



Present

THE POWER ***OF*** ***PRAYER***

*A Training Seminar in Dynamic Group
Prayer*

Prepared by

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Power of Prayer

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PRAYER: AN INTRODUCTION

John 15:3 : *"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."*

Psalms 12:6 : *"The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times."*

PRAYER IS COMMUNICATION WITH GOD

God has given us His Word, the Bible, which is His word to us. God communicates through His word. It is His chosen way. Jesus Christ is identified as the Word of God in John, chapter one. He is the word (logos) who was in the beginning with God, who was God, and who became flesh and lived among us (**John 1:1,14**). Jesus tells us that His word to us cleanses us. As we listen by reading the Scripture, the Lord will speak to us. There are many other ways that God speaks to us (such as through dreams, visions and prophecies) but His word to us through the Bible is the basic way. The Psalmist says His words are pure words. To hear from the Lord is so precious and is the key that makes prayer real, alive and pro-active.

AN UNDERSTANDING OF PRAYER

How does God answer prayer? How did Jesus answer the requests made of Him by needy people? Was it just a matter of asking? Did He always answer the same way? Faith is the key, Jesus taught us, but not blind faith. Biblical faith comes by "hearing" His word (**Romans 10:17**). *"To your faith add virtue, to virtue add knowledge . . . knowledge (in) of the Lord Jesus Christ"* (**2 Peter 1:5-8**). We can learn much in studying the Scripture about prayer, and faith grows as true knowledge grows. Jesus was a man who prayed much and taught His disciples how to pray, by direct teaching, teaching through parables and by demonstration. Paul exhorts us to pray much and prays for us in a number of places in his letters. He teaches on the vital role of prayer for every believer, for those who preach and teach, and in the realm of warfare and victory.

PETITIONING GOD

Petitioning God certainly has a scriptural base: *" . . . make your requests known to God"* (**Phil.4:6**). However, there is more to answered prayer than endless petitions.

David asked God for specific directions: *"will I go up against the Philistines?"* (**1 Sam. 23:2** & other places). God would tell Him what to do. God's instructions were rarely, if ever, the same.

When the blind man came for healing (**John 9:6**), Jesus firstly spat on the ground, made clay of the spittle and applied the clay to his eyes; then Jesus sent the man to wash in the pool of Siloam. There was a command that required the obedience of faith. The blind man obeyed and came back seeing (*verse 7*).

GOD'S ANSWERS ARE UNIQUE

The Scriptures are clear: the people of God need to pray incessantly (**1 Thess. 5:17**); but we also need to continually grow in knowledge of the Lord's will. I suggest we need to balance our petitions with asking the Lord for specific knowledge as to how He wants the answer to come. In **Ephesians 1:17** Paul prays, *"that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him"*. Paul goes on to pray for three things that we need to know (by revelation): *"that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe"* (**v 18-19a**).

There needs to be teaching on prayer so that people understand that God's miracles are always unique, rarely mass produced. They are frequently specific, and different for each person, sometimes requiring repentance or an act of obedience, some change on the individual's part or a specific response to God. God is not a computer; He is living and active, a personal God, who understands the human condition perfectly.

John 15:7 : *"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you."*

v.8 : Answered prayer glorifies God the Father, and is the means of our fruitfulness, and proof of our discipleship.

Let us press on to know the Lord and experience His mighty healing hand!

God is calling His Church to prayer

There is a calling from God to prayer at this time. People in churches all over our nation are hearing the call. Since 1994, and earlier in some parts of the worldwide church, God has been releasing gifts of intercession in a new way, in some cases quite dramatically. People have experienced great travelling in the Spirit, including

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groans and physical manifestations. There has been a release of a spiritual birthing process (*Romans 8:22-27*).

In 1994, I became involved in presenting prayer seminars. These have proven popular as the Lord has called together pray-ers, and those who desire to learn how to pray. God has been helping all to hear His voice more clearly. Sometimes people have recognised His voice for the first time in the atmosphere of a prayer seminar. Sometimes, a person has been able to pray aloud in a group for the first time. There are some who, for the first time, received feedback from God. For many of us, group prayer has become a joy. Prayer fellowships have grown up to augment prayer chains. Such groups provide the encouragement and fellowship of shared prayer.

This calling to prayer reflects what God is doing with many Christians around the world and is intensifying, year by year. Recently, an elder from a denominational church shared how God had raised up intercessors in their church during 1996. A pastor's wife in Yangon, Myanmar (Rangoon, Burma), shared in early 1997 that she is part of the AD2000 Prayer Movement in her country. At the beginning of 1997, I was conscious of God's calling to His church in our nation of Australia to become serious in prayer. I believe as the church responds to the Lord spending real time waiting on Him in prayer, both individually and in groups, He will reveal His will and begin to move in revival across the nation. Australia is yet to see a broad-based revival that impacts the life of the nation. Many believe such a revival is coming.

HIS ANSWERS

We have seen many answers to prayer in our church, our city, our state and our nation. We have seen God's hand in political changes; we have experienced rain coming to douse threatening bush fires, and a pleasant, cooler-than-normal summer to follow; we have a weekly pastors' prayer meeting and fellowship in our city (unity is a growing reality and a great encouragement); we have enjoyed a wonderful visitation of God's Holy Spirit in our church for over two years. These are just some of the highlights.

GETTING RIGHT WITH GOD

It is important for us to come together to seek the Lord. In this session, we will take time to approach God, step by step. We will follow the pattern revealed in Moses' tabernacle.

The first step is to come to the altar of burnt offering where the blood sacrifice was offered to cover and take away sin. The altar pointed to the cross. When the priests came to Moses' tabernacle to enter in to perform their priestly duties of ministry to the Lord, the first step was to come to the brazen altar and offer the necessary sacrifice to cover their sin. Now we come to the cross and confess our sin to God, asking for forgiveness through Jesus. He sacrificed Himself for us.

JUSTIFICATION

We are justified

Romans 4:25 — *"Jesus our Lord was delivered up because of our offences, and was raised because of our justification."*

Jesus Christ makes us right with God through His death and resurrection: *"We are justified by His blood"* (**Romans 5:9**).

Romans 5:1 *"Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Romans 10:9 *"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."*

What are you believing in your heart today? *"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realise that Jesus Christ is in you - unless you fail the test?" (2 Cor. 13:5).* We confess what we believe in our hearts concerning Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 3:1: *"consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus Christ" (NKJV).* He is a merciful and faithful high priest who made propitiation for our sins, who suffered, being tempted, and thus is able to come to our aid (**Hebrews 2:17-18**). It is through Jesus Christ only that we are made right with God. He makes us holy and acceptable to God (**Romans 12:1**).

Confession of Sin

1 John 1:8-9 : *"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sin and purify us from all unrighteousness."*

1 John 1:7 : *"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ purifies us from all sin."*

We can and should come before the Lord asking Him to purify our hearts. Sometimes it is necessary to confess our sins to another (**James 5:16**) before healing comes.

Receiving and giving forgiveness

Jesus is insistent in His teaching that God's forgiveness is conditional upon our forgiving others for their sins against us. We pray this in the Lord's prayer; Jesus highlighted this again immediately after giving the prayer in **Matthew 6:14-15**. Please turn there now.

Ask yourself - Do I need to forgive someone - maybe a church that has hurt me - maybe an institution such as a school or a government agency? If the Holy Spirit shows you a person or an institution that you hold unforgiveness towards, ask the Lord for His grace to be able to forgive. **Romans 5:6** tells us Christ died for the ungodly and **verse 8** says He died for us while we were yet sinners. The grace of forgiveness is available through the cross. It is an act of our will, out of a heart of faith in Jesus Christ, that we exercise forgiveness, but it is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that makes this possible.

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Sometimes forgiving those who have deeply hurt us (abuse of all forms, assault, threats etc) seems impossible. We need the Lord's help. When Jesus was dying on the cross, having suffered so terribly at the hands of godless men, He asked His Father to forgive them (**Luke 23:34**). If forgiveness is too hard for you but you want to forgive, so you can be forgiven and set free yourself, ask Jesus to forgive that person: "Father, forgive, and bring him/her to repentance, in Jesus' name."

