tunic together and provided him a place to carry weapons such as dagger and sword and other equipment to help him in battle.

Q: What does Truth have to do with a belt? What is the truth?

Truth is vital because our enemy, the devil, as the Lord describes him, is the father of all lies. The truth has everything to do with our mind. The Bible says in 1 Peter. 1:13 "*Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*". This verse tells us that the belt is between our ears. We need to guard our mind from the lies of the devil.

Like a Roman soldier, the belt held his tunic together and provided him a place to carry his sword. Likewise, the belt of truth holds our life together- our mind, our will and our emotions and allows us to carry our spiritual sword of the

Spirit and use it effectively. Again we ask; what is the truth that has to be fastened around us?

Our Lord Jesus is the truth and His Word is truth. He said, *“I Am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the father except by me”* (John 14:6). He prayed to the Father for His disciples and all the believers in Him, *“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your Word is truth”* (John 17:17)

The belt of truth holds the sword of the Spirit, linking truth and the Word of God. The Truth of God’s Word guards our mind in the battle against the lies and deceptions of the enemy. So God is telling us, let My Word hold your life together against the lies of Satan.

The truth of God’s Word includes His promises, His commands and His warning. God’s Word reveals to us who Jesus is, and what He is for us. He is the way, the truth and the life. He is the way that leads to the whole truth concerning our life now and then.

We are to base our thinking and emotions on the truths of Scripture. We need to immerse ourselves in the truth of God’s Word, *“so that we may 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”* (Eph. 4:14).

The schemes of Satan are false doctrines. Satan perverts the truths of Scripture for at least two reasons;

1. To keep people out of God’s kingdom, the kingdom of light.
2. To cause people in the kingdom of God confusion and lack of security.

Knowing the true teaching of the Bible is essential for our spiritual battle. We need to hold on to two important truths the Bible has revealed to us; who God is, and who we are to God in Christ.

Firstly, God the Creator of the universe manifested Himself in the flesh in Christ Jesus to redeem us. This truth of God's love to us and His grace of salvation to rescue us and secure our eternity.

Yes, our Creator, in His love, mercy and grace, became our redeemer in Christ, who died for our sins and rose again for our justification, and has given us His Spirit for our sanctification, and He is coming again to take us to our eternal home to enjoy the glory of eternal life with Him.

Secondly, we are His beloved children if we are in Christ. This truth secures our present life until He comes.

As His beloved children, we need not fear, or worry about anything that robs our joy and our peace in Christ. No weapon fashioned against us can prosper. We can sing with confidence, the song of Romans 8 which states,

“What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything

else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:31-39).

However, for that to be in effect, we must arm up with the belt of truth, and guard our mind with the Word of God, to stand our ground against the devil’s scheme.

The truth of God’s Word prepares us for battle and gives us confidence. It holds our life together and it is our safeguard against daily problems.

Let us then fasten our life with God’s Word and proclaim and declare the Lord’s goodness over our life.

Let the Word of God guide us in everything we do. Let us join David and say with confidence, *“Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path... By Your Word Oh Lord, your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward... May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer”* (Psalm 119:105; 19:11, 14).

Yes, our Father in Heaven, we thank you for your redemptive work you’ve done in Christ in our lives. We hold your Word of Truth as a weapon against the enemy’s schemes. Today we put on the belt of truth, Your Word O Lord to protect us against lies and deception of the devil. Help us O Lord our God to stay alert and hold on in your promises. Thank you that we never fight alone, for you are always with us, You are shielding, Praise Your Holy name. Amen.

2. Breastplate of Righteousness

The breastplate of righteousness is the second piece of the armor of God. *Why is the breastplate important—for both ancient soldiers and us?*

Let us look at this piece in three ways. First, how the breastplate was used on the Roman Soldier, second, how it is to be used for us as Christians, and finally, what is this righteousness and how do we put it on for our spiritual battle?

So let's begin with what the breastplate did for the Roman soldier. The breastplate was worn on the chest of the soldier and was made of plates of leather tied together with metal which swords and arrows could not get through. It was intended to protect the soldier's vital organs like the heart, lungs and intestines. If one of these vital organs became injured in battle, the soldier was considered dead. So the breastplate was obviously important. The breastplate was considered a body shield like the bulletproof vest is in our day.

So with that in mind, let's move on to see how the breastplate is to be used for the Christian in spiritual battle. For Christians, the breastplate of righteousness protects our hearts. The heart in the Bible represents, our mind, will, emotions and feelings. Luke 2:19 states, "*Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart*". Hannah praised God and said "*My heart rejoices in the LORD*" (1 Sam 2:1). Barnabas encouraged the believers in Jesus "*to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts*" (Acts 11:23).

The Christian's heart is the primary target of the devil. The devil attacks us with doubt, fear, misleading teaching (lies)

and all thoughts that make us sad. The Bible says, "*Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life*" (Proverbs 4:23). The mind and emotions are the two areas where Satan most fiercely attacks.

What protects our hearts from the attack of the enemy? Righteousness! "*Stand firm... having the breastplate of righteousness in place*" (Eph 6:14). So we ask; what is this righteousness that we must put on in our spiritual battle?

The Bible speaks of three kinds of the righteousness: first, the righteousness of God imputed to us in Christ. Second, the self righteousness of man to achieve God's favour and his forgiveness by keeping the law of God. And thirdly, practical righteousness of a life lived in obedience to God's Word that we do as the fruit of our justification by faith in Christ's work for us.

God dresses us in the imputed righteousness of Christ (like we dress a child) as 2 Cor 5:21 says "*God made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*". "*This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe... and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood, to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus*" (Romans 3:22-26). Yes, as the Bible says; "*The Lord is our righteousness*" (Jeremiah 23:6).

The self righteousness that man tries to do is to achieve salvation by keeping the law. This is all vain because no man is able to keep the law. The Bible says, *“There is none righteous, no, not one... There is none who does good, no, not one... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”*. *“We are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags”* (Romans 3: 10-12, 23 & Isaiah 64:6).

The Apostle Paul also testifies of this righteousness and said, *“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”* (Phi 3:9).

But we must put on our practical righteousness everyday; the fruit of our justification by faith in Christ’s work for us as the Bible says in Titus 2:11-14, *“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good”*.

Let us protect our hearts against the accusations and charges of Satan and secure our innermost being from his attacks with the righteousness of God imputed to us in Christ which we received by faith. *“The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light* (Romans 13:12).

3. Shoes of the Gospel of Peace

The third piece of armor of God is the shoes of "the readiness of the gospel of peace."

Shoes! Are they really important?

What purpose did shoes serve for a Roman soldier?

What does the Gospel of Peace have to do with shoes? What is the Gospel of peace?

Why do our spiritual shoes matter and why do we need to make sure we're equipped with them in our spiritual battle.

Imagine a fully armed Roman soldier. He has his sword, shield, helmet, breastplate and belt, but his feet are completely bare. The picture seems strange, and the problem goes beyond just looking odd. A shoeless soldier could run into real trouble in the heat of battle; bare feet can cause serious pain.

The shoes of the Roman soldier were leather sandals fitted with nails, or armed with spikes, to give firm footing on uneven rocky ground. Shoes allow the soldiers to step freely and without fear while they turn their full attention to the battle.

Footwear is all important if you're to be effective wherever you are or wherever you're going! Soldiers may be crippled by ill-fitting boots, or boots that don't provide sufficient protection. Battles can be lost through poor footwear.

So with that in mind, let's move on to see *what the Gospel of peace is. What does the gospel have to do with shoes?*

As we read throughout the New Testament, we find some descriptions attached to the word gospel; the gospel of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel of the grace of God, the gospel of peace and the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:1, 14; Acts 20:24).

Q: Are these descriptions attached to the word gospel multiple gospels?

No. The Bible affirms that there is only one gospel. Apostle Paul wrote to the church of Galatia,

“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ” (Galatians 1:6-7).

The Greek word translated gospel means "**good news**." This raises the question: *The good news of what?*

The good news is all about Jesus the Messiah, who He is and His work on the cross for us.

The gospel of peace is the good news of Jesus who purchased our peace with God by His death for our sins and offers it by His grace to all who believe in Him and acknowledge Him to be their Saviour and Lord.

The Bible says, *“Being justified by faith (i.e. having put on the breastplate of the righteousness of Christ), we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand”* (Romans 5:1-2).

Q: What does the gospel of peace have to do with shoes?

The Bible says, *"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!"* (Isaiah 52:7 & Romans 10:15). God's Church is sent to announce the good news of peace with God to the whole world as He commanded us, *"Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation"* (Mark 16:15).

In the Apostle Paul's day, he walked countless miles in delivering the good news. Today, transportation and communication have changed, but the gospel of peace is the same and we must arm ourselves with this good news of salvation and be ready to do our part and share it with others.

Q: How do these spiritual shoes help us stand firm?

Every soldier needs the proper shoes when he goes into battle. Shoes are a very important part of the armor of God and without shoes one can find it difficult to walk or stand. When you are barefoot you might step on sharp, rough, hot and uncomfortable ground which would make your mobility uncomfortable and painful.

