

“Against all Odds...”

by

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Faith Food From

The Word Of God

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Other books by this author are:

More Than A Conqueror

Just Say The Word

&

Open The Eyes Of My Heart

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Introduction

This book is a collection of Bible based messages which are about what God can do in the lives of those who trust Him even when things seem to be falling apart. It begins with six chapters about Hannah (1 Samuel) and how she saw miraculous answers to her prayers when she believed and kept believing.

“Against All Odds” is intended to motivate and inspire the reader to live a life of active faith and see the limitless potential there is in simply believing, because all things are possible for those who believe. These messages are a reflection of the work of God in my own life as He teaches me faith and patience. The chapters of this book were originally written as weekly ‘eWords’ for the inspirational website www.risingonwings.org. Each stand-alone chapter consists of a passage of Scripture and its application. It would make a good travelling companion, a motivating devotional or a provoking group study guide. Reading this book will stir and strengthen your faith to keep believing despite the challenges that arise.

This book is dedicated to the One who gave me every message, the beautiful and precious Holy Spirit, my Teacher and dearest Friend. I am also thankful for the inspiration I have received from all the mighty men and women of God who choose to trust God and keep believing against all odds, especially David and Tracy Ruleman of the Gate, DC.

Be a giant for Jesus! Walk in radical faith!

Minoli

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“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful.”

Hebrews 10:23

Chapter One

Knocking On Heaven's Door!

(1 Samuel 1:1-6)

"There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.

Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the Lord. Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninah and to all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb. And because the Lord had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her." (NIV)

This passage is from the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel. When the curtains open on this book, we see the spotlight focused on the man Elkanah. He was from Ramathaim, (Ramah) and a descendent of a Levitical temple musician called Zuph (1 Chronicles 6:35). Elkanah was a man of God, and his family had been serving God for generations.

God's desire for human marriage was monogamy from the start, but a man called Lamech (Genesis 4) decided to go against God's structure for marriage (given in Genesis 2:24) and marry more than one woman. This became a mistake repeated by people, generation after generation, bringing strife and confusion, and opening the family door to darkness. This would seem to have been the situation in Elkanah's home. We are told that there was much strife between his two wives. One was extremely blessed but not able to walk in that blessing graciously, while the other was longing for the same and unable to bear her lack of it with grace!

Elkanah was a man who loved and revered God. Year after year he travelled to Shiloh (where the Ark of the Covenant was) with his wives and children, in order to worship the Lord with his offerings. Three times a year every Israelite male was expected to come before the Lord at the sanctuary, and Elkanah faithfully sought the Lord, even though the priests ministering in the temple were the two evil sons of Eli. The feast mentioned here was probably the Feast of Tabernacles, which was a commemoration of God's care for His people during the desert journeys. It was also a joyful celebration of God's blessings on the year's crops, and brought families to Shiloh to rejoice and worship together. However, it was not a time of joy for Hannah.

The Word of God tells us that when Elkanah had offered his sacrifices, he would divide portions of the meat for his whole family, but he gave an especially big share to Hannah because he loved her. She was the apple of his eye! She was the 'special' wife and his favorite, but, she could not rejoice in this because the Word of God tells us that while Peninah had many sons and daughters "...the Lord had closed her womb....!"

You may be reading this message whilst in the middle of an unpleasant situation. Perhaps you have been praying about difficulties you are experiencing, or you may have been seeking fruitfulness in the ministry, in your finances or work, or in personal healing. You may have continued to pray and seek God's Will, believing to the best of your knowledge that you are walking righteously before Him, just like Elkanah and his family were. You love the Lord, and are obeying the Word of God to the best of your ability, and still, there seems to be a silence, a deadlock - *almost as if the womb of your situation has been closed!* How can this be?