SANCTIFICATION

We are sanctified:

The second step for the priest was to bathe in the brazen laver. This can be interpreted as being washed in the water of His word (**Ephesians 5:26 and John 15:3**) and that is what we are doing when we confess the word of God, believing it in our hearts.

The word of God sanctifies us (**John 17:17**), that is, we are set apart for God and His purpose for our lives. The word of God governs our behaviour.

We are set apart to God through faith in Jesus Christ (**Acts 26:18, 1 Cor. 1:2**) and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our lives (**Romans 15:16**).

We offer our whole body as a living sacrifice to God (**Romans 12:1**). Such an offering is "*holy and acceptable to Him*" and it is "*our reasonable service and (of) spiritual worship*".

The Priestly Garments

After the priest had bathed in the brazen laver, he put on the priestly garments of linen. The linen garments speak of righteousness; we are made righteous through faith in the vicarious death of Jesus Christ on the cross. We are "*to put on the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 13:14), and to make no provision for the flesh*".

The priest was now sanctified, set apart for the service of God in the holy place. He was clothed in the priestly garments. These garments were holy and the priest had been made holy through blood sacrifice (**Hebrews 13:12**) and washing (**John 15:3**).

What ministry did the priest perform once he was justified and sanctified? He entered the Holy Place to trim the wicks of the seven golden lamp-stands, checking that there was sufficient oil to enable the light to shine. He was to replace the bread on the table of show-bread each day. He was to offer incense at the altar of incense, before the ark of the covenant, which was beyond the veil in the holiest of holies.

How do we receive this priestly clothing?

We are to be "*clothed with power from on high*" (**Luke 24: 49b**). We need the gift and power of the Holy Spirit in our lives to be fully sanctified, to be clothed and able to enter His presence.

GLORIFICATION

Romans 8:29-30: "*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*" God intends to fully sanctify the believers (**1 Thess. 5:23**) so that He may glorify them, that is, reveal His glory through them (**John 17:22**). This is God's express purpose. He cannot reveal His glory through sinners but through saints, the sanctified ones.

It is God's intention to cover His people with His Glory (**Isaiah 4:2-6**). In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were "*naked and not ashamed*" (**Genesis 2:25**); yet later they were afraid because they were "*naked*" (**Genesis 3:7-11**). What had changed? Sin had entered in through their disobedience to the clear command of the word of God. They had lost the covering of God's glory; they could no longer walk open-faced before the Lord; they were unholy, needing to be justified and sanctified. Then God would be able to cover them again with His glory. In reality this did not, and could not, happen until Jesus came and shed His blood for our justification and sanctified us. **Galatians 3:27** says, "*for as many of you as were baptised into Christ, have*

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*put on (clothed yourselves with) Christ". **Romans 13:14:** "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh." There is a covering for the believer in Christ. It is a covering of glory (**Isaiah 4:5**).*

2 Cor. 3:18: *"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory unto glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."* This verse is the New Testament fulfilment of the priestly ministry at the altar of incense. Previously the altar of incense was outside the veil and the glory was inside the veil in the holiest of holies. Now we are able to approach God with an open face (unveiled, nothing hidden, no shame or guilt lurking inside). As we pray and worship in spirit and truth, we are changed, touched by His glory and transformed into His likeness. Hallelujah!

WORKSHOP FOR SESSION ONE

Sometimes there are things deep inside of us that are in darkness. We are able to invite Jesus to come into every room of our lives. This is called inner healing. God desires that we come into the light of His love and grace fully, experiencing healing from every past hurt and failure, coming into wholeness in Christ.

This workshop will allow participants to experience a method of group prayer leading into repentance and forgiveness – both as an opportunity to experience God's inner healing for themselves, and for them to use at other times with other people.

- (a) In Groups of two or three, answer the question: do you agree that frequent confession of your sins will bring you closer to God? _____
Why? _____

- (b) Ask Jesus now if there are any sins you need to bring before Him. You may wish to note them on a separate piece of paper.
- (c) Share with your partner/s (if comfortable) the sins you are confessing (**James 5:16**). If you are struggling with the area of forgiveness (of another or even yourself), you may like to ask others to pray for God's grace for you to forgive.
- (d) Pray with and for each other, laying on hands and ministering His love and forgiveness.

JESUS CHRIST – THE FOCUS OF PRAYER

Listening for His agenda, not ours!

THE FOCUS OF PRAYER

In August 1996, a four day prayer retreat was held for pastors and ministers. Thirty-five pastors from Toowoomba met together for four days of prayer and praise, with two facilitators, a pastor from Melbourne and a pastor from the prayer summit movement in the U.S.A. Eighteen churches from nine denominations plus three student and youth ministries were represented. The retreat consisted of prayer and praise meetings and interaction in fellowship.

The retreat flowed very well due to two discernible factors:

- i. a number of folk from the churches in Toowoomba had been praying around the clock for the summit;
- ii. each prayer meeting began with a fresh focus on the Lord Jesus Christ.

No one had any trouble focussing on Jesus, offering Him praise and thanks and then, as we were led, praying in more specific areas. Plenty of time was given to allow the pastors present to come to the Lord in repentance and confession. Praise and thanksgiving flowed freely to the Lord. The pastors were glad to be together in the Lord's presence. Much good fruit has flowed into the life of the Church in Toowoomba as a result. Since that retreat, attendance at the weekly Friday morning pastors' prayer meeting has regularly been between 20 and 30 pastors.

SOME KEYS FOR EFFECTIVE GROUP PRAYER

Facilitator

Have a coordinator or a facilitator to give the necessary leadership. The style of leadership is that of a true servant whose heart is for the other members of the prayer group, but also one who has a clear vision for prayer and its role in serving the Lord.

Praise

Always begin the prayer time with an exhortation to focus on Jesus and bring praise and thanks to God through our Lord.

This time may include suitable choruses, songs or hymns. This is best entered into spontaneously, with any group member free to initiate a song. Beware that sometimes people tend to get carried away singing their favourite songs and not necessarily catching the wind of the Spirit.

Confession of sin and repentance

This time of focussing may include confession and repentance. Scriptural guides such as *Romans 12:1-2* are excellent helps to people wanting to come into the presence of God.

What is **Romans 12:1-2** saying?

How could you use this in your prayer meetings?

Waiting on the Lord

The second phase of the prayer meeting is to ask the Lord what He wants you to pray about. Encourage participants to listen to the Holy Spirit and share together the thoughts and issues that come to mind. Generally a clear pattern will emerge in this dialogue time.

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With the help of the leader a pattern will be agreed upon and a starting point decided in agreement.

In this time, share any prayer requests that have been brought to the meeting. They may already be written; it may be helpful to have them written. Agree that the prayer requests will be prayed through during the prayer time as the Holy Spirit leads and prompts.

This stage of the prayer meeting may include some dialogue but keep the sharing focussed and move into prayer as soon as possible.

Agreement

Begin to pray concerning an agreed upon issue or concern. It may be helpful to ask the person who shared the particular need to lead in prayer. Encourage others to pray in agreement as led. Encourage short, to the point prayers, so that others can easily pray confirming and supporting prayers. Sometimes longer prayers are Spirit led but avoid longer prayers that seek to cover a number of burdens or concerns. Each burden needs to be prayed through until the Holy Spirit's peace comes to all in the group; then it is time to move on to the next issue.

Spirit-led

How do you know it is time to move on?

Is it okay to stop and confer?

Generally the Lord will lead the prayer focus very naturally and participants will realise they have moved on and are at peace about that. Sometimes one prayer seems to complete the prayer for a particular issue and naturally merges into the next issue. It is a delight to be in prayer groups that begin to function in the Holy Spirit as participants experience the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Gifts

Be open to the ministry of Holy Spirit through gifts in the prayer time. Often the Lord will give direction or confirmation through gifts of seeing (pictures/visions) or hearing (words of wisdom/knowledge or prophecy) in the Spirit, or through Scripture.

Re-focus

What happens when the zeal for prayer seems to be missing or there does not appear to be a strong burden for any particular prayer focus? Always be willing to re-focus by stopping to see how others are feeling; be open to simply praising and worshipping God; maybe you have skipped a necessary time of repentance and confession of sin.