Our journey of life is like stepping on uneven rocky ground. The peace of God that we have in Christ is the Gospel itself that we share to others. It is to be the firm footing of our walk, and enabling us to live without worry or fear. That is our testimony that others see in us.

God's good news of peace is our mission; our marching orders to preach it. Yes it is our firm foundation. Friends, take comfort in the good news promised by God, who promised *"Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and*

scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Luke 10:19-20).

We have protection and strength in the knowledge of what the good news of God's peace mean to us as we share it with others. Our walk will always be sure and unshakable when we trust God’s promises. Our Lord Jesus said, *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).*

Take comfort in God’s promises of peace that fills our hearts and take away all worry and trouble in this present time. The Bible says, *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7)*

Let us take some time today to consider a person or group who need to hear this good news of peace. Pray that the message of the good news will reach our family, friends, neighbours, and all people in the world. Pray that the kingdom of our heavenly Father comes and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

4. The Shield of Faith

The fourth part of the armor of God is the shield of faith. Ephesians 6:16, states “*In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one*”. The question is; why is the shield so important for a soldier?

The Roman shields of the time were different sizes. One of them was large as a door that would cover the soldier entirely. Shields often made of wood that could extinguish flaming arrows. Such a shield was not just defensive but could also be used to push opponents. The Roman soldiers of Paul’s day were sometimes subject to a shower of arrows that rained down on them from above.

For example, when laying siege to a walled city or a fortified hill, they had to advance while arrows were launched from above them. The soldiers formed a tight square. Those in the front raised their shields in front of them. Those on the sides faced to the side and raised their shields. Similarly, those in the back faced the back and raised their shields. Those in the middle raised their shields overhead to protect against arrows flying in from above. In this way, no part of the band of soldiers was left exposed.

Clearly, a shield is really important to a soldier. It provides a blanket of protection. It is the first barrier against the enemy’s attack. With this in mind, let us see what a shield has to do with faith.

Q: What is faith? And how does faith quench the flaming arrows?

The word *faith* means “firm belief.” Faith in God means our firm belief in His promises. Faith is an unshakable belief in the promises of God.

The Bible, in Hebrews 11:1-2, describes it as the realization of something we can't see: “*Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. For by it the ancients believers obtained a good testimony*”.

We are justified by God's gift of the saving faith. Faith is the means by which we receive the grace of salvation and have peace with God as the Bible says in Romans 5:1-2,

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God”.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast” (Eph 2:8-9).

We are able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one by taking up the shield of faith (*The trusting Faith*). “*Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one*” (Eph 6:16).

Yes faith as a shield is our firm, unshakable belief in God and in His promises that enables us not only to defend ourselves, but to also quench “*all the flaming arrows of the evil one*”.

Q: What are the flaming arrows and how does faith quench them all?

The “*flaming arrows of the evil one*” are no ordinary temptations. They are things that seem to suddenly come from nowhere to pierce and penetrate and torment our soul. Satan attempts to causes us to doubt, worry and to fear, to discourage us and destroy our faith in God. But God has given us this promise to overcome Satan’s scheme, “*Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith*” (1 John 5:4).

Q: How does faith quench all these flaming arrows?

Just as a Roman soldier in battle was confronted by the fiery arrows of the enemy, we, too, can be attacked at any time and in any area by the flaming arrows of the evil one.

We give in to doubt or worry or fear, when we look with our human eyes at how hard our situation is rather than looking with heavenly eyes seeing what God has promised us. Faith in God is the shield that reminds us that God is true to His Word. So when Satan’s attack causes us to doubt God, faith prompts us to believe God. Faith is a protective barrier between us and the schemes of the evil one.

Faith in ‘*the shield of faith*’ means application of what we believe as an answer to every flaming arrow that the devil throws at us.

Let take some examples. When Satan causes us to doubt God’s love and His gift of salvation to us, faith chooses to believe the promises of God and the assurance that Jesus has

redeemed us and that there is no more condemnation (Romans 8:1; Revelation 12:10-12).

When Satan plagues us with worry, faith chooses to trust in God and to stand on His promise, “*Cast your cares upon Him and he will sustain you*” (Psalm 55:22). When Satan causes us to fear, faith chooses to trust in God and to stand on His promise “*Do not be afraid, I Am your shield*” (Gen 15:1). God promised us in Matthew 28:20, “*I Am always with you even to the end of the world*”. The Bible says in Proverbs 30:5, “*God is a shield to those who take refuge in him*”.

Our unshakable belief in God and in His promises must be enduring. The shield cannot remain effective if it is lowered.

When we believe God and take Him at His word, we remain grounded in truth. The lies of the enemy lose their power, and we become overcomers. In that way, faith is our shield.

Like David, our faith looks up and says,

“Lord, You are my shield; in You I take my refuge. Lord, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me! Many are saying of me, “God will not deliver him.” But you, Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, the One who lifts my head high. I call out to the Lord, and he answers me ... I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me. I will not fear though tens of thousands assail me on every side. Arise, Lord! Deliver me, my God! From the Lord comes deliverance. May your blessing be on your people” (Psalm 3)

5. The Helmet of Salvation

The fifth piece of the armor of God is the helmet of salvation as the Bible instructed us to stand firm by putting on the Helmet of Salvation (Eph 6:17).

Q: Why is the helmet important for a soldier? What does the helmet of salvation represent? What is salvation? Why do we need it? And how do we put it on?

Here, Apostle Paul pictures the Roman soldier's helmet. The helmet was made of bronze and had a band to protect the forehead and plates for the cheeks. It also extended down the back to protect the neck.

In warfare, the enemy commonly attacked the head since the soldier's mind controlled his decisions and reactions in a fight. To harm the head was to gain an advantage in combat. Our enemy, Satan, does the same. With this in mind, let us see what the helmet of salvation represents?

The helmet of salvation represents our right knowledge of salvation that assures us that we are saved by the grace of God and we are anticipating the coming of our saviour for our glorification. Salvation is God's story for our life which covered three aspects; past, present and future, in other words; Justification, sanctification and glorification.

But before we make sure that we have the right knowledge of salvation, we should first ask, what is the distorted view of salvation?

As with every other piece of armor, the helmet of salvation shows us how the enemy attacks. Here we see how he attacks the believer's assurance of salvation. Satan

attempts to plant in our mind a wrong and distorted view of salvation, to lead us away from God's true way of salvation, which makes a Christian unprofitable and not much use to the kingdom of God. This is why attacking the head is a common tactic of Satan.

The wrong view of salvation says Christ's death on the cross is not sufficient for our salvation from Judgment. We have to also keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved. We receive justification and salvation by faith and works.

But according to the Word of God, this view is wrong because the Bible says, "*By the works of the law no one will be justified...for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!*" (Gal 2:16, 21).

Now let us see the right view of salvation according to the Word of God. The biblical salvation has three aspects;

1. The first aspect of salvation is our justification.

It is by Faith alone in the Grace of God alone in Christ alone as the Door and by His perfect sacrifice on the Cross that we receive; Justification, salvation and forgiveness of sins. Our Lord said in John 10:9, "*I AM the Door; those who come in through Me will be saved*"

The Bible says, "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God presented as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood to be received by faith*" (Romans 3:23-25).

In Ephesians 2:8-9, the Bible says also *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God not by works, so that no one can boast”*. And also in Romans 5:1-2 the Bible says, *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God”*.

2. The second aspect of salvation is our sanctification.

So the helmet of salvation represents also our present salvation, our sanctification which is the work of the Holy Spirit in us, to perfect us and present us as a beautiful bride to Christ at His Second Coming.

The Bible says in Ephesians 5:25-27, that *“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a glorious church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless”*.

3. The third aspect of salvation is our glorification.

The helmet of salvation represents also our future salvation that we anticipate, our glorification at the Second Coming. It is called the hope of salvation.

The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 says, *“But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith*

and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet”.

We are saved by grace, and that saving grace teaches us to wait and anticipate the second coming of Christ.

This is what the Bible says in Titus 2:11-14, *“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good”.*

Our salvation is not limited to a one-time act of the past but is also our future hope of when our Lord Jesus comes again. God’s salvation is our eternal state that we as children of God enjoy in the present. It is daily protection and deliverance from Satan’s schemes.

We must keep our helmets buckled on so we can stand against Satan’s schemes and *“destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ”* (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Let us therefore look to the coming of our Lord and take that hope as a helmet because the Bible says, *“Understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day*

is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light... Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh” (Romans 13:11-14).

Let us fix our eyes on our eternal destiny rather than our present state. The Bible says, *“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Cor. 4:17-18).*

Our anticipation of that end will protect our heads in the heat of the battle and that hope keeps us from falling. The Bible says,

“For our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Philippians 3:20-21).

6. The Sword of the Spirit

We have seen five defensive pieces of the armor of God; the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation (Ephesians 6:10-18).

The sixth piece of the armor of God is the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Let us explore why the sword was important for a Roman soldier? What does the Sword of the Spirit represent? Why and how do we use the Word of God to win our spiritual battles?

Swords or daggers in the ancient times were used for close combat, not long-range warfare. When the sword is sharpened, its two edges pierce through as well as cutting in every way. This close combat sheds some light on the nature of our spiritual battle as Christians against the evil one.