As I meditated upon this verse, the Lord directed me to a passage of Scripture - James 4:3. "*When you ask you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives....*" Hannah saw Peninnah as her rival (verse 6). This was not because they competed for the love of their husband, because Hannah knew she was his favorite. The Bible tells us that she was irritated by Peninnah, and the fact that she had many children. Hannah wanted children very badly, but she probably also felt under pressure to conceive a child, to prove that she could! It must have been very hard for her to live with the fact that her husband and other people saw her as 'barren' while Peninah was seen as 'fruitful'. In the Jewish cultural context of the time, the lack of children was seen as the judgment of God, or a curse. Hannah must have felt so condemned because of what people saw as her 'inability' to 'produce' a child!

Hannah was no different to any of us. Apart from the help of the Holy Spirit, it is very hard to be happy for someone who receives something you were longing for. We have all been in that place where someone received the promotion we wanted for a long time, or sometimes even a particular spiritual gift. Perhaps you have been praying for the right life partner and all your friends seem to be settling down with someone, but nothing seems to be happening in your life. Just as Peninah carried her blessing with pride, and provoked and taunted Hannah, flaunting her "fruitfulness" before her, Hannah was walking in bitterness of spirit, resentful of the fact that Peninah had what she was longing for, devoid of the grace to go through this time of waiting victoriously. **She was trying to walk through this in her own strength!**

Of course we know that God turned everything around for Hannah later on, but there are two specific lessons we can take from this chapter.

Firstly, we need to look at our motive for prayer. As the Lord gave me this revelation, He shone His searchlight into my heart, and I saw the selfish and worldly motives behind prayers I have been bringing before Him. He had me on my knees repenting and seeking His power to purify every deep and hidden motive within the prayers I pray. Ask the Lord to search your heart today, friend. Call forth the light of Jesus into those hidden places you do not normally see, or which you see glossed over. He wants you to have the breakthrough you are waiting for, but until you pray in accordance with His Will and a spirit of love and selflessness, you may not see it come to pass.

Secondly, we need to look at how we are walking as we wait for the answer to our prayers. Are we trying to bring about the desired result with our own maneuvering and manipulation, or are we submitted completely to God's time frame and way of working? Are we walking in love? Are we blessing and praying for those who have already received that which we sought, or are we resentful and irritated with those people, and a little envious that they received what we

believe we deserve more?! *"Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too be patient and stand firm because the Lord's coming is near"* (James 5:7 & 8). "Waiting" is one of the important classes in Holy Spirit School, and we cannot avoid it! God builds character and depth in us as we learn to wait upon His will and His time. When we can be genuinely joyful for others who get blessed while we wait for our blessing, then the Lord has surely done some powerful work within us! *"Have your way in us, precious Holy Spirit. Help us to reflect the face of Jesus!"*

Finally, remember that life is all about seed, time, and harvest (Genesis 8:22). Sow good seed, give it time, and harvest good fruit! See the results of your Spirit-motivated prayers and your life of love and obedience, as they bring a powerful harvest and showers of blessing. You will see divine answers to prayer!

As you seek the Lord from the depths of your heart and wait for His will, I pray every spirit of barrenness to be broken from your body, your finances, your relationships, your work, your prayers. May your unsaved loved ones be saved in Jesus' name. May every hindering wall be broken from your life. May every 'closed' situation be opened to you now, in the power of the Spirit, and in the mighty name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen!

Notes:

Chapter 2

“Lord, Hear My Cry”! (1 Samuel 1:6-11)

"And because the Lord had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the Lord, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat. Elkanah her husband would say to her, 'Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you down hearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?'"

Once when they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh, Hannah stood up. Now Eli the priest was sitting on a chair by the doorpost of the Lord's temple. In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the Lord. And she made a vow, saying, 'O Lord Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.'" (NIV)

It is not difficult for most of us to understand what was going on in Hannah's life. She was carrying a very heavy weight on her spirit. She was downhearted and discouraged because what she longed for more than anything else appeared to be beyond her reach. She may have lost all hope after months and years of disappointments. To add insult to injury, Peninah (Elkanah's other wife), provoked and hurt Hannah about what was seen as her misfortune. She probably never saw how much pain she caused Hannah, and sadly, this was going on in the house of the Lord! Journeying to Shiloh to worship the Lord was probably not something Hannah looked forward to, because of Peninah. She probably tried her best to be patient, until the jibes got really bad! Hannah knew her husband loved her. She knew that he would do whatever he could to give her the child her heart longed for. She knew it hurt him to see her hurting, but although he tried his best to console her, nothing could make her feel any better - not even the statement that the love of one good man is far better than ten sons! (Of course, this has to be true, when you think of all the cooking, laundry and tidying up that goes with it!)