Prayer needs on the 6pm news

Tom White was teaching in a seminar in Toowoomba in 1996. He shared how the LORD had changed his response to watching the 6pm news. Instead of getting depressed by world and local news, the Lord showed him to begin to intercede even as he listened. For some time God has been challenging us to always bless in prayer, especially our political leaders, and to cease from cursing them through our negative words and attitudes. As we have learnt to bring the needs of our nation and state before God in prayer, praying for our leaders by name, we have witnessed dramatic answers to prayer in the political life of the nation and in other spheres.

Power of Prayer

Be open in your prayer groups to step out in faith and pray about the "big" issues as well as intrachurch issues, family needs and other church related issues. God is calling His church to pray the kingdom into the earth, to discern His will and pray it into the affairs of men.

Testimony/feedback

It is important for the leader to be a facilitator. Prayer meetings are called and attended for the purpose of prayer, not testimony or Bible teaching. However there will be answers to prayer and people will want to share and testify. This is faith-building for all present. Guard against conversations that lead the group off focus.

Something for discussion in pairs:

In a group prayer situation, when do you think it is best to offer personal prayer ministry? Why?

WORKSHOP FOR SESSION TWO

Break into groups of five to six. Identify one to three prayer needs and practice praying as outlined in this session.

PRAISE IN PRAYER

Goal: To teach on praise and lead in focussed praise; to practise waiting on the Holy Spirit, listening more, allowing Him to lead and release true spontaneity.

We are exhorted to enter His gates with thanksgiving, His courts with praise. God inhabits (dwells in) the praises of His people. God is enthroned in the praises of Israel (**KJV, NKJV, NASB, Psalm 22:3**). As we praise, the Holy Spirit releases us into God's presence. We become more aware of the Lord and His glory! Praise is a powerful way of experiencing the Lord and the glory of heaven! Praise opens the door to the King of kings!

Powers of darkness flee when we praise and worship God! Through entering into praise we are submitting to God and confessing His word. This overcomes the evil one (**James 4:7**). The praise of God is a vital part of prayer and has specific application to areas of spiritual warfare, overcoming oppression. Recently, I was part of a three-member team ministering to a person who was troubled by an evil spirit. The demon had been identified but was refusing to go. We had others praying in support but it was not until we asked the support team to enter into praise that the victory came. All of a sudden the demon's power was broken, the person was able to confess sin and forgive and the demon then quietly left. There is often an outworking of the word of testimony as we speak the word of God in praise to Him.

LOOKING AT PRAISE THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES

The praise of God features throughout the Bible, but by far the most references to God's praise are in the Psalms. Various Hebrew words are used that are translated "praise":

i. *halal*, a primitive root meaning: *to be boastful, to praise*; *halal* also means: *shine* and *to be insane*; translated 121 times in a form of the word, praise; 18 times in a form of the word, boast; 8 times as glory; and by 12 other English words, once each.

ii. *yadah*, (NAS.C., 1981: no. 3034), a primitive root, meaning: *to throw, cast*; also meaning, *confess, praise, give thanks, thank* (TWOT, 1981: no.847). In its use to express praise to God, it means: to acknowledge or confess God's character and works, but also refers to the confession of sin and is used to confess man's attributes as well. Translated 19 times as praise, but 70 times as a form of the word, thanksgiving; 16 times as a form of the word, confess; and in a few other ways once each. The word, *yadah*, is used predominantly to express one's public proclamation or declaration (confession) of God's attributes and His works (TWOT, 1981: p.364). Praise is a confession or declaration of who God is and what He does. Often translated as "thanks", this word includes thanksgiving as a way to praise.

iii. *tehillah*, (NAS.C., 1981: no. 8416, from 1984b [*halal*]), meaning: *praise, song of praise*; used 55 times in a form of the word, praise.

The Hebrew root, *halal*, which is the base of *tehillah*, "connotes being sincerely and deeply thankful for and/or satisfied in lauding a superior" (TWOT, 1981: p.217). Synonyms in the Hebrew are: *yadah* - to praise or give thanks; *ranan* - to sing or shout joyfully; *barak* - to bless or to praise; *gadal* - to magnify; *rum* - to exalt; *zamar* - to sing, play, praise.

WE ARE COMMANDED TO PRAISE¹

In the Psalms, the call to praise mostly comes as an imperative summons, e.g., **Psalm 100:1**: "*Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.*"

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Praise is a vital necessity in the life of God's people. God is to be recognized and His fullness affirmed and stated.

Praise is to be offered in an **attitude of delight and rejoicing** (*Phil. 4:4*). Belief and joy are inextricably intertwined (*Psalms 27:13*).

The call to praise is generally in the plural, showing us worship is especially **congregational**. Praise often involves **singing together and the use of musical instruments** (*Psalms 144:9b, 33:2, 71:22*).

Look up the following verses and write down the praise action:

<i>Psalms 105:2b</i>	_____	<i>Psalms 9:2</i>	_____	<i>Psalms 9:11</i>	_____
<i>Psalms 105:2a</i>	_____	(also <i>Psalms 5:11</i>)			
<i>Psalms 149:3</i>	_____	(also <i>Psalms 150:4, 2 Samuel 6:14</i>)			
<i>Psalms 63:4</i>	_____	(also <i>Psalms 141:2</i>)			
<i>Psalms 47:1</i>	_____	(also <i>Psalms 98:8, Job 27:23</i>)			
<i>Psalms 71:23</i>	_____	(also <i>Psalms 32:11</i>)			
<i>Psalms 96:1</i>	_____	(also <i>Psalms 40:3, 33:3, 98:1, 144:9a, Isaiah 42:10.</i>)			

The Scriptures emphasise the **decision** that the individual must make to praise God. *Habakkuk (3:17-18)* says, "Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation". *Psalms 103:1*: "Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!" We must make verbal expression - praise is mostly spoken out. To publicly exalt God's person and work is tantamount to an affirmation of life itself: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord" (*Psalms 150:6*).

God is the unique and sole object and the content of true praise. He is inseparably joined to praise. Human existence and praising the true God are closely related: ". . . and all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever" (*Psalms 145:21*). If people do not praise the Lord, He will raise up the stones to praise Him (*Luke 19:40*). The fullest richness of human life produces continual praise. One's only and continual boast (glorying) is to be in God. *Psalms 28:6-7* illustrates this: "Praise be to the Lord, for He has heard my cry for mercy. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks."

Does your heart leap for joy? What will you give thanks to the Lord for?

God's praise is to fill the earth. God declares He will not allow another to receive His due. God's praise is: proclaimed (*Psalms 29:1-11*); recounted (*Psalms 78*); and ever increasing (*Psalms 148 and 150*).

His praise is often closely tied to His historical acts of deliverance on behalf of His people (*Psalms 78 and Psalms 105*), but praise can also deliver us now (*Psalms 32:7*).

God is magnified by praise (*Psalms 69:30*). God the Lord or one of His names is the object of praise. All nations (*Psalms 45:17*) are to praise God; all kings (*Psalms 138:4*); and the heavens (*Psalms 89:5*) !

PRAISE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Hebrews 13:15: "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God that is, the fruit of our lips that give thanks to His name."

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- 1 Peter 2:5** : “You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ.”
- 1 Peter 1:8** : Peter speaks of our “greatly rejoicing with joy inexpressible and full of glory”.
- Luke 1:46** : Mary praised God: “My soul exalts (magnifies) the Lord and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour.”

Jesus was “anointed with the oil of joy” (**Hebrews 1:9**) and praised God (**Matthew 11:25-27**). Jesus constantly spoke of His Father and gave Him honour and glory, always acknowledging Him as the source of what He taught and the One who worked the miracles through Jesus.

Our lives are to glorify and praise God

As New Testament believers live out their faith, abounding in love, growing in real knowledge and discernment, having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, God receives glory and praise (**Phil. 1:9-11**). In **Ephesians (1:6)** God's choosing of us in Christ and predestinating us to adoption as sons is “to the praise of the glory of His grace”. Furthermore, He seals us with the Holy Spirit of promise as a pledge of our inheritance to receive God's full redemption, which “is to the praise of His glory” (**v.13-14**). The Father is glorified when we as disciples bear much fruit through prayer (**John 15:7-8**). Jesus asked His Father to put His glory on believers, the same glory that Jesus received from the Father (**John 17:22**).

