



# ARMOURED

BOAZ ADHENGU



# ARMOURED

BOAZ ADHENGU



9781716796272

©2020 By Boaz Adhengo. All Rights Reserved

Published by Lulu Books  
627 Davis Drive, Suite 300  
27560 Morrisville, North Carolina.  
United States

**eBook ISBN: 978-1-71679-627-2**

AMOURED by Boaz Adhengo is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit [http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en\\_US](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en_US).

Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at <http://www.adhengoboaz.com/armoured.info/reader>

Design and typography: Sophia Nyakoboke

X<sub>2</sub>\_r85





---

Adhengo Boaz  
& ASSOCIATES

---

[www.adhengoboaz.com](http://www.adhengoboaz.com)



@adhengobeuze

# Table of Contents

I	Tempted .....	1.
II	Ancient Warfare .....	12.
III	Ephesus .....	20.
IV	Power of Prayer .....	31.
V	Spiritual Maturity .....	44.

## PREFACE

Spiritual wars are part of what makes us human, embracing our fallen nature and gleaning for hope to restore ourselves through grace, to the Kingdom of God. This is a discovery that my heart blossoms to discern, even amidst temptations, am always Spirit Filled, in prayer that having been set-apart to serve God, whatever struggles may come, that we abide in the Word of God.

From the days when my son, Jahwar Amber, was longing to attend a church service; the days when responding to this request became a glimpse of a greater calling to be part of stewardship. Later on, the tireless quest in my heart to serve or be part of a wider body of believers, even amidst worship at my local church; God still led me to attend a service at Nairobi Miracleland Church in the suburbs of *Maringo*. I must say, this one Sunday transformed my purpose in God, for I discovered much more courage brought into me by being amongst committed Christians who are prayerful and always questing for an intimate relationship with God. To this end, am thankful to Bishop Tobias Konyango of Nairobi Miracleland Church and am grateful that in my journey as a born again Christian, to have discovered a fellowship of believers, consistent in helping others grow and discover the spirit of joy in them through Christ Jesus.

To be able towards even understanding God's purpose in me, has only been more possible ever since being enrolled as a student at Christian Leaders College, Michigan U.S.A.; an opportunity that has encouraged skilful development in addition to mentored relationship to serve as a Chaplain in many different fronts including sports and the corporate world where am more involved as a business consultant. Hitherto, in prayer and thanksgiving, am still growing to better understand God's purpose in me; to help even others in their quest for a healthy Christian life and to live for God.

To different readers, this book may steer different interests but of greater purpose is that it helps to glorify God.

1

tempted

We all have experienced it. We resolve not to give in to temptation, but in the heat of the battle, our resolve melts and (much to our own sense of shame and self-loathing) we fall into sin. Sometimes it seems that the more we focus on not sinning, the more powerless against temptation we feel, and the more hopeless our condition appears. We wonder if indeed we are saved at all. It's hard to imagine any serious Christian who hasn't wondered about his or her own salvation, especially after having just fallen into sin.

Temptation is not sin. Jesus was "*tempted in every way, just as we are - yet he did not sin*" (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus was tempted like us, but His experience with temptation differed from ours in one important respect. When we are tempted, our own nature betrays us. We are dragged away by our own evil desire and enticed (James 1:14). Jesus had no sinful nature to lure Him to sin. This distinction raises an intriguing question. If Jesus' nature was not drawn to sin, in what sense was He tempted?

Temptation is rooted in desire. The lure of temptation is that it appeals to ordinary appetites and legitimate desires. When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, he appealed to genuine need and legitimate desire and then urged Jesus to satisfy them in an illegitimate way (Matthews 4:1–11). This was the same strategy Satan employed when he tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:5).

When we are tempted, we need "*grace to help.*" Jesus' sinless obedience is the key to our victory over temptation. Because Jesus succeeded where we failed, we can hope to share the Saviour's victory when we appeal to Him during the time of temptation. Through Christ we can find "*a way out*" when we

feel the enticement of sin (1 Corinthians 10:13). When we place our faith in Jesus Christ, His obedience is charged to our account and the power of His victory over sin is placed at our disposal. Jesus' sinless obedience and death on the cross provides forgiveness to all who turn to Him in faith. His victory over sin and resurrection provide the believer with power over the sinful nature and a new capacity to resist temptation.

We have a spiritual enemy, as the story of the very first temptation illustrates. He has opposed God and humanity since before creation of the world, and in today's passage, Jesus identifies who the enemy is and what his purposes are. He is the devil, or Satan, which means "*adversary*." Some have believed the devil and demons to be mere mythical creatures, part of the landscape of medieval Christian belief. They may think we've evolved beyond such superstition. And although Jesus does not describe the devil as a horned creature wearing a cape and carrying a pitchfork, Jesus testifies to his real existence.

Temptation acts on this premise of "*better than*." We are often enticed by the promise that something new will be more deeply satisfying than what we currently have. We even grow suspicious that God has chosen to withhold good from us. When Satan tempted Eve in the Garden, he put God's character on trial, convincing Eve that God had begrudged them the tree's power and pleasures.

The writer of Psalm 73 exposes how he almost fell prey to this temptation of doubting God's goodness. The psalm begins and ends with the truth of God's goodness, but in the middle of the

psalm, tension surfaces as the psalmist has struggled to believe this divine reality.

Knowledge of God's omnipresence and omniscience can provoke two different reactions. First, it can be a source of consolation, as it was for the writer of *Psalms 139*. Knowing that God is always near can reassure us of His love and protection. On the other hand, if we're fleeing from God as Jonah was in today's reading, or as Adam and Eve did when they ate the forbidden fruit, we might be terrified at the thought of God seeing us in our every actions.

Although temptation and difficulty can drive us far from God either because we are entertaining the allure of sin or rehearsing our disappointments with God, they can also drive us toward Him if we let them. At the throne is seated the One who is sympathetic to weaknesses, and nothing we can say to Him will shock or surprise Him.

Fortunately, we can have victory over the temptations that so easily ensnare us. None of us, no matter how enveloped in sin, is hopeless, for our "*Father of lights*" (James 1:17) is greater than our propensity to evil, and only in Him and through His Word can we have victory. Sure, temptations are real, sin is real, and the battle against self is very real. But God is real, too, and through Him we can more than overcome the temptations that brew inside us, just waiting to take us down.

James is emphatic. Not only is God not the author of evil, He is not the source of temptation either. Evil itself is the source of

temptation. According to this passage, the problem lies within us, which is the main reason it's so hard to resist.

Thus, the battle against sin begins in the mind. As much as many might not want to hear it, the truth is that we choose to sin. No one can force us (Romans 6:16–18). Sinful desires, inclinations, and propensities do constantly capture our attention. By using common hunting and fishing terms, James 1:14 describes these inward promptings. Our own desires lure and entice us, and when we give in to them, they finally hook and entrap us.

At its root, sin begins with distrusting God. Satan, using the same successful method by which he deceived a third of the angels (Revelations 12:4,7–9), raised doubts in Eve's mind about God's character (Genesis 3:1–5). Approaching the forbidden tree was not sin, but taking and eating the fruit was. Even so, wrong thoughts seem to have preceded her sinful act (Genesis 3:6). She adopted Satan's suggestions as her own.

Sin always begins in the mind. Like Eve, we may think about the supposed "*benefits*" of wrongdoing. Then our imagination and feelings begin to take over. Soon we seize the bait and fall into sin.

Often we wonder how it could happen. The answer is easy: we let it happen. Nobody forced us into sin. The strongest temptation is no excuse for sin. However great the pressure brought to bear upon the soul, transgression is our own act. It is not in the power of earth or hell to compel any one to sin. The will must consent, the heart must yield, or passion cannot overbear reason, nor iniquity triumph over righteousness.

If you have not already learned, being a Christian does not mean an end to temptation. Satan will do everything he can to tempt you to sin; yet it is very common for us to shift the blame for our giving in to temptation.