Elkanah asked her “*why are you down hearted?*” He was telling her to look on the bright side, to thank God for the blessings, and to be hopeful and positive. He was trying to do what most of us would do to encourage and lift up a friend who is discouraged. However, anyone who has been in this situation of waiting knows that there comes a point when nothing anyone says to you can make you feel better. No one but the Holy Spirit can truly understand your feelings of grief, disappointment, and pain. This is why Hannah suddenly realized that only God could help her. No one, not even Elkanah her loving husband, could answer her prayer, no matter how much he loved her and longed to make her happy.

We are told that it was just another day in Shiloh. The family had finished eating their meal. Perhaps Hannah had to endure the taunts of Peninah all through the meal. Finally, we are told that *'she stood up'*. For years Hannah had borne the pain and provocation. She was so affected by all this that she would weep and not even eat! She suffered inside herself, seeing Peninah as her rival, and bottling up the irritation day in and day out until she could bear it no more. She finally reached a point which was a spiritual crossroads. **She stood up!**

Friend, you may have been tolerating irritation, humiliation, insult and injury for many years. Today is your day to stand up and say to the devil "**No further. No more! I am taking back all that you have stolen from me.**" If we begin to listen to the lies of the devil, instead of the Truth of God's Word, he speaks louder and longer into our lives, eating up our self esteem, destroying our faith in God, breaking down our reliance on God's Word, bringing us to despondency and discouragement, and setting us up for total destruction. After a few months or years of this, we may be ready to lie down and allow circumstances to completely flatten us! Day after day, year after year, Hannah had listened to Peninah's unkind jokes and cruel insinuations. Through the years, she had heard their relatives whisper behind their hands and pity her, labeling her 'barren' and a failure! Year after year she had come to Shiloh to worship but gone away thinking that God had forgotten her and did not care! These were the lies of the enemy. She had allowed them to take root in her mind, until she believed the lies herself and thought God had passed her by, and that she could never be the recipient of His blessing. She too believed that her womb had been "closed", although they worshipped the God of the impossible, the God who opens doors that no man can shut (Revelations 3:7 & 8).

Many precious people of God have put up with a dead-end situation like this for years and months. Some may have been living with a health situation which they think can never be changed, or a long term relationship which only causes pain. Maybe it is your finances, and you have started believing that God wants you to go through poverty or financial difficulty and that this is His plan for you! Perhaps you are in a relationship where you are lied to constantly, or treated shabbily, and you have put up with it, thinking that this is your lot. The devil has fed us lies, and we have believed and received them into our lives. Today you can rise up like Hannah. Today you can say to yourself "**No more!**" Today you can decide that you are not going to lie down and allow the enemy to walk all over you. You are the head and not the tail. You are above and not beneath. You are the leader and not the follower. You are the precious child of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ! Hallelujah!

Dear Friend, what you can tolerate, you will never change. Decide today that you want change. Decide that you will tolerate this situation no longer. Break out of that comfortable discomfort and stand up like Hannah. Things are going to be different from now on! You are stepping up to higher ground!

So what did Hannah do next? We are told that she prayed a bold prayer. Eli the priest was sitting by the doorpost of the Lord's temple, but his presence did not bother Hannah. She was on a mission. She was full of a new fervor and faith. We are told that she prayed with all her heart (*in bitterness of soul*), and as she prayed, she wept her heart out to the Lord. She offered Him everything within her! All the years of pain, all the months of disappointment, all the times she had heard the gossip of people and felt a failure; the rejection, the isolation, the jokes of Peninah and others, which had cut to the core of her being. She offered it all to the Lord. As she wept deep tears from years past, the Holy Spirit took those prayers and lifted them up to Heaven. (Romans 8:26 – "*We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express...*") Sometimes tears are our language as we stand in the presence of the Almighty, and our hearts simply connect to Him in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the silence of a higher prayer that only He can lift us to. What an intense and

powerful moment! Hannah prayed a prayer unlike any she had ever prayed. Her God was suddenly more real to her than ever before!

