

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

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### I. INTRODUCTION

A vital step to maturity in the life of any believer is the establishment of a consistent and successful prayer life. The spiritual growth of so many is hampered, and their needs unmet, because they do not take the time to fellowship with God in prayer, and to ask Him for the things that they need. Without prayer, there is no real communion with God; for prayer, most simply defined, is **communication with the Lord**. It is not merely a religious ritual, done to increase one's piety. Prayer is the cry of our heart to the Father, the cry of fellowship and the petition for specific needs. It can be done at any time, in any place, and in any circumstance (Acts 10:9; 16:23-25). Those who neglect it neglect a vital link to their fellowship with and effectiveness for the Lord.

Prayer is a common denominator which appears in the lives of men who have a close, intimate walk with God, and who accomplish great things for Him. One will always find that these men have developed a **consistent prayer life**. Jesus, during His earthly ministry, would often slip away to pray (Luke 5:16). Paul's devotion to prayer can be seen in the exhortations he gave to the churches (Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 4:2; I Timothy 2:8). This common factor of *consistent prayer* is visible in the lives of all the men whom God raised up to accomplish His will in past centuries (e.g. Luther, Wesley, Finney, and Moody). All of these men were known as avid devotees to prayer, spending untold hours of their lives pouring out their hearts before the Lord.

It goes without saying that if we want to grow in our relationship with God, and effectively accomplish His will for the Church, we must become consistent in our approach to prayer. This is not a complicated task; prayer is simply our speaking and communing with the Lord. Yet, it is so often neglected in the lives of believers, because it doesn't fit into their schedules, or because they fail to see any great value in it. The time has come for a renewed commitment to prayer and to daily fellowship and communion with God, so that we may see His will accomplished in the earth today. "*Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving*" (Colossians 4:2). Only as the Body of Christ becomes "devoted to prayer," will we begin to see God move in power and glory in the world today.

And on the next day, as they were on their way, and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.

*Acts 10:9*

And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and having received such a commandment, they threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

*Acts 16:23-25*

But He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.

*Luke 5:16*

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with thanksgiving in view, be on the alert with a perseverance and petition for all the saints.

*Ephesians 6:18*

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.

*Colossians 4:2*

Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands without wrath and dissension.

*I Timothy 2:8*

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.

*Colossians 4:2*

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### II. OUR IDENTITY IN PRAYER

Before going any further on the subject of prayer, we must review certain facts about our redemption, which have great bearing on how we approach God. One major prerequisite to *effective prayer* is a thorough knowledge of who we are in Christ. It is because of unclear thinking in this area that many have feeble prayer lives, lacking in any kind of boldness or confidence. They feel themselves unworthy, and are convinced that God has some record of wrongs which He holds against them. Because of these feelings of unworthiness and sinfulness, many believers seldom pray, if they do so at all. They have only a vague perception of who they really are, and how *God* looks upon them.

If our *identity* is not settled in our hearts and minds, then insecurity and inferiority will dominate our prayer life, and we won't have confidence to ask for anything. Thus, the first step in any kind of effective prayer is an **acknowledgement of all that God has done within us**, and all that He has made us to be through Christ's redemptive work. When a Christian understands that God has made him righteous, righteous enough to stand in His very presence, then he will be able to approach the Lord boldly without fear. His faith won't be crippled by the nagging uncertainty of his worthiness to receive, because he recognizes the fact that **God has made him worthy!** This is a position of rest and assurance from which one can ask anything from the Father and receive it.

#### A. REDEMPTION'S COMPLETE WORK

Even though there is a process of growth and development going on inside every believer (a process which the Bible calls "renewing the mind"), there is unquestionably a *completed work* which was wrought in every one of us when we accepted Jesus as our Savior and were born again. This was an *instantaneous, one-time* occurrence, the result of which remains unchanged within us. It is this inward change which renders us children of God, righteous new creatures before Him. And it is this position of sonship and righteousness which we, even at this very moment, hold before God. We don't need to "work up" righteousness in order to go before God; He Himself already made us righteous. We needn't "beg" God as slaves, because He made us His *children*.

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### 1. Children of God

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; **and such we are**" (I John 3:1). Under the Old Covenant, the people of God (the Israelites) were *servants*, but under the New Covenant, the people of God (the Church) are *sons and daughters*! This doesn't mean that we are not to reverence the Lord and obediently serve Him, as did the Israelites. But we give reverence and obedience to God as children to Father, and not as slaves to Master. God called us out of servitude to the Law and into the glorious liberty of His sons (Galatians 4:6,7).

As children of God, we have *direct access* to our heavenly Father. Thus, when we approach God in prayer, we can do so confidently, as any child would confidently enter his earthly father's presence. With God as our Father, we can be assured that He is ready and willing to grant us what we desire of Him. Jesus said, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him" (Matthew 7:11).

Most people's minds have been "programmed" with information that is directly opposite to this revelation. God is often viewed as a withholder, with whom we must beg and plead to get our prayers answered. But this is not the God whom the Bible describes; the scriptures refer to God as a **generous giver** (James 1:5) and a "rewarder of those who seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). God is our loving, heavenly Father. One who longs for us to commune with Him in prayer, and who is ever ready to grant whatever righteous request we bring to Him. As we become increasingly aware of this fact, renewing our minds to it on a daily basis, we are in a better position to exercise faith and receive from God.

### 2. The righteousness of God

The Bible declares that when we accepted Jesus as our Savior, *ALL* of our sins were completely and irrevocably forgiven (Colossians 2:13,14; Hebrews 8:12). All the iniquity that stood between us and God was taken out of the way; thus, we can stand before the Father, having been cleansed from every sin by the precious Blood of Jesus (I John 1:7).

See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

*I John 3:1*

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

*Galatians 4:6,7*

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all meagerly and generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

*James 1:5*

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

*Hebrews 11:6*

And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

*Colossians 2:13,14*

"FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL NOT REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE."

*Hebrews 8:12*

But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

*I John 1:7*

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He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

*1 Corinthians 5:21*

Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

*Ephesians 1:4*

Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.

*Hebrews 4:16*

Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

*Hebrews 10:22*

Which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

*Ephesians 1:20,21*

Even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.

*Ephesians 2:5,6*

Not only did God forgive us, but He changed us on the inside by imparting to us **His very own righteousness!** "*He [God] made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*" (II Corinthians 5:21).

Every believer can stand before God in prayer, blameless and unashamed (Ephesians 1:4), because he stands in the righteousness of God. God does not see Christians as unworthy sinners; He sees them as **forgiven and recreated saints**, standing in holy purity before Him. Unfortunately, some Christians view themselves as unworthy to come into God's presence; they introduce every prayer to God with an affirmation of sinfulness and unworthiness. They struggle with prayer because of overwhelming feelings of inferiority and insecurity before God. But the Bible exhorts us to "**come boldly to the throne of grace**" (Hebrews 4:16 KJV), and to "**draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith**" (Hebrews 10:22). "Coming boldly" and "drawing near" speak of *confidence* and *assurance*. These are the attitudes we are to have when we come to God in prayer.

In order for us to stand up and take our rightful place in communion with and intercession before the Father, we must cement into our thinking the fact that **God has made us righteous**. This doesn't mean that we are now incapable of sin, nor that we needn't repent if we do sin. But it *does* mean that we can stand in God's presence without feeling as if we didn't belong there. We must eradicate any thoughts of unworthiness and inferiority, and be renewed in our thinking. **We must see ourselves as God sees us!**

### 3. Our position in Christ

Our position in Christ is one of authority. When Jesus rose from the dead, God lifted Him up and exalted Him over all power and might and dominion (Ephesians 1:20,21). Thus, Jesus has authority over all demonic power. But the Bible says of us, that God "*made us alive together with Christ, and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus*" (Ephesians 2:5,6). Jesus had dominion over demons before He came to earth as a man. But in His death and resurrection, **He secured that dominion for us!** Being seated with Christ in heavenly places refers not to a physical location, but to **our position of authority over all the forces of Hell.**

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When standing in prayer against the powers of darkness, we must remain conscious of this reality: **God has given us authority over demons**, through the Name of Jesus. The youngest believer can put to flight the mightiest of demons by simply taking his place in Christ, and coming against that power in Jesus' Name. But as long as a Christian remains ignorant of his position in Christ, he will never confidently resist demonic onslaughts. He'll always remain in fear as to what Satan will do next. As we become aware that the enemy has been placed under Jesus' feet (Ephesians 1:22), and hence under OUR feet, then we are in a position to break down Satan's strongholds through fervent, believing prayer.

### B. BOLDNESS BEFORE GOD

Establishing our identity in Christ is essential if we are to have the boldness and confidence necessary to be effective in prayer. This boldness is not self-sufficient arrogance; it is confidence in what *God* has done. Our assurance before God is not based on how brash we can be or how loud we can pray, but on how convinced we are of what Christ has done in us. "*And such confidence we have through Christ toward God*" (II Corinthians 3:4). The boldness necessary for effectual prayer is that which comes through Christ, as a result of His righteousness being imparted to us.

There are two major areas which must be dealt with regularly if we are to maintain our boldness before God. First, we must be *meditating* on the redemptive work that is complete in us. Second, we must be sure that we have a *clear conscience* before God with regard to our manner of life.

#### 1. Meditate on the facts

In order to maintain and develop confidence before God, we must meditate on the facts of our completed redemption. We are children of God; we have been made righteous in Christ; we are now seated in heavenly places with Christ. All these things are already ours. They represent a position in which we stand *now!*

And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church.  
*Ephesians 1:22*

And such confidence we have through Christ toward God.  
*II Corinthians 3:4*

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Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

*II Corinthians 5:17*

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”

*John 3:6*

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

*II Corinthians 5:21*

Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

*Colossians 2:12*

And raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.

*Ephesians 2:6*

And having summoned His twelve disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

*Matthew 10:1*

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

*I John 3:21,22*

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

*I John 1:9*

One of the best ways to meditate on these facts is to speak them out loud. Remember, that to meditate means “to mutter to oneself.” As we affirm the reality of these facts with our mouths, consistently meditating upon them, they stir up within us a holy boldness. Often, it is helpful to start personal prayer times by confessing these truths of God’s Word concerning all that He has done. In this way we are reminded, before we pray, of all that we are and have in Jesus, and are thus emboldened to request things which were unthinkable in any other state of mind.

Here are some facts that will help us to realize our place in God. We are:

- Members of a new creation (II Corinthians 5:17).
- Born of God’s Spirit (John 3:6).
- The righteousness of God in Christ (II Corinthians 5:21).
- Resurrected from death (Colossians 2:12).
- Seated with Christ (Ephesians 2:6).
- In dominion over the forces of the enemy (Matthew 10:1).

### 2. Maintain a clear conscience

“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight” (I John 3:21,22). No one will ever have any confidence before God while knowingly living in sin or disobedience to God. Sometimes lack of confidence before God is a result of the devil’s condemnation, or of doubts about God’s forgiveness. This can be remedied by meditation in the scriptures, and by encouragement from the Spirit. But lack of confidence caused by known sin can only be remedied by **speedy repentance!**

After having sinned, repentance is the only way back to a clear conscience and confidence before the Lord. We have this promise from God: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9). Once we have genuinely

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repented of a sin and forsaken it, then any thoughts of condemnation do not spring from a violated conscience, but are merely the lies of the devil. That is the time to affirm with our mouths our forgiveness through Christ and our righteous stand before the Father.