Like Mary who responded in praise to God for the great things He had done for her (**Luke 1:46-55**), so we respond to God in praise for the wonderful things He has done and continues to do for us. Praise includes recounting the historical acts of salvation that God has done and the blessings that flow from His historical acts, as well as the things He is doing in our lives and all over the earth now.

What is your “story” of God’s Salvation?

PRAYERS AND SONGS OF PRAISE

Prayers and songs of praise are found throughout the Bible.

- Jacob praised God in **Genesis 48:15-16**, as he blessed Joseph's sons.
- Moses and the sons of Israel sang praise to God (**Exodus 15**), and Miriam and the women danced and played timbrels, as they celebrated God's deliverance from Egypt and the victory at the Red Sea.
- Hannah praised God in exultant prayer (**1 Samuel 2:1-10**). She had received her deepest desire from the Lord.
- David is remembered as the sweet Psalmist of Israel. In **2 Samuel 22**, he sang the praises of the Lord. Solomon publicly praised God in dedicating the temple in **1 Kings chapter 8**.
- Many of the Psalms reach great heights in praise. In the books of the Prophets, there are numerous passages speaking of God's glory and praise. The Epistles of Paul, Peter and Jude have many wonderful expressions of praise as the authors seek to reflect the wonder of His love and grace and glory.
- **Romans 16:25-27; Ephesians 3:20-21; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 Peter 1:3; Jude 24-25.**
- The book of **Revelation (ch.1:4-5)** reaches the greatest heights of all as John portrays praise and worship in heaven. Hallelujah!

CONCLUSION

From the study of praise in Scripture we can say that praise is a way of life. Praise is more than a tool we use to come into God's presence. It is an integral part of the expression of our relationship with Him. Let us be a praising people. Let us focus in prayer meetings through praise.

WORKSHOP FOR SESSION THREE

Spend time now in praising Jesus and the Father through the empowering of the Holy Spirit for your salvation and things that make your heart leap for joy.

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND PRAYER

Unfortunately, prayer for many has been more a discipline than a delight. Prayer meetings often have not been very popular. For many, prayer meetings have been uninspiring, lacking in power, lacking in direction and agreement, and lacking a testimony of answered prayer.

When Paul went to Ephesus and met some disciples there, he must have felt something vital was missing in their fellowship for he asked, *“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”* Paul quickly recognised a lack of His presence, possibly due to the obvious lack of an alive faith and the absence of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND JESUS

Matthew 3:16 : *“As soon as Jesus was baptised, He went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him.”*

Luke 4:1 : *“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit . . .”*

Luke 4:14 : *“Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit . . .”*

Acts 10:38 : *“how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with Him.”*

Jesus did not begin His ministry until He was filled with, or received the anointing of, the Holy Spirit. He was already *“born of the Spirit”* in that His conception was of the Holy Spirit (**Luke 1:35**).

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE BELIEVER

God promised through the prophet Joel that *“He would pour forth His Spirit on all people”* (**Joel 2:28**).

Jesus also promised the Holy Spirit would come in power. **Acts 1:8**: *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you . . .”* He said in **Acts 1:5**, *“you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit”*.

In the four Gospels, John referred to Jesus as the One who baptises the believer in the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33

THE BIRTHDAY OF THE CHURCH

Prior to the Holy Spirit coming on the day of Pentecost, the disciples had no innate power of their own. When Jesus was taken from them, they became afraid. Observe the difference that the power of the Holy Spirit made on the day of Pentecost:

Acts 2:4: *“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”*

In **verse 38**, Peter declares *“you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”*. **Acts 2:39**: *“For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself.”* The gift of the Holy Spirit was not just for them.

WHO CAN RECEIVE THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

“All whom the Lord our God calls!” (**Acts 2:39**)

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If we are born again of the Spirit of God, then we must have the Spirit within. “*No one can say, Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit*” (*1 Cor. 12:3*). Why is it that some genuine believers have said that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not for the today? If we have received the Holy Spirit as Jesus promised, has He changed from the person of God represented in the Bible? Jesus said we would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on us (*Acts 1:8*); He said miraculous signs would follow those who believe (*Mark 16:17-20*). When Peter and John went down to Samaria and laid their hands on the new believers, “*they were receiving the Holy Spirit*” (*Acts 8:14-17*). The newly baptised believers at Ephesus “*began speaking in tongues and prophesying*” (*Acts 19:1-7*) when Paul laid his hands on them and the Holy Spirit came on them.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE GIFTS OF HOLY SPIRIT?

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 lists nine gifts of the Spirit (word of wisdom; word of knowledge; prophecy; tongues; interpretation of tongues; faith; miracles; gifts of healings; discernment of spirits). Some of these gifts are very effective and powerful when given by the Holy Spirit in the prayer meeting. There are many other gifts of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, but these are specifically described in the context of meetings of the church and some of them have particular application in the prayer meeting.

The **word of wisdom** is best described as knowing God's way or His will for a particular situation; or, to be able to apply the word of God to the situation.

The **word of knowledge** is a particular insight or knowledge about the situation that the Spirit gives, that could not have been known naturally.

Prophecy is speaking forth God's word. It is, the expression of His will for a particular time or situation. Prophecy is to edify, exhort and console (*1 Cor. 14:3*). The **interpretation of tongues** is similar to prophecy.

Prophecy can include elements of the first two (word of wisdom, word of knowledge). People receive these gifts in word or thought form, or through a Scripture reference, that is, having the verse that fits and explains, or in the form of pictures or visions, which can be shared. Sometimes the words or pictures need interpretation just as a message in unknown tongues does.

The gift of **faith** is special or specific faith for an extra-special need that the Spirit desires to meet. A person exercising this gift manifests faith that does not give up until the power of God breaks through.

Miracles are literally works of power. Extraordinary things are accomplished by the believer in response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

There are **gifts of healings** (both words are plural in the Greek). God is not limited. All kinds of sicknesses and diseases can be healed.

Discernment of spirits is a necessary gift for effective prayer. In some instances the Spirit gives discernment of the evil spirit(s) that are to be rebuked in prayer.

HOW DO THE GIFTS OPERATE IN THE PRAYER MEETING?

The gifts bring confirmation, by providing a second or third witness to someone's prayer. Receiving the witness of the Spirit through a gift of wisdom, knowledge or prophecy, tongues and interpretation, or discernment of spirits, leads to prayers of agreement,

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encourages the faith of the prayer group members, and guarantees God has heard and answered in many instances.

WHO CAN OPERATE OR USE THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT?

As many as have “repented, been baptised in the name of Jesus Christ and have received the gift of the Holy Spirit” (*Acts 2:38-39*). In *1 Cor. 12:1-3*, Paul suggests that anyone who can say, “Jesus is Lord”, has received the Holy Spirit and therefore should not be ignorant of His gifts.

THE GIFTS BRING GLORY TO GOD.

For example, if there are gifts of prophecy and an unbeliever or an uninformed person is in the meeting, he will fall down and worship God; “*God is truly among you*” (*1 Cor. 14:24-25*). If a person is healed they will give glory to God. Recently we were ministering in a town at night and holding open prayer meetings in the day. On the third day a new group of people came to the prayer meeting saying, “we heard that the manifestations of God are among you”. God's glory was manifest and word spread.

CONCLUSION

We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, *Eph. 5:18-19*. This includes being filled with a growing knowledge of His word through psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. The Holy Spirit loves to release His gifts to build up the body of Christ. He loves to empower God's people to overcome the enemy and to witness with power to the lost. Prayer without the Holy Spirit's gifts and power is hard work and cannot be as effective as prayer that is inspired and empowered by God the Holy Spirit Himself.

WORKSHOP FOR SESSION 4

- (a) Spend time on your own listing what you think are some of the gifts the Holy Spirit has ministered through you.
- (b) Meditate in prayer, seeking God for His response. You may like to use your bible.
- (c) In groups of five to six, pray for the Holy Spirit's empowering through laying on of hands. (If there are words or visions, share them at this time.)