In faith Hannah pledged her blessing back to the Giver. She said to God *“all these years I thought you had forgotten me; but if you will just pause to look at me and have mercy on my sorrow, if you will only remember me and give me a son, I offer him back to you; I dedicate him to be set apart for you for his whole life, that he may serve and honor you...!”* The book of Numbers Chapter 6 talks about the Nazirite vow which a man or woman could make when they consecrated themselves to the Lord for a time. Among other conditions, a Nazirite could not consume any alcohol, or cut or shave his/her hair. Hannah promised the Lord that if He blessed her with a son, the child would be set apart, and consecrated to serve God for his whole life. This was a bold prayer and a brave promise. The one who had been longing painfully for a baby was now saying to God that if she had one, he would never truly belong to her anyway - he would be the Lord's! She was not laying claim to the answer to her prayer. She had already released him to the Lord, so that God could turn that blessing around to benefit and bless many more. This is really amazing! The last chapter looked at motives to prayer, and how this can be a key to receiving answers. We see here that Hannah prayed with the highest possible motive, that she would not own the child she was asking for; he would be given to the Lord and for the Glory of His name. This is powerful!

There are three progressive steps we see Hannah taking in this brief account. **Firstly, she took a decision.** She decided that she could not and would not tolerate her situation any more. (She stood up). **Secondly, she took authority** (She started to pray and call on the Lord). **Thirdly, she believed she would receive.** (She had faith. She offered the blessing back to God, even though she still had no physical evidence upon which to base her hope).

Dear Friend, we are living in the last days and we have no time to waste! Take a decision today, and begin to pray boldly and with authority. This is the powerful Spirit given weapon we have on the earth. Win back your place in your home, in your workplace, in the church, and in your nation. God is waiting for you to rise up and begin to call upon His name. Be strong and unwavering in your decision. Be fervent in your prayer, be firm in your faith. *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived what God has in store for those who trust Him, but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit"* (1 Corinthians 2:9). Hallelujah! Walk in His blessing. Walk in His power!

Notes:

Chapter 3

“Go In Peace” (1 Samuel:12-18)

"As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, "how long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine." "Not so, my Lord," Hannah replied, I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief."

Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him." She said "May your servant find favor in your eyes." Then she went her way and ate something, and her face was no longer downcast. (NIV)

In the last chapter, we looked at how Hannah decided to stand up and take authority over her situation. She began to pray in the power of the Holy Spirit, and call on the name of the Lord. Now, as she stood in the temple praying, Eli the priest noticed her silent prayer and made the wrong judgment. It was a dark time in Israel, a time of moral and spiritual decay. People were far from God. We know from the book of Judges (chapters 17-21) that people had strayed from the True God, and were bound up in vice and idolatry. It was not an uncommon thing for a drunken person to enter the sanctuary of God. It was also not a common thing to see a person standing in the sanctuary praying! People would come in to offer their sacrifices and fulfill their rites and rituals, but Eli the priest had probably never seen a woman standing there urgently seeking the Lord from the depths of her being, as Hannah was.

The minister of God did not expect to see someone come in to the house of God for prayer! This is the situation today in many churches, the world over. We excel at planning events and programs, but when it comes to prayer, there is often not much happening. In this end time hour, the Lord is calling His people to rise up and pray. He is calling His bride to take her God given authority to decree and declare in His name, and see His will brought to fulfillment on the earth. The Lord is calling His children to come together and cry out in one accord for the release of the prophetic voice worldwide, and the end time outpouring of the Holy Spirit. We are seeing His fire lighting up many places on the earth, but this is only the tip of the iceberg. He has so much more for us! I believe the Lord is grieved when we (like Eli) continue to sit in our chair of complacency, carrying on with the normal order of events in the tabernacle, without heeding His voice which calls us to a higher order of service. He is calling the Bride to true Spirit led, Spirit lifted worship and passionate prayer for the establishment of His presence, and the fulfillment of the Kingdom in this age. This can happen only as we stand up to be people of prayer and power in the Holy Spirit, allowing the winds of the Spirit to take each of us upwards to higher ground, and a closer walk with Him. Eli was the priest at Shiloh. He was a man of potentially great power and influence in the nation, but he was sitting around in his chair, tired, old and with blurred vision (1 Samuel 3:2). Friend, the Lord Jesus Christ has given us the power and authority of His name. He has given us the power of His Spirit to make us more than conquerors in Him! Let us not continue to sit around in our daily routines, waiting for something to happen