If our heart does not condemn us and if our conscience is clear before God, then we can have confidence, a confidence that springs from knowing we are in obedience to the Lord's commands. Those who desire to be effective in prayer must carefully watch their conscience and *be quick to repent* if they stumble in sin. Confidence before God can only be maintained when a person knows in his heart that he is walking uprightly before God.

### C. ESTABLISHING OUR HEARTS

We establish our hearts by fixing our attention on what God's Word says about us. Prayer must begin with a strong assertion of these facts. When we begin to see ourselves in that light, then confidence in prayer will be ours. But if we don't enter into these facts, we will always struggle for faith; the assurance that our prayers are being heard will always elude us. Believers must establish their identity in Christ from the Bible. When that spiritual identity becomes apparent to them, then boldness in prayer will doubtless be the result.

### III. THE PRAYER OF WORSHIP

Prayer is our communication with God. Through prayer we petition God for our needs and intercede for the needs of others. But there is a kind of prayer which involves nothing but fellowship with the Lord. It is **the prayer of worship and praise**. This prayer is the highest form of prayer. It is not a time in which we ask or petition God for anything. It is simply a time to express to God our love and devotion for Him, whether in thought, word, or song. Unfortunately, God often hears nothing but petition and requests from the mouths and hearts of His children. God has indeed told us to ask of Him when we are in need. But if that is the only kind of prayer that a Christian offers up, then he is sadly lacking in real communion with the Lord.



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Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.

*Ephesians 1:4,5*

And he appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the Lord, even to celebrate and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel.

*I Chronicles 16:4*

And Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and the Levites by their divisions, each according to his service, both the priests and the Levites, for burnt offerings and for peace offerings, to minister and to give thanks and to praise in the gates of the camp of the Lord.

*II Chronicles 31:2*

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

*I Peter 2:9*

And He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

*Revelation 1:6*

"But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers."

*John 4:23*

"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

*John 4:24*

Man was created to have fellowship with God. This is the primary reason for his existence. God predestined us to this fellowship from before the world's creation (Ephesians 1:4,5), and redeemed us with that in view. When we spend time fellowshiping with the Father, we fulfill our purpose of being. That is why worship, by which we commune with God, is the highest form of prayer. It delights the heart of God when we come boldly into His presence with nothing but thanksgiving on our lips. "*Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise*" (Psalm 100:4).

### A. MINISTERING TO THE LORD

Our praise and worship to God minister to Him. Under the Old Covenant, King David appointed Levites, whose sole job was to stand and minister in worship before God. "*So he [David] left Asaph and his relatives there before the ark of the Covenant of the Lord, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required*" (I Chronicles 16:37). This ministry to the Lord consisted of *celebrating and thanking and praising the Lord God of Israel* (I Chronicles 16:4). After a period of apostasy, righteous King Hezekiah reinstated this arrangement, and once again the Levites ministered and gave thanks and praised in the gates of the camp of the Lord (II Chronicles 31:2).

Under the New Covenant, there is no special class of people to minister before the Lord, because **every believer has been made a priest** (I Peter 2:9). "*And He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father*" (Revelation 1:6). Because every Christian is a priest before God, he has the same opportunity and responsibility to *minister to the Lord* as the Levites did. And just as this was done continually before the ark, so we too are exhorted to worship continually (i.e. consistently). "*Through Him [Christ] then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name*" (Hebrews 13:15).

#### 1. In spirit and in truth

True worship is not merely a ritual or form, conducted in designated places at prescribed times. Those who worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth; this is the kind of worship that the Father seeks (John 4:23). Jesus said, "*God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*" (John 4:24). Since God is spirit, all who

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want to worship Him in reality must worship Him in spirit. It is a man's spirit that is in communion with God's Spirit, and this communion cannot be reduced to a ritualistic formula. True worship comes from the *heart!*

Jesus made all of this plain to a Samaritan woman who believed that the "place" or "form" of worship was all-important (John 4:20,21). He said that where and when one worships would no longer be important to God. Under the Old Covenant, most worship took place at the location that God Himself had chosen (Deuteronomy 12:5; Psalm 132:13,14). But under the New Covenant, God's Spirit lives *within* believers. Thus, time, place, and form no longer have any importance. What is of primary importance is that worship be in spirit and truth. It must be real communion with God **which springs from the heart**, and not just an outward activity. When one engages in a prescribed form of worship, simply to fulfill a religious obligation, this is not true worship. **True worship is a genuine, heartfelt praise and adoration of the Father for all of His goodness and love.**

### 2. Consistent ministry of worship

Believers are exhorted to worship God "*continually*." This doesn't mean every minute of every hour. It denotes a **consistent pattern** in a person's life. Consistency in worship means an habitual practice, one which is not set aside when extra demands are made on one's time. Ministering to the Lord in praise and worship is as much a vocation for the New Testament believer as it was for the Old Testament Levites. While Christians are not called upon to do so incessantly, they must do so regularly. In this way they take their rightful place before God as priests.

But more than being a responsibility, ministering to the Lord is a **joy and a privilege!** No one expresses this sentiment better than David. There was nothing that he desired more than to come to the house of the Lord and worship (Psalm 27:4). This was a place where David could experience the presence of God's Spirit and the sweetness of His fellowship. Thus, the Psalmist says: "*How lovely are Thy dwelling places, O Lord of hosts! My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God*" (Psalm 84:1,2). So too, with Christians today, fellowshiping with God through worship is a sweet and joyous time of communion with Him.

"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father."

*John 4:20,21*

"But you shall seek the Lord at the place which the Lord your God shall choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come."

*Deuteronomy 12:5*

For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation. "This is My resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it."

*Psalm 132:13,14*

One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to meditate in His temple.

*Psalm 27:4*

How lovely are Thy dwelling places, O Lord of hosts! My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God.

*Psalm 84:1,2*

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“Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

*Matthew 26:41*

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

*Galatians 5:16*

And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.

*I Peter 1:8*

Yet Thou art holy, O Thou who art enthroned upon the praises of Israel.

*Psalms 22:3*

In unison when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised the Lord saying, “He indeed is good for His lovingkindness is everlasting,” then the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.

*II Chronicles 5:13,14*

### 3. Discipline of devotional worship

It need hardly be said that becoming consistent in worship requires discipline and self-control. There are times when the mind and the body are not in any mood to pray or worship the Lord. Jesus said to His sleeping disciples, “*The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*” (Matthew 26:41). The spirit within always wants to pray and to flow out with praises to the Lord God. But the flesh does not always share this inclination. Often believers are robbed of glorious times of worship because they obey their flesh rather than their spirit.

The scripture says that if one walks according to his spirit, following its inclination to pray and worship, he won't fulfill the flesh's desire to avoid these things (Galatians 5:16). There will be occasions when one must worship the Lord, despite contrary emotions (i.e. even when you don't “feel” like it!). This is not hypocrisy; it is faith! The inner man is always ready and willing to worship the Lord, gloomy feelings notwithstanding. Discipline is necessary to ensure that one doesn't simply follow the dictates of emotions. Self-control enables a believer to press on in worshipful prayer, in spite of emotional contradiction, and break into a realm of glorious communion with the Lord. Anyone who does so will find that his emotions respond to the joy that is bubbling out of his spirit, a joy that is “*inexpressible and full of glory*” (I Peter 1:8).

### B. THE EFFECT OF WORSHIP

“*But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel*” (Psalm 22:3 KJV). God inhabits the praises of His people. That is, He manifests His presence when His people praise and worship Him. When Solomon brought the ark of the covenant into the newly built temple, all the people praised the Lord with one voice. “*And when they praised the Lord saying, ‘He indeed is good for His lovingkindness is everlasting,’ then the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God*” (II Chronicles 5:13,14). Their worship brought the presence of God on the scene in a mighty manifestation of His Spirit.

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The same is true today. Whether in a spectacular or less obvious manner, God manifests His presence when we worship Him. When we worship in spirit and truth, we loose the Spirit of God to work.

### 1. The power of praise

**Read II Chronicles 20:20-25.**

The Israelites were faced with an enemy capable of destroying their army and their cities (II Chronicles 20:2). After they had sought the Lord, God said through a prophet that the battle was His; He would fight for them (II Chronicles 20:15). In response to that promise, King Jehoshaphat placed the worshipers ahead of the army, and they marched off to the battle, *praising the Lord*. God moved on their behalf, confused the enemy, and won the battle for them. As they worshiped the Lord, God's power was loosed to bring about their deliverance.

And they rose early in the morning and went out to the wilderness of Tekoa; and when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the Lord your God, and you will be established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed." And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who sang to the Lord and those who praised Him in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, "Give thanks to the Lord, for His lovingkindness is everlasting." And when they began singing and praising, the Lord set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; so they were routed. For the sons of Ammon and Moab rose up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir destroying them completely, and when they had finished with the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

When Judah came to the lookout of the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and behold, they were corpses lying on the ground, and no one had escaped. And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take their spoil, they found much among them, including goods, garments, and valuable things which they took for themselves, more than they could carry. And they were three days taking the spoil because there was so much.

*II Chronicles 20:20-25*

Then some came and reported to Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you from beyond the sea, out of Aram and behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar (that is Engedi)."

*II Chronicles 20:2*

(over)

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Read Acts 16:23-26.

And he said, "Listen, all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: thus says the Lord to you, 'Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's.' "

*II Chronicles 20:15*

And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened.

*Acts 16:23-26*

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

*Acts 16:25*

And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

*Acts 13:2*

Much the same kind of thing happened to Paul and Silas. Locked in the lowest dungeon of the prison, they were "*praying and singing hymns of praise to God*" (Acts 16:25). What's more, they weren't doing so quietly, for "*the prisoners were listening to them.*" As they worshiped the Lord, God shook the entire building with an earthquake and loosed everyone's bond. As in Jehoshaphat's case, their worship and praise loosed the power of God to bring about their deliverance.

The prayer of worship has powerful effects, because God Himself inhabits that worship. He comes on the scene when His people praise and magnify Him. Unfortunately, this power of praise and worship is seldom realized in the lives of many believers, because they can't see beyond their circumstances and emotions enough to engage in it. We have, as our example, the men of the Bible. Jehoshaphat certainly didn't "feel" like praising God, while he faced a vast enemy army. But he and his people praised the Lord in spite of that adversity, and God won their battle for them. Paul and Silas must not have "felt" like worshiping God; their backs were bleeding, and they were locked away in a dungeon. Yet, they rose above their circumstances and sang hymns of praise loudly; God's Spirit moved on their behalf.

### 2. Sensitivity to God's Spirit

When we worship the Lord, we get in a position where God can more easily speak to us. We become more sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit as we yield to Him in worship and minister to Him. The book of Acts records that the Holy Spirit gave direction for Paul and Barnabas while they and others "ministered" to the Lord. "*And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them'*" (Acts 13:2). It is these times of communion between our spirit and His Spirit that make us more spirit-conscious, aware of His leading and direction for us.