Much of our temptation to sin is from Satan, but as humans with an active sin nature, we frequently put ourselves into a position to give in to temptation without any extra help. In order to lead a victorious Christian life, we must know the sources of our temptations as well as how to avoid and overcome temptation.

A person's spirit is that person's life. When the spirit is gone, the body is dead. James said, "*the body without the spirit is dead....*" Jesus also equated the spirit with life.

John 6:63 "*It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*".

In the verse above, "*quickeneth*," means to "*give life*." Then, He equated "*life*" and "*spirit*" concerning the words which He spoke. In other words, "*spirit*" and "*life*" are interchangeable because spirit is life.

In Revelation 13:15, the False Prophet will have power to give life unto the image of the beast so that the statue can talk. The word translated "*life*" is the Greek word "*spirit*." The translators of the King James Version recognized the vital link between spirit and life.

*"And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the*

*beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed". Revelations 13:14-15.*

The life of that image that will be made to talk in Revelation 13: 15, is spirit. What kind of spirit is it? Did it come from God? No, it will be a Satanic spirit. It will be a demon that makes that image (*statue*) live.

How then, does Satan inflict sickness on Christians? Revelation 13: 15 above, gives us a clue. The False Prophet did not give that statue "life," he gave him "spirit." The "spirit," in turn, provided its life since spirit is life. Just as Satan was the animator of the statue, He also provides the life force of many sicknesses in the form of demons. This leads us to this; many sicknesses have a life force (*spirit*) which came from Satan. This life force is a demon.

If you put a sickness under a microscope, you will not see the spirit (life) that animates it. But you will see the effect of that spirit. You will see the damage that it does to the body. But the moment that wicked spirit (*demon*) is cast out of that body, the sickness dies. Consequently, it will pass out through the body. It dies because it has no more spirit, it has no more life. When the life is gone out of it, it will wither up and go away.

Demon induced sickness is how Satan afflicts the bodies of believers. This may not be the only way he afflicts them, but this

is certainly one way he does it. This staggers the mind of many modern believers. They cannot grasp this. They cannot take it in because it is contrary to everything they believe. They are so conditioned to the modern *mindset*. They can recognize a virus, germ or bacteria under a microscope, but little do they know that a spirit that can animate it, causing it to live. Force the spirit of that virus to leave and the virus dies; dries up and is just passed out through the body. Then, the person afflicted with it recovers fully.

We must stop demons from coming against our homes, our churches, our children, our jobs, our businesses and our health. Say, *"I rebuke you in Jesus' name! Stop it."* It will come to a grinding halt. *"All power."* Jesus said, *"both in Heaven and in earth have been given to me."* He also said, *"I am never going to leave you."* He said, *"I am going to be with you always, even unto the end of the world."* He said that He will live within you and bring all His authority into you.

*"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"*. Matt 28:18-20

You have this authority now. It only works when you work it. It works with words. When something comes against you, rebuke that thing in the name of Jesus.

There is a relationship between your spoken word and your receiving the blessings of God. What you speak determines what you obtain of the blessings God wants to give you, because He gives them in direct proportion to what you say. What you say also determines whether or not you defeat demons and sickness. In other words, you actually say yourself a blessing or you say yourself out of it.

*“But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”.* Romans 10:6-10

The word translated into English as confession is a combination of two Greek words, the Greek word HOMO which means the same, and the Greek word LEGO which means to say. The word confession, in the above passage, then, means to say the same thing. Say the same thing as what? We must say with our mouths the same thing that God says in His Book. In this passage, we must confess our way into salvation.

Next, we must understand some things about the word translated salvation. This is the Greek word SOTERIA. This word is translated different ways in the Greek New Testament. All of

them pertain to salvation. In other words, salvation contains more than just our ticket to Heaven. This Greek word, SOTERIA, or salvation (*the verb form of this word is SODZO*) is translated by the words preserved, saved, healed, salvation and whole. All of this is wrapped up in Christian salvation. So, when Paul says in Romans 10:10, that we make confession into salvation, he is saying that we must confess our way into everything contained in salvation.

All the Bible means, when it tells you to confess with your mouth certain things, is just agree with what God said. For if I agree, this means I believe it and I'm lining myself up with the word of God. But if I don't confess with my mouth the same thing God says in the Word, it means I don't agree with what He said. Then, I'm calling God a liar. Is it any wonder that the blessings of God fall short in our lives when we have lined ourselves up directly against the Word of God?

There are two avenues for a Christian to obtain the blessings God has promised him just like there are two avenues to getting saved (*believe and confess*). In both cases, it takes both of them. The average Christian thinks all they have to do is believe and pray hard and things will happen. But that is not the way it is. That is only half of it. The Bible says that in order to be saved, one must believe with his heart and he also must confess with his mouth. You must believe with your heart into righteousness, but you must confess with your mouth into the full range of what is included in that Greek word salvation.

This word, salvation, includes material prosperity, healing for your body, well-being for your family and the salvation of your

souls. This word contains everything for the Christian and we confess our way into that state. In other words, we must learn to say the same thing about our salvation that the Word of God says about our salvation.

You must learn not only to believe and trust God, but you must say what you believe and trust. You must say the same thing with your mouth that God said in His Word. When you say what God says, then you and God are in agreement. Your verbalized agreement is the fuel.

We must say the promises about ourselves, our circumstances, our homes, our families and our health. Not because our circumstances say that everything is good, but because the Word of the Living Christ says He will make everything good if we combine believing with confessing. Whatever your need; whatever your problem; find the promise of God that covers it and apply it to your own life, situation, finances, healing, and family. Based upon your confession, you can move your family, your finances and your health into it. Confess that promise out loud with your mouth. Until you learn to make your confession based on the Word of God there is no power, no movement into.

You can believe it but it will not happen until you say with your mouth the same thing that you believe, which is what God's Word says in Scripture. There must be a matching, corresponding confession with what you believe, for it is the confession that fuels it to make it all go. Without the confession, you stay in your circumstance.

When God placed Adam on this planet, He gave him dominion over it. Adam was to exercise this dominion over the earth through the spoken word. The Bible says that Adam named all the animals. Adam controlled this whole business with the spoken word. He sinned; he rebelled; he committed high treason and gave that dominion to the devil. Jesus came to get that dominion back. Jesus ruled the waves of the sea and the winds of the sky with the spoken word. Jesus brought people back from the dead with the spoken word. Jesus made blind men see with the spoken word. Jesus made a lame man walk with the spoken word. Jesus made a withered hand become normal with the spoken word. Finally, He said that you are to do the same thing.

You must say what Jesus said, even though your circumstances tell a totally different story. Your circumstances will dominate if you let them. But if you speak the word of God into that circumstance, you will bend those circumstances to fit the Word of God.

# 2

ancient warfare

*“The practice of magic was ubiquitous in Antiquity; theorising about it was rare.”* Thus concluded the renowned church historian Robert Markus’ in a paper devoted to Augustine’s *“neglected semiotic theory of magic,”* in which he also sketched Greco-Roman theories about magic prior to St. Augustine.

The enquiry best begins with *Apuleius* who, in his *Apology*, gives no less than three definitions of what is a *magus*: First, he is a priest in the language of the Persians, secondly, he is a specialist involved in the education of a Persian prince to whom he teaches the correct ways of cult and of royal behaviour (*for which Apuleius cites Plato as his source*); and, finally, in what Apuleius calls the vulgar definition (*more vulgari*), *“a magus is someone who, through the community of speech with the immortal gods, possesses an incredible power of spells for everything he wishes to do.”* While the first two definitions are virtually identical and have been introduced by Apuleius in order to ennoble and thus neutralize the charge of *magia*, of which he had been accused, at least these definitions show how easily in antiquity our modern categories of religion and magic are collapsed. The third definition deserves more attention since it is similar to a theory of how magic works. The basis of magic is the community of speech between human and superhuman beings, *“immortal gods”*, and its specific agents are the spells, *cantamina*.