before we pray. Let us open our eyes to the signs of the times, and begin to call on the name of the Lord!

Hannah was probably hurt and shocked that she was being misjudged by the man of God, as she stood there crying out to Heaven out of the longing of her soul. Remember that she had been pushed around and put down for many years because of her situation. She had tolerated hurtful remarks and pain of mind for many years, until she finally decided she would live with it no more, and began to pray for the change she sought. That prayer was an entry into a higher level of her walk with God. She grew in her faith. The boldness of a moment took her on to a deeper revelation. However, it is often the case that when there has been a promotion from God, the devil sends people to discourage and distract us from the upward path we have begun to climb, often from within the circle of believing friends or loved ones we trust! Eli was unwittingly being used to discourage Hannah, to make her think that nothing had really changed, and that she would be misunderstood, and a failure forever!

When God gifts His children or takes them on to a higher level of anointing, it is for good! God never takes His gifts away (Romans 11:29). If we are not seeing His power flowing in our lives, it is often because we have been listening too much to the voice of the world and the devil, and not enough to the Word of God and the leading of the Holy Spirit! We have the power to choose who we listen to and what we receive into our spirits. Hannah decided she would not receive the words of Eli upon her life. Eli was looking on the outside and making a judgment, while God sees the heart. Hannah calmly and quietly stated her case to the man of God, explaining that she was not under the influence of alcohol, but *“a woman who was deeply troubled and pouring out her soul to the Lord, praying in the house of the Lord out of her great anguish and grief.”* She had been in great pain, but she finally saw the light when God showed her the answer: *“Call to me and I will answer you and show you great and unsearchable things you do not know”* (Jeremiah 33.3). There is no problem too hard for the Lord. All He desires is that we *trust* Him enough to call on His name. He has much to show us - the miraculous, supernatural power He desires to release into our lives, and through us, upon the earth. When discouragement comes from sources and circumstances around you, do not hesitate to calmly speak up like Hannah did. State your case. Declare your trust in God. Proclaim the power of the Blood and the Word upon your life. Follow the leading of the Spirit, and see the enemy turn and melt away! God will give you the victory step by step, as you trust Him to lead you out of a mess and up the mountain!

When Eli realized he was wrong about Hannah, he spoke a blessing upon her life. He said *“May the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of Him”*. For Hannah, this was a confirmation that God would indeed grant her the blessing she had cried out for in so much pain. We are told that she went away with peace in her heart and *“her face was no longer downcast.”* She was able to eat and drink, and for the first time in many years, she was happy in the knowledge that Jehovah God had heard her and answered. It was the state of absolute, indestructible peace which comes only when you pray a Spirit led prayer and know that your prayer reached home!

This little passage of Scripture demonstrates the power of Spirit led prayer, for each of us as individuals, as well as for the church at large. It could be that you are a person who spent much time in prayer in the past, but you may have slipped into a routine of quick devotions of late, because of the fast pace of the life you live. The Father is calling you back to those sweet days

when you put everything else on hold just to be with Him for a little while, basking in His love. If you find it is difficult to get away and be behind a closed door, you can worship and pray while you drive, or fulfill your daily tasks. You will be bringing Jesus into your life in a new and powerful way!

If you are someone who has never spent quality time in prayer, now is the time to seek God. Begin with worship, and thank God for His goodness and grace. Pray in the heavenly language. As you continue to pray, loving God and opening yourself to Him, you will see Him transform situations and people (including yourself), and answering you with many and mighty things you did not know! (Jeremiah 33:3).