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### IV. ASK AND RECEIVE

Once a believer has begun to establish in his heart and mind who he is before God, he is in a position to ask and receive from God. God desires to answer every petition which we bring to Him in prayer. That is why Jesus always exhorted His disciples to *ask* from God the things they needed. The simple yet profound promise of the scriptures is that **God will answer our prayers and grant us the things for which we ask.** *“Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened”* (Matthew 7:7,8).

Because we are confident of our stand before God, and confident of His promise to hear and answer our righteous petitions, prayer becomes a powerful tool by which we can change and direct things in our lives, indeed, in the entire earth. Jesus' unreserved statements about prayer are a witness to its limitless potential. *“And **whatever** you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me **anything** in My name, I will do it”* (John 14:13,14). This means that nothing, barring ungodly requests, is beyond our reach through prayer. God hearkens to the voice of His children when they ask of Him. How profound this power of prayer is can be seen in what has been accomplished through it. Through prayer Elijah shut up the heavens, so that it didn't rain for three years. When he prayed again, the heavens were opened, and it rained at his request (James 5:17,18). At Joshua's request, the sun stood still while the Israelites completed their defeat of the enemy. *“And there was no day like that before it or after it, when the Lord listened to the voice of a man”* (Joshua 10:12-14). When the apostle Peter was thrown in prison to be executed, the church fervently prayed on his behalf (Acts 12:5); as a result of those prayers, Peter was miraculously released from the prison by an angel (Acts 12:11).

Through prayer, we have at our disposal all the power of God. And yet, so many Christians don't experience this power because they simply neglect to ask. *“You do not have because you do not ask”* (James 4:2). They feel that their request is “too big,” or that it's “too small.” But Jesus' statements about prayer simply tell us to ASK. He didn't say that some things are too much to ask of God, neither did He label

*“Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened.”*

*Matthew 7:7,8*

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

*James 5:17,18*

Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, “O sun, stand still at Gibeon, and O moon in the valley of Ajalon.” So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies. Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, when the Lord listened to the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel.

*Joshua 10:12-14*

So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.

*Acts 12:5*

And when Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod, and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.”

*Acts 12:11*

You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.

*James 4:2*

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Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full."

*John 16:24*

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."

*John 15:7,8*

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And when Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

*Acts 12:5,11*

anything as insignificant. He said "*whatever you ask*" will be given to you. While there are rules that govern prayer and receiving in prayer, we must not lose sight of **the major principle of prayer** that Jesus put forth: **Ask and you will receive!**

### A. ANSWERED PRAYER

God wants to answer our prayers. He hasn't told us to ask so that we can be kept busy doing a fruitless exercise. God doesn't play games with us. Jesus said that we should *ask* so that we might *receive* (John 16:24). Asking in prayer has one purpose — **receiving from God**. We must eradicate from our thinking any idea or mental image of God as a withholder. Those who believe God to be a withholder, instead of a liberal giver, think of prayer as a way to "bend God's ear" and "bombard the gates of heaven," until God gives in and grants the request. Prayer to them is a means of begging and pleading with God. But God is not a tight-fisted ogre, who only answers our prayers after we have begged and pleaded for weeks. Asking becomes easier when we realize that God is ever-ready to hear and grant the requests that we bring to Him in prayer. He desires to grant our petitions more than we can ever know.

#### 1. To the glory of the Father

*"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples"* (John 15:7,8). God is glorified when we "bear fruit" in our prayer lives, that is, when we get our prayers answered. Miraculous occurrences, which happen in response to our prayers, cannot be attributed to man. When Elijah stopped and started the rain through prayer (James 5:17,18), he certainly couldn't take the credit. Joshua's request that the sun stand still was granted (Joshua 10:12-14), but it wasn't his own power that accomplished it. When Peter was released from prison as a result of prayer, again God got the credit for his deliverance (Acts 12:5,11). In any situation in which God answers our prayers, the glory goes to Him, because only He can do the things we ask.

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God wants our prayer lives to be fruitful, so that our needs and the needs of others can be fully met. It is not glorifying to God when His children are in need, because they aren't receiving through prayer. But God is magnified and exalted as we are able to tell Christians and non-Christians alike that we serve a God who answers prayer.

### 2. Our joy made full

When a believer begins to see his prayers answered, it has an effect on him. *"Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full"* (John 16:24). A Christian's joy is **made full** when his righteous requests to the Father are answered. Receiving from the hand of the Father stirs up a gladness within, a gladness which comes from knowing that God our Father is for us and attentive to our needs and requests. We are not to be led by circumstances and be downcast if answers are not immediate. But when we look back at all the instances in which God has answered prayer, it produces a thankful joy within our hearts to God our Father.

### B. THE WILL OF GOD

When Jesus prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, His suffering on the cross was imminent. And so, He prayed and asked the Father to allow it to pass from Him, saying to God, "If it be Your will" (Matthew 26:39). This was a **prayer of dedication**, in which Jesus consecrated Himself to God's purpose and surrendered His will to the Father's will. We can learn a valuable lesson for our own lives from Jesus' dedication and His submission to the will of God for His life. There are indeed times of seeking direction for our lives, when our prayer to God must be as Jesus' prayer: "Not my will, but Yours be done."

"Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full."

*John 16:24*

And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

*Matthew 26:39*



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"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."

John 15:7

However, when asking of God in prayer for those things which we have need of, the things for which He has *told* us to ask, then the expression — "if it be Your will" — is inappropriate. Many seek to discover the will of God by adding this expression to their prayers. If they receive what they asked for, they assume that it was God's will; but if they don't receive it, then they assume that it was not God's will for them to have it. This fatalistic attitude has hindered and confused many Christians. When petitioning God for something, we are to know God's will in the matter *before* we pray. We are to pray in the knowledge of God's will; without it, there can be no assurance in our hearts that we will receive. Using the expression — "if it be Your will" — is no substitute for a solid knowledge of God's Word, which reveals His will.

### 1. **Whatever you wish**

Jesus said, "*If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you*" (John 15:7). We can ask and receive "***whatever we wish***" IF we abide in Christ and His Word abides in us. When we abide in Him, we are much more knowledgeable about what we can ask of God. God's will for us, the things which He desires for us to have, is vast and encompasses more than we can imagine. For too long, the Church has been limited in its thinking about what God would grant in prayer. Many Christians see God's will for them as very restricted. Thus, receiving what God wills means receiving next to nothing at all.

But when Jesus spoke of what we could ask in prayer, He used such expressions as "***anything,***" "***whatever,***" "***whatever you wish.***" He wanted to stir His disciples into the realization of how much God is *willing* to give, if they would only ask. Even so today, God wants us to realize the vastness of His will, so that we would never be hindered in bringing any righteous request before Him in the full assurance that He would gladly grant it to us. What God is willing to grant to us in prayer is not a narrow corridor; it is a vast, wide-open plain. Even though there are some things for which we cannot ask, to focus on these few things is to miss the entire thrust of Jesus' teaching about prayer. Jesus encourages us to ask of God anything from this vast "plain" of promises, so that we may receive all that God has for us.

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### 2. Line up with the Word

*“And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him”* (I John 5:14,15). Believers must learn to distinguish what is God's will for them, *before* they ask in prayer. Our confidence in prayer rests in the knowledge that God hears petitions which are *“according to His will.”* The more we abide in Jesus, and His words abide and settle in us, the clearer will be our perception of all that God's will includes. As we have said, for centuries the Church has had a very narrow view of God's will, and so has been hindered from being bold in prayer. God wants us to be bold in our requests, but that boldness comes as a result of knowing that God hears requests that line up with His will.

For those who have a narrow view of God's will, the passage quoted above is a discouragement; it promises only the “few things” that God will allow. But this passage was written to *motivate us* to prayer! If we know God hears us, then we know we have the things for which we ask! But it also motivates us to know God's *Word* and His *will*. No one can pray confidently if he is unsure of God's will.

We cannot pray for things that the Word of God does not promise us. To be sure, the blessings of healing, prosperity, deliverance, strength, and wisdom from heaven are promised to every believer. One may be confident that any request made for these, or any other provision mentioned in the Bible, will be heard and answered by the Father. But even though the will of God shown in His Word is vast, there are still some things for which we cannot ask. Thus, a prayer that this physical body might never die will not be answered, because the Bible doesn't promise this. (Our bodies will be “changed”; we will receive *new* bodies.) Neither can we pray for absurd or ridiculous things. Our petitions must align with His will, which is revealed in His Word.

And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.  
*I John 5:14,15*

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You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. James 4:3

In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father." John 16:26,27

Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens, Thy faithfulness reaches to the skies. Psalm 36:5

### 3. Unanswered requests

It should go without saying that God will not hear or answer requests that are unrighteous or **wrongly motivated**. "*You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures*" (James 4:3). While God's will is extremely broad, it does not encompass sin, nor greed, or lust. One cannot ask God to give him his neighbor's wife, nor his neighbor's goods. One cannot petition God for help to do things that are unrighteous. God will not answer a prayer for help to accomplish a morally questionable business deal, or to help in deceiving someone. Requests of this nature will go unanswered.

### C. BY GRACE YOU STAND

We are able to come into God's presence boldly and ask whatever we wish, because of what *He* has done by *His* grace. It isn't our good works or our fine, upstanding ways which enable us to stand before God and pray. We can stand before Him only because of His love and mercy. This principle of grace (unmerited favor) holds true in all aspects of prayer. When God answers our prayers, it's not because of our greatness, but because of His grace. Jesus said, "*In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father*" (John 16:26,27). The Father answers prayer because **He Himself loves us!**

This principle of God's unmerited favor must retain a primary place in our thinking about prayer. We can have confidence that God will hear us when we pray, and respond because **He is utterly faithful**. "*Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens, Thy faithfulness reaches to the skies*" (Psalm 36:5). Assurance in prayer, while in some degree dependent on our properly adhering to prayer's principles, is primarily founded on this factor of grace. God responds to prayer, not on the basis of our spiritual stature, but on the basis of His love and unmerited favor toward us.

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For this reason, even the youngest babe in Christ can have confidence that God will hear his prayer. We are told that Elijah “*was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years*” (James 5:17 NIV). Elijah’s prayers weren’t heard because he was a “spiritual giant”; he was just like anybody else. Elijah’s prayers were heeded because of God’s grace. We must learn to put our trust in God’s grace and faithfulness. It is the simple assurance of His love that will see results in prayer.

### D. PRINCIPLES FOR ANSWERED PRAYER

While the primary factor involved in answered prayer is the grace of God, there are some principles given in the scriptures that must be adhered to, if one is to be successful in prayer. God is the One who answers our prayers; it is His power that brings the answer, and His faithfulness on which we can count. But, we as believers have a responsibility in the area of prayer, which cannot be thrown back on God. We must *ask* in order to receive. We must *believe* in order to receive. We must base our request on God’s Word and will. Our part in prayer isn’t as immense as God’s, yet we are still accountable to fulfill that part and observe the principles of prayer which have been given to us. These principles are not to be taken as a “formula” or a “recipe” for successful prayer. But they must be heeded by anyone who seriously desires to have a fruitful prayer life.

#### 1. Find the scripture, and be specific

We must find the scripture which covers the things for which we are asking. As we have seen, one cannot ask for and receive those things which God does not promise us. Furthermore, only the Word of God can give us a solid basis to believe for the thing requested. There are countless scriptures which will suffice for any need which might arise in our lives. In fact, there is very little that God’s Word says we cannot have.