Note: The leader may like to discuss the importance of not requesting/sharing the answers from part (a) of the workshop regarding gifts before this prayer time, so that pray-ers are not influenced.

You may like to make a note of any words/visions given for you, for future reference/confirmation.

THE ARMOUR OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

The Scriptures in *Ephesians 6:10-20* are very important and need to be understood and applied. Paul talks about spiritual opposition to God's people that is complex, pervasive and a force to be reckoned with. He assumes an understanding of the spirit world that is alien to many modern people. He then instructs us in how to put on the whole armour of God so that we may be able to defend ourselves spiritually and go on the offensive to overcome and remove the opposition.

BE STRONG IN THE LORD

Eph. 6:10 : “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.”
“in the strength of His might” (NAS).

Some Scriptures that confirm this exhortation to be strong in the Lord

Joshua 1:7 : be strong and very courageous;

Joshua 1:9 : be strong and of good courage;

Psalms 27:14 : wait for the Lord, let your heart take courage;

Eph. 3:16 : be strengthened with power through the Spirit in the inner man;

2 Tim. 2:1 : be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus;

1 Cor. 16:13 : be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men.

This “*strength of His might*” is ‘the ability God has placed in you by the anointing’

It is God's armour

Eph. 6:11 : “Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.”

It is God's armour and parts of the armour are referred to in various scriptures. Paul calls it the “*armour of light*” (*Romans 13:12*) and says we are to put it on as children of light. We have been delivered from darkness (*Col. 1:13*).

Isaiah 59:17a : “He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head.”

Rev. 1:16 : “and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword.” (see *Rev. 2:12*)

Rev. 2:16 : “I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.”

Rev. 19:15 : With the sword, Jesus “smites the nations”.

Isaiah 11:5 : “Righteousness will be the belt around His loins, and faithfulness the belt around His waist.”

Isaiah 52:7 : “How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces news of happiness (peace), who announces salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’”

Gen. 15:1 : God Himself is our shield.

Psalms 7:10-13 : “My shield is God Most High, who saves the upright in heart.”

Psalms 7:12b : “He will sharpen His sword; He will bend and string His bow.”

Stand Against the Devils Schemes

We are to stand against the devil's schemes (wiles). (*schemes*: means *craft* or *deceit*), The same word is used in *Ephesians 4:14* as ‘deceitful scheming’.

Who is the enemy?

Ephesians 6:12 : “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers [principalities], against the authorities [or powers], against the powers [the world forces of

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this darkness] *of this dark world and against the spiritual forces* [hosts of wickedness] *in the heavenly realms* [high places].”

This verse gives us the reason WHY we need the armour of God. Many Christians have chosen to ignore the reality of evil forces that are actively opposing the church, deceiving the world and causing much hurt to Christians and non-Christians. Some have even gone so far as to teach Satan is not a real being. As a result, we have lacked for teaching on the armour of God. Our struggle is not with people or with human organisations; as Christians, it is not people who are our enemies. We are exhorted to love our enemies. Our battle is against the spiritual enemies of **verse 12**. Our adversary is the devil and he is aggressive in his pursuit of God’s people (**1 Peter 5:8**).

The evil day

Eph. 6:13: “*Therefore put on [take up] the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground [resist, withstand], and after you have done everything, to stand.*”

Maybe you have already had some real battles! You may know what it is like when everything seems to go wrong; when your world falls apart unexpectedly. How did you stand? Was your faith strong? Were you in a place of protection? How do you think you will respond next time you face a ‘battle’?

THE BELT OF TRUTH

Eph. 6:14: “*Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist [having girded your loins].*”

Luke 12:35: “*Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning*” (NKJV).

Literally, “*let your loins be girded*” (NASB margin).

“*Be dressed ready for service*” (NIV).

1 Peter 1:13: “*Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.*”

“*Gird the loins of your mind for action*” (NASB margin) is the literal text here.

Jesus Christ is the truth and His word is truth. God desires truth in the inward parts (**Psalms 51:6**). Let your yes! be yes! and your no! be no!

The belt of truth covers our waist and loins. This includes the very core of our being (our innermost parts) (**John 7:38**). There is a covering for the moral area of our lives as we offer every part of our body to God.

Putting on the belt of truth is committing ourselves to the Lord and the truth of His word. A person wearing the belt of truth will not consciously speak or act in contradiction to the expressed will of God, as declared in Scripture. Truth also has to be in our minds: we are to be convinced of the truth of God's word.

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Eph. 6:14b : “*with the breastplate of righteousness in place*”.

1 Cor. 1:30 : Jesus Christ has become for us righteousness from God.

2 Cor. 5:21 : God made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

This righteousness comes from God on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ (**Phil. 3:9**). His atoning death through the shedding of His blood takes away our sin. A breastplate covers

the chest and thus the heart. Jesus said it is out of the heart that all kinds of sin come. We come to God confessing our sin and receiving His cleansing from all unrighteousness. The breastplate guards our heart then, keeping us close to God, His Holy Spirit dwelling within.

THE SHOES OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

Eph. 6:15: *“and with your feet fitted with the readiness [the preparation] that comes from the gospel of peace.”*

How can peace be a part of spiritual armour?

Isaiah 52:7 speaks of the loveliness of the feet of Him who brings the gospel. Paul uses this verse in **Romans 10** to refer to preachers of the gospel. The gospel is a message of peace; *“peace on earth to those who do His will”*. Faith in Jesus Christ brings peace with God (**Romans 5:1**). Notice that often when someone was healed by Jesus, He would say, *“Go in peace; your faith has made you well”*, or some similar saying.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace: He said, *“My peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you”* (**John 14:27**). **James (3:17)** says that God's wisdom is peace-loving and that the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace (**NAS 3:18**). *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God”* (**Matthew 5:9**).

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

Eph. 6:16 : *“In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows [darts, missiles] of the evil one.”*

1 Thess. 5:8 : *“. . . having put on the breastplate of faith and love and the hope of salvation as a helmet.”*

Genesis 15:1 : God is our shield.

Hebrews 11:1 : *“Now faith is the substance [assurance] of things hoped for, the evidence [conviction] of things not seen” (KJV).*

Where do we get this faith from? What does **Romans 10:17** say?

Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word (rhema) of Christ. God speaks to us. When we hear and obey, faith is being worked out. It is the hearing of His word that brings the assurance and substance of faith.

How important is confession to believing faith?

Faith must be, believing from the heart. Paul teaches in **Romans 10:8**, *“the word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, that is the word of faith . . .”*

v.9: *“that if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord’, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”*

v.10: *“For it is with the heart that you believe and are justified [resulting in righteousness].”*

Doubts (the darts of the enemy) may come into your mind but if faith has entered into your heart, using faith as a shield, you are able to confess what you believe in your heart and be built up in your believing. This process of confessing one's basic faith in Jesus Christ from the heart strengthens one's mind as well. Praise is a powerful way of expressing what we believe. Effectively, we are lifting up the shield of faith through praise. The darts of the enemy also refer to the negative things that pierce our hearts, bringing hurt. Once we are aware this has happened, the exercise of faith is the way to reach out to Jesus and ask for the healing we need.

THE HELMET OF SALVATION

Eph. 6:17 *“Take the helmet of salvation . . .”*

It is the hope of salvation that is our helmet (**1 Thess. 5:8**). The writer to the **Hebrews (6:11)** speaks of the full assurance of hope until the end. This hope (**v.19**) we have, as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast, and one which enters within the veil. This hope comes to us through the word also and true hope engenders faith (**Romans 4:18**).

A helmet fits over the head and thus is meant to cover our minds and our will. We have received the spirit of a renewed mind (**Eph. 4:23**) and through the Spirit of God, we are able to know the things freely given to us by God (**1 Cor. 2:12**). We are to fix our minds on things above, where Christ is seated (**Col. 3:1-3**).

The end result of our submission to God and our warfare against the enemy is *“every thought taken captive to the obedience of Christ”* (**2 Cor. 10:5**). Joshua was told to *“meditate on the word day and night”*, then he would have success (**Joshua 1:8**). The Psalmist tells us of the blessings for the man who delights in the law of the Lord and meditates in it day and night (**Psalms 1**). Isaiah promises perfect peace to the one whose mind is steadfast, whose trust is in the Lord (**Isaiah 26:3**). Take the helmet of salvation: think about who Jesus is and what He has done.