What constitutes a magician, again, is his unusual closeness to the divine sphere. This definition reflects current Greco-Roman thinking: magic has its foundation in the possibility of contact between humans and superhuman beings, and its main vehicle is speech, the powerful word (*and not ritual, the powerful act*). Prayer belongs to any ritual, since prayers *“produce an indissoluble and sacred communion with the gods”* - they initiate contact with them, bind humans and gods in *“concordant communion”*, and seal the *“ineffable unity”* with them. In short,

the speech acts are viewed as the main means for creating the *theurgic* communion.

The pagan superstition, from idolatry via magic to all sorts of divinatory beliefs and practices results from the pernicious consociation of men and demons which has been instituted as an untrustworthy and devious friendship. These demons are the followers of the prime fallen angel, the trickster and liar Satan. This association works on the basis *“of a language which is common to both humans and demons”* and whose signs have been chosen by the demons in order to trap the humans. But the signs of language, St. Augustine insists, like the signs of the alphabet, are purely conventional, having been agreed upon by the members of a specific language community: *“All these signs move the souls according to the conventions of each group, and as the conventions are different, the effects upon the soul are different: people did not agree about the specific meanings of the signs because the signs already had those meanings, but they have the specific meaning because people did agree upon it.”* Since this is true for every language community, it is valid also for the community which unites men and demons. But this semiotic approach has an important corollary: as soon as one decides to cancel the convention, communication becomes impossible; and since Christians are not supposed to consort with demons (as Paul insisted: 1 Corinthians 10:20), they no longer share a common language with them. Magic, then, is impossible for a Christian, as is divination and all other rites which rely upon the shared language conventions with the demons. Paul does not question the validity of sacrifices to pagan gods; but, just as Paul points out that, to a Christian, those gods are actually demons, and forbids Christians to be partners with demons.

Witchcraft, demonology and magic are all understood as beliefs; the central issues are the origins of, and the reasons for the

persistence of this mass of ‘superstitious’ lore to which the “*credulity of our ancestors*” is matched by the contemporary “*popular credulity*”. The witches of Scripture had probably some resemblance to those of ancient Europe and non were involved with Satanism. If there was theological error, it was that of idolatry. It is from these ancient bases that magic was transmitted to Christianity, especially by more ignorant converts to the Christian faith.

Magic in Christendom is thus a result of “*borrowing*,” it is a “*survival*” from the “*ruins of paganism*” and the “*wreck of classical mythology*”. Every generation of the human race must swallow a certain measure of nonsense. There remains hope, however, that the grosser faults of our ancestors are now out of date; and that whatever follies the present race may be guilty of, the sense of humanity is too universally spread to permit them to think of tormenting wretches till they confess what is possible.

In general, to be actively occupied with the semblance of the truth and drawn towards it in any way is characteristic of someone who has been deluded by the forces which draw one to the lower world: this is what the magic of nature does; magic itself is such a force. If specified, its limitation is that it acts only on the non-intellectual part of the soul. The person who follows practical pursuits in his life and who, driven by his non-rational soul, is a victim of magic: The only human being who cannot be touched by magic is the absolutely contemplative person, the ideal and perfect philosopher - contemplation as a Christian stands untouched by magic.

What constitutes magic as a special field of activity, then, is not the force employed, but only the intention of the person who makes use of this force. To put it slightly differently: when one does away with the demonological superstructure of magic, magic and religion would collapse were it not for the different intentions of the practitioners.

In the Christian monotheist tradition there are only two ways of dealing with magic. One is to assume that the sorcerers make use of negative superhuman beings which coexist with God, those pagan gods who now have been unveiled as evil demons and who either are or are not identical with the fallen angels of Jewish tradition; the alternative view, which is represented in the actual Christian spells (*which never enlist the help and intercession of demons, but rather of Christ, the Virgin or the Saints*), has to rely on the concept of intention in order to distinguish magic and religion. An invocation to the Virgin is religious when made with good intentions, but magical when used with evil intentions.

Among the extant Coptic texts of ritual power are several texts from the British Library (London Oriental Manuscript 6794; 6795; 6796 [several leaves]) that were parts of a portfolio of texts owned by *Severus son of Joanna* (or Anna). Two of these texts contain spells for good luck in fishing, on the one hand, and a good singing voice, on the other. A third text in this portfolio of spells from the British Library is a prayer of the Virgin Mary to be used to empower the one using the spell, in this case our friend Severus. Here Mary is presented as an exalted figure praising God and identifying herself, in prayer, as follows: “*I praise [you, I glorify] you, I invoke you today, [God, who is alive] for ever and ever, who is coming upon [the clouds] of heaven, for the sake of the whole human race, Yao [Sabaoth] ..., [Adon]jai Eloï .... I am Mary, I am Mariham, I am the mother of the life of the whole world, I am Mary. Let the rock [split], let*

*the darkness split before me, [let] the earth split, let the iron dissolve ...*” (London Oriental Manuscript 6796[2], 9-25). The Virgin Mary thus exhibits the powers and possibilities of the mother and the goddess as manifested in various contexts. Like Eve, Mary is the mother of the living. Like Isis, Mary is the deliverer of those in need, and she can liberate those who are in bondage.

In some fuller forms of the prayer, which include a *historiola* or at least a fuller narrative context, the Virgin Mary is said to offer her prayer in order to deliver Matthias (*the replacement for Judas Iscariot according to Acts 1:26*) from prison. The prayer, then, is said to be so efficacious that the iron fetters dissolved and the prison doors opened.

To this day, in some quarters, especially in the study of the science of antiquity, magic tends to be conceptualized as the idiosyncratic and private rites not controlled by the public religion.

Through the centuries, interpreters have typically attributed the ritual performances reported, listed, or alluded to in the Hebrew Bible to one of two distinct communities of antiquity: those peoples characterized as Canaanites performed rituals of magic, while those identified as Israelites were to engage in the rites of religion. As the most comprehensive catalogue of so-called magic and divination preserved in the Hebrew Bible, Deuteronomy 18:9 - 11 has served as a major datum for most studies concerned with the topic of ancient Canaanite magic.

Literarily speaking, Deuteronomy 18 forms part of the transition separating the final stages of the wilderness wanderings from the commencement of the conquest of Canaan. The more immediate context of Deuteronomy 18 is Moses' farewell speech on Mt. Nebo, and it is from this vantage point, overlooking the promised land of Canaan, that Moses contrasts several ritual

professions with the roles of the king, Levitical priest, and true prophet. In the end, he censures the former on the basis of their origins in Canaanite culture.

Apostle Paul says, be strong in the Lord and the power of His might; the putting on of God's armour shows understanding in what our Lord Jesus Christ has accomplished on our behalf. If we do not know the power and authority that we have in Christ Jesus, the devil certainly does; therefore we must know how to stand firmly against him.

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. That is why our weapons are NOT CARNAL – the Bible's contents are powerful against evil when spoken in faith from the heart of a saint. Neither are we going against anyone or thing in the flesh with a hand grenade. We are fighting in the spiritual realm through words of prayer, with new songs, music and songs of deliverance; and, as far as the wicked spirits are concerned, this is a fight unto death with no holds barred! They are out to disable, discredit and squash our witness as well as our faith. Therefore, we must be strong in the understanding of the power of God's might - His Word, His Spirit, the Name of Jesus, the knowledge of Jesus' imputed righteousness and our consequent justification before God. The Bible says that people perish through lack of knowledge. Being well versed in the word of God's truth, means we are less likely to fall under the mesmerising spells of false prophets - always check what preachers tell you against the Word of God.

A Roman soldier would spend much time getting his armour battle-ready. Shoes must be cleaned, no mud on the soles to slip on, fastened safely and comfortably; shields greased for battle in order that arrows would easily slide off; helmets would be polished and the crest of horse hair, showing the battalion or

unit, well combed. Helmets were also securely fastened and a scarf worn to prevent chafing round the neck from the metal; breastplates would be very carefully fastened in place; belts would also be well fastened to hold knives and clothing securely in place; swords would be sharpened like razors and highly polished to glint in the sun - no rusty swords please! There was no going out to war unless everyone was battle-ready. The efficiency of the Roman soldier's armour meant the difference between life and death.