The Bible tells us that we must take a sword - not a literal sword but a spiritual sword- to use it against our enemy the devil in the evil day. The Bible says, *“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ”* (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

In our spiritual battle, the evil one is not off in a distance but he is in close combat with us. He is on your face and all over you in a frontal assault, on your life, on your family, on your home, on your mind and in your circumstances.

In this close combat with the evil one, he attacks us like a serpent to deceive us with his lies or attacks us like a lion to devour us and destroy our faith. In such battles, we go through *many tribulations* (Acts 14:22), and *fall into various trials* (James 1:2). How and where can we get the strength for our souls to stand our ground?

Our loving God did not leave us alone. He is with us and He has given us His Sword which represents His Word. As the Apostle Paul says, “*Take the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God*” (Eph 6:17).

Psalm 119:105 says, “*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*”. God's Word illuminates. It reveals to us the good and the bad, the wise and the unwise. It is the ultimate tool in learning how to live the best possible life, and keeps us from stumbling in darkness.

Our Lord Jesus, in the days of His flesh, prayed for us to the Father in John 17:17, “*Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth*”. When we trust and believe the Word of God, it will guide us in the paths of righteousness in which we need to walk.

God refers to His Word as a sword again in Hebrews 4:12, “*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*”.

Here the Word of God is described as living and powerful and sharper than a double-edged sword. Piercing, or penetrating; means that the Word of God reaches the “heart,” the very center of action, and lays open the motives and feelings of those it touches.

The Word of God is able to cut through every defence our enemy can raise against us. When Satan attacks us with his flaming arrows with doubts, fear or worries, we can trust in God's Word and shield ourselves with it.

The Word of God enables us to discern the truth from the lies of the evil one. When we take the Word of God as our Spiritual Sword, we will be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

We are easily defeated if we ignore and do not use the Word of God. If we read, hear and apply it in our daily life, however, we will be blessed and stand our ground. Our Lord Jesus said, *"Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it"*. *"Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it"* (Luke 11:28; Revelation 1:3).

Q: Why must we take the Word of God as our Spiritual Sword in our battle with the devil? And how can we use it as Spiritual sword?

Satan is allergic to the Word of God! When we trust God and believe His Word, Satan cannot and will not stand before us; he will flee from us. *"Resist the devil and he will flee from you"* (James 4:7).

Speak the Word of God over your situation when the devil is in your face. Start speaking the Word of God and do not let the devil words penetrate and control your mind. The Bible says, *"Do not give the devil a foothold"* (Eph 4:27).

Find a specific promise or verse related to your specific challenge and speak it into Satan's face. He will then flee from you. Use the Sword of the Spirit as our Lord did.

Our Lord Jesus demonstrated this use of Scripture during His wilderness temptation. We are given three recorded temptations in Matthew 4:4, 7, 10. Each time Satan tempted our Lord Jesus He responded with the truth of Scripture and said “*It is written*”. Satan could not take it anymore, so he left Jesus.

We have also several examples of temptations where our Lord was challenged by the religious leaders. On each occasion, our Lord’s skilful use of the sword of the Spirit silenced His enemies.

Take for example the situation recorded in Matthew 21:15-16. The religious leaders were angry with Jesus for allowing the children to refer to Him as the “Messiah.” Do you remember His response? “*Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise’?*”

Another example is the Sadducees’ argument against the resurrection, recorded in Matthew 22:29-31. Jesus responds, “*Your mistake is not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God*”; and again He said “*Have you not read what was spoken to you by God? ‘I Am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’. He is not the God of the dead but of the living*”.

One last example is found in the Lord’s response to the Pharisees’ allegation that Christ was to be merely the son of David. What did our Lord say to them? He again quoted the Scripture, “*How can they say that the Christ is the Son of David? Now David himself said in the Book of Psalms: ‘The LORD said to my Lord ... David calls Him ‘Lord’; how is He then his Son?’*” (Luke 20:41–44).

In each of these examples, the Captain of our salvation is teaching us indirectly how to effectively use His Sword. We must do the same and learn to live "*by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*" (Matthew 4:4).

Let us not forget that our "*enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith*" (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Yes, we can resist the devil and silence him as our Lord Jesus did. So, let us use the word of God, speak out the promises of God. Speak specific promises over your situation, when the devil is in your face. Find specific verses related to your specific challenge and speak it out into Satan's face and he will flee from you.

Let us take up our swords. The battle is ours. Your spiritual sword needs to be sharpened if it is to remain useful, and it certainly won't sharpen itself.

Set aside some time for regular Bible study. Spend time reading, meditating, studying, and memorizing the Bible. Through continuous practice, we will be always ready to defend the hope that lies within us and stand against the enemy of our souls and demolish his schemes.

Let us "*Put on the full armor of God. Stand firm and take... the sword of the Spirit*" (Eph 6:11-18). Let us always stand on the promises of God, and "*the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet*" (Romans 16:20). "*The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast*" (1 Peter 5:10).

7. Pray Always in the Spirit

The seventh and the final piece of the armor of God is prayer. “*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints*” (Eph 6:18).

Prayer is a vitally important piece of the armor of God and we must keep on praying, because it is another powerful tool to stand against the devil’s scheme. ***So what is prayer?***

Prayers connect us with God, they open a dialogue with God who promises to answer us, “*Call unto me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know*” (Jeremiah 33:3). Prayers strengthen us for our spiritual fight, and keep us grounded.

Q: What are the components of biblical prayer that we must have in mind for our spiritual warfare against the devil’s schemes?

The Bible instructed us with a five elements of prayer, and it will be easy for us to remember them if we look at these elements of prayer in five directions as follows: -

- (i) Look up: adoration;
- (ii) Look back: thanksgiving
- (iii) Look in: confession;
- (iv) Look around: intercession;
- (v) Look forward: petition.

The first important component of prayer is that we look up to God and adore Him.

Yes, we adore and praise our God for who He is and what He has done for us. He is worthy to be praised, because He is our Creator. He is our loving Redeemer. We can use a passage from Psalms that help us to express our adoration to Him. The Bible says, “*Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name*” (Psalm 100:4)

The evil one wants us to be miserable, angry, scared, and doubtful so he can mess with our minds; it’s no accident that thankfulness and prayer are both mentioned together in multiple places throughout the Bible. The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 “*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus*”.

The second component of prayer is that we look back with an attitude of gratitude and thanksgiving and praise Him.

Sometime we find ourselves combining adoration and thanksgiving together as one thing because when we come to adore God we look back at the great things that God has done for us and thank and praise Him in adoration.

The Bible says, “*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice... The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 4:4-7).

The fight is always centred in our minds; so if we determine choosing to be grateful and thankful to God, that attitude enables us to beat Satan at his own game. Praising God and counting our blessings empowers us.

The third component of prayer is that we must look in our hearts and confess our sins.

There is much to be ashamed of, much to repent of and to confess our shortcomings. But as we bring our sins to God, we have a great assurance of forgiveness because of what our Lord Jesus did for us on the cross.

The Bible says, *“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). And in 1 John 2:1-2, *“If anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins”*. And *“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7).

The fourth element of our prayer is that we must look around and offer intercessory prayer for all people.

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” (Eph 6:18), and *“Pray for all people”* (1 Tim 2:1).

We fail in this in so many ways. There is nothing wrong in praying for ourselves; my sickness, my injury, my job, my finances and all the things that trouble us. But we are called also to pray and make supplication for all people; for all

Christians and the servants of God. (Please read these references, 1 Tim 2:1-7, Eph 6:18).

The fifth and the final aspect of prayer is that we look forward and bring our petitions to the Lord.

Ephesians 6:18 says, “*Praying always with all prayer and supplication*”. The first term ‘prayer’, refers to general requests whereas the second term, ‘supplication’, is a word for specific prayer needs. Yes, we bring all our troubles to God, our specific needs, and God promised that He will fulfil our needs and hear our prayer.

But in all our specific needs, we are called to pray *in the Spirit* and we must keep on praying *with perseverance and never give up*.

Praying in the Spirit means that to some degree, our prayers are going to be based on the Bible. That is always a good place to start our prayers. If you are praying in the Spirit, according to the Word of God, according to the will of God, then we can be certain that what we pray for will be given to us. The Bible says in 1 John 5:14, “*Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us*”.

Praying always and without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17) doesn’t mean that we should always be on our knees praying, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It means rather, that we should always be maintaining an attitude of prayer without giving up soon as Ephesians 6:18 reads, “*being watchful to this end with all perseverance*”. Sometimes we feel that we pray the same thing over and over, day after day, and never seem to get anywhere. But the Bible here and elsewhere tells us to keep on praying. Why is this?

In the parable of the Unjust Judge, God our loving Father is contrasted with the unjust judge. God is a loving Father, kind, merciful and gracious God. He loves to hear and answer our prayers and do what is right for us. So God is encouraging us to keep on praying and takes the widow in that parable as a good example of not giving up in what she is looking for.

The evil one tries his best to stop us and comes to our mind and says “Well, you pray over and over again, your God does not care! Just give up.” So we often feel that each time we take a step forward, we’re met with resistance in the form of doubt, fear, worries, or other strategies Satan uses against us.