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.

*James 5:17*

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"Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him."

*Matthew 6:8*

And it came about that as He was approaching Jericho, a certain blind man was sitting by the road, begging. Now hearing a multitude going by, he began to inquire what this might be. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he had come near, He questioned him, "What do you want Me do for you?" And he said, "Lord, I want to regain my sight!" And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he regained his sight, and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

*Luke 18:35-43*

But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord.

*James 1:6,7*

"Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you."

*Mark 11:24*

"No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations."

*Genesis 17:5*

It is important for us to be as specific as possible in our petitions. This is not so the Lord will be "properly informed," since He knows what we have need of before we even ask (Matthew 6:8). But our asking, and asking specifically, demonstrates faith. The story of the blind beggar, Bartimaeus, illustrates this principle. This blind man came to Jesus, crying out for mercy. Jesus asked this man, who was obviously blind, "What do you want Me to do for you?" (Luke 18:41). Bartimaeus told Jesus exactly what he wanted, "I want to regain my sight!" Jesus already knew what Bartimaeus needed when He asked him; He didn't need to be informed. But He wanted Bartimaeus to exhibit faith in asking specifically (Luke 18:35-43).

### 2. Ask in faith

"And all things you ask in prayer, **believing**, you shall receive" (Matthew 21:22). The Bible makes it plain that unless we ask in faith, we won't receive answers to our prayers (James 1:6,7). Those who pray, and then "hope for the best," do not have successful prayer lives. Jesus told us how to operate this principle of faith in prayer. "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, **believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you**" (Mark 11:24). When we pray and ask, we are to believe that we have received, even *before* we see any outward manifestation of the answer. Waiting to see the manifestation before acknowledging the answer is not faith. Faith believes *before* it sees! This means that we are to rise above the outward realm of the senses and see things from God's perspective. We receive from God *when* we pray, even though the outward results may not be immediately apparent.

### 3. Words and thoughts affirm the answer

We must not allow our speech, nor even our thoughts, to affirm anything less than that we **have received** the things for which we asked. This means speaking what we believe, in the face of contradictory circumstances. This is exactly what God did when He renamed Abram, Abraham (father of a multitude), long before Isaac was even born (Genesis 17:5). Remember, God is the One who "calls things that are not as though they were" (Romans 4:17 NIV).

(cont'd.)

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We must not allow negative words to nullify our prayers. Many people's prayers are hindered because they constantly speak doubt concerning the things for which they have asked. *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit"* (Proverbs 18:21). Continual negative confession will kill all effectiveness in prayer. We must guard our mouths, and only say what God says about the things for which we have petitioned Him. We must **agree with God** that the thing is done!

### 4. Guard your mind

The scripture tells us to guard our minds from thinking ungodly and unwholesome thoughts. *"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things"* (Philippians 4:8). Doubts and fears about what we have prayed for certainly don't fit in this list. When we pray, and the result is not immediately manifested, we cannot afford to let our minds run loose with thoughts of defeat and disaster. Fear and anxiety are the enemy's attempts to make us give up.

When faced with anxiety and worry about whether or not our prayers will be answered, we must cast all these cares on the Lord (I Peter 5:7) and think only of the answer. Worry is a form of meditation. It is a constant rehearsal in our minds of all the lies of the devil concerning our particular situation. But we are told to think on good and truthful things. We are to **think about the answer** to our prayer, and not worry about the problem. Sometimes it is helpful to get a *mental image* of the thing for which you have asked. If you have prayed for healing, then see yourself healed and doing things you couldn't normally do. If you prayed and believed for a new house or a car, then see yourself in that house or car. If you prayed for family reconciliation, then see the members of your family walking in genuine love toward one another. As we focus our attention on the answer, believing that we have received, then Satan's lies will fade out of view.

(As it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the sight of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist.

*Romans 4:17*

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

*Proverbs 18:21*

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.

*Philippians 4:8*

Casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.

*I Peter 5:7*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson FIVE THE PRAYER LIFE — FRUITFUL FOR GOD

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."

*John 15:7*

"Ah Lord God! Behold, Thou hast made the heavens and the earth by Thy great power and by Thine outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for Thee."

*Jeremiah 32:17*

"Is anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son."

*Genesis 18:14*

And being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.

*Romans 4:21*

"For nothing will be impossible with God."

*Luke 1:37*

### 5. Meditate on the scriptures

Take the scripture on which you based your prayer, and meditate upon it. Remember, to meditate means to mutter to oneself. Faith comes by hearing, and as one meditates on the scripture that promises the thing prayed for, faith grows strong in that person's heart. Jesus said that if His words abide in us, we would receive whatever we ask of God (John 15:7). Having the Word abiding within is an absolute necessity to getting prayers answered. We are responsible to be building up our faith through careful study and meditation of the scriptures.

Meditating on God's Word is meditating on the facts! Even though there may be times when everything seems to contradict the Bible, we must retain our assurance that the scriptures *always* tell us the truth. The scriptures are our window into the unseen spiritual realm which God sees. Thus, when we see from a scriptural point of view, we are seeing from *God's* perspective. We have been given everything pertaining to life and godliness and have been blessed with all spiritual blessings. Meditation on the Word of God quickens our hearts and minds to this unseen reality, a reality which supercedes and controls what occurs in the natural.

### 6. God's greatness and faithfulness

Reflect upon God's greatness. He is more than enough to supply every need. "Ah Lord God! Behold, Thou hast made the heavens and the earth by Thy great power and by Thine outstretched arm! **Nothing is too difficult for Thee**" (Jeremiah 32:17). There is no task which God cannot accomplish, nor is there any problem or difficulty which God cannot solve. God rebuked Sarah for her unbelief concerning the promised son of her old age, saying, "Is there anything too difficult for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14). Her husband Abraham was noted for his great faith because he was "fully assured that what He [God] had promised, He was **able** also to perform" (Romans 4:21). Abraham was convinced of God's infinite power and His ability to do what seemingly was impossible. When the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would conceive by the Holy Spirit, he said, "For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). God's power and ability know no limits, so there is nothing we can bring to Him in prayer which is too "big" or too "hard"!

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But not only is God able, He is also *willing!* When reckoning on God's unlimited ability, we must also ponder His lovingkindness and faithfulness toward us. Knowledge of God's power is wonderful, but gives little comfort unless we know that He is willing and faithful on our behalf. The scriptures declare that God is *infinitely* faithful; His faithfulness is as boundless as His power (Psalm 36:5). "*Thy faithfulness continues throughout all generations*" (Psalm 119:90). "*For the Lord is good, His lovingkindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations*" (Psalm 100:5). Thus, we must reflect on God's mercy and faithfulness as we pray and stand in faith for our requests. Assurance of His power and His faithfulness will enable us to remain steady in the face of adverse circumstances.

### 7. Subsequent prayers a statement of faith

Jesus told us to believe that we receive when we pray (Mark 11:24). We are to put faith in the fact that we have the things desired, while they are yet unseen. Thus, any subsequent prayer concerning the matter should be a statement of faith, in which we thank God for the answer and assure our hearts before Him that it is ours. To ask in the same way for the same thing over and over again is not faith. Even though we are told to be bold and persistent in prayer (Luke 11:5-8; 18:1-8), we cannot ask God again and again for the same thing; this indicates lack of faith in the fact that God granted it when we asked.

Thy lovingkindness, O Lord, extends to the heavens, Thy faithfulness reaches to the skies.

*Psalm 36:5*

Thy faithfulness continues throughout all generations; Thou didst establish the earth, and it stands.

*Psalm 119:90*

For the Lord is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations.

*Psalm 100:5*

"Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you."

*Mark 11:24*

And He said to them, "Suppose one of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and from inside he shall answer and say, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs."

*Luke 11:5-8*

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God, and did not respect man. And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' And for a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal

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protection, lest by continually coming she wear me out.' ” And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

*Luke 18:1-8*

And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him.”

*Matthew 6:7,8*

Jesus said: “*And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him*” (Matthew 6:7,8). We must not be guilty of asking repeatedly in prayer for the same thing. Repetition doesn't serve to get His attention so that He may be properly “informed.” God knows what we need. Once we petition God and pray the prayer of faith, we must stand in faith, believing that we have received. This does not mean that we cannot ever mention the matter in prayer again. But whatever subsequent prayer we do make should be one that acknowledges the answer, rather than the problem.

The scriptural principles of faith enumerated above are not a “magic formula” that in and of itself will produce results. Our hearts must be in a right attitude of devotion to God; we must abide in Christ. But these principles do represent the degree of *our responsibility* in the matter of successful prayer. God has the larger share of responsibility, in that it is *His power* that brings the answer. But this does not mean that we can put all accountability for successful prayer onto God. Some believe that God will answer whether they believe or not. This kind of fatalistic attitude is irresponsible! Jesus said that we must exercise *faith* if our prayers are to be answered. We are called upon to believe, the inference being that if we don't, our prayers will not be fruitful. Thus, *we* are accountable to adhere to the principles of faith when we pray, so that God can fulfill His part and answer our prayers.

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### V. SUMMARY — COMING BOLDLY TO GOD

When a believer establishes his identity in Christ, and is assured of his righteous stand before God through the Blood of Jesus, then he will be able to come boldly into the Father's presence. Every believer has direct access to God. God is always ready to hear his requests. Thus, one can approach His throne with full assurance of faith in his heart. But whether or not a believer avails himself of this marvelous privilege is largely a matter of his own discipline and determination. God's invitation for His children to "Come!" is always extended, but so often it is overlooked or neglected. Those who accept it, and come regularly before God in prayer and worship, are those who glorify God through their fruitfulness in prayer. This fruitful prayer life springs from an awareness of one's identity in Christ, from a disciplined approach to fellowship with God, and from application of the principles of faith given in the scriptures.

### VI. ASSIGNMENTS

- A. Listen to tape number 5.
- B. Complete the study questions (to be turned in to your cell leader).
- C. Suggested reading:
  - Prayer That Moves Mountains*  
Gordon Lindsay
  - Prevailing Prayer to Peace*  
Kenneth Hagin

# **GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE**

## **Lesson SIX PRAYER WARFARE — CO-LABORERS WITH GOD**

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- II. THE PRAYER OF INTERCESSION
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# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson SIX PRAYER WARFARE — CO-LABORERS WITH GOD

### I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Bible, there are records of how men changed the course of history through prayer. Though it seems baffling to the mind, the fact remains true that God will change things at the request of a righteous man. In fact, there are things which God desires to do, which will not be accomplished unless someone asks Him. This fact doesn't detract from God's sovereignty or supremacy. It simply informs us of man's responsibility in the fulfillment of God's design.

God gave this responsibility to the *Church*. For centuries, however, Christians have viewed the Church as a weary and weak pilgrim, suffering through a land of woe. Prayer was seen as a means of survival, a way to avoid annihilation at the hand of the adversary. But Jesus said that the Church is mighty, that not even the *gates of Hell* can prevail against her (Matthew 16:18)! Jesus didn't leave the Church helpless. He gave every member *authority* over the adversary's power (Matthew 10:1; Ephesians 2:6), and sent the mighty Spirit of God to dwell within (John 14:16,17). Yet, ignorance of this reality has kept believers from being bold in prayer. They haven't understood that prayer (specifically intercessory prayer) is the means by which the Church can come against the powers of darkness, to such an extent that the gates of Hell itself won't be able to stand against its onslaught.