May this be the key which opens every closed door in your life. God loves you and is waiting for you to call on His name!

Notes:

Chapter 4

In The Course Of Time (1 Samuel 1:19-20)

"Early the next morning, they arose and worshipped before the Lord and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah lay with Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, 'because I asked the Lord for him'." (NIV)

In the last chapter, we saw how Hannah overcame the inevitable discouragement that comes from the enemy when God begins to lift us to higher spiritual ground. We now sprint through many months of Hannah's life, to the glorious fulfillment of her prayers, and the birth of her son Samuel. So much happened between the day when Hannah finally had a breakthrough, and the day of her son's birth.

When we last saw Hannah, she had come to a point of personal revelation and spiritual growth, a place of faith and trust in God. Once she surrendered her problem wholly to the Lord and received His Word upon her life, a peace truly did come upon her as was prophesied over her by the priest of God. Hannah's breakthrough began when she finally realized that her prayers would not be answered by her tears and sadness, and that the negative feelings she was having about other people would get her nowhere. She saw that she could not receive her blessing by manipulating or maneuvering her circumstances or the people around her. Hannah finally understood that her prayers would be answered only when she totally trusted the Almighty, the One who alone has power over life and death. As she released her burden into the hands of God, the indescribable peace of God came upon her. She knew deep down in her spirit that God had heard her prayer. **God's heart is full of compassion for His kids, but He is moved by faith, not by tears!**

Some of the things that made the difference for this family:

A lifestyle of Worship: We are told that the family worshipped the Lord before they travelled back to their home in Ramah. This seems like an ordinary thing to do, but it has much significance as we look at Hannah's breakthrough. They were a big family - Elkanah, his two wives, and Peninah's many children. Travelling with a large family is no joke even today, and it was probably a greater challenge in those days, as they journeyed on foot, and donkey, across hot desert roads. However, they rose early in the morning, went to the house of the Lord, and took time to worship the Lord Jehovah before they set off on their journey home. Worship was a part of their lives and Elkanah the priest always brought his whole family to worship at Shiloh, even though the tradition required only the man of the house to present himself three times a year.

It is also significant that the family worshipped together. The strife which had existed between Peninah and Hannah had rendered their worship an empty offering before the Lord until now. Jesus said in Matthew 12:25 that *"a house divided against itself will not stand"*. So many people are praying strong prayers for breakthrough in some area of their lives but seeing none because of situations of strife in their homes or families, which stand in the way, and need to be resolved. Strife gets in the way of our prayers, even when we are bearing no grudge against the

other person. This is why Jesus taught His disciples (Matthew 5:23 & 24): *“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”* Now that Hannah was at peace with Peninah, she was able to sincerely offer her sacrifice of worship to the King of kings.

True worship is powerful. As Hannah worshipped in the house of God that morning, something began to take shape in the spiritual dimension. What was birthed when she prayed the prayer of faith the day before received life and the Creator’s divine breath as her heart submitted and her hands were raised. Hannah was being prepared to receive the blessing of God upon the womb of her spirit as well as the womb of her body. A life style of worship keeps us in the presence of God and under an open heaven. Worship is a higher form of prayer, a deeper level of communication. It is when spirit to Spirit, we are joined to the Eternal One, to experience all the beauty and reality of the oneness and love that exists between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. True worship lifts us up to another dimension, beyond the natural, and into the awesome supernatural glory of God. Worship is so powerful because when we sincerely worship through the Holy Spirit, we align ourselves with Heaven, where there is worship happening eternally and continuously, as angels and elders fall before the glorious throne of the Almighty, crying “holy, holy, holy”. Worship is a process of death to self, and goes beyond a prayer. I have found that when the Spirit leads me upward into true worship, there is no request that I want to make, apart from a longing and a cry to draw closer to my Lord; to see His face; to hear His heartbeat; to feast upon His beauty as His presence fills my cup! His glory purifies, heals and restores. Worship goes beyond words. In worship, the frail and finite human being is completely lost in the awesome infinity of God. In His presence there is fullness of joy! **When we choose to focus not on our problems but on the reality of the Almighty, and simply worship Him, Heaven comes down to bring us the victory and overcoming we could have never thought possible. His Kingdom comes, His will is done!**