But No! Keep standing. Keep fighting. Keep praying. Do not give up. The Holy Spirit of God will come to our aid as the Bible says, in Romans 8:26-27, *“the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God”*.

Praise God, prayer brings us into the presence of God who makes a way when there is no way. Let us then practise daily praying in the Spirit, according to God’s Word and using these five dimensions of prayer. It is what God has given to us to make use of His power in this battle we are in. Bring your needs to God and remember His promise to fulfil your needs.

Chapter Three

Using the Lord's Prayer as a Spiritual Weapon

The teaching of our Lord Jesus on the topic of prayer was not only direct, but also simple and unique. He guided us as to what to pray and also how we should pray. He gave us the models of prayer and showed us His own example to follow.

First, He told us to avoid two kinds of prayers; the hypocritic prayer and ritual babbling prayer. The word hypocrite is used for an actor, who puts on a mask to hide his true identity. He just plays his role in the dramatic play. The Pharisees of the first century prayed like actors. They loved to be seen praying, pretending to be highly spiritual. Their motivation was wrong.

Our Lord does not want us to act like them. *“When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full”* (Matt 6:5-6).

Babbling prayer or memorized ritual prayer is chanted over and over without thinking what it means. Our Lord Jesus said it is vain repetition, and He does not want us to pray that way. He said, *“When you pray, do not keep on babbling like heathens, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him”* (Matt.6:7-8).

Our Lord is saying, in your prayer, do not be like an actor who puts on a mask to play his role. And do not be like a

Parrot who repeats babbling words without understanding it. The question now is: How then we should pray?

Our Lord wants us to *Pray like God's own dear children*. He gave us the model of prayer which we call "*The Lord's Prayer*" to keep us from using vain repetitions. He said, "*This is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom, power and glory for ever and ever Amen"* (Matt.6:9-13).

The Lord's Prayer is the prayer of the true children of God and is the perfect expression of faith and trust in God. It teaches us the basics of how and what to pray. It lists seven petitions that we should ask and want in this life. It can be divided into two sections: the first I called "*the three yours*" petitions which draw our attentions to God our Father, to His name, His kingdom and His will. The first "*Hallowed be Your name*", the second "*Your kingdom come*", the third "*Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*".

The second section of the Lord's Prayer I call "*the four us*" petitions that concern our physical needs as well as our spiritual needs. "*Give us this day our daily bread*", "*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us*", "*And lead us not into temptation*" and the last petition, "*Deliver us from the evil one*".

The Lord's Prayer begins with addressing God, our Heavenly Father who is heaven, and ends with praising Him saying "*For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever*".

“Our Father Who is in Heaven”

The Our Father unites us with the prayer of Jesus. This is how he prayed. This is what he prayed for. Christians in a private or public prayer, begin their prayer by addressing God as Father. There's nothing more common among us than to address God as our Father. There is no command to instruct God's people of the Old Testament to call God "Father". But in the New Testament, we are instructed to address God and call Him directly when we pray "*Abba- Father- in loving relationship- Daddy*"

This is a radical departure from Jewish traditional prayer. In fact, they are trained not to pronounce God's name Yahweh, at all but instead, they say *Adonay, Master*.

When we come to the New Testament, we find that in every recorded prayer we have from the lips of our Lord Jesus He calls God "Father" except for the one time when He cried on the cross in Matthew. 27:46, "*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?*", and that was because He was taking our place and bore our sins.

Jewish leaders sought to kill Jesus because He called God His Father and dared to speak in such an intimate, personal way with God. They considered Him a blasphemer who claimed to be equal with God and for this reason they asked the Roman governor to crucify Him.

Our Lord Jesus encourages us to look at God as the Loving Father who has given us the right and privilege to come into His presence and address him as Father because indeed He is our Loving Father.

The Bible says, “*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him*” (1 John 3:1). The expression “*What great love*” manifests how the Heavenly Father “lavished” His love on us and also implies our astonishment and admiration of His great love and our privilege to be His children.

Through receiving Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, we receive the privilege to be in the Father's family and we are called “children of God.” The Bible says in John 1:12 “*To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God*”.

What an honour it is, that God calls us His children and gives us the assurance that as His children we are heirs of the eternal glory which will be revealed at the coming of Christ (Romans 8:17).

Because of this privilege and our new relationship with God, we can approach a holy God as our heavenly Father with “*boldness and full assurance of faith*”, as the Bible says in Hebrews 10:19-22, “*Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus... let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water (the Word of God)*”.

We have that confidence because of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit who “*bears witness with our spirit*

that we are children of God” (Romans 8:16). Being a child of God, adopted “through faith in Christ Jesus”, is the source for our hope, and the security of our future. Being children of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords calls us to a higher standard, a different way of life to glorify God in our daily life.

It is amazing that a holy and righteous God, who created and sustains all things, who is the only all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present God, would allow sinful humans like us to call Him “Abba- Daddy.”

Let us then put our trust and faith in the Father God, who loves us, provides for us, and protects us, as He promised *“Listen to me... you whom I have upheld since your birth, and have carried since you were born. Even to your old age and gray hairs I am He, I am He who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you” (Isaiah 46:3-4).* Here is God, the Father who carries us, as His dear children and we are safe and secure in His arms.

Let us also recognise His true fatherly love when he disciplines us to restore our souls and leads us in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. The Bible says in Hebrews 12:11, *“Now no discipline seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it”.* Yes, *“The LORD is compassionate and gracious; slow to anger, abounding in love... As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust” (Psalm 103:8, 11-14).*

The message of the Bible's reference to God as the Loving Father is to urge us to trust Him today and tomorrow, for He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. In contrast to the human father, our Father God is perfect. He is our faithful father, who continues to carry us from start to finish.

Such fatherly compassionate love calls us to bless Him and forget not all his benefits, all the blessings we have in Christ. Let us then glorify the name of Jesus who gave us the privilege to call God our Father. Amen.

1. **Hallowed Be Your Name**

God's name expresses His person; it reflects who He is, and what He is, it is all about His eternal attributes. The question is: *What does it mean for God's name to be hallowed?*

This petition "*Hallowed be your name*" does not mean that God can become any more holy than He is. God is already "Majestic in Holiness". To hallow God's name is to revere and glorify Him in our daily life. We ought to be holy for the Lord our God said, "*Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy*" (Lev 19:2).

This first petition echoes the third commandment; "*You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God*" (Ex. 20:7). We ask God to make our actions, our words, our thoughts, and our emotions holy.

The Bible says, "*Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things*" (Philippians 4:8)

*“Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name” (Psalm 96:8).
“May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer” (Psalm 19:14).*

To hallow God’s name is to praise and adore Him for who he is and what He is for us and for others.

Asaph prays in Psalm 83:18, *“Let them know that you, whose name is the LORD- that you alone are the Most High over all the earth”*.

We hallow God’s name, when we ask God that people around us, come to know His love, and acknowledge Him as their Saviour.

In the days of His ministry on earth and before His cross, our Lord prayed, *“Father, Glorify your Son... For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him... that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:1-3).*

The Apostle Paul followed our Lord’s example and said *“My heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved”. “Pray for all people. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (Romans 10:1 & 1 Timothy 2:1-4).*

We hallow God’s name, when we come before Him in our worship, and think of who He is and what He is, and worship Him through His many names. The name of God is God Himself, as He has made himself known.

In your prayer, you may say to the Lord, “O Lord, You are my rock, my salvation. You are my shepherd and my provider. You are my righteousness and my peace. You are El Shaddai; You are my strength and Hiding place”. Remember God’s names in your daily life, because God is who His name is because He does what His name says.

Let us then revere and praise our glorious Father, our Emmanuel and hallow Him for He is with us.

Say with Jeremiah, “*No one is like you, O Lord; you are great and Your name is mighty in power*” (Jeremiah 10:6).

Sing with David “*Our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth*” (Ps 8:1)

Shout with the seraphim, “*Holy, Holy, Holy; is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of your glory*” (Isa 6:3)

I heard a story of a king who was loved and honoured by all His people. He set aside an open day every week making himself available to meet the needs of his people and hear their concerns, and their petitions. There was an old man who came every week, and simply stood at the back of the throne room, yet never asked the king any request. The king was puzzled and wondered why this old man kept coming.

One year later, the king summoned the man to approach him, and asked him his petition, saying he didn’t need to keep bothering to come; just state your request. The man said, “Your majesty, when I was a young man, I committed crime and I was sentenced to death. On the day I was dragged to the gallows, I saw you riding your horse on the other side of the road, and I cried out for mercy. You came and looked at me, and you granted me a royal pardon and you set me free.

Thirty years later, I heard that your majesty opened your throne room to any who have a request. That is why I come to stand in your presence every week. I do not come to ask for anything. What more could I ask for? You have already given me my life and my freedom. I come only to pay homage to honour your majesty.

We do the same thing when we pray the Lord's Prayer. We are entering the throne room of our gracious heavenly King. There will be time for the rest of our petitions in due course. But we first must begin by paying homage to our heavenly Father, the king. First we offer him all the reverence that He alone deserves, praising him and adoring him in the beauty of his holiness.

We join the Apostle Paul and say, *"We give joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. For He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins"* (Col 1:12-14).