We, who are soldiers of Christ, should also be ready with our armour fully functional and with no chinks to let in fiery darts; our foe, although wounded by our Lord Jesus Christ, still has an enduring malice for all those who are the seed of the woman and Christ's chosen. Therefore, make your salvation sure; own Christ's righteousness not your own; know the truth which will set you free; build a buttress of faith through memorising scripture; take God's peace and the glorious Gospel everywhere you walk; and wield your sword with words of wisdom, truth and power against the enemy of your soul. Therefore, stand and be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might; take the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, stand - armed for conflict!

3

ephesus

Ephesians was written to young believers in the city of Ephesus, the first city in Asia. Ephesus boasted the Temple of Diana, Asia Minor's premier deity, and was visited annually by thousands of pilgrims. But Ephesus, like the rest of the first-century world, was filled with people who were uncertain about their future and fearful that their fate was in the hands of powers over which they had no control. Every resident of Ephesus sensed what Paul meant when he wrote that "*our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*"

Today we Christians are less aware than first-century believers that there is an invisible war between God and Satan going on around us. Yet we, too, struggle with uncertainty, fears and doubts. Scripture makes it clear that much of our self-doubt, much of our difficulty in maintaining satisfying personal relationships and many of the fears that trouble us are rooted in the efforts of those same "*spiritual forces of evil*" that plagued the Ephesians. That is why it is so vital that we understand the message of the Bible's book of Ephesians. In Ephesians the apostle Paul unveils the strategies Satan uses to attack believers. And he also explains the armour that God has provided to shield us from Satan's attacks.

In A.D. 53 the apostle Paul approached the city of Ephesus. He was traveling along a major Roman road known locally as "*the common highway.*" Leaving a broad plain, the highway mounted a ridge, and from its top Paul caught the first glimpse of his destination. The city of Ephesus was hidden behind a wall seven meters high, but from the ridge Paul could see the *Artemision*,

the temple of the goddess Artemis (*also known as Diana*), which lay just south of the city proper. The magnificent temple, its columns glowing in the light of the sun, was hailed even in that day as one of the seven wonders of the world.

The Artemision was an appropriate possession of the city, for, in the first century, Ephesus was the third most prominent city in the Roman Empire. Ephesus boasted a quarter of a million inhabitants. The city sat astride important land and sea trade routes, and was both the economic and religious centre of the province of Asia. Ephesus was also the destination of thousands of religious pilgrims who flocked to the city each year to worship the goddess and seek her aid.

Paul, however, was not approaching Ephesus as a pilgrim. He was coming as a missionary, intent on spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That mission would bring him into direct conflict with the “*spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*” (Ephesians 6:12), for Ephesus was more than a centre of pagan religion: It was also a centre of demonic activity, a place where magic and sorcery were practiced in an effort to control the powerful spirits that people believed ruled their destinies.

During Paul’s stay in Ephesus open conflict would erupt between Christ and demonic powers that owed their allegiance to Satan. And the powers would not surrender without a battle.

In the first century, most people were well aware that the spirit world is real, and believed it to be occupied by a variety of spirits. There were spirits of the dead. There were spirits of the heroes of old. There were spirits who were gods and goddesses.

And there were demons...evil spirits. All these spirits were believed to interact with the world of men and to have impact on the living. Everything - *success in business, in love, in athletic competitions, even in one's health* - depended on whether the spirits were pleased or displeased with an individual. And the spirits were at best capricious. None really cared about a human's welfare; any spirit was more likely to harm a person than help him. The best anyone could do was to make offerings to placate possibly angry or hostile spirits, or resort to magic to try to control them.

First-century Roman writer Plutarch notes that the sorcerers of his time advised those who were demonized to “*recite and name over to themselves the Ephesians letters.*” These letters were six supposedly magic words that were written on separate pieces of leather, and could be shuffled and recited in differing order. If one order of the six words did not work, perhaps another order would - for even sorcery was not reliable.

No one in Ephesus had ever seen a person dominate demons as Paul did. No wonder the people of the city held Paul and the name of Jesus in such awe.

Strikingly, modern beliefs about the spirit world mirror the beliefs of the first century - notably that entities in the spirit world exert powerful influence over one's personal life. These entities include the spirits of dead relatives, of individuals from ancient times, of gods and goddesses, of angels and demons and even of spirits of animals (*totems*).

The major difference between the beliefs of many people today and the beliefs of first-century Ephesians lies in the fact that first-century men and women feared the spirits. Moderns assume that the spirits are well disposed to humans and eager to help. As a result moderns tend to be comfortable going to palm readers or clairvoyants, mediums or witches, or calling directly on spirits for help and guidance. When encouraged to invite a “*spirit guide*” into their lives, many unhesitatingly open the door to demons - for the spirits that modern pagans seek to contact are what the Bible identifies as demons.

When the apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians about the “*spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms*” (Ephesians 6:12), he knew exactly what he was writing about. Ever since Satan showed up in Eden and manipulated Adam and Eve into declaring independence from God, dark forces have lurked behind the scenes of history, intent on causing as much suffering and misery as possible. In Old Testament times, spiritual forces of evil found expression in the gods and goddesses who were worshiped by pagan peoples. According to Deuteronomy 32:16 - 17, the *foreign gods* of the nations around Israel were in reality demons. The Old Testament also refers to these dark forces as evil spirits, perverse spirits, lying spirits or unclean spirits.

In the gospels, the spiritual forces of evil are called by the familiar terms demons or evil spirits. There we catch a glimpse of just how hostile demons are to human beings. Demons were responsible for a great number of mental and physical ills, from madness to blindness. They crippled human beings and were intent on causing pain and suffering. But in the gospel accounts,

demons run into Jesus. And in every confrontation, the demons lose and are driven out of the individuals they oppress.

The New Testament epistles refer to demons using words common to Greek language and culture. Paul did call these spiritual forces of evil demons in 1 Corinthians 10:20 and 1 Timothy 4:1, but normally the New Testament letters refer to evil spirits in the vocabulary used by the average first-century citizen. In the first century, the man on the street called the inhabitants of the spirit world - that is, the gods and goddesses, the spirits of the dead, the angels and demons - by the names principalities, rulers, powers, dominions, thrones, spiritual forces or elemental spirits.

When the apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians that *“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”* (Ephesians 6:12), everyone knew he was referring to evil spirits.

Demons, whose realm is the spirit world - the heavenly realms - really do mount attacks on humans living in this world.

Whatever the origin of demons, they clearly are allied with Satan. Demons are hostile to God and hate human beings. It is also clear that demons can get inside our personalities. When Jesus confronted a demon who was tormenting a human, the Bible describes Jesus as casting the demon out. To be thrown out, the demon must in some sense have been in.

So demons are evil spirits, hostile to us and eager to gain some kind of access to our lives so they can make us as miserable and unproductive as possible.

The danger from demons is not being *demon possessed*. The word possessed is not found in the gospels. The Greek word is *daimonizomai*, which simply means “demonized.” Demons do not possess their victims, in the sense of gaining control. What demons do is influence us. They tempt us, twist our thinking and cloud our understanding. They lie to us about our identity in Christ, telling us we are useless and hopeless. Demons encourage bitterness and anger and destroy healthy relationships. They stimulate our fears and cause panic. They drown us in depression and despair. They tell us that we cannot risk stepping out in faith to respond to God’s Word. Demons push us toward addictions that can ruin our lives. And sometimes in the process demons ruin our health.

Every day when you wake up and begin your day, you are entering a battlefield. Ephesians 6:11 says to put on the whole armour of God to fight the enemy. Putting on the armour of God is a metaphor the Bible uses to explain vital aspects of our relationship with God and how we are to use them to protect ourselves against attacks from the enemy. The armour of God consists of six pieces - five for protection and one for attack.