Elkanah's lifestyle of priestly worship influenced and shaped the lives of the members of his family. In these days of great turmoil and darkness, the Holy Spirit is calling us to seek the Lord in worship. Psalm 16 says: *“You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand”*. The path of worship is truly the path of life. It takes us Heavenward, into the presence of the King. The psalmist writes that we are filled with joy when in His presence, and we experience 'eternal pleasures' – open heavens, supernatural encounters, healing, wholeness, and joy! It is the path we want to take. It is God's desire that like Elkanah, men will take their priestly place, and set a standard of worship and prayer in their homes, in their work places, and in the church.

They did what they had to do and God did the rest: We are told that Elkanah “lay with Hannah” and the Lord remembered her. And “in the course of time” she gave birth to a son. The Lord never forgets! God heard Hannah's cry the day she lifted up her heart and prayed a prayer of faith. However, certain things had to happen in the physical realm for that blessing to be manifested. Hannah and Elkanah had to come together as man and wife, for the divinely opened womb to receive the seed which would become baby Samuel. There may be many people for whom God has already released (in the spiritual dimension) the blessing they prayed for. However, they may be still waiting because they have not acted upon conditions they were

given to fulfill in order to see the physical manifestation of what they sought. It could be an un-Godly relationship that has to end, or perhaps a hurt that should be forgiven, or even a lack of surrender to the Lord in the area of finances (tithes and offerings). Whatever it may be, if the voice of the Holy Spirit is speaking to you today, take steps to obey, dear friend. Hannah and Elkanah did not sit back and wait for a baby to be mysteriously placed in Hannah's womb; they did what they had to do!

God's timing is different to ours! In the course of time, that baby was conceived and born. Hallelujah! God is sovereign and does not work according to our time frame. Know that His blessing will be manifested in your life at the time He knows is best for you. Once that baby was conceived, Hannah still had to go through nine months of pregnancy and it is possible that she had the whole package – fatigue, nausea, aches, hormonal fluctuations, etc, although it is also possible that her pregnancy was a joyful one from start to finish! While the Lord is mighty and can do anything supernaturally, we may often receive our blessing in seed form, and need to wait, pray, and call it forth into the full manifestation of what Daddy has already granted, even though that time of gestation may not be an easy one. For example, God may have blessed you with the new business you have been praying for, but you may have to work faithfully to see it come to the level you first saw in your spirit. There may not be short cuts and you may still have to *go through* to see the dream fulfilled; but *in the course of time*, you will have the joy of seeing the blessing fully manifested in your life.

Even words of prophecy take their “course of time”. Some of us may have received words of prophecy from the servants of God and wondered why they have not been fulfilled. A word of prophecy is often similar to the seed that had to be placed in the womb of Hannah. When it is released, it cannot fall on barren ground – a person has to be ready for that Word which God gives. The anointed word of prophecy carries divine power, and when it is received upon the prepared heart, it falls on good soil. Like the baby that developed in the secret place of Hannah's womb, the word from God takes root deep in the secret place of your spirit. It is fed by the Word of God, by the proclamation of that Word, by praying towards the fulfillment of the prophecy, and by faith that it is coming to pass, as the Holy Spirit takes us towards that blessed complete work decreed for us. Sometimes a word from God is too precious and profound to even share with others, unless the Lord would have you share it. Speaking about it dilutes that which grows in intensity and power with an anointing and spiritual momentum inside the depths of your spirit, until it is birthed, like a child, at the appropriate time.

When Hannah's precious bundle was finally born, we are told that she named him “Samuel” because she “asked the Lord for him”. The name “Samuel” is taken from the word 'Ishmael' which means “heard by God”. It also means “asked of God” and “name of God”. He was God's answer to a mother's prayer. If you are a parent, God has a mighty blessing in answer to the prayers you pray on behalf of your children! Hannah's Samuel, became a man of power and anointing. He was a blessing to the nation, and the voice of God to all of Israel. He was a priest and prophet, and the anointer of Kings. Samuel was no ordinary child. It was almost as though God doubled Hannah's blessing because she had waited so long for it!