"Hallowed be Your Name" is the only one of the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer that we will continue to make for all eternity. Yes we shall be ever singing hallelujahs, which is nothing else but the hallowing of God's name.

We will join with the voices of angels, who never stop saying, *"Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come"* (Revelation 4:8).

To summarize the first petition, we ask our heavenly Father that He would make us holy in everything we do, say, think, feel, and adore. Just as He who called us to be his

children, is holy, so let us be holy in all we do, for it is written “*Be holy, because I am holy*” (1 Peter 1:16). This is how to hallow God’s name.

That makes us the children of our heavenly Father. We pray that His name is regarded in the highest esteem and held in a holy, deep, and abiding reverence and respect. Blessed be His name forever and ever Amen!

2. Your Kingdom Come

To understand the second petition, “*your kingdom come*”, we may ask three questions: *What does the “Kingdom of God” mean? How can we enter the kingdom of God? And why should we pray this petition?*

God’s Kingdom is a spiritual reality of God’s rule that establishes in the heart of believers as we acknowledge our Father God not only as our Creator King, but also as our Redeemer who revealed His love to us in Christ and grants us the blessing of Eternal life.

The kingdom of God is not a physical earthly kingdom, as Our Lord said in John 18:36, “*My kingdom is not of this world*”. “*The kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst*” (Luke 17:20) “*For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*” (Romans 14:17).

The Apostle Paul in says 1 Cor 15:50, “*Brothers and sisters, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God*”. And he says in Eph 5:5, “*For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person- such a person is an*

idolater- has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God". And again he says in 1 Cor 6:9-11, "Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God"? ... "And that is what some of you were. 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".

Our Lord blessed the citizens of the kingdom of God saying to them in His sermon on the mountain, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven... Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt. 5:3-10).

Q2: How can we enter the kingdom of God?

In John 3:1-30, Nicodemus asked this question and our Lord's answer him saying, *"You must be born again ... No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again... No one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit"* (John 3:1-5).

Nicodemus was shocked and asked, *"How can someone be born when they are old?" "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"* Our Lord said to him, *"You should not be surprised at my saying, "You must be born again". The Lord reminded Nicodemus of the Israelites in the wilderness emphasizing the importance of faith in what God said, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.... For*

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:14-16).

So we are born again by believing in Christ who took away our sins on the Cross. And then we are in His kingdom, *“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son” (John 3:17-18).*

The Bible says, *“To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).*

Q3: Why should we pray this petition?

Our heavenly Father *“wants all people to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4).* He *“is patient with us, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).* For this reason, Jesus came from heaven to earth to die on the Cross to take away our sins, and in response to His love, we must love Him and do His will which is to seek the salvation of all people by telling them the Good News of God’s Love and pray for all people. Our Lord said in Matthew 6:33, *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”.*

Apostle Paul also instructs all Christians in 1 Tim 2:1-6, to offer to God *“petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving for all people, for kings and all those in authority... This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to knowledge of the*

truth... For Christ Jesus our Saviour gave himself as a ransom for all people”.

Let us then follow the example of our Lord who promised, *“I have other sheep that are not of this sheep fold. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd”* (John 10:16).

And also, as the Apostle Paul said in Romans 10:1, *“My heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved”*. Let us continue to tell the good news of God’s love to all people and pray for them that they may be saved. Look forward to the coming of Jesus who will bring all citizens of the kingdom of God, those who are drawn from every tongue, and tribe, and kindred, and nation who were redeemed and we will enjoy the joy and the glory of eternal life forever. Praise His Holy name. Amen

3. Your Will Be Done

“Your Will Be Done” is the third of the seven petitions of the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:10). It is last of the *“Yours”* petitions that focus on God’s name, His kingdom come and His will.

When we pray, *“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”*, we ask God to make us willing to know, obey, and submit to His will, as the angels of heaven do, even if it is hard to do or seems impossible to believe.

David prayed to God saying in Psalm 143:10, *“Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; Your Spirit is good. Lead me in the land of uprightness”*.

Let us look at three examples from the Bible that show us, how they knew God's will, obeyed it and submitted to it even though it was hard, painful and seemed it impossible to believe.

"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven", was the prayer of Mary after the angel Gabriel had revealed to her the will of God in bearing his son Jesus. The angel Gabriel said to Mary, *"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God... you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus"* (Luke 1:30-31).

Mary said to the angel, *"How can this be, since I do not know a man?"* The angel said, *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God"* (Luke 1:34).

Then Mary said *"I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me according to your word"* (Luke 1:38). When Elizabeth saw Mary she said to her, *"Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfilment of those things which were told her from the Lord"* (Luke 1:45).

Mary became the bearer of the Messiah, God manifested in the flesh, because she prayed that God's will might be done in her life. Her life, and the life of the world, was transformed because she lived that prayer.

"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven", was also the prayer of Joseph, after the angel revealed to him in a dream the will of God concerning the birth of the Saviour through Mary his wife before they get together.

The angel of the Lord said to Joseph, *“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”* So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, *“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,”* which is translated, *“God with us”* (Matt 1:19-24).

Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.

“Your will be done”, was also the prayer of our Saviour and our Lord Jesus Christ at the garden of Gethsemane. In his agony in Gethsemane, Jesus prayed three times for a way around his suffering, *“Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.”* Then He came to His disciples and said to them, *“Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, see, My betrayer is at hand”* (Matt 26:36-46).

The only way for the purpose of God to be accomplished is through the pain and suffering of the Cross. He said to the Jewish leaders, *“I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”* (John 5:30) In Hebrews 10:9 we hear him saying to the Father, *“Here I am, I have come to do your will.”*

When Peter drew his sword and struck the high priest’s servant and cut off his right ear, Jesus said to him, *“Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?”* (John 18:10-11).

Q2: Why should we pray this petition?

Praying for the will of God to be done on earth, as it is in heaven, means that we are willing to go through whatever might prevent that purpose from being accomplished. We pray this petition because God's Will is good, acceptable, pleasing and perfect, but whereas our will is not (Romans 12:2).

Our prayer is that we want to be so aligned with the will and purpose of God that we ask God to empower us to accomplish it.

Q3: What is God's Will for us and for the world?

- God wants all people to be saved (1 Tim 2:4).
- God wants us to be light and to be holy (1 Thess 4:3)
- God wants us to be ready for His coming (Tit 2:11-14).

The Bible says, *"This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth"* (1 Tim 2:4). *"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him"* (John 3:17). *"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst"* (1 Tim 1:15).

God wants His people to be holy. The Bible says, *"You are the light of the world... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5:14-16). *"For this is the will of God, that you be sanctified"* (1 Thess 4:3). *"But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy"* (1 Peter 1:15-16)

God wants us to be ready for His coming. The Bible says, *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works”* (Titus 2:11-14). *“You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of the Lord and speed its coming”* (2 Peter 3:11-12).

O, Lord God our Father open the eyes of many that they may be saved and come to the knowledge of your love. Help us to be light to the world and live a holy life that brings glory to your name. Help us to be ready for the coming of Jesus. Speed your coming, O Lord. Amen, “Come Lord Jesus”.

4. Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

It is good to remember that the Lord’s Prayer has been given to us to instruct us how to pray in our private prayer and in our public prayer together. As we meditate on its seven petitions, it is good also to remember that the first part of the Lord’s Prayer is called the three “Yours” petitions which draw us toward the glory of God’s name, His kingdom, and His perfect will! The second part of the Lord’s Prayer is called the four “Us” petitions which draw our attention toward our physical and our spiritual needs.

The fourth of the seven petitions, “*Give us this day our daily bread*”, is the first of the four “Us” petitions that concern our physical and our spiritual needs. So the question is: *What does it mean to pray “Give us this day our daily bread?”*

This petition speaks to us with three challenges: the challenge of total dependence on God, the challenge to live in godly contentment, and the challenge to be filled with compassion toward those who are in need. When we pray this petition, we acknowledge our total dependence on God the Father, the one whose name is “*Yahweh Jireh*” the Provider for all our needs.

“*Give us today our daily bread*” implies a promise, the promise that our Father God will provide whatever His children actually need.

This petition teaches us to depend on God for life itself, not only physically, but also spiritually. “*For it is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of The Lord’*” (Matthew 4:4).

Our Lord tried to teach the 5000 this lesson. After He fed them from just two fish and five loaves of bread, they were so impressed with his miracle that they wanted to sign up for a permanent meal plan, they said, “*Sir, from now on give us this bread*”(John 6:34).

Our Lord said to them, “*I am the bread of life. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world*” (John 6:51).

Anyone who wants to have eternal life must believe in Jesus and receive Him as His Savior in the way a hungry person takes in his daily bread.

The Bible says, *“If God is for us, who can be against us? 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?”* (Romans 8:31-32)

What joy there is to life when we discover that Jesus is all we need, and by having Him, there is nothing we lack. He declared, *“I AM the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry”* (John 6:35).

Q2: Why should we pray this petition?

Because it helps us to live with godly contentment in this life and helps us to be filled with compassion and identify with the poor who are in need.

We are challenged with the temptation to have more than what we really need. This is because we worry about tomorrow.

The Bible says in 1 Timothy 6:6-10, *“Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in*

their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”.