Jesus left the Church with a charge to take the gospel of deliverance to the whole world (Matthew 28:19). This commission includes not only preaching salvation, but also coming against all the works of the adversary: "*The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil*" (I John 3:8). But this can only be fulfilled as the Church begins to take its place in intercessory prayer before the Father. Only when the Church begins to diligently intercede, will we see the great things that God desires to do. To this end, the apostle Paul exhorts us to "*devote yourselves to prayer*" (Colossians 4:2). The time has come for us to awake out of ignorance and complacency, into the realization of our part in the fulfillment of God's plan, and the responsibility that it bears.

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it."  
*Matthew 16:18*

And having summoned His twelve disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.  
*Matthew 10:1*

"Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you."  
*Luke 10:19*

"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you."  
*John 14:16,17*

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."  
*Matthew 28:19*

The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.  
*I John 3:8*

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.  
*Colossians 4:2*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson SIX PRAYER WARFARE — CO-LABORERS WITH GOD

### II. THE PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.  
*Isaiah 53:12*

Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them, and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation." Then Moses entreated the Lord his God, and said, "O Lord, why doth Thine anger burn against Thy people whom Thou hast brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?"

So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.  
*Exodus 32:10,11,14*

So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.

And when Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."  
*Acts 12:5,11*

In those days I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks. I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all, until the entire three weeks were completed. And on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris, I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz.

(cont'd.)

Strictly defined, to intercede means "to plead on another's behalf."<sup>1</sup> Thus, intercessory prayer is prayer offered up for someone other than oneself. Intercession is the word used to describe what Jesus did on the cross. "*Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors*" (Isaiah 53:12). Jesus **took our place** on the cross, bearing the punishment for our sins. In the same way, when a believer intercedes for someone else, he **takes that person's place in prayer**, and makes request before God for him. Thus, God has blessed us with the promise that He will work mightily on the behalf of **others** (those whom we love, who may need special care or help), if we will ask Him to do so.

Intercessory prayer is the means by which we can combat the powers of darkness and bring deliverance to the captives. Through intercession, whole nations have been saved from destruction (Exodus 32:10,11,14), captives have been set at liberty (Acts 12:5,11), and demonic principalities have been put to flight (Daniel 10:2-5,12,13). The Church cannot afford to underestimate the effectiveness of intercession. We will be held accountable before God as to whether or not we fulfilled our responsibility in this area. God is looking for a group of people who will unselfishly give of their time, and stand in another's place before Him in prayer. The greatest thing that a believer can do for another individual is to spend time before the Father interceding on their behalf. This does not mean that we are to ignore their physical needs; the Bible commands us to love "*in deed and truth*" (I John 3:18). But prayer will bring the supernatural power of God on the scene and will reap **eternal results** in another's life. It is by this means, by intercessory prayer, that we will see the will of God brought about in other's lives, whether individuals, families, or entire nations.

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson SIX PRAYER WARFARE — CO-LABORERS WITH GOD

### A. STANDING IN THE GAP

When Moses stood before God, interceding for Israel, the Bible says that he "*stood in the breach* [or the gap]" (Psalm 106:23). On more than one occasion, the scriptures refer to intercession as "*standing in the gap*" (Ezekiel 13:4,5; 22:30). The image denoted is one of a soldier standing in the broken part of a city's defensive wall. Due to this weakness in its defenses, the city is vulnerable to attack and destruction. Destruction is averted, however, as a responsible soldier takes up a position in that "gap" or "breach." This image is allegorical of what an intercessor does when he prays. He stands for that person or nation in an area of weakness, and petitions God on their behalf. The "breach" in the wall is indicative of an area of need, for which the intercessor makes petition. He stands with or for the person to overcome that weakness and see the need met.

There are times when some people simply cannot pray for themselves, whether because of iniquity, ignorance, or fear. Thus, the intercessor is in the privileged position of standing *for* them, filling up that "breach" in their life. And again, believers sometimes need someone to pray and stand *with* them, since they are unable to do so *alone*. In either case, the intercessor takes up a position before God on their behalf. This kind of unselfish love is demonstrated in the lives of two Old Testament saints who interceded before God for cities and nations. Abraham stood boldly before God, interceding for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, that God might not destroy them. Moses "*stood in the breach*" for the Israelites to avert a judgment that would have annihilated them.

Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me for I had been left there with the kings of Persia."

*Daniel 10:2-5,12,13*

Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

*I John 3:18*

Therefore He said that He would not destroy them, had not Moses His chosen one stood in the breach before Him, to turn away His wrath from destroying them.

*Psalm 106:23*

"O Israel, your prophets have been like foxes among ruins. You have not gone up into the breaches, nor did you build the wall around the house of Israel to stand in the battle on the day of the Lord."

*Ezekiel 13:4,5*

"And I searched for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one."

*Ezekiel 22:30*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson SIX PRAYER WARFARE — CO-LABORERS WITH GOD

### 1. Moses and the children of Israel

Twice the children of Israel committed such grave sin that they provoked God to destroy them. Both times, Moses' intercession saved them from destruction. "*Therefore He said that He would destroy them, **had not Moses His chosen one stood in the breach before Him, to turn away His wrath from destroying them***" (Psalm 106:23).

#### Read Exodus 32:7-14.

Here we find that God was ready to eradicate Israel because of their iniquity. Yet Moses interceded for them and staid God's hand. This is a dramatic illustration of the influence that a righteous man can have upon God, even to the benefit of sinful people. "***Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them, and that I may destroy them***" (Exodus 32:10). God did not need Moses' permission to destroy the Israelites; but He wouldn't do so without **first hearing what Moses had to say!** When Moses petitioned God for their lives, his prayer was heard by God. "*So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people*" (Exodus 32:14). **God listened to Moses,** and didn't destroy the people (Deuteronomy 9:19). Bear in mind, that at this point, the people had not yet even repented; it was Moses' intercession, and not their subsequent repentance, which averted destruction.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!'" And the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them, and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation."

Then Moses entreated the Lord his God, and said, "O Lord, why doth Thine anger burn against Thy people whom Thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Thy burning anger and change Thy mind about doing harm to Thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants to whom Thou didst swear by Thyself, and didst say to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'"

So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.

*Exodus 32:7-14*

"For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the Lord was wrathful against you in order to destroy you, but the Lord listened to me that time also."

*Deuteronomy 9:19*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson SIX PRAYER WARFARE — CO-LABORERS WITH GOD

Read Numbers 14:11-21.

Again, the Israelites committed a great sin. They rejected the land of promise (Numbers 13:31-33) and accused God of trying to kill them (Numbers 14:3). They even spoke of appointing a leader to take them back to Egypt (Numbers 14:4). God threatened to wipe them out, and once again, Moses' intercession saved them from eradication. God heard Moses' prayer, and said, "*I have pardoned them according to your word*" (Numbers 14:20). God hearkened to **Moses' word** and pardoned them. Moses' prayer, in this and the previous example, consisted of nothing more than reminding God of His oath (i.e. His Word) to bring the people into the promised land. God's reputation before the nations was at stake (Exodus 32:12; Numbers 14:15,16). The simple intercession of *one man* had an immense effect on the destiny of an entire nation of people.

And the Lord said to Moses, "How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst? I will smite them with pestilence and dispossess them, and I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they."

But Moses said to the Lord, "The Egyptians will hear of it, for by Thy strength Thou didst bring up this people from their midst, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of this people, for Thou, O Lord, art seen eye to eye, while Thy cloud stands over them; and Thou dost go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if Thou dost slay this people as one man, then the nations who have heard of Thy fame will say, 'Because the Lord could not bring this people into the land which He promised them by oath, therefore He slaughtered them in the wilderness. But now, I pray, let the power of the Lord be great, just as Thou has declared, 'The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations.' Pardon I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Thy lovingkindness, just as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now."

So the Lord said, "I have pardoned them according to your word; but indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord."  
*Numbers 14:11-21*

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## Lesson SIX PRAYER WARFARE — CO-LABORERS WITH GOD

But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us." So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size. There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

*Numbers 13:31-33*

'And why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?'

*Numbers 14:3*

So they said to one another, "Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt."

*Numbers 14:4*

'Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Thy burning anger and change Thy mind about doing harm to Thy people.'

*Exodus 32:12*

'Now if Thou dost slay this people as one man, then the nations who have heard of Thy fame will say, Because the Lord could not bring His people into the land which He promised them by oath, therefore He slaughtered them in the wilderness.' "

*Numbers 14:15,16*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson SIX PRAYER WARFARE — CO-LABORERS WITH GOD

### 2. Abraham and Sodom

Read Genesis 18:17-33.

God would not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah without first informing Abraham of His intentions. "*Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?*" (Genesis 18:17). When he knew those intentions, Abraham began to intercede for the cities. He was **bold** in his intercession, reminding God of His integrity and justice. "*Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?*" (Genesis 18:25). This wasn't an arrogant boldness, for Abraham acknowledged who he was before God (Genesis 18:27). But he also knew that God would hearken to his voice. At Abraham's request, God would have spared that wicked city for the sake of ten righteous people. Even though there were not ten righteous in the entire city, and Sodom was destroyed, this story shows clearly that **God responds to a righteous man's intercession**. Indeed, it was this intercession, reminding God of His equity and justice, that saved Lot's life. Lot hesitated in leaving Sodom when he was warned of its imminent destruction, so the angels **forced** him out of the city (Genesis 19:16). The "*compassion of the Lord was upon him*" because of Abraham's intercession. Lot's safety was absolutely assured; the angels were not allowed to do anything against Sodom until he had escaped (Genesis 19:22).

And the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed? For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him." And the Lord said, "The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave. I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know."

Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom while Abraham was still standing before the Lord. And Abraham came near and said, "Wilt Thou indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt Thou indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from Thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from Thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" So the Lord said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account."

And Abraham answered and said, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am but dust and ashes. Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, wilt Thou destroy the whole city because of five?" And He said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." And he spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose forty are found there?" And He said, "I will not do

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# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson SIX PRAYER WARFARE — CO-LABORERS WITH GOD

### 3. New Covenant intercessors

In both of the examples cited above, a righteous man "*stood in the breach*" before God on behalf of a large group of people. The Bible says that had Moses not done so, the children of Israel would have been destroyed (Psalm 106:23). Both of these examples illustrate **how profound an effect we can have on other's lives through intercession**. We can avert destruction, stay judgment, even prevail upon God to "*change His mind*" (Exodus 32:14), if we will diligently intercede before the Lord. We can stand in the gap for individuals or nations, with as much or even more effectiveness than Moses or Abraham.