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

Eph. 6:17b: *“. . . and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”*

The sword here is the rhema word of God and it was the rhema word of God that Jesus used in **Matthew 4** to overcome the temptations of Satan. However the logos word is also likened to a sharp two-edged sword (**Hebrews 4:12**) and knowing and using the logos is very powerful as well.

Remember the sword of the Spirit of God is the word of God, both the logos and the rhema word. What is God's word for me in this situation? What is God's word for my church? The sword is a weapon with which we not only defend ourselves but can wage war with as well. We are able to go forward in Christ as we receive (hear) His word and obey it.

PRAYER

Verses **18-20 (Ephesians)** stress the foundational place of prayer in the effective use of the armour. Often the importance of prayer in the whole armour of God has not been shared in teaching on this subject.

For all the saints (**v.18**)

We are to pray in the Spirit. It is the Spirit's sword which He gives to us to wield and it is the Spirit's prayers that will bring the breakthrough. Praying in the Spirit is suitable on all occasions, for all kinds of prayers and requests. We are to pray for all the saints, keeping alert and watchful with strong purpose and perseverance. We are to petition God for the saints by name and intercede for them.

Who are some of the saints you regularly pray for?

Do you have a prayer partner, or someone who regularly prays for you? If not, why not pray now, asking God to give you such a partner?

For the preaching of the word (**v.19-20**)

Power of Prayer

Paul asks for very specific prayer for the preaching ministry. He asks for utterance (what to say) and for boldness or fearlessness. God is restoring the preaching and teaching ministry of the word to the church. When the word is spoken with power and authority the church is built up and the strongholds of the enemy are destroyed. Paul is in prison when he writes this letter. He is not expecting his chains to restrict his preaching as long as the prayer support is strong.

Do you have a ministry? We are all “witnesses”. Paul asked for “utterance” and “boldness”. What would you ask of God for your ministry? Utterance? Boldness? Opportunity? Wisdom? Discernment? Faith? Strength? Protection?

CONCLUSION

This study of the armour of God leads into our next study on the weapons of our warfare. There are links and a merging between the two aspects of the Christian walk.

I pray that the eyes of our understanding be opened by the Holy Spirit as we prayerfully take the armour and learn to walk in it, fully covered in Christ.

WORKSHOP FOR SESSION 5

Working in small groups, prayerfully put on the whole armour of God. Begin with dialogue first, making notes on how to pray and apply each piece of armour. Each member of the small group is encouraged to then lead in prayer, putting on one particular piece of armour.

The Belt of Truth

The Breastplate of Righteousness

The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace

The Shield of Faith

The Helmet of Salvation

The Sword of the Spirit

THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE

In instructing us concerning spiritual warfare, Paul (**2 Cor. 10:4**) tells us that our weapons are not fleshly (carnal, or of this world) but divinely powerful (mighty before God), to demolish strongholds. What are these weapons that God has given to the church?

Revelation 12 (7-10) tells of war in the heavenlies between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels. Satan was defeated in the battle and cast down to the earth. He is the accuser of the brethren, who accuses them day and night. *“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their own lives so much as to shrink from death” (v.11)*. Three powerful weapons that overcome Satan and his angels are listed here:

- the blood of the Lamb;
- the word of their testimony;
- loving not their own lives so much as to shrink from death.

THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB

The sacrificial death of Jesus Christ is central to New Testament teaching. Jesus made the New Covenant in His blood: *“This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28)*. *“Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Hebrews 9:22b)*. Jesus *“loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve His God and Father - to Him be glory and power for ever and ever!” (Rev. 1:5b-6)*

How is the blood of the Lamb a weapon that the saints can use to overcome Satan and his accusations?

The key to understanding this is – **that our sins are forgiven!** Jesus died in our place. *“If we confess our sins He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and to purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9)*. Once our sin is forgiven and we are cleansed by the blood of Christ, no stain or guilt of sin remains. *“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18)*. **Therefore Satan has no grounds to accuse us.** *“We are washed, we are sanctified, we are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11)*. We may have been involved in serious sin in the past but God has rescued us; He has saved us and delivered us. We have victory over sin; therefore we have victory over death which is the due penalty for sin; and we have victory over Satan and the demons as they have no grounds to accuse us or oppress us when we are cleansed and covered by the blood of the Lamb. **Use this vital provision that God has made;** acknowledge the power of the blood of Jesus to forgive, cleanse and protect. In **Exodus 12** the blood on the doorposts protected the homes from the angel of death.

THE WORD OF THEIR (OUR) TESTIMONY

Testimony comes from the same Greek word as witness. The root word is *matur*, from which we derive the English word ‘martyr’, which means, one who bears witness by death. Testimony is more than speaking the truths of the gospel; it is bearing witness to the power of the truths. This sense is similar to Paul's statement, *“the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power (1 Cor. 4:20)*. Testimony has to do with the speaker's personal experience (Vine, p.1143). John says we proclaim that which we have heard and seen and touched (**1 John 1:1-3**); in other words what we share is real and the reality of it will impact the hearers.

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The story of Paul's conversion is recorded in *Acts 9*. In *Acts 22*, Paul testifies on the steps of the barracks, sharing his experience of how he came to know Jesus as the Messiah and Lord. Again in *Acts 26*, Paul testifies publicly before Agrippa, sharing the story of his conversion and commission. In other places in the Scripture, Paul is testifying, not so much just his own story but relating how God has worked through him and others. He regularly preached and taught the word in terms of testimony: how the power of God works, relating an understanding of Scripture through what was happening.

Jesus spoke of his testimony being witnessed to by the Father (*John 5:31-40*). Jesus promised to bear witness to His testimony in us by confirming signs and wonders (*John 14:12-14 and Mark 16:17-20*). The word of our testimony is the sharing of the word in our lives from real experience. Testimony is irrefutable. As I share a real experience that tells of the Word and Spirit working in my life, this is very powerful. There is no room for Satan and his accusations in this. I know I have met Jesus! I know the Holy Spirit has empowered me! I know I have authority over Satan! I do not use the name of Jesus whom Paul knows, I use the name of Jesus whom I know (*Acts 19:13-16*).

Recently I was sharing with a young person who had been drawn to church. He was open and soft towards God, but he did not have a testimony. He did not know the Lord but he was searching. He asked me, "How do people know the power of God in themselves? Can I really know the Lord? Will that make me different from other people?" and other such questions. This young man prayed with me, confessing the Lord and asking for the power of the Holy Spirit. I am sure he will have a word of testimony soon.

What is your word of testimony?

Point to ponder: How would you answer the young man's questions?

THEY DID NOT LOVE THEIR LIVES TO THE DEATH (NKJV)

Satan's great power over the human race since the fall has been the fear of death. Jesus said not to fear them who can hurt the body but fear Him who can cast the soul into eternal damnation (*Matthew 10:28*). By His death Jesus destroyed him who held the power of death - that is, the devil - and freed those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (*Hebrews 2:14-15*).

When we come to Jesus and commit our lives to Him through His mercy and grace, we are dying to the old man of sin and coming alive to God in righteousness. Jesus redeems us with the ultimate price of His own shed blood. We are no longer our own but God's. It is through faith, by grace that we are saved (*Eph. 2:8*). As we understand who Jesus really is and His undisputed claim to our lives, and we become His whole-hearted disciples, we are a threat to the devil. The very yielding of ourselves to God overcomes the evil one (*James 4:7*). Now our lives are hidden in Christ. We are His possession. We are translated out of darkness into the glorious light of God. We are now the children of light. The darkness cannot comprehend or overcome the light.

In *Acts 1:8*, Jesus said we would receive power when the Holy Spirit came on us and we would be His witnesses. We would have God's power in our lives to testify! God would become real within us. Being a witness is only possible through the power of God in our lives: that is the word of our testimony.