Worry about tomorrow was the temptation of the Israelites in the wilderness. God gave them the Manna to eat day by day and Moses said to them in Exodus 16:15-16, *“This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat. Let everyone gather it according to each one’s need... for those who are in his tent”*. And then Moses said, *“Let no one leave any of it till morning”* (Exodus 16:19). But some of them did not trust God for tomorrow, and they left part of it until morning. And what happened; *“it bred worms and stank”* (Exodus 16:20).

In the book of Proverbs 30:7-9, we read about a godly man named Agur, who wants to live with godly contentment. He prayed to God saying, *“Two things I ask of you, Lord... Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God”*.

To live in godly contentment, the Bible says in the book of Hebrews 13:5-8, *“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’ So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid...Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever”*.

Our Lord Jesus said, *“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? 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? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own”* (Matthew 6:25-34).

“Give us this day our daily bread”, also challenges us to have compassion and identify with the poor who are in need. Food for the poor is a matter for our prayer as Christians. Our Lord teaches us to pray in the PLURAL. He has given US a family prayer for the whole world.

Hunger is not an agricultural problem. There is more than enough food to feed the world. Yet many people still go hungry. The poor lack bread because of greed, corruption, oppression, and warfare. That is why the Church prays for bread. And that is why our Lord taught us to pray first the 3 YOURS petitions *“Hallowed be YOUR Name, YOUR kingdom come, YOUR will be done”*.

When God rules in the hearts of many, they will be filled with compassion and identify themselves with the poor.

The Bible says, *“Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering”, “Do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”* (Hebrews 13:3,16).

Let us then think of these challenges and practice them in our prayers. Let us acknowledge our total dependence on God. Let us live with contentment trusting God for tomorrow. Let us identify with the poor with compassion.

Our Father, we acknowledge that You alone are the source of life, help us to trust always in your care. Help us to overcome the temptation to have more than what we need. Help us not to worry about tomorrow. Help us to identify ourselves with our sisters and brothers in other parts of the world; give them today their daily bread. Amen.

5. Forgive Us Our Sins

“Forgive us our sins” is the fifth of the seven petitions of the Lord’s Prayer, and is the second of the four “Us” petitions that concern our physical and spiritual needs. We need God to “forgive us” as well as to “give us” every day. We are asking him for daily pardon as well as daily provision.

But why should we pray for daily forgiveness? God has already forgiven all our sins once-for-all through the death of

Jesus for us. Why then do we need to keep on asking for his forgiveness?

The answer is that we are not perfect, and never will be in this life. We keep on sinning, everyday, in thought, word and deed. We therefore need to come to our Father confessing our sins as the Bible says, *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John1:8-9).

“Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us” is the most difficult petition to apply, because it is the only petition that comes *with a condition attached*. Our Lord said to them, *“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive men their sins, Your Father will also not forgive your sins”* (Matt 6:14-15). And in Mark 11:25 it says, *“When you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your sins”*.

So how can we apply this hard teaching; as Peter said to the Lord, *“Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”* (Matt 18:21).

To help us to have a forgiving spirit, our Lord told His disciples a story of the unmerciful servant. It is about a man who owed the king a great debt- ten thousand talents, which would be one million dollars in today’s economy. Since the man was not able to pay, the king ordered the man and his entire family to work as slaves in order to repay the debt. The

man fell on his knees and begged the king saying, “*Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all*” (Matt 18:24-27). The king cancelled his debt, and let him go.

The man went happily on his way home and met one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, which would be ten thousand dollars in today’s economy. He laid hands on him and took him by the neck, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’ His fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ But he would not; he refused to forgive his debtor and dragged him off to prison till he could pay the debt.

When his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told the king all that had been done. The king then called him, saying to him, ‘*You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?*’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him” (See Matthew 18:28-34)

Our Lord then said, “*My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses*” (Matthew 18:35).

Q: *Why must we have a forgiving spirit toward those who sin against us?*

I think that there are three reasons for having a forgiving spirit toward those who sin against us.

First, never forget this: Forgiveness is for OUR benefit. It is for OUR good. God would *never* tell us to forgive if it

wasn't good for us. It is the only way He ordained for us to experience freedom from hurt and harmful emotions and to enjoy His perfect peace and the joy of His salvation.

Secondly; If we choose to live without a forgiving heart, Satan will have a potential advantage over us and our life will be plagued and flooded with bitterness, and many harmful emotions (Eph 4:31-32 : & 2 Cor. 2:10-11) .

Thirdly; Forgiveness is revelation of our Christian identity. As Christians we choose to live out the love of God and demonstrate the nature and character of God when we forgive those who sin against us.

Having an unforgiving attitude will hold us captive in harmful emotions, (manifested by anger, sorrow, bitterness and the like), but forgiveness brings joy, peace and healing to our wounded heart.

Unforgiveness is like a poison destroying our heart and mind with harmful emotions which are what imprison a person. But forgiving the one who wrongs us, means we refuse to allow bitterness and anger to control our life anymore. In this way we can experience inner healing and move on with our lives.

We have a decision to make. We can hold on to our anger and live in a prison of bitterness and pain-filled life. Or we can choose to forgive and move from bitterness to blessing. Forgiving those who hurt us is a very difficult thing to deal with. God knows that we are able to forgive as He said to us to do, but our problem is sometimes we do not want to. May the Lord help us to believe His word, and trust Him because forgiving those who sin against us is for our good, and for our benefit.

Forgiving those who hurt us slams the door against the devil and his demonic forces who want to have a foothold in our mind to bring even *greater* harm to us. Yes, holding on to an unforgiving attitude (manifested by anger, sorrow, bitterness and the like) literally gives the devil a potential advantage over us.

Let's look at God's Word, where He warns us that when we hold anger or bitterness against someone, we give Satan a potential advantage over us. In Ephesians 4:26-32, we read: *"In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold...Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger ... Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you"*.

In the second passage in 2 Cor. 2:10-11, the Apostle Paul is addressing the church at Corinth over a matter of forgiveness, He writes, *"I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices"*.

Never forget this: If we do not get rid of all bitterness, *rage and anger*, we sin and give the devil a legal right to affect our peace and joy with God, not to mention potentially affect our faith and trust in God and His Word.

Be aware of the devil's tactics in the area of "feelings". The devil manipulates our feelings and suggests ideas that draw us further from forgiveness. He wants us to insist on revenge or simply resist forgiveness to remain in the victim mentality and be captive under his control. The devil will play with our feelings forever if we allow him to deceive us with this tactic. We then become the most joyless and

miserable Christians and our life will be flooded with bitterness and anger. The Bible says, *“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith”* (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Holding anger against someone can literally STOP us from enjoying the abundant life; a life full of peace and joy that God intended for us! Let us be encouraged to forgive those who have done wrong to us. This act of forgiveness removes the sting of pain but not usually the memory. Yes this act of forgiveness will change us from prisoners of the past to liberated people at peace with our memories. God will see to it, if we trust Him and obey his advice to forgive.

Finally, when we choose to forgive, God promises to reward us for it! Holding onto an unforgiving spirit is very, very unwise. Do any of us want to be unwise and lose out on rewards from God when they are available to us? No!

Our Lord promises in Luke 6:27-35, *“But this I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you... and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Highest”*.

In this spiritual battle, we demonstrate the nature and character of God’s love when we forgive. Forgiveness is our protective footwear that we need to enjoy the peace of God and the joy of life. Let us wear “forgiveness combat boots” manufactured by the Heavenly Gospel of Peace Enterprises, a "spiritual subsidiary" of The Kingdom of God In Christ. If we wear it, we will enjoy the perfect peace of God, and the God of peace will crush Satan under our feet. Amen.

6. Lead us not into temptation

“Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one”, are the last two petitions in the Lord’s Prayer where we ask for protection during temptation.

Q: *What does it mean when we pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one”? Does God lead us into temptation on certain occasions?*

This petition cannot mean that God is the prime mover behind temptation to sin, because the Bible clearly says in James 1:13, *“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one”*.

God does not do the tempting, He does not put evil desires in our hearts, but He does allow us into the presence of many tests and temptations. The Bible says in Matthew 4:1, *“Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil”*.

The confusion arises we tend to use the word tempt in the negative sense of *“fall into sin”*. But the word “temptation” in Greek-πειράζω –peirazo- means “to make proof of, to attempt, to test, and to tempt”. So, it means to tempt with the goal of causing one to sin or it can mean a test, trial or tribulation to prove the validity of one’s faith.

Obviously God never tempts anyone to sin, this what Satan does. But God does test us as the Bible says in James 1:2-3, *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance”*.

Q: What does this petition teach us?

We are in Spiritual Warfare. We are fighting with the devil and his demonic forces as the Bible says, “*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*” (Ephesians 6:12).

We are all vulnerable to temptation, and no one is above falling, no matter how old we are or how mature in the faith we are. Although the strength of certain temptations may diminish somewhat with age, we are never free from temptation as long as we live in this world. The Bible says, “*So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall*” (1 Cor 10:12).

We must watch and pray asking God for deliverance. Our Lord said to his disciples, “*Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation*” (Matt 26:41). And we must put on the armor of God that we may stand against the devil’s schemes.