If God would hearken to the voice of righteous men under the Old Covenant, how much more will He hearken to the voice of His own children under the New Covenant. Under this present covenant, we have been made the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 5:21). We are children of God, with direct access into the Father's presence. Thus, we have God's ear **at all times**, and can be assured that He responds to our voice in intercession as much as He did to Abraham or Moses. Whether or not we will avail ourselves of this privileged position before the Father, and spend time standing in the breach for others who are in need, is **our decision**.

t on account of the forty." Then he aid, "Oh, may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?" And He aid, "I will not do it if I find thirty here." And he said, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord; suppose twenty are found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it on account of the twenty." Then he aid, "Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it on account of the ten." And as soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the Lord departed; and Abraham returned to his place.  
*Genesis 18:17-33*

But he hesitated. So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his daughters, for the compassion of the Lord was upon him; and they brought him out, and put him outside the city.  
*Genesis 19:16*

"Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Therefore the name of the town was called Zoar.  
*Genesis 19:22*

Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen one stood in the breach before Him, to turn away His wrath from destroying them.  
*Psalm 106:23*

So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.  
*Exodus 32:14*

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.  
*II Corinthians 5:21*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson SIX PRAYER WARFARE — CO-LABORERS WITH GOD

### B. ACCOMPLISHING GOD'S WILL THROUGH PRAYER

God is looking for men and women who will take their place in prayer and stand in the gap for others. It is in this way that His will will be accomplished on the earth. *"And I searched for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. Thus, I have poured out My indignation on them"* (Ezekiel 22:30,31). God was searching for someone to stand in the gap so He wouldn't have to destroy the nation of Israel; but He found no one, and so it was destroyed. God did not want them destroyed, but they continued sinning, and there was no one to intercede in their behalf and stay God's judgment.

The same is true today in the Body of Christ. There is much that God wants to do, but can't because Christians do not intercede. There is much that the devil perpetrates in the earth which is **not God's will**, because believers do not take their place in intercession. (Although God is all-knowing and sovereign, one cannot assume that everything that occurs is in accordance with His will. Sin certainly is not the will of God, yet it is prevalent all over the world.) God is still searching for those who will stand in the gap for lost souls, governments, and entire nations, so He can see His will accomplished on the earth, and so all the earth can be *"filled with the glory of the Lord"* (Numbers 14:21).

The people of God have a divinely-appointed responsibility in seeing the will of God accomplished in the earth. This responsibility begins in intercessory prayer. Without prayer, any attempt to fulfill God's plan is destined to fail. **Nothing can be accomplished for God without intercession!**

God prophesied through Jeremiah that after seventy years of Babylonian exile, the Israelites would return to their land (Jeremiah 29:10). God declared His will for the people of Israel, that they should not remain in captivity. And the scriptures do indeed record the fulfillment of this prophecy (II Chronicles 36:20,21). Yet, it took Daniel's intercession for Israel to bring it about (Daniel 9:2,3,17-19). Daniel interceded for God to forgive Israel and return them to their homeland, as He had promised.

*"But indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord."*

*Numbers 14:21*

*"For thus says the Lord, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.'"*

*Jeremiah 29:10*

And those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete.

*II Chronicles 36:20,21*

In the first year of his reign I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

*Daniel 9:2,3*

*"So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Thy servant and to his supplications, and for Thy sake, O Lord, let Thy face shine on Thy desolate sanctuary. O my God, incline Thine ear and hear! Open Thine eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Thy name; for we are not presenting our supplications before Thee on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Thy great compassion, O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Thine own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name."*

*Daniel 9:17-19*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson SIX PRAYER WARFARE — CO-LABORERS WITH GOD

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving.

*Colossians 4:2*

Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

*I Timothy 2:4*

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

*II Peter 3:9*

Who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time.

*I Timothy 2:6*

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

*I John 2:2*

First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men.

*I Timothy 2:1*

And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few."

*Matthew 9:36,37*

"Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

*Matthew 9:38*

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

*II Corinthians 4:3,4*

Every member of the Church shares in this responsibility. Even though some do have ministries which are devoted entirely to intercession, the Bible calls upon **all of us** to devote ourselves to prayer (Colossians 4:2). It is only as we, the Body of Christ, devote ourselves to intercession, staying **consistent** in it, that we will see the will of God accomplished in our generation.

### 1. Praying for the lost

The Bible says that God wants **all men** to be saved and to know the truth (I Timothy 2:4). God does not wish "for any to perish but for **all** to come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). For this reason, Jesus offered Himself as a ransom for **all** (I Timothy 2:6). His death atoned for the sins of **the whole world** (I John 2:2). Jesus didn't die just for the Church, but for the world. Given all these scriptures, it is obvious what God's will is concerning the lost: **He wants everyone to be saved.**

To this end, Paul exhorts us to pray for **all men**. "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of **all men**" (I Timothy 2:1). God wants us to intercede on behalf of those that are lost, who do not know about the salvation that Jesus has made available to them. Even though we have been commanded to go and preach to the lost, our *first* responsibility is to *pray* for them. When Jesus saw the multitude distressed and downcast, He noted that the harvest was plentiful, but the laborers few (Matthew 9:36,37). But the command that He gave to His disciples at that moment was not to *go*, but to **pray**. "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:38).

### Intercessory prayer is essential to the salvation of souls!

The travail which brings about new "birth" in a person's heart takes place as a believer intercedes for that person. It is in prayer that we can stand in the gap for the lost and break the power of Satan's deception over their minds. Satan has blinded the minds of unbelievers to the truth of the gospel (II Corinthians 4:3,4). But we can break that hold of ignorance through intercession. God is searching for those who will rise above slothfulness and complacency, and take their place in the breach, interceding for those who are perishing.

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson SIX PRAYER WARFARE — CO-LABORERS WITH GOD

### 2. Praying for leaders

Paul tells us that we are to pray for all men: "*For kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity*" (I Timothy 2:2). Part of our responsibility in prayer is to intercede for the leaders of our nation, from a national level down to a local level. Few Christians realize the extent to which they can affect government leaders through prayer. Many spend untold hours in active political involvement, but neglect the far more powerful weapon of intercession. "*The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes*" (Proverbs 21:1). Since the hearts of government leaders are in God's hand, and since that same God is **our Father**, then it stands to reason that we can affect those leaders through our intercession. Political involvement has its place. But far more will be accomplished through intercession than could ever be accomplished through politics.

Every Christian has a mandate from the scriptures to pray for government leaders. But all too often, Christians spend more time criticizing their government leaders, than they do praying for those leaders.

The truth is that Christians are not held responsible by God to criticize their government, but they are held responsible to pray for it. So long as they fail to pray, Christians have no right to criticize. **In fact, most political leaders and administrators are more faithful in the discharge of their secular duties than Christians are in the discharge of their spiritual duties.** Furthermore, if Christians would seriously begin to intercede, they would soon find less to criticize.<sup>2</sup>

The Bible does not alleviate us from this responsibility to intercede if we don't approve of our leader. It simply tells us to pray! Thus, whether or not a leader is of our political persuasion has no bearing on our responsibility in prayer. We are to pray for them whether we like them or not. If Christians will be obedient to the Word and pray for their government, it will result in leaders making wise and righteous decisions. The intercession of Christians will bring about a stability and order in the political and economic scene of the nation, that will enable them to live tranquil and quiet lives.

For kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

*I Timothy 2:2*

The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes.

*Proverbs 21:1*

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson SIX PRAYER WARFARE — CO-LABORERS WITH GOD

### 3. Boldness and diligence

Effective intercession requires *boldness*. No believer should ever shrink back from interceding on behalf of an entire nation, or for revival in an entire city, or for anything which seems like a very large or broad request. The enemy will often try to convince Christians that they are insignificant, in order to stop them from interceding. Moses was only one man, yet his intercession saved Israel from destruction. You are righteous through Jesus Christ and are a child of God. Be bold before Him in intercession. Don't allow the size or scope of the thing for which you ask to intimidate you. There is nothing so large or significant that it can't be affected through *your* intercession!

Effective intercession also requires *diligence*. Those who are lazy or complacent about prayer will never be effective intercessors. True intercession takes *time*. Two minutes of prayer a day is not sufficient to produce the endurance in prayer which true intercession demands. The true intercessor knows how to spend long seasons in prayer before God. Those who are slothful and complacent are unlikely to do this. Thus, we must be diligent to pray consistently (i.e. every day), and to keep interceding in any given matter until the Holy Spirit indicates that we may stop. *Consistency and longevity* (i.e. being able to stay at something for long periods of time) are essential ingredients to effectual intercession.

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson SIX PRAYER WARFARE — CO-LABORERS WITH GOD

### C. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND PRAYER

Jesus called the Holy Spirit "*the Helper*" (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7). One of the areas in which He helps us is prayer, especially intercessory prayer. The Bible calls Him a Spirit of prayer (Zechariah 12:10), because one of His major functions is to **teach us how to pray** and **help us** as we do. Any effective prayer life must be founded upon a dependence on the Helper within. Without the aid of God's indwelling Spirit, intercessory prayer would be a vain exercise. This does not relinquish us from our responsibility in this matter. He is called the "*Helper*" because He helps **US** to pray; He doesn't do the praying for us while we sleep or think about other things! We are the ones who are to pray diligently. But the fact remains that **we need help from God's Spirit in order to pray effectively**, so that every blow delivered in prayer is made to count. Thus, the Holy Spirit directs us as to *what* to pray for, and shows us *how* we should pray. In this way, we become co-laborers with God in the realm of prayer. Our responsibility lies in overcoming the flesh's inclination not to pray, and yielding ourselves to the Spirit within us as He urges us to intercede.

#### 1. The Spirit helps our weakness

The Spirit of God is sent to help us to pray because of our *weakness*. This weakness consists of our not knowing *what* to pray for, nor *how* to pray. "*So too the (Holy) Spirit comes to our aid and bears us up in our weakness; for we do not know what prayer to offer nor how to offer it worthily as we ought, but the Spirit Himself goes to meet our supplication and pleads in our behalf with unspeakable yearnings and groanings too deep for utterance*" (Romans 8:26 Amplified). Any believer who desires to be effective in intercession must acknowledge his utter dependence on God's Spirit in this area. We *need* the help of the Holy Spirit, so that we can overcome our weakness and pray effectively.

"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever."

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."

*John 14:16,26*

"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me."

*John 15:26*

"But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you."

*John 16:7*

"And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born."

*Zechariah 12:10*

And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

*Romans 8:26*



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For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

*Romans 8:20-22*

And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

*Romans 8:23*

For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven.

For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

*II Corinthians 5:2,4*

And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

*Romans 8:26*

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

*I Corinthians 2:11*

And He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

*Romans 8:27*

The Spirit helps us by interceding for us with unutterable *groanings*. Paul mentions this kind of groaning in regard to creation. All of creation groans, longing to be freed from the corruption which came when Adam fell (Romans 8:20-22). He also speaks of Christians groaning, as they long and desire for the redemption of their physical bodies (Romans 8:23; II Corinthians 5:2,4). "*And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness . . .*" (Romans 8:26). The "same way" in which the Spirit helps us is with **inward groanings**, as He longs for the will of God to be accomplished, and so intercedes within us.

But this does not occur without our cooperation. The Spirit *helps* us do the job; He doesn't do the job for us. The Greek word translated "*help*" in this passage means "to take hold with another (who is laboring)." <sup>3</sup> The Spirit *helps* us by taking hold *with* us, with inward groanings and yearnings, to see God's will accomplished. But we must cooperate with the Helper and yield ourselves to Him. It is only as we do our part that we will receive the "help" of God's Spirit. We must take the initiative in intercession, by "taking hold" in prayer; only then can the Spirit take hold *with* us!