The first is the helmet of salvation, which represents the mind of Christ that you receive when you ask Jesus into your heart. Accepting Jesus Christ as your Saviour is the first step in winning your battle against the enemy. Then as you renew your mind by reading God’s Word, you are placing a symbolic helmet

on your head that helps you think the right thoughts and protects your mind from the onslaughts of the enemy. As you bring every thought captive to Christ, then you are able to change the way you think about your situation and about life. You will begin to think of yourself as an overcomer.

The second piece of God's armour is the breastplate of righteousness, which symbolizes the exchange that happens when you ask Jesus into your life: You give Him your sin, mistakes, and addictions, and He gives you His righteousness or right standing with God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 explains that Jesus, who had no sin, became sin for you so you can now receive His righteousness. In other words, you can actually exchange your sins and mistakes for God's righteousness-which means that you are now in right standing with God! Because of your standing, or position, when thoughts and feelings of self-condemnation and self-hate come at you, you can refuse them and say, "*No. I am a new creation!*" Understanding this righteousness protects you from the destructive thought patterns that will lead you down a dead-end street-back to old habits and behaviours.

The shield of faith is the part of the armour used to protect you from Satan's attacks. The Bible says in Ephesians 6:16 that this shield of faith literally quenches every fiery dart of the wicked one (his lies, temptations, and the trouble he brings into your life). Taking up the shield of faith means that your faith is now in God and that you trust Him as you live the way He wants you to live. It means that you use the faith God has given you to live for Him and that you truly believe what His Word says. God's Word allows you to deflect the arrows of assault, fear, and doubt that the enemy shoots at you.

The belt of truth means that you have chosen to align your life with the Word of God and walk in His principles. This represents everything being held together by the ultimate truth, which is believing in God and conforming your life to God's Word. By walking in truth, you automatically leave deception behind. For example, when you are walking north, your back is turned to the south and you are literally walking away from the south. Similarly; when you choose to do the right thing, you don't have to worry about doing the wrong thing because wrong is automatically eliminated by doing right. In fact, the word repent in the Bible means to turn around and go the opposite direction (Acts 3:19).

The next piece of armour is shoes, or "*symbolically wearing the gospel of peace on your feet*" (Ephesians 6: 15, NKJV). To wear the shoes of peace means that when you receive Christ as your Saviour, you also receive His peace, which will guard your heart and mind. "*God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand*" (Philippians 4:7 NLT), will be given to you so you don't have to live in turmoil anymore. Therefore, when you put on the shoes of peace, you are walking and living in peace instead of walking and living in turmoil and chaos. Romans 8:31 says that if God is for you, who can be against you? Even when things appear to be bad, you can trust that God can turn them around for your good.

The first five pieces of armour are for your protection, but the last piece is an offensive weapon called the sword of the Spirit. The Word of God is the weapon we use to go on the offense against the enemy. To use the sword of the Spirit is to literally speak God's Word out loud. God promises that as you declare

and decree His Word, He will watch over His Word to perform it. When the enemy comes to try to bring something into your life something that is not God's will, rise up and speak the Word of God. For example, if fear tries to hit you, you can set a firm boundary and say "No! 2 Timothy 1:7 - God has not given me a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." When we are afraid or in any other situation, we have the opportunity to take God's Word and boldly proclaim, declare, and decree what the Word says in the face of what may seem or feel totally opposite.

This is why it is so important to know the Word of God. You need to be able to speak the Word of God as your weapon. Hebrews 4: 12 says the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, is sharper than any double-edged sword, and it has the ability to discern between that which is good and that which is evil, that which is right and that which is wrong.

It may not be easy to resist acting out your thoughts, emotions, and choices, but God's Word planted on the inside of you will actually change your desires and transform you into the person God wants you to be (Romans 12:1-2). As you put the Word on the inside of you, it grows stronger and stronger, and you will be able to fight wrong desires and overcome the enemy. The next time you find yourself struggling to do anything that is not of God, remember that God has equipped you with power and strength to finish the fight victoriously (Philippians 2:13). *"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us"* (Romans 8:37).

As a child of God, you have authority over the enemy (Luke 10:19). Exercise that authority by boldly speaking the Word of God to take back the areas of your life where the devil has had you bound (1 John 5:4-5). Don't allow yourself to be defeated. Rise up in Jesus' name and be who you were born to be. Remember, without God, you can do nothing (John 15:5). Allow Him to be your strength.

When you stand firm with the armour God gives you, you will be fully protected, and you will win every time!

# 4

power of prayer

There is nothing more common among men, no human activity more universal, yet none more mysterious and misunderstood than prayer. Since the dawn of time and the advent of recorded history, the religious expression of prayer has been found in every culture, civilization, and era. Primitive tribes on every continent to complex civilizations around the world have been known to practice this ancient art called prayer to some god or deity. Even we as Christians, we practice prayer.

Psychologists and behavioural scientists have long studied the effects of prayer on human development and socialization. Some studies have even attempted to validate and document the effectiveness of prayers on the individual practicing the art. There is no shortage of skeptics and antagonists who frown on those who believe that such human superstition and fanatical religious tradition could impact human experience or the course of life on earth.

Yet the question must be answered, why do men pray? Hundreds of millions of people around the world participate in this ritual every day in every language, race, and culture. Why do people of every religion pray? All the major religions require their adherents to practice regular daily prayers. Why? Why is the human spirit naturally drawn to seek solace and comfort in the unseen and unknown? Is there a mystery that man still does not comprehend? Why should and - why do we - pray?

While prayer is so common, it is also mysterious and misunderstood. It seems as if it is the most commonly practiced activity unknown on planet earth. Scores of books have been written on the subject in every generation. Conferences and

seminars are held everywhere to explore the mysteries of this ancient art called prayer.

Despite all the questions, confusion, and uncertainty surrounding prayer, though, it is still the greatest common denominator among all the great Biblical characters and thousands of believers throughout history: Moses practiced it. Abraham practiced it. King David, Solomon, Esther, Deborah, Daniel, Joseph, all the prophets - and, of course, Jesus Christ Himself - had dynamic and profound commitments to lives of prayer. Their records show the direct impact of their prayers on their lives and on the circumstances and situations they faced. The evidence affirms that one thing is sure; no matter what you may think about prayer, it works.

To understand the principle of prayer, it is necessary to understand the mind and purpose of the God Himself. Prayer is a result of God's established authority structure between heaven and earth, as well as a product of His faithfulness to His Word. Prayer is as simple as respecting God's authority. This is because prayer was born out of God's arrangements for man's assignment on earth; it happened when the Creator spoke two words during the creation process: "*so that they*." These words are recorded in the Bible:

Then God said, "*Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.*" (Genesis 1:26 - 27).

These words are critical in understanding the principle of prayer, since they define the relationship the Creator intended and desired with man and the planet earth.

The Creator's mandate for man to dominate the earth was established in the declaration, but the parameters of that dominion were established with the words, "*so that they.*"

The Creator's commitment to His original intent for creation is a priority for Him and motivates and regulates all His actions. In essence, everything He does is driven by His purposed desire, which never changes. In fact, His declaration is clear when He states, "Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails" (Proverbs 19:21 - 22). Again, He declares, "*I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.*" (Isaiah 46:10 - 11)

It is this commitment to His Word that is the basis of the prayer principle. The Word of God is not just the law for man, for it is also called "*the Law of God.*" This implies that every word God speaks is also a law to Himself. He will subject Himself to His promises and decrees because of His integrity.

In the book of Psalms, we find these words: Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. Your faithfulness continues through all generations. (Psalms. 119:89 - 90).

Prayer is a lonely experience for many of us. Although we have been taught that it is important to pray, we have been so disappointed and frustrated that our prayers haven't been

answered, we've almost given up on it. We may pray when we are scared or sick, but it's not a regular practice in our lives. Outwardly, we agree that prayer is worthwhile, but secretly we wonder: Does God really hear me when I pray? Why is prayer so boring and fruitless for me?