Satan, the evil one, the old serpent, the deceiver, the tempter “*disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness*” (2 Corinthians 11:13–15). The Bible says in James 1:14-15, “*Each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin*”.

Sometimes Satan tries to consume us with the cares of this life, as our Lord said in Luke 21:34, “*Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with cares of this life*”. The Bible says in 1 John 2:15-16, “*Love not the world, neither the*

things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world”.

In 2 Corinthians 11:3, Paul warns the believers: *“I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”* Satan wants us to focus our attention on ourselves and fill our hearts with sorrow. He does not want us to look at Our Saviour Jesus who is our deliverer from his snare. Satan accuses us before God, but it is a glorious thing that we have our Lord Jesus, our advocate, who *“always lives to make intercession for us”* (Hebrews 7:25). Satan’s defeat is sure. But his accusations haven’t ceased.

The Apostle Peter is a powerful illustration of our need to pray and stand against temptation and be delivered from the evil one. At the Last Supper and before His crucifixion, our Lord said to Peter, *“Simon, Simon! Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren”* (Luke 22:31-32).

Our Lord said again to his disciples, *“Pray that you may not enter into temptation”* (Matt 26:41). But Peter failed to stand against the temptation. Satan controlled Peter by fear, and soon Peter denied His Lord three times. Every day, we stand before countless temptations. That’s what life is. So when we pray, *“Lead us not into temptation”*, we say *“Do not let temptation take us in. Deliver us from this evil that is set before us. Forbid that we would yield. Hold us back from stepping inside the temptation”*.

Whether we are asking for God to lead us away from sin or from difficult trials, our goal is always “*Deliver us from the evil one.*” God can and will save us from the power of the evil one, when we cry to Him and rely on His name.

The Apostle Peter makes an urgent call to end-time prayer: “*The end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers ... Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith... And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power forever and ever. Amen*” (1 Peter 4:7 & 5:8-11).

Yes, our Lord Jesus is standing with us because “*He is our great High priest who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses, because He has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet he did not sin* (See Heb 2: 17; 4:15-16).

We are to be wise and seek His power over trials and temptation, because the Bible says, “*No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it*” (1 Cor 10: 13). In all things, let us continue to pray, “*Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one*”. Amen.

Chapter Four

Our Cry For Help

1. Where Is God When I need Him Most?

“*How Long, O Lord?*” (Psalm 13:1-2) was David’s cry for nearly 10 years. He was running for his life, because King Saul sought to kill him, and David said in his heart, “*There is but a step between me and death*” (1 Sam 20:3).

The circumstances around him were so difficult, and it seemed to him that God had forgotten him. There was nothing but pain and sorrow, and he found it hard to understand why this should be so, and why for so long.

There are times when life goes bad for us, and we cry like David, “How long, Lord?” Despite the very great cultural differences between East and West, the needs of the human heart are the same wherever you go, and the problems of life are the same everywhere.

We often face situations that buffet our faith in the Lord. We often wonder “Where is God when I need Him most?” Like David we may struggle with his 4 anxious questions; “How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?” (Psalm 13:1-2).

We may feel the same way; sorrowful, deserted, ignored and abandoned. The cry “*How long?*” is the cry of an individual who faces different kind of trials, or a cry of a

church, as a result of long years of persecution from its enemy.

But the good thing we can do, and indeed the only thing to do, is not give up. We must continue to bring our troubles to the Lord. This is what David did; he brought his situation frankly to God in prayer, and he cried to the Lord, “*Look on me and answer, Lord my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death, and my enemy will say, “I have overcome him,” and my foes will rejoice when I fall*” (Psalm 13:3-4).

He looked to the outside danger; his foes, and his fear of death by the hand of his enemy. Although he cannot understand the ways of God, he still prays and makes three requests. The first was, “*Look on me,*” a plea for the Lord to fix His eyes on His servant and see his pain. David felt that God had hidden His face and he wanted Him to turn His face toward him again.

In his second request, “*Answer me*”, David felt he had been deserted and his prayers were accomplishing nothing. He therefore asks the Lord to send some kind of encouragement. His third request is “*Give light to my eyes*”. This is a request, not only for spiritual enlightenment, but also for physical and emotional energy and strength. When the mind and the body are weary, how easy it is to be discouraged!

David believed that God is the Giver of light, and without God’s light in us in this world, all would be darkness. God is the Giver of life, and without Him there is only death.

David's prayer can be our prayer too, in times of trouble, and different kinds of trials. In all cases, let us turn to the Lord and according to His promises, all things will work for our own good.

If we look to our troubles through our eyes, we will see it as a mirror through which we see our sad face and a reflection of our distress. However, if we look to our troubles through heaven's eyes we will see it as a window through which we see God at work for our good.

This is what David did and his tears turned into praise. He said, "*But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praise, for he has been good to me*" (Psalm 13:5-6).

The little word "*But*" indicates a transition from fear to faith and from questioning to claiming God's promises. God's people don't live on explanations; we live on the promises of God and those promises are as unchanging as the character of God. God is on His throne and His character had not changed.

David's circumstances hadn't changed, but he trusted in the Lord, and that led him to rejoice in God's salvation which is to come. With that attitude of faith, pain can give place to prayer; self-pity to trust; and prayer can lead to praise.

Let us ponder anew on God's promises, "*I have heard your prayer and seen your tears*" (Isaiah 38:5).

The Lord says to the persecuted Church in Smyrna, “*I know your afflictions ... I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown.*” (Rev 2:9-10)

Yes, “*The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him*” (Nahum 1:7).

No matter what we are going through, the Loving God is in control. The Bible says, “*Wait for the Lord, be strong let your heart take courage*” (Psalm 27:14). Even if you're surrounded by a dark cloud, God’s hand will protect you.

If you cry, “How Long, O Lord?” or you may say, “How long will you forget me forever?” or “Where is God when I need Him most?”, God sees you. Even if you don’t make a sound, God still hears you.

One day God will wipe away every tear and take away all your pain “*I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you*” (Gen 28:15).

Blessing be to His name forever and ever Amen.

2. Lord I do not know what to do!

In Psalm 11:3, we hear the Psalmist asks, “*If the Foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?*”

The word “foundations” refers to the spiritual and moral righteousness that exalts any society; as the Bible says “*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.*” (Proverbs 14:34)

This question is asked by David; he describe his situation as one who hears only bad news, and nothing but gloomy headlines. David’s friend saw his imminent disaster and advised him to run away and hide in the mountain.

“*Flee as a bird to your mountain*” For look! *The wicked bend their bow; they make ready their arrow on the string that they may shoot secretly at the upright in heart*” (Psalm 11:1-2). This is a pessimistic counsel of despair and discouragement.

In another words, they said to David, “You are as insignificant and defenceless as a little bird. The best thing you can do is to escape. Saul and his wicked men have the upper hand. Law and order have vanished and the foundations of society are crumbling. David, listen to our advice; what hope do you think there is for a righteous person like you?” Run and hide.

Our sojourn on earth isn’t any different from those who have gone before us; nothing is new under the sun, except in terms of technology. In every generation since the creation of Adam and Eve, the life of mankind is caught up in a world bent on evil.

The godly people in the time of the prophet Isaiah around 700 B.C, had a desperate time, they said, “*We look for justice, but find none... justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey*” (Isaiah 59:11-15).

To the Christians of the first century who suffered injustice, the Apostle John said, “*We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life*” (1 John 5:19-20).

In every generation, godly people ask, “*If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?*” The Bible identifies godly people as the house of God of the Old Testament, and the Church of the New Testament as *the pillar and ground of the truth*, as it is written in 1 Timothy 3:15, “*The house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth*”.

But when truth is no longer respected, when justice is no longer practiced, when fraud and misleading have taken the place of honesty and honour, when error prevails, when a character for integrity no longer affords any security, what can the righteous do?

When the foundations are destroyed, there are two things we can do. First of all, let’s get a right view of our God. Psalm 11 verses 4-7 read, “*The Lord’s throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyes test the sons of men. The Lord tests the*

righteous. Upon the wicked He will rain coals; fire and brimstone and a burning wind shall be the portion of their cup. For the Lord is righteous, he loves justice; the upright will see his face".

David saw God in five aspects: (1) God is sovereign "He is on His throne". (2) God sees everything the enemy is doing. Nothing can be hidden from God, because He sees everything. (3) God tests the righteous. (4) God will punish the wicked. (5) God will bless us with His presence; "*the righteous will see God's face*".

When we look around, and see the problems, and the outlook is grim, let us try to look up. When we look up to the Sovereign Lord, and trust in Him and walk by faith not by sight, we will see the answer to our question.

The second thing we must do if the foundations are destroyed is, "*We must walk by faith not by sight*" as David did. He said to his friends who advised him to escape, "*In the Lord I put my trust; how can you say to my soul, "Flee as a bird to your mountain?"*" (Psalm 11:1).

In another words David said to his friends, "I will not fear, I will not fret, and I will not flee. Why flee when the Lord is my refuge".

There are two times in David's life that he escaped- from King Saul, and from his own son Absalom. In those crises he cried, "*Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. Indeed, I would wander far off, And remain in the wilderness*" (Ps 55:6-7).

But in this crisis of Psalm 11, David rejected the pessimistic counsel of despair and discouragement, to flee, because He had the right view of His God and put his trust in the Lord.