### 2. The Helper knows God's will

The weakness that every believer faces in prayer is one of *ignorance*. We don't know how or what to pray as we should. But the Holy Spirit knows everything about God (I Corinthians 2:11), and when He intercedes within us, He prays according to God's perfect will. "*And He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God*" (Romans 8:27). The weakness of ignorance in prayer should not hinder anyone from praying. God has placed within us the **Helper** who knows His will. The Spirit **groans within us** because He intensely desires and longs for that will to be accomplished on the earth.

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

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### 3. Praying in the Spirit

Paul told the Ephesians to “*pray at all times in the Spirit*” (Ephesians 6:18); Jude exhorted us to build ourselves up by “*praying in the Holy Spirit*” (Jude 20). Both of these scriptures refer to a believer **praying in tongues**. “*For if I pray in an [unknown] tongue, my spirit [by the Holy Spirit within me] prays, but my mind is unproductive*” (I Corinthians 14:14 Amplified). On the day of Pentecost, the disciples were filled with the Spirit, and began to speak in tongues, as the Spirit **gave the utterance** (Acts 2:4). The Spirit of God was enabling them to speak in a language unknown to any of them. In the same way, when we pray in tongues, we are allowing the Spirit of God to pray through us in a language that our minds do not comprehend.

But God understands every word prayed to Him in tongues. “*For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries*” (I Corinthians 14:2). Thus, not only is praying in tongues an excellent way to worship and give thanks to God (I Corinthians 14:16-18; Acts 10:46), it is also a means of intercession. By praying in the Spirit (i.e. in other tongues), we release our spirit to pray directly to God by the Helper who is within. We pray mysteries to the Father, prayers that are in accordance with His will. We are the ones doing the speaking, but the Spirit within is the One who is directing and orchestrating the mysteries which we speak to the Father. Thus, praying in tongues is a way in which we can release ourselves to the Helper within, and allow Him to use us in praying according to God's perfect will.

### 4. Learning dependence on the Helper

Whether by groaning from deep within, or by prayer in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit is our *Helper* in the realm of intercession. No real intercession can take place without a total reliance on this source of power and insight. Only as we tap the resources that God has put at our disposal, will we truly become effective in prayer. But the way to tap these resources must be learned. If one's prayer-life is sporadic, with only occasional seasons of prayer, he'll never come to understand just how the Spirit helps in intercession. But when a believer diligently gives himself to prayer, on a regular basis, then he'll begin to understand more and more about the kind of “help” the Holy Spirit will give.

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with thanksgiving in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.

*Ephesians 6:18*

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit.

*Jude 20*

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.

*I Corinthians 14:14*

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

*Acts 2:4*

For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.

*I Corinthians 14:2*

Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all.

*I Corinthians 14:16-18*

For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God.

*Acts 10:46*

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## Lesson SIX PRAYER WARFARE — CO-LABORERS WITH GOD

"He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters."  
*Matthew 12:30*

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.  
*II Timothy 4:7*

Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.  
*I Timothy 6:12*

Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.  
*II Timothy 2:3*

"Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way, and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Be on your guard before him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since My name is in him. But if you will truly obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. For My angel will go before you and bring you in to the land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will completely destroy them."

"I will send My terror ahead of you, and throw into confusion all the people among whom you come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. And I will send hornets ahead of you, that they may drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites before you."  
*Exodus 23:20-23,27,28*

And Joshua captured all these kings and their lands at one time, because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.  
*Joshua 10:42*

Intercession is not a simple formula which one can master in minutes. It is an art which must be learned with time. This does not mean that our prayers are ineffective while we are learning. It simply indicates that the way to a deeper understanding of prayer is through practice. One can receive volumes of teaching on the subject, but until he puts it into operation, he has learned very little. But if one will diligently practice the art of intercession, he'll gain deeper insight into how the Holy Spirit can make his prayer-life more and more effective.

### III. SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Every believer is involved in a spiritual war, a war in which there is no neutrality. Jesus said "*He who is not with Me is against Me*" (Matthew 12:30). There are no "non-combatants" in this war. A believer cannot decide that he wants no part in it; the very fact that he is a child of God makes him a part of it. If he chooses to ignore the spiritual conflict raging around him, he will simply become a casualty in it! Every Christian has a responsibility to take part in this battle. Paul, near the end of his life, said, "*I have fought the good fight*" (II Timothy 4:7). He exhorted Timothy to "*fight the good fight of faith*" (I Timothy 6:12), and "*suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus*" (II Timothy 2:3).

God has given the Church mighty weapons with which to fight in this spiritual conflict. These weapons represent our role in the fight. Whenever we are engaged in a battle with the adversary, God is there to ensure our victory. But we mustn't suppose from this wonderful fact that we have nothing to do in the fight. We are responsible to take the weapons God has given us, and use them as He instructed us. So it was with the children of Israel, when they conquered the promised land. They won their battles because **God was with them** (Exodus 23:20-23,27,28; Joshua 10:42). But they still had to take up arms, and do battle with the adversary. The same is true today. God has promised to be our Victor, but we must do our part by using the mighty spiritual weapons that He has given us. As we do, what was true of Israel's adversaries will be true of our spiritual adversaries.

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*"And He will deliver their kings into your hand so that you shall make their name perish from under heaven; no man will be able to stand before you until you have destroyed them" (Deuteronomy 7:24).*

These mighty weapons are to be wielded in prayer! It is in the **arena of prayer** that we will do combat with the spiritual forces that are arrayed against us. The apostle Paul described the armor which God has given us (Ephesians 6:14-17; a description which we will study at a later time in this lesson), and then told us how to use it. "**Praying** always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:18 KJV). Those who are mighty in spiritual warfare are those who spend long periods of time in intercessory prayer, coming against the adversary's attacks. It is the Church who fights in this way, which Jesus referred to when He said, "*The gates of Hades shall not overpower it*" (Matthew 16:18).

### A. OUR ADVERSARY

Paul makes it manifestly clear as to whom we are fighting in this spiritual conflict. "*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places*" (Ephesians 6:12). The apostle Peter is just as explicit. "*Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. **Your adversary**, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour*" (I Peter 5:8). Our enemy is not the people around us, nor is it the circumstances which befall us, nor is it God (as some are prone to believe). Our adversary is Satan and all of his demons. We are pitted against **spiritual forces**, which are bent on our destruction (John 10:10).

*"And He will deliver their kings into your hand so that you shall make their name perish from under heaven; no man will be able to stand before you until you have destroyed them."*

*Deuteronomy 7:24*

Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDLED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

*Ephesians 6:14-17*

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.

*Ephesians 6:18*

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it."

*Matthew 16:18*

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places

*Ephesians 6:12*

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

*I Peter 5:8*

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The thief comes only to steal, and ill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.”

*ohn 10:10*

but when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.

but the Jews aroused the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

*cts 13:45,50*

but the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of the Gentiles, and embittered them against the resurrection.

but Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

*cts 14:2,19*

but the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and coming upon the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.

*cts 17:5*

for we wanted to come to you — I, Paul, more than once — and yet Satan thwarted us.

*Thessalonians 2:18*

These forces that are against us are *unseen*, a factor which Satan has used to convince many people that they don't really exist. The devil is most often viewed as an imaginary "spook," classed with such "creatures" as hobgoblins, gremlins, and leprechauns. In this way, he diverts people's attention away from their real adversary. Even in the Church, many believers underestimate the ways in which Satan works. They rarely give thought to his existence, much less how to combat him. While the problems that confront them are very real, the one who instigates those difficulties is only vaguely acknowledged, if at all.

Paul suffered much at the hands of *men* (Acts 13:45,50; 14:2,19; 17:5), yet he never lost sight of who was behind these uproars and hindrances. He recognized his true adversary (I Thessalonians 2:18). It is of vital importance that the Body of Christ today begin to recognize their real enemy. Only then will we be able to combat him effectively in prayer. This recognition of our spiritual foe comes from the Bible. The Word of God shatters all of Satan's deceptions, telling us of his origin, his power, and his tactics, so that we won't *underestimate* nor *overestimate* his abilities.

# GOD'S PLAN FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE

## Lesson SIX PRAYER WARFARE — CO-LABORERS WITH GOD

### 1. The origin of Satan and demons

Two Old Testament prophecies give us insight into the origin of Satan. Although these passages seem to be addressed to men, they contain descriptions that could only pertain to a heavenly being (Isaiah 14:12-16; Ezekiel 28:11-17). Satan was an archangel before his fall, one of mighty stature and extreme beauty. But when pride entered in, and iniquity was found in him, he was cast from heaven. When he fell, he took a third of the angels of heaven with him (Revelation 12:3,4; II Peter 2:4; Jude 6). These fallen angels are the emissaries of Satan, who do his bidding. It is to these that Paul refers when he speaks of rulers, powers, world forces of this darkness, and spiritual forces in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12). All of these titles indicate various levels of authority and power among "*the devil and his angels*" (Matthew 25:41).

"How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit. Those who see you will gaze at you, they will ponder over you, saying, 'Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms?'"

*Isaiah 14:12-16*

Again the word of the Lord came to me saying, "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God, "You had the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; the lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; and the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you.

On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were the anointed cherub who covers, and I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, until unrighteousness was found in you. By the abundance of your trade you were internally filled with violence, and you sinned; therefore I have cast you as profane from the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Your

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heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, that they may see you.” ’ ’

*Ezekiel 28:11-17*

And another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven, and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.

*Revelation 12:3,4*

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment.

*II Peter 2:4*

And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day.

*Jude 6*

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

*Ephesians 6:12*

“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.’ ”

*Matthew 25:41*

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### 2. The scope of his authority

Paul calls the devil "*the god of this world*" (II Corinthians 4:4), and "*the prince of the power of the air*" (Ephesians 2:2). Jesus called Satan "*the ruler of this world*" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). All these titles point to the fact that Satan exercises authority over this world and those who are a part of it (I John 5:19). Satan himself claimed authority over all the kingdoms of the earth when he tempted Jesus (Luke 4:5-7). The world had been "handed over" to him, and he had legal right to give it to "whomever" he wished. This was not a lie, or his offer to Jesus would have been no real temptation. Recall that this dominion had originally been given to Adam (Genesis 1:26,28). But Adam knowingly and willfully sinned by obeying the devil; he was not deceived when he fell (I Timothy 2:14). When he sinned, he subjected the entire world to the dominion of sin and Satan (Romans 5:12).

In whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

*II Corinthians 4:4*

In which you formerly walked according to the course of this world according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience

*Ephesians 2:2*

"I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me."

*John 14:30*

"And concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged."

*John 16:11*

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

*I John 5:19*

And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours."

*Luke 4:5-7*

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

*Genesis 1:26,28*

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and it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression.

*Timothy 2:14*

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death spread to all men, because all sinned.

*Romans 5:12*

and He called them to Himself and began speaking to them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? and if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. and if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but he is finished!"

*Matthew 23-26*

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

*Ephesians 6:12*

Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places, seeking rest, and does not find it."

*Matthew 12:43*

In those days I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks. I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all, until the entire three weeks were completed.

*Daniel 10:2,3*

When he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your prayers were heard, and I have come in response to your words."