Unanswered prayer is a major obstacle that stands in the way of a life of true faith. Certain people have lost their faith altogether because of unanswered prayer. Some have turned to philosophy, metaphysics, or cults to find answers to life's questions and problems. Others have turned to horoscopes, psychic hotlines, and witchcraft. Still others have rejected the spiritual realm completely and now focus on purely materialistic things.

Confusion about prayer also affects those who are committed Christians. The greatest difficulty in most believers' experience is their prayer lives. Even though they believe prayer is a foundational element of the Christian life, they shy away from it because they don't really think it will make a difference. They don't pray because it hasn't seemed to work for them in the past, and they don't like failure. Some have been tempted to delve into ungodly activities because they were weary of not having their prayers answered.

Prayer is one of the most misunderstood arts of the human experience - yet it is meant to be one of the most exciting aspects of a life of faith.

What is faith and how does it work? What is the difference in faith and believe? Faith is information we get from God for us to act upon. We get information (faith) from God basically two

ways: (1) from the Scriptures and (2) directly into our spirit man from the Spirit of God. Faith (*information that we get from God*) enables us to know God's will in advance on a given subject. It enables us to literally peer into the future. It shows us what God is going to do before He does it. In addition, this advance information also shows us what our part is in what God is about to do. This is what faith is. We can demonstrate this from Hebrews 11:7 with the case of Noah:

*“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith”.*

Now what is the difference in faith and belief? Faith is knowing something, believing is acting it out. Faith is having information, believing is following the instructions in that information. Although the term, believe, is not used in Hebrews 11:7, Noah obviously believed because he walked out the information God gave him.

Nothing will take the place of our dwelling in the secret place. We must experience God on our own. The person, who makes the choice to dwell there, is a person moving into the position to receive the blessings of God, no matter what adversities come. This is a person who is moving into a position where there is a protection and a covering, no matter what blows up in his life.

Your job may disappear. Your business may be running well today and tomorrow go bankrupt. Your home, family, wife, husband and children may be going perfectly right now and

tomorrow disaster strikes. One of them wants a divorce, a child runs away or gets in jail, but when you learn to dwell in the secret place of God, there are some benefits that accrue to you simply from the fact that you dwell there.

Psalms 91:1-16:

*“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation”.*

You can't move in and out, you must learn to dwell in that place. We must step aside and enter the chambers of the throne room and dwell in the secret place of the Almighty. There must be a

time when you enter the throne room. You must spend time in the presence of God. Then, and only then, will He become your fortress and refuge. At that point, you abide under His shadow. This is a figure of speech. God does not have a *shadow*; neither does He have feathers and wings. These figures of speech are used here like Jesus used parables. The point is that if I am close enough to God to be in His shadow, I am close. If I am this close, since nothing harmful can get this close to God, it can't hurt me either since I am with Him. There is a refuge in the storm when we dwell in the secret place.

Do you have a storm brewing in your life? Are you living under circumstances that are painful for you? Is there a situation in your home that you really wish you could change, that has become like a fowler and a noisome pestilence? Is there anything in your work place that comes against you, robbing you spiritually and pulling you? Stop battling these things long enough to get into the secret place of God Almighty and get under His shadow. Under His shadow, He will surely deliver thee.

God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind. When our minds go haywire and start thinking strange things, our answer is not in a tranquilizing pill, it is in the secret place. There, things level out and everything comes back into place. Then, I can function the way God intended. Everything comes together in the secret place.

A major principle regarding our authority and power in prayer is our right to use the name of Jesus. The authority of Jesus' name gives us access to our heavenly Father. Our right to "*approach*

*the throne of grace with confidence*” (Hebrews. 4:16) brings us the delight of a restored relationship with God. Yet this essential aspect of prayer also enables us to agree with the Father and His purposes, and to ask Him to fulfil His Word as He meets our needs and the needs of others.

In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God (John 16:26–27).

God’s presence, power, and unlimited resources are available to us in the name of Jesus. Yet Jesus’ name isn’t a magic word we use to get what we want. We must pray according to God’s will, which we find in His Word. Jesus said in John 15:7, *“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”* The backbone of prayer is our agreement with God’s Word, our oneness with Christ, who is the Living Word, and our unity with God’s purposes and will.

God is loving and gracious. He knows we have a limited understanding of Himself and His ways, and that we struggle with our fallen nature. That is why He will at times answer our prayers even when they are weak and full of doubt. However, as a loving Father, He wants us to grow and mature. He doesn’t want to leave us in our weakness and uncertainty. He wants us to enter into His purposes, because that is where we can truly be children of our heavenly Father, work together with Him, and live the abundant life Christ came to give us (John 10:10). Therefore, at times, He will withhold answers to prayer so we will seek Him and the principles of prayer that are essential for

praying according to His will and for appropriating His promises and power.

To begin with, God does everything for a reason, because He is a God of purpose. His actions are not arbitrary. “*The Lord Almighty has sworn, ‘Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand’*” (Isaiah. 14:24). “*The plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations*” (Psalms. 33:11). “*Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails*” (Proverbs 19:21). God is a God of purpose, and everything He has created in this world, including men and women, has been created to fulfil His purposes. Therefore, when God said, “*Let us make man in our image, in our likeness*” (Genesis 1:26), what does this statement reveal about His purposes for humanity and the reason for prayer?

God created humanity to reflect His character and personality. We were created to be like Him, having His “*image*” and “*likeness*” (Genesis 1:26). This means we were created to have His nature and moral character. That was meant to be the essence of our being.

Man was created out of the essence of God, yet is always dependent on God as his Source. As human beings, we are not self-sufficient, even though we would like to think we are. We cannot reveal God’s image and likeness apart from a relationship with Him. We were intended to reflect God’s nature in the context of being continually connected to Him in fellowship. I John 4:16 says, “*Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.*” No human being is going to be truly satisfied with life

until he or she loves God. God must have the primary place in our lives because we were designed to find fulfilment and ultimate meaning in Him.

The account of the creation of mankind shows us that God never desired or intended to rule the earth by Himself. Why? It is because “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8, 16), and love doesn’t think in those terms. A selfish person wants all the glory, all the credit, all the power, all the authority, all the rights, and all the privileges. But a person of love wants others to share in what he has. It is crucial for us to understand that the relationship of love that God established with mankind is not separate from the purpose God has for mankind. Rather, the relationship is foundational to the purpose; both are essential keys to prayer.

When God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden, it was never His intention that they leave the Garden. Instead, He wanted the Garden to be spread over the earth. What does this mean? God wanted them to take the character of the Garden - *God’s presence, light, and truth* - and spread it throughout the world. This was the overarching meaning of having dominion over the earth. This is still God’s purpose. Isaiah 11:9 says, “*The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.*”

We know that tragedy came to mankind when Adam and Eve turned their backs on God and desired their own wills apart from His will. Some think prayer originated because we were separated from God by our sin, and we needed a means by which to reconnect with Him. That is one use for prayer; however, it is not the heart of prayer. To understand its essence,

we must realize that prayer began with the creation of mankind. It was not instituted after the *fall* but before it. Prayer existed from the beginning of God's relationship with man.

Because of the fall of mankind (*see Genesis 3*), and because of the stubbornness of our sinful nature, we often need to prepare our hearts in prayer so we can truly enter God's presence. Yet that is only for the purpose of taking us where we were originally created to be, the place where Adam and Eve were before the Fall - a place of purity before God in which we reflect His nature and a oneness with His purposes, in which our wills are in total agreement with His will. Jesus said, "*Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them*" (Mathew 18:20). The heart of prayer is communion with God in a unity of love and purpose. It is agreeing with God - *heart, soul, mind, and strength* - to bring about God's will.

Praying does not mean convincing God to do your will, but doing His will through your will. Therefore, the key to effective prayer is understanding God's purpose for your life, His reason for your existence - as a human being in general and as an individual specifically. This is an especially important truth to remember: *Once you understand your purpose, it becomes the "raw material," the foundational matter, for your prayer life.* God's will is the authority of your prayers. Prayer is calling forth what God has already purposed and predestined - continuing His work of creation and the establishment of His plans for the earth.