OTHER WEAPONS

Faith

1 John 5:4-5: *“Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”*

Jesus taught on the power of faith to overcome:

Mark 11:22-24 : *“Have faith in God. I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”*

Prayer of Agreement

This follows on from faith in that shared faith is even more powerful than individual faith:

Matthew 18:19-20: *“Again I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it shall be done for you by My Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in My name, there I am with you.”*

Binding and Loosing

Prayers of agreement are set in the context of binding and loosing:

Matthew 18:18: *“I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound [or will have been bound] in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven.”*

In **Matthew 16 (16-20)** binding and loosing are given as keys to the kingdom of heaven, and the context is one of warfare: *“the gates of hell [Hades] will not overcome”* the church which is built on revelation faith in Jesus Christ.

The Name of the Lord

In the name of Jesus we have the victory! The Lord said to pray in His name. The Lord said He would be in our midst when we pray in agreement. It is the prayer of faith (believing in His name) that we pray. God has given to Jesus *“the name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (**Phil. 2:9-11**). See also **Eph. 1:19b-23**.

CONCLUSION

Through knowing and using the weapons God has given to us:

- we overcome Satan (**Rev. 12:11**) and stand against the devil's schemes (**Eph. 6:11**);
- we struggle effectively against the rulers and authorities and powers of evil in the heavenly (spirit) realm (**Eph. 6:12**);
- we demolish strongholds and arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God (**2 Cor. 6:4-5**);
- we are able to come into the obedience of faith ourselves and lead the nations into that obedience (**2 Cor. 10:5b and Romans 15:18**).

INTERCESSION

INTERCESSION – THE ACT OF GOING BETWEEN

The word, intercession, means “the act of going between”. One who intercedes is like a mediator. In creation God had put man - Adam - on earth to represent Himself. Adam was given a commission to rule over “*all the earth*” (*Genesis 1:26,28*). He was like a go-between for God and His creation. Man sinned and it became necessary for man to be reconciled to God.

Throughout the Old Testament, the Scripture records godly, righteous men interceding or mediating on behalf of sinful or needy mankind and God.

Abram pleaded for the deliverance of the righteous men of Sodom (*Genesis 18:23-36*). He was persistent in pleading because he knew God’s character – with the result that God delivered Lot and his family from destruction.

Moses pleaded with God for forgiveness for the children of Israel “*so the LORD relented from the harm He said He would do to His people*” (*Exodus 32:14*) and made a covenant with them (*Exodus 32:9-15*).

Ezekiel 22:30: “*I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none.*” God was looking for one who would mediate between Himself and man - one who would bring about this reconciliation between God and man.

Isaiah 59:16: “. . .so His own arm worked salvation for Him.” Jesus became that One.

JESUS AS INTERCESSOR

During His life on earth, Jesus revealed (represented) God to man. Then through His death and resurrection He completed this work as He identified with man. He represented man to God. The completed work of Jesus at Calvary was to reconcile us to God.

Where is Jesus now and what is He doing?

In *Romans 8:34*, Paul writes, “*Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us*”. Because He had lived as man, He had stood in our place and identified with us and therefore is now able to represent us with understanding before God. He stands before God to present us to God as one of His own - righteous in the sight of God. This is His role as **reconciler**.

Hebrews 7:24-25: “. . . because Jesus lives forever, He has a permanent priesthood. Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.” *Hebrews 9:24* says that He is there “*now to appear for us in God’s presence*”.

Our acceptance depends upon this intercession of Jesus and because He is now standing before the Father we are able to come to God in prayer “asking in His name”. Because He appears before God as Priest, we have free access to God through Him. We come boldly to the Father through Jesus, His Son and our Great High Priest. **He mediates between God and man.**

1 Timothy 2:5: “*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*”

In his book “Intercessory Prayer”, Dutch Sheets gives the following definition: “*Intercessory prayer is an extension of the ministry of Jesus through His Body, the Church,*

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whereby we mediate between God and humanity for the purpose of reconciling the world to Him, or between Satan and humanity for the purpose of enforcing the victory of Calvary."

In intercessory prayer, we have the privilege of calling God's blessings into being in another person's life. We have the privilege of asking God to intervene in specific circumstances when we know that what we are asking is in agreement with His will. We are called to mediate: plead for mercy and justice for others; to pray for deliverance and freedom for others; to forbid the interference of Satan in the lives of others.

When we feel a burden for another person, we share in the suffering of that person. We remember the work Jesus finished on the cross and the victory He won over evil and His victorious resurrection as we seek Him to guide us in prayer. We come in intercession to the One we know, to the One *"who is even at the right hand of God who also makes intercession for us"* (**Romans 8:34**).

Jesus has sent us into the world as the Father sent Him into the world (**John 17:18, and John 20:21**). Thus we too are called to this ministry of intercession - to *"build up the wall and stand in the gap"* on behalf of others, to present others to the Father, and to enforce the victory that Jesus won at Calvary.

As we focus on Him we receive His promise: *"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."* (**John 15:7**)

ABIDING IN CHRIST JESUS - PRAYING IN AGREEMENT

We need to know the words of Jesus to know the Father's will, and to pray in agreement with His will. In **John 14:10 b** Jesus said, *"The words I say to you are not just My own. Rather, it is the Father living in Me, who is doing the work";* and in **John 8:28** He says, *"I do nothing on My own but speak just what the Father has taught Me"*.

We need to be in a position where we hear and see what God is wanting to do in the life of the person for whom we are interceding and in the situation that we are praying for. We identify with Jesus and His will. This is what Jesus did as He lived among us. Though He was God (thus was identified with God), He also identified with Man. When we pick up a burden for someone, we identify or share in that person's suffering. (We identify with man).

Then as we identify with Jesus through the finished work He did at Calvary, we are able to intercede in prayer according to His will and purposes. We pray in agreement with His will (**Matthew 18-19**).

As we approach God through Jesus in this way, we receive the promise that Jesus gave us in **John 16:23**, *"My Father will give you whatever you ask in My Name"*.

We need to be abiding (remaining, continuing, dwelling) in Christ Jesus and asking God to release the gifts of words of prophecy, wisdom, knowledge and discernment, and to give visions and pictures - **TO BE RECEIVING THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT FROM GOD SO THAT WE KNOW GOD'S WILL.**

Jesus as intercessor during His life on earth

Hebrews 5:7 tells us: *"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the One who could save Him from death, and was heard because of His reverent submission"* (NIV); *"because of His Godly fear"* (NKJV). He set us an example of much time spent in prayer - time where He stayed in relationship (abided) with God and where He learned His Father's will.

Power of Prayer

Jesus demonstrates how we are to pray as we see Him interceding for:

- **weak believers:** *“I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 23:32).*
- **His enemies:** *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” v.34*
- **the sending of the Holy Spirit:** *“And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor and He will be with you forever” (John 14:16).*
- **for the church** (His disciples, both then and in the future): **John 17:**
 - v.9: *“I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those You have given Me, for they are Yours.”*
 - v.11: *“... protect them by the power of Your name - the name You gave Me - so that they may be one as We are one.”*
 - v.15: *“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one.”*
 - v.17: *“Sanctify them by the truth.”*

What does Jesus say in **Matthew 9:37-38**?

He gives instructions for us **to ask God for Christian workers**. In doing this He has commissioned the church to mediate through prayer.

In the midst of His own agony we see Him praying **for the salvation of others**. *“And being in great anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground” (Luke 22:42-44).* This agony is also recorded in **Mark 14:34** and in **Matthew 26:38**. In both these passages Jesus asks His disciples to *“stay here and keep watch with me”*. Again there is an example for us to heed – Jesus, in intercession, looked for the support of others.

In the raising of Lazarus from the dead (**John 11:1-44**), Jesus interceded with groans and tears: **Verse 33:** *“He groaned in the Spirit and was troubled.”*

Verse 35: *“Jesus wept.”*

Verse 38: *“Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself ...”*

Verse 41: *“Father, I thank You that You have heard Me”* What did the Father hear?

Verse 43: *“He cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’”*

Jesus taught about prayer

Through the parable of the widow coming before the hard-hearted judge (**Luke 18:1-8**), and the parable of the friend who visited at midnight (**Luke 11:1-10**), Jesus taught us to **be persistent** in prayer. *“Then Jesus told His disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up” (Luke 18:1).*

He also taught us to **expect God to answer** our prayers when He said, *“the Father will give you whatever you ask in prayer” (John 15:16).* This is conditional upon our remaining in Christ Jesus.