*Daniel 10:12*

In the kingdom of darkness, there exists structure, order, and hierarchy; without these, this kingdom could not exist (Mark 3:23-26). Paul's list of demonic powers (Ephesians 6:12) is not mere repetition; it is a list of various positions in the hierarchy of Satan's kingdom. This hierarchy includes demonic powers in "heavenly places," all the way down to demons which roam the earth (Matthew 12:43). The authority of demons in heavenly places is illustrated in the book of Daniel. The prophet Daniel prayed and fasted for three weeks (Daniel 10:2,3). When the answer to his prayer came, he was informed that he had been heard on the first day of his supplication (Daniel 10:12). This explanation was given by the messenger angel for the delay: "*But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia*" (Daniel 10:13). The "prince of the kingdom of Persia" refers to a demon prince who was over that nation. If this expression had meant a human prince, certainly the messenger angel wouldn't have required Michael's assistance to combat him, much less have been detained twenty-one days.

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This prince of Persia, and the prince of Greece mentioned later (Daniel 10:20,21), represent demon powers which rule over nations, in heavenly places. These "princes" attempt to make men in power conform to their wicked designs for that nation. It is these demons, along with all of the other wicked spirits in various other roles, which we are to come against, and combat with the weapons which God has given us. It is with these *invisible* powers that we struggle in this world. They are the ones who motivate evil men (Acts 5:3; John 13:2), come against us to deceive (II Corinthians 11:3, 13-15), and even cause natural disasters of the elements (Mark 4:37-39). These are the enemies against whom we are to use the weapons of God in prayer.

Then he said, "Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come. However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince."  
*Daniel 10:20,21*

But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land?"  
*Acts 5:3*

And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him.  
*John 13:2*

But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.  
*II Corinthians 11:3*

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds.  
*II Corinthians 11:13-15*

And there arose a fierce gale of wind, and the waves were breaking over the boat so much that the boat was already filling up. And He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Hush, be still." And the wind died down and it became perfectly calm.  
*Mark 4:37-39*

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.

*II Corinthians 10:3*

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

*II Corinthians 10:4*

Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.

*Ephesians 6:10*

Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

*Ephesians 6:11*

Stand firm therefore, **HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH**, and **HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**, and having shod **YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE**: in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take **THE HELMET OF SALVATION**, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

*Ephesians 6:14-17*

### B. OUR WEAPONS

The weapons God has placed at our disposal are not of the flesh (i.e. pertaining to natural strength or abilities), because our war is not against flesh and blood opponents. "*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh*" (II Corinthians 10:3). When a believer tries to combat the devil by natural means, focusing on the circumstances rather than the power behind them, he is warring "after the flesh." This kind of fight is destined for failure. All too often, believers are drawn by the devil's deception into fighting on a **natural level**. The enemy will always try to draw a person's energies away from himself (the devil — the real source of the problem), and onto the outward circumstance, leaving that person vainly beating the air, while the real enemy goes unscathed.

Paul stated clearly that our struggle is not against physical opponents. We are not fighting people or events. We are opposed by **unseen supernatural forces**, and so God has given us **supernatural weapons** with which to fight. "*For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses*" (II Corinthians 10:4). Only with these "divinely powerful" weapons can we successfully defeat the enemy. Thus, Paul told us to be **strong in the Lord**, and in the power of **His** might (Ephesians 6:10). It is **God's** power that overcomes Satan. But His power is unleashed as **we** wield the supernatural weapons that He has given us.

#### 1. The armor of God

"*Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil*" (Ephesians 6:11). This armor is enumerated in Ephesians 6:14-17. It includes:

- the belt of **truth**
- the breastplate of **righteousness**
- the preparation of the **gospel**
- the shield of **faith**
- the helmet of **salvation**
- the sword of the Spirit (i.e. the **Word of God**)

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The purpose of this armor is so that we can “stand firm” against the enemy’s schemes. Although God has provided this armor, it is our responsibility to put it on and use it in the arena of prayer.

We must “**gird**” ourselves with the truth as to who we are in Christ, and all that He has done in and for us. We must be filled with the knowledge that **Jesus defeated the enemy through the cross**. “*When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him*” (Colossians 2:15).

The **breastplate of righteousness** is our defense against condemnation. We put it on by acknowledging that *Jesus* made us righteous (II Corinthians 5:21). This is an essential weapon in the arena of prayer, since no one who feels unworthy and unclean can confidently stand before God or against the devil.

Being prepared to **share the gospel** with others is a prerequisite to keeping one’s thinking clear as to why we were left on the earth. We weren’t left here simply to be blessed; heaven has far more blessings than the earth could ever offer. We are here to preach the gospel to those who are perishing. Conscious awareness of this fact keeps us “heaven-minded” in our intercession.

The **shield of faith** is a defensive weapon, because faith is a position of rest. One doesn’t fight with a shield! In this position of rest, we can put out all the flaming thoughts of fear and terror that the enemy throws at our consciousness. The danger of flaming arrows is not in being struck by one, but in allowing it to linger, and the fire to spread. Quench by faith all of the enemy’s insinuations of failure and impotence.

The **helmet of salvation** is our defense against discouragement and despondency in prayer. Often, the enemy will try to convince us that prayer is a waste of time. Only by warding off these thoughts of despondency will we be able to persevere in prayer and continue to intercede. Prayer is effective (James 5:16). But Jesus said that men should continue praying, and not give up because of discouragement (Luke 18:1).

When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

*Colossians 2:15*

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

*II Corinthians 5:21*

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

*James 5:16*

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart.

*Luke 18:1*

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But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'"

Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"

Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'"

*Matthew 4:4,7,10*

Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

*Philippians 2:9-11*

Far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

*Ephesians 1:21*

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

*Matthew 28:18*

"And in that day you will ask Me no question, Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full."

*John 16:23,24*

The sword of the Spirit is the **Word of God**, especially the "spoken word." (The Greek word here, translated "word," is **rhema**, which often refers to a **spoken word**.) We wield this sword by speaking the Word as we pray. We must speak the Word in intercession and say only what God has said. This was the weapon that Jesus used very effectively against the devil; He responded to every one of Satan's temptations with the words, "*It is written*" (Matthew 4:4,7,10).

Even though most of the armor described above is defensive, this doesn't mean that we are not to be aggressive in prayer against the devil. Only those who intend to go into battle have need of armor. If preservation was the only purpose for this armor, then Paul might well have said, "Go into the bomb-shelter of God." But armor is designed to protect those who intend to fight! It is as we war against the devil in prayer and intercession that this armor is fully utilized.

### 2. The Name of Jesus

"Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11). When Jesus was resurrected, He was exalted "*far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named*" (Ephesians 1:21). The Name of Jesus speaks for who He is, and carries with it all the authority in heaven and earth that was bestowed upon Him (Matthew 28:18). Jesus gave His disciples unqualified use of that Name. He said that whatever we would ask the Father in His Name would be given to us (John 16:23,24). He also said, "*And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons . . .*" (Mark 16:17).

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The disciples were instructed to use the Name of Jesus when combatting evil forces. The apostle Peter spoke to the lame man in Jesus' Name, and he was healed (Acts 3:6). He explained to the gathering crowd, "*And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man . . .*" (Acts 3:16). Paul cast the demon out of a woman in Philippi, using the Name of Jesus (Acts 16:18); he exercised the right that Jesus had given him.

We have the same right today to use the Name of Jesus in prayer and against the devil. This is one of the mightiest weapons at our disposal, for when we speak it in intercession, it carries with it all the power and authority that Jesus now has. When we speak in the Name of Jesus, it is as though Jesus Himself were doing the talking. Demons respond to the Name of Jesus, spoken from the lips of a believer, with the same terror that they responded to Jesus (Luke 8:28). Speak the Name of Jesus in prayer: it avails with the Father and routes the forces of Satan.

### C. OUR AUTHORITY OVER SATAN

God has given us mighty spiritual weapons against which the devil has no real defense. He defeated the enemy at the cross, disarming him and making him an open showcase of defeat (Colossians 2:15). He gave us the armor of God and the right to use the Name of Jesus. All these things point to the fact that God has given us authority over Satan and all of his demons. Thus, not even the youngest believer should ever feel awed by the power of Satan. Even though from a natural standpoint the devil has super-human power and intellect, yet from God's vantage point in the heavenly places, the enemy is already defeated. It is up to us to enforce that defeat here on earth.

Having all these spiritual weapons means that we have authority over demonic powers. We have authority as Christians to bind the powers of darkness and loose those who are held captive by him. "*Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*" (Matthew 18:18). Jesus said that in order to do damage to Satan's kingdom, and thwart his designs, we would first have to bind him and his demons (Matthew 12:29). This we do as a part of our intercessory prayer warfare against the enemy.

But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene — walk!"  
*Acts 3:6*

"And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all."  
*Acts 3:16*

And she continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.  
*Acts 16:18*

And seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, "What do I have to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me."  
*Luke 8:28*

When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.  
*Colossians 2:15*

"Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."  
*Matthew 18:18*

"Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house."  
*Matthew 12:29*

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And having summoned His twelve disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

*Matthew 10:1*

“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give.”

*Matthew 10:8*

Let the godly ones exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishment on the peoples; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute on them the judgment written; this is an honor for all His godly ones. Praise the Lord!

*Psalm 149:5-9*

Notice that *we* are the ones who bind the enemy. God will not do this for us. To be sure, it is *His* power and authority which we wield, but we are responsible to wield it. Jesus bestowed authority on His disciples when He commissioned them (Matthew 10:1); He then told them to go out and *use* that authority (Matthew 10:8). All the authority in the universe is of no value if a person doesn't exercise it against the enemy.

### IV. SUMMARY — THE HONOR OF THE RESPONSIBILITY

*Let the godly ones exult in glory;  
Let them sing for joy on their beds.  
Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,  
And a two-edged sword in their hand,  
To execute vengeance on the nations,  
And punishment on the peoples;  
To bind their kings with chains,  
And their nobles with fetters of iron;  
To execute on them the judgment written;  
This is an honor for all His godly ones.  
Praise the Lord!*

*Psalm 149:5-9*

We have spoken much of our *duty* as soldiers of Christ, and of our *responsibility* to intercede for others, coming against and binding the powers of Satan. But at the same time, we cannot overlook nor minimize what a *privilege* it is to be a co-laborer with God. The Psalm quoted above stated that it is an *honor* for the saints to take up the “sword” and do damage to the enemies of the Lord. While this was spoken of Israel in a physical sense, it is certainly true of the Church in a spiritual sense.

We have been given a mighty two-edged sword, so that we can “execute vengeance” on demons, and “bind” their kings and nobles. The sword represents the “divinely powerful” weapons that God has given us. As we use these weapons in the arena of prayer, in full knowledge of who we are and what God has given us, then we will truly experience the honor of seeing the enemy bound in “chains” and “fetters.”

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But only those who diligently take their place in intercessory prayer will experience this honor. Battles are won and victories experienced by those who take up arms and go into battle. Christians who, by reason of complacency or ignorance never stand in the gap, praying for others and binding the powers of Satan, know little of this honor. But those who practice the art of intercession on a regular basis, know well the weapons that God has given them, and how to use them. The great army of believers that God is raising up in these last days is primarily an army of prayer. It is an army of men and women who are sober and on the alert to the devil's schemes (I Peter 5:8), and who are not slack toward their responsibility in intercessory prayer.

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

*I Peter 5:8*