Prayer is not an option for the believer. It is a necessity to fulfil God's purposes in the world and in our individual lives. Time spent in prayer is not time wasted but time invested. As we

embrace the will of God, as we live before Him in the righteousness of Christ, as we seek to fulfil His purposes, nothing will be able to hinder our prayers, and we will begin to understand Jesus' saying, "*With God all things are possible*" (Mathew 19:26).

Power in prayer is not based on emotions, feelings, or the theories of men, but upon the Word of God, "*which lives and abides forever*" (1 Pet.er 1:23). His Word is the guarantee of answered prayer. God is asking you to bring Him His Word, to plead your covenant rights. We are not to pray to God in ignorance but as partners in His purposes. Prayer is joining forces with God the Father by calling attention to His promises. "*No matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ. And so through him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God*" (2 Corinthians 1:20). The New King James Version expresses it in this way: "*For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.*"

Jesus' prayers were effective because He had a relationship with God, knew His purposes, and prayed according to God's will - according to what God had already spoken and promised to do. We are to imitate Him. More than that, we are to let His Spirit and attitude rule in our lives. "*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 2:5). We are to live in the new covenant that God has granted us in Christ, which restores us to oneness with God's heart and will: "*This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people*" (Jeremiah. 31:33).

# 5

spiritual maturity

When we read the only inspired church history that was ever written, the history of the church in the days of the apostles as it is recorded by Luke (*under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit*) in the Acts of the Apostles, what do we find? We find a story of constant victory, a story of perpetual progress. We read, for example, such statements as Acts 2:47: "*The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved*" and Acts 4:4: "*Many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand,*" and Acts 5:14: "*And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.*" In addition Luke in Acts 6:7 states: "*And the word of God increased: and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*"

And so we go on, chapter after chapter, through the twenty-eight chapters of Acts, and in every one of the twenty-seven chapters after the first, we find the same note of victory. I once went through the Acts of the Apostles marking the note of victory in every chapter, and without one single exception the triumphant shout of victory rang out in every chapter. How different the history of the church as here recorded is from the history of the church of Jesus Christ today. Take, for example, that first statement, "*The Lord added to the church daily [that is, every day] such as should be saved.*" Why, nowadays, if we have a revival once a year with an accession of fifty or sixty members and spend all the rest of the year slipping back to where we were before, we think we are doing pretty well. But in those days there was a revival all the time and accessions every day of those who not only "*hit the trail*" but "*were [really] being saved.*"

Why this difference between the early church and the church of Jesus Christ today? Someone will answer, "*Because there is so much opposition today.*" Ah, but there was opposition in those days, most bitter, most determined, most relentless opposition in comparison with that which you and I meet today is but child's play. But the early church went right on beating down all opposition, surmounting every obstacle, conquering every foe, always victorious, right on without a setback from Jerusalem to Rome, in the face of the most firmly entrenched and most mighty heathenism and unbelief. I repeat the question, "*Why was it?*" If you will turn to the chapters from which I have already quoted, you will get your answer.

Turn, for example, to Acts 2:42: "*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayers.*" That is a picture very brief but very suggestive of the early church. It was a praying church. It was a church in which they prayed, not merely occasionally, but where they all "*continued steadfastly...in prayers.*" They all prayed, not a select few, but the whole membership of the church; and all prayed continuously with steadfast determination. "*They gave themselves to prayer,*" as the same Greek word is translated in Acts 6:4.

Now turn to Acts 6:4 and you will get the rest of your answer. "*We will give ourselves continually to prayer.*" That is a picture of the apostolic ministry: it was a praying ministry, and a ministry that "*gave themselves continually to prayer,*" or, to translate that Greek word as it is translated in former passage (Acts 2:42), "*They continued steadfastly in prayer.*" A praying church and a praying ministry! Ah, such a church and such a

ministry can achieve anything that ought to be achieved. It will go steadily on, beating down all opposition, surmounting every obstacle, conquering every foe, just as much today as it did in the days of the apostles.

But what, specifically, will prayer do? We have been dealing in generalities; let us come down to the definite and specific. The Word of God very plainly answers the question.

In the first place, prayer will promote our personal piety, our individual holiness, our individual growth into the likeness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as almost nothing else, as nothing else but the study of the Word of God. These two things, prayer and study of the Word of God, always go hand-in-hand, for there is no true prayer without study of the Word of God, and there is no true study of the Word of God without prayer.

Other things being equal, your growth and mine into the likeness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will be in exact proportion to the time and to the heart we put into prayer. Please note exactly what I say: "*Your growth and mine into the likeness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will be in exact proportion to the time and to the heart we put into prayer.*" I put it in that way because there are many who put a great deal of time but so little heart into their praying that they do very little praying in the long time they spend at it.

On the other hand, there are others who, perhaps, may not put so much time into praying but put so much heart into praying that they accomplish vastly more by their praying in a short time than the others accomplish by praying in a long time. God

Himself has told us in Jeremiah 29: 13: "*And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*"

We are told in Ephesians 1:3, that God "*has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.*" That is to say, Jesus Christ by His atoning death and by His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father has obtained for every believer in Jesus Christ every possible spiritual blessing. There is no spiritual blessing that any believer enjoys that may not be yours. It belongs to you now; Christ purchased it by His atoning death and God has provided it in Him. It is there for you; but it is your part to claim it, to put out your hand and take it. God's appointed way for claiming blessings by putting out your hand and appropriating to yourself the blessings that are procured for you by the atoning death of Jesus Christ is by prayer. Prayer is the hand that takes to ourselves the blessings that God has already provided in His Son.

Go through your Bible and you will find it definitely stated that every conceivable spiritual blessing is obtained by prayer. For example, it is in answer to prayer, as we learn from Psalm 139:23, 24, that God searches us and knows our hearts, tries us and knows our thoughts, brings to light the sin that there is in us and delivers us from it. It is in answer to prayer, as we learn from Psalm 19:12,13; that we are cleansed from secret faults and that God keeps us back from presumptuous sins. It is in answer to prayer, as we learn from the 14th verse of the same Psalm that the words of our mouth and the meditations of our heart are made acceptable in God's sight. It is in answer to prayer, as we learn from Psalm 25:4,5; that God shows us His ways, teaches us His path, and guides us in His truth. It is in answer to prayer,

as we learn from the prayer our Lord Himself taught us, that we are kept from temptation and delivered from the power of the wicked one (Matthew 6:13). It is in answer to prayer, as we learn from Luke 11:13; that God gives us His Holy Spirit. And so we might go on through the whole catalogue of spiritual blessings and find that everyone is obtained by asking for it. Indeed, our Lord Himself has said in Matthew 7:11: *"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him."*

One of the most instructive and suggestive passages in the entire Bible as showing the mighty power of prayer to transform us into the likeness of our Lord Jesus Himself, is found in 2 Corinthians 3:18: *"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass [The English Revision reads better, "reflecting as a mirror"] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."* The thought is that the Lord is the sun, you and I are mirrors, and just as a mischievous boy on a bright sunshiny day will catch the rays of the sun in a piece of broken looking-glass and reflect them into your eyes and mine with almost blinding power, so we, as mirrors, when we commune with God, catch the rays of His moral glory and reflect them out on the world *"from glory to glory."* That is, each time we commune with Him we catch something new of His glory and reflect it out on the world.

But not only will prayer promote as almost nothing else our personal holiness, but prayer will also bring the power of God into our work. We read in Isaiah 40:31: *"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings*

*as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk [plod right along day after day, which is far harder than running or flying], and not faint."*

The New Testament word *faith* comes from the Greek word *pistis*, which simply means *belief* or *confidence*. Having faith means believing and having confidence in the words that you hear. It is believing in something that is not seen as though it is already a reality - and then speaking it and expecting it until it manifests itself. Everyone lives by this definition of faith, and people usually receive exactly what they have faith for. Why? Men and women were created in God's image to operate in the same way He does - through words of faith. "*For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm*" (Psalms 33:9).