We too are like David; we don't need wings like a dove to flee; we need wings like an eagle, so we can rise above the storm by faith and defeat the enemy of our souls, *"The Lord's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, the sons of men. The Lord tests the righteous. For the Lord is righteous, he loves justice; the upright will see his face"* (Psalm 11:4-7)

In our trials and temptations, let us remember this; the Lord **tests** us to bring out the best in us, but Satan, the enemy of our souls **tempts** us to bring out the worst.

When we trust the Lord in the difficulties of life, our trials work for us and not against us. God is looking upon us with delight. We will see His face and live in His presence forever. He is coming soon. Let us put our trust in Him. He is our refuge in the time of the storm.

Trusting in the Lord is our antidote when there is nothing but gloomy storm. In the Lord I put my trust, I will not fear, I will not fret and I will not flee.

The waves of adverse circumstances may seem to be against us at any particular time, but the tide of God's irresistible purpose is sure to win in the end. We will see His face, and we will live forever in His presence. Yes, He is coming soon. Amen!

3. O Lord Bless Me

“Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, ‘Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.’ And God granted his request” (1 Chronicles 4:10).

Who was Jabez?

Little is known of Jabez, but the Bible tells us four things about him; (i) he was a descendant of Judah, (ii) the reason his mother gave him his name, (iii) he was more "*honorable*" than his brothers, and (iv) a town was named after him (See first Chronicle 2:55).

In 1 Chronicles 4, we see a list of names of genealogy of the tribe of Judah to encourage those who had just returned from exile and were struggling to rebuild their ruined nation. These names showed that God accomplished his purposes through their ancestors before David, Moses or even Abraham. In fact, God's plan began with Adam the father of mankind, as we see at the very first verse of 1 Chronicles, "*Adam, Seth, Enoch...*" The genealogy showed that God had a purpose for Adam, Israel, Jabez and that includes us too.

Why did his mother give him this name? The name Jabez means "*he causes pain, sorrowful or man of sorrow*" so we can assume that something had happened at his birth. Some say his father died at his birth, and that was emotionally painful to his mother, and she named him Jabez.

Names in the Bible were very important. A name often described a person's character or his future. So perhaps his mother thought that he will be "*a man of sorrow*".

But God saw something different to Jabez's mother. "*Jabez was more honorable- in the sight of God -than his brothers.*"

Jabez was honored because of his relationship with God. The record of the genealogy of Judah was interrupted to bring us these details about Jabez. God wants us to see how He blesses those who seek Him and trust in Him like Jabez. When the people of his town saw God's hand of blessing upon Jabez's life, they renamed their town with Jabez's name. So what did Jabez pray for?

Simply, he wanted God's blessing and he prayed for it to be fulfilled in his life. He understood the secret of happy life is to seek and to see God's hand upon his life.

Q: What does it mean to ask for a blessing?

To ask for a blessing is to receive God's favor upon your life, on what you have, on what you do, and to see Him through any trouble you may face.

Jabez cries out to the God of Israel for three particular things: Firstly, blessing on what he has already, "*Enlarge my territory*". Secondly, he desired God of Israel to help him in what he is doing, "*Let your hand be with me*", and thirdly, he desired the God of Israel to protect him from evil and trouble he may face, "*Keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain*".

Jabez was seeking God's blessing on what he already has "*Enlarge my territory*". Jabez acknowledges that the God of Israel is the source of all blessing, and he asks Him for His blessing. No doubt, this request was based, at least in part, on God's promise of blessing to Abraham and his descendants in

Genesis 22:17-18, “*I will bless you and you will be a blessing to others*”.

The word “*blessed*” slips so easily off our lips. You may say “I have been blessed” or, “you are blessed”, or “she/he is blessed”. But what does it actually mean? What would a blessed person or a church look like?

Let us see how God views blessing. At the end of the first century our Lord Jesus told the church members at Smyrna, “*I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich!*” (Rev 2:9), while he told the church members at Laodicea, “*You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked*” (Rev 3:17).

One church is poor and yet they are rich in the sight of God. The other is rich and yet they are poor. Quite obviously then, blessing has nothing to do with prosperity and the absence of hardships. Yet this is a contrast to the way many people think and speak about what it means to be blessed.

The Bible is telling us that true blessings can be found only in a relationship with our Creator and Redeemer. Only the One who made us and redeemed us knows what will truly make us happy and give us satisfaction in life.

God doesn’t link blessing to circumstances that in the end will not last forever. He links it rather to what will last forever; your relationship with Him and that will be your reward in heaven.

The Bible summarizes the blessed person in Psalm 146:5, “*Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God*”. Why Jacob? Why the God of Israel?

Jacob trusted God in all of his troubles and fear. When Jacob heard that his brother Esau was coming with four hundred men to meet him, Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed and cried to the Lord, *“O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, ‘Return to your country and I will deal well with you’: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all your faithfulness which You have shown Your servant... Lord deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me... For You said, ‘I will surely bless you”* (Genesis 32:6-12).

At the end of his life Jacob said to Joseph in Genesis 48:3, *“God Almighty appeared to me in the land of Canaan and blessed me”*. And Jacob blessed Joseph, and said: *“God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has fed me all my life long to this day, The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless these boys”* (Genesis 48:15).

Anything in our life which brings us closer to God is to be viewed as a blessing. To be blessed is to see more of God in your life; His presence, His peace in your trouble and fear, to lack nothing because He is your shepherd and His fulfilment of your needs. We are blessed, when we are where God wants us to be in close relationship with him. This was the blessing that Jabez enjoyed with God and the God of Israel honored him more than his brothers.

The second prayer of Jabez was, *“Let your hand be with me”*. In the Bible, the hand of God represents: God’s power, God’s guidance, and God’s revelation and promise.

As for power and strength, the Lord God said in Isaiah 41:10, *“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed,*

for I am your God. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand”.

As for guidance, the psalmist says in Psalm 139:9-10, *“If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me; your right hand will hold me fast”.*

As for revelation and promise, *“The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones... These bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, ‘Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off! ‘Thus says the Lord God: I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it,’ says the Lord”*” (Eze 37: 1, 11, 14).

The third request in the prayer of Jabez was, *“Keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain”.*

Jabez, asks God to keep him from that sorrow which his name recalled *“A man of sorrow”*. Our Lord Jesus taught us to pray in this way, *“Father in heaven . . . Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one”* (Matt 6:13). Jabez looks to God in confidence as his defender.

Jabez’s goal in his prayer was to live free from sorrow, and the last thing we read about him is that God answered his prayer. The blessings Jabez enjoyed outweighed the sorrow of his beginning. The prayer of Jabez overcame the name of Jabez.

His prayer reminds us that everybody struggles with choosing to rely on himself or God. However, God is faithful in caring for those who seek Him.

Jabez sets a great example of how God wants everyone to come to Him in trust and faith. Our God should be the center of our life, and this is the real blessing.

His Word tells us, "*Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts shall be established*" (Proverbs 16:3).

Let us stay close to God and rely on His guidance throughout our life. God is able to protect us from evil and pain. The reason this prayer of Jabez is in the Bible is because it was answered! "*God granted his request*".

Let us trust God, like Jabez did even in the midst of any trouble that may surround you. He will be close to you. "*Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need*" (Hebrews 4:16).

Will you ask for God's blessings today for your life and your family and others? Will you then pray the prayer of Jabez?

Conclusion

In studying the armor of God and our need to stand in spiritual warfare, we must remember that each piece of armor not only represents an action or attitude that we need to daily practice, but it also represents ways our enemy attacks us.

We need the belt of truth because Satan is a liar who tries to deceive us and keep us away from at least two important truths that God's Word has revealed to us: Who God is for us and who we are in Christ. We need the breastplate of righteousness because Satan continually attacks our hearts, mind and emotions. We need the footing of peace because Satan is always trying to attack our relationship with God and our relationships with others. If we truly understand the gospel of Christ and apply it in our daily life, it produces peace with God and peace with others. We need the shield of faith, because our enemy always discourages us and tries to make us doubt God and his promises. It is by believing in God and his promises that we can stand in the war. We need the helmet of salvation to keep us protected from the false teaching of demons. Above all we must pray continually trusting that God who began the good work in us will bring it to completion on the day of His coming.

O Sovereign Lord, help us to trust in you and believe that you are in control of everything. When we are tempted to give up, help us to keep going. When things don't go our way, help us not to fear, not fret and flee but always take our refuge in you. When the outlook is grim, grant us the eagle wings to rise above the storm and overcome the enemy of our souls. Help us to walk by faith not by sight. Speed your coming, O Lord. Come, Lord Jesus. We want to live forever in your presence. Amen.

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“The Sword of the Spirit”

Rev. Dr. Botros Botrosdief

Whether we like it or not, we are in a spiritual battle with the devil and his forces. In studying the armor of God and our need to stand in spiritual warfare, we must remember that each piece of armor not only represents an action or attitude that we need to daily practice, but it also represents ways our enemy attacks us.

Dr. Botros has authored 41 books; 13 in English and 28 in Arabic. He is the minister of

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you can take your stand against the
devil’s schemes” Eph.6:11*

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