The apostle, Paul, wrote to Timothy emphasizing the importance of expectation and persistence in prayer. In **1 Timothy 2:1** Paul says, *“Pray much for others, plead for God’s mercy upon them, and give thanks for all He is going to do for them” (Living Bible).*

To expect something from God requires trust in God and in His faithfulness to keep His promises. Even before He answers we are able to give Him thanks in anticipation. In **Philippians 4:6**, Paul exhorts the believers, *“... in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God”*.

Ask, expect, and look for answers.

Power of Prayer

This expectation comes from knowing the nature of the God to whom we are praying. We know that He is a God who keeps His promises and is a merciful and compassionate God who loves justice.

Look at these petitions of the apostle, Paul, in ***Ephesians 6:18-20***

v.18 for the saints

v.19-20 for himself as a **missionary preacher**

Look up further prayers of intercession **for the saints** in: ***Phil.1:9-10, Eph.3:16-19*** and a prayer of intercession **for all people** in ***1 Tim. 2:1-4***.

We are sure we can pray these prayers for they express the will of God as He has said in Scripture. As the church, the Body of Christ, we are to be persistent in these prayers and to give thanks in anticipation of God fulfilling His promises.

Interceding in the Spirit

In ***John 17:21***, Jesus prayed for us that we might be one with the Father as He and the Father are one. As we surrender to God and die to self, the Holy Spirit is able to move freely in our lives. We give Him the right to manifest in our bodies - to express Himself as He chooses.

Paul writes in ***Romans 8:26-27***: *“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.”* Paul is saying that the Spirit prays through our spirit without interference from our own ego. These prayers in the Spirit are the pure will of God, because they are the Spirit’s intercession, not our own. What a blessing! God is covering our inadequacy in prayer.

MANIFESTATIONS

Paul writes that *“To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good”* (***1 Corinthians 12:7***).

Manifestations are the signs of the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives and these gifts are listed in ***1 Corinthians 12:8-9***. The physical manifestations that we will be looking at in this study are the out-working of the burden which the Lord gives. They have nothing to do with natural emotions, and often occur without warning. They are the signs of the Spirit interceding on our behalf. Our body is aligning itself with the Spirit and our posture is often affected. Manifestations can be noisy (e.g. groaning and weeping).

Travail

One of the manifestations we see can be likened to the preparation a woman goes through in the hours before a baby arrives:

- the pain begins without warning;
- the mother cries out spontaneously;
- the baby does not come before time - the process cannot be hastened;
- others are there to support the mother during the birth;
- there is joy when the baby is born.

Scripture refers to this as **travail** and it has to do with the bringing to birth of something in the spiritual realm.

We saw Jesus weeping, His sweat falling like great drops of blood, groaning in His Spirit as He travailed in the Garden of Gethsemane. He asked His disciples to stay with Him to

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comfort Him through His ordeal. He spoke of the joy that was before Him (even though the disciples did not understand and did not experience that joy for some time).

The Lord refers to this intercession of bringing something to birth in **Jeremiah 4:31**: *“I hear a cry as of a woman in labour, a groan as of one bearing her first child - the cry of the daughter of Zion gasping for breath, stretching out her hands.”*

Isaiah 26:17 says *“As a woman with child and about to give birth writhes and cries out in her pain, so were we in Your presence, O Lord”*.

In **1 Kings 18:42** we see Elijah on Mt.Carmel taking the position of a woman about to give birth as he waits for God to fulfill His promise.

The apostle, Paul, speaks of being *“in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you”* (**Galatians 4:19**).

This manifestation of travail comes as we identify in the physical realm with the process that God is setting in place in the heavenly realm to bring something to birth.

Tongues

This gift is frequently released to help us in intercession. The Spirit of God knows what we need to pray for and how we need to pray. Praying in tongues when another manifestation is upon a person often gives understanding of what is happening.

Tears

Jesus wept in the garden of Gethsemene (**Luke 22:44**), and at Lazarus’s tomb (**John 11:36**).

Paul wept for others. In **2 Corinthians 2:4** he says, *“For I wrote to you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears . . .”* and in **Philippians 3:18**, he writes: *“For as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears . . .”*

The Lord has promised that *“those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy; he who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him”* (**Psalms 126:5-6**).

Other Manifestations mentioned in the Scripture

Moses **fell prostrate** before the Lord as he pleaded for the people after they had sinned (**Deuteronomy 9:18**). Daniel’s natural strength left him and: *“I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground”* (**Daniel 10:9**).

“Abraham remained standing before the Lord” (**Genesis 18:22**) as he pleaded with God for Sodom. There is a sense of **waiting** when King Solomon *“stood before the altar of the Lord”* (**2 Chronicles 6:12**) to plead with God to honour the promise He had given to King David.

Nehemiah *“mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven”* (**Nehemiah 1:4**) as he pleaded for the people and for his proposed audition with the king.

CONCLUSION

In ‘Rees Howells: Intercessor’, Norman Grubb writes *‘When the Holy Ghost really lives His life in a chosen vessel, there is no limit to the extremes to which He will take him, in His passion to warn and save the lost’*. He speaks of:

- **Isaiah** called to go *“naked and bare-footed”* as a warning to Israel;
- **Hosea** who had to marry a harlot to show God’s willingness to take back His adulterous people;

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- **Jeremiah** who was not allowed to marry as a warning to Israel against the terrors and tragedies of captivity.¹

These and many other examples throughout scripture show how the Holy Spirit will use a surrendered life to plead for whole nations. Many Old Testament characters have interceded for mercy and blessing, release from shame, and forgiveness from sin with great effect.

In modern history we have seen Wesley plead for a backslidden England, William Booth for the down-and-outs, Hudson Taylor and Brother Andrew for China, Ed Silvosa for Argentina... just to name a few.

For a long time, the gift of intercession was rarely seen in public meetings. Those who were interceding with passion and persistence generally prayed in private. The Holy Spirit has changed many things in the life of the church in recent times and God the Holy Spirit is releasing more and more people into a freedom to exercise this vital gift of prayer. In some churches and cities there are special intercessory prayer meetings where people (including children) wait upon the Lord to see how He wants them to pray to release His will in the lives of individuals and nations.

God is serious about His intention to send revival and reap a harvest. As these goals become real in our hearts, our response is to weep and groan, travailing until He brings forth what He desires. God is putting in our hearts a passion for the lost, and He is calling us back to our “first love” for Him.

WORKSHOP

The aim of the workshop is to yield to the Spirit of God and allow Him to bring the burden of intercession upon us; then to follow through with this burden in group (supporting) prayer until we have the peace that God gives in reassurance that our prayers have been heard.

- Ask the Holy Spirit
- to deepen our prayer life;
 - to release to us a passion for the lost;
 - to release a passion for purity and holiness in us and the Body of Christ as a whole;
 - to release to us a passion for a revival to come.

Pray for the Spirit of “*grace and supplication*” (***Zechariah 12:10***). The leader may minister through the laying on of hands to impart the gift.

One of the ways that the Holy Spirit moves in response to this prayer, is to release a burden of intercession to someone through a manifestation that this person may never have experienced before. As this unfolds, we encourage others to gather around the one who has the burden and to support that person in prayer with whatever gift the Holy Spirit releases to each one.

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TEACHING / STUDY MANUALS AVAILABLE

1) The Word and the Spirit; 2) Prayer a Way of Life; 3) Foundations of Our Faith; 4) The Power of Prayer; 5) This Gospel Must Be Preached; 6) Steps to Revival; 7) Strategy to Reach the Nation; 8) The Glory of the Lord shall be revealed; 9) Let us go on to Perfection; 10) And He gave some to be Apostles...; 11) The Cross to the Glory; 12) Planting the Church; 13) I will Build My Church; 14) Faith in Practice 15) Leadership in the Last Days; 16) The Spirit and Power of Elijah

Youth and Young Christians: **1) Prayer Attack; 2) Foundations of our Faith for Youth; 3) Born again to Serve; 6) Heroes of the Bible**

Children's Manuals: **1) God Talk; 2) Joseph, Jesus and Me**

"Walking in Our Inheritance" a book by Paul Galligan