God created by believing in the reality of what He would create before He saw its manifestation. "*By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible*" (Hebrews 11:3). God not only spoke words to create things, but He even uses words to keep the universe running. Hebrews 1:3 says, "*The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.*" God sustains everything by the power of His Word. He spoke, and the universe came into being. He keeps on speaking, and this keeps the universe going. The principle is this: When you ask for something in prayer, you have to start speaking about it as if it already exists. Moreover, you have to keep on speaking in order to see its manifestation. Then, when it comes, it is not enough to receive it from God. You have to be able to keep what God has blessed you with.

The Bible says, “*Faith comes by hearing*” (Romans 10:17). Faith doesn’t just initially come by hearing. It continues to come by continual hearing. If you listen to good teaching for one hour and then listen to negative talk for two hours, you are going to have faith for the negative. Faith comes from the word that is near you. That is why I’m careful about the company I keep. I want to be around people who speak words that produce the faith of God, because this is the kind of faith we are to have.

How do you obtain the God kind of faith? Remember that Romans 10:8 says, “*The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart.*” Again, whatever is in your heart comes out of your mouth. We could define *heart* in this instance as the subconscious mind. It’s where you store everything you have been listening to. Again, what comes out of your mouth creates your world because you are just like God in the way you function. Whatever you speak has the power to happen.

I want you to remember this truth because it is going to be the biggest test of your faith. What do you say in the midst of trouble? What do you say when there is adversity? What do you say when things are not going the way you want them to go? What you have been listening to will come out of your mouth, because that is what is in your heart. This is why it’s so important to have a constant diet of the Word of God, so that it will get down into your heart. It will nourish your heart so that, when you experience troubles, the Word is what will come out of your mouth, and you will create what the Word says.

Prayer is the greatest opportunity and privilege offered to a person in Christ. Yet because of the power of prayer, the

adversary makes it his business to see that the prayers of individuals and churches are ineffective. Satan knows that a church is only as powerful as its prayer life. Therefore, he will use misconceptions about prayer to thwart our prayer potential. These misconceptions are hurdles to overcome as we address the problems that lead to unanswered prayer.

Luke 17:5 says, *“The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’* Have you ever prayed a prayer like that? You are in good company. The disciples lived with Jesus for over three years. They saw Him cast out demons, heal the sick, and raise the dead, yet they still asked him, *“Increase our faith!”* His answer is wonderful. *“He replied, ‘If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you’”* (v. 6).

When you spend time with God in the morning, or anytime, He begins to show you what’s supposed to be done next. Prayer saves you time. Many of us say we believe this principle, but we really don’t. We put off praying because we think it is a waste of time, or at least less important than our other activities. We also think the length of time we pray isn’t important. Why did Jesus spend hours in prayer? It is because He had a genuine relationship with the Father, and any relationship takes time to build and maintain. God is saying to us, *“You will get more done in My presence than you accomplish in the presence of other people”*. You spend all day talking foolishness with others. They aren’t contributing anything to your future. They’re just talking. You sit down and spend two or three hours talking politics. In the end, nothing is solved, nothing has changed, and you’re depressed. You should have spent those hours on your knees

praying for the government, the gangs, and all the other situations. We often discover that when we spend time in prayer, God begins to use us to change circumstances.

Ninety-nine percent of the time God will speak to your mind through your spirit. Many people are waiting for a burning bush or the appearance of an angel. However, they don't hear from God because they're waiting in the wrong way. God doesn't generally speak verbally. That's not intimate enough. He speaks directly to our spirits.

Prayer is coming into union with God's mind. God showed Jesus everything He was thinking and said to His Son, "*Go and manifest that for Me.*" There is nothing more intimate than your thoughts. Words are an extension of our thoughts, but we are our thoughts. Proverbs 23:7 says, "*As [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he*". God desires not to talk to you, but to "think" to you. This is what Jesus meant when He said, "*I do what I see My Father doing*" (John 5:19). The text implies, "*I do what I mentally see My Father thinking.*"

When you have an important decision to make, pray and fast. If you're trying to decide whether to take a certain job, start a business, go to a specific college, or get married, spend some time with God. God is going to make it easy for you. He helps you avoid making mistakes and doing things twice. Jesus wants us to operate in the way He operated: much time in communion and love with the Father, and much accomplished for the kingdom. Jesus specifically prayed that we would follow His example in this:

*That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one.* (John 17:21 - 22)

Our power in prayer is the Word of God. He has already given this to us. Our job is to learn how to handle it properly and responsibly (2 Tim. 2:15). It is through God's Word that we can know, believe, and agree in faith with God's will. Without His Word, our prayers have no foundation. They are based merely on our opinions, desires, and feelings rather than on "*the living and enduring word of God*" (1 Pet. 1:23).

The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12)

The Word is alive—that's how powerful it is! What did God use to create the world? "[The Word] *was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made*" (John 1:2–3).

What did God send to the world to redeem it? "*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14).

What did Jesus give His disciples for salvation and sanctification? "*Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has*

*crossed over from death to life*” (John 5:24). “*You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you*” (John 15:3). “*Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth*” (John 17:17).

The Word is alive and active on our behalf. Probably no one quoted Scripture more than Jesus did. When He was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, what did He do? Each time, He gave the devil God’s Word, saying, “*It is written*” (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). Jesus was so well acquainted with the Word that He wasn’t fooled by the enemy’s distortion of it. (See verse 6.) God watches over His Word to fulfill it (Jeremiah 1:12). That is why, when Jesus spoke the Word in faith, God fulfilled it, and Christ overcame temptation.

There are two conditions to answered prayer: “*If you abide in Me,*” and “*If...My words abide in you.*” First, what does it mean for you to abide in Jesus? It means to constantly flow in spiritual communion with Him. You do this by fellowshiping with Him and worshipping Him, by praying and fasting.

Second, what does it mean to have His words abiding or living in you? Here is how you can test whether or not the Word is in you: What is the first thing that comes out of your mouth when you are under pressure? Is it an affirmation of faith? Or is it fear, confusion, frustration, doubt, or anger? We know the Word is truly inside us when it directs our thoughts and actions.

You can’t get the Word inside of you by keeping it on a shelf in your house. You can’t get the Word in your spirit by putting it under your pillow at night and expecting to absorb it by osmosis. You can’t even get the Word in you by having someone preach

it to you. Preaching only stirs up faith. You have to have the Word in you already. You have to be reading and meditating on the Word regularly.

Jesus gave us the condition, “*If...My words abide in you,*” so the last part of the verse having to do with prayer could be fulfilled in us: “*Ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.*” If His words are in you, then what you desire and ask for will reflect those words. Do you see the connection? If you are filled with the Word, then you won’t ask for just anything you feel like. You will ask on the basis of His Word, which is the thing He watches over to fulfil.

Remember that most of our prayers aren’t being answered because we are praying for things He never asked us to pray for. However, when we pray according to His Word, we know we are praying the will of God. God performs His Word, and nothing else. He doesn’t perform your suggestions or feelings. He doesn’t perform your perspective on things. Therefore, if you don’t bring Him His Word, you won’t be able to experience “*it shall be done for you.*” Too often we think the phrase “*ask what you desire*” means we can ask for anything. Yet Christ was saying, in effect, “*If My Word is abiding in you, then you can ask for what’s abiding in you, and it will be done.*” That is the power of the Word.



This book is made available for free download due to the generous donations of many who appreciate reading from Boaz Adhengo. You too can make a donation using the M-PESA method.

*Mr. Boaz Adhengo is President to Creative Arts Society of Kenya, a leadership coach, business for arts consultant and a cultural policy strategist. Having published twenty books, he manages the Adhengo Boaz & Associates consulting group and is co-founder of the Buruburu Basketball Ministry, Inc.*

*He has been recently ordained as a Life Coach Minister by the Christian Leaders Ministries, Michigan, U.S.A.*