Dear friend, do not despair if you have not as yet seen an answer to your prayer. Your blessing is on its way. God is preparing double for your trouble! If you are a mother praying for the

salvation of your children, be encouraged - He has heard your prayers and you will begin to see the manifestation of His mercy and His grace upon your family in the days to come.

Let us like Hannah worship while we wait, and do what we are meant to do. Let us believe and know that in the course of time we **will** see the manifestation of the promise of God in our lives. Know that life, power and victory are in store for you!

May God the Holy Spirit come upon you and draw you into a new level of worship and may you experience breakthrough and blessing, and all the awesome things the Father has in store for you, in Jesus' mighty name, Amen!

Notes:

Chapter 5

Gift From God (1 Samuel 21-23)

"When the man Elkanah went up with all his family to offer the annual sacrifice to the Lord and to fulfill his vow, Hannah did not go. She said to her husband, "after the boy is weaned, I will take him and present him before the Lord, and he will live there always." "Do what seems best to you," Elkanah her husband told her. "Stay here until you have weaned him; only may the Lord make good His Word". So the woman stayed at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him." (NIV)

Here we see a transformed Hannah. She was a mother, and one whose heart was filled with joy! She finally knew a fulfillment, which she had never known before. She was so absorbed with her new arrival that she had no time to get irritated with anyone else, even Peninah. She was so thankful to God that her mouth was filled with laughter, and the only tears that come into her eyes were tears of joy! A whole year had passed since the last family visit to the temple of the Lord, and it was time to go up again to Shiloh to offer the annual sacrifices. Elkanah had vows to fulfill. Perhaps he too had prayed for Hannah and asked the Lord to open her womb. (Wives need the spiritual covering of the prayers of their husbands!)

Many months before this day, Hannah had made a promise to the Lord. As she stood in the house of God praying before the altar that day, she had vowed that if God had mercy on her and blessed her with a son, she would dedicate him back to the Lord to serve the Lord all his life. She conceived and gave birth to a child a few months later. Just as God never forgot her need, she too never forgot her promise to the Lord. She knew that the precious baby she held in her arms was only hers for a time. He belonged to the Lord. She knew that when the time was right, and he could survive physically without her loving nurturing, she would give him up to the One who gave him to her. Right now, he was still too young and needed her care, but when the time was right, Hannah knew what she had to do.

There is precious revelation we can receive from Hannah. **We see commitment and credibility in her life.** She had made a promise to God and she was going to keep it regardless of the cost. As a mother, I can only imagine the struggle Hannah probably experienced in her heart when she even thought about the possibility of being parted from her boy. It is normally almost an impossible thing for a mother to give up the child she bore in her body for nine months and brought into the world in the midst of pain and travail. That child is flesh of her flesh and bone of her bones. For Hannah, who had waited so long for this child, it must have been more than difficult, but she had promised! I remember many occasions from my youth when I would fall into some scrape, and would make promises to the Lord, telling Him what I would do for Him when He got me out of my mess. God was always faithful, but I was not! It is so easy to forget our promises to God but Hannah did not. Many months had passed, but she had given her word to the Lord and however hard the sacrifice, she was not going back on her word. Proverbs 20:6 says *"Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man, who can find?"* For Hannah, this was a sacred act of worship, and an offering above and beyond all the sacrifices her family had made at Shiloh. She was giving the most precious and costly sacrifice - her long awaited son. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever*

believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life”(John 3:16). **A gift that costs the giver is a fragrant offering which can change the world!**

Hannah finally held in her arms the gift she had once thought she might never have, the one she had wept and longed for year after year. The natural tendency would be to jealously guard, and hold on tight to what we fought hard to get, but Hannah's response was different. Similar to the way Abraham surrendered Isaac, Hannah knew she had made a commitment to the Lord and she was willing to surrender Samuel to serve Him. This goes back to Chapter One, where we considered the fact that our *motives* have a big part to play in the answers we receive to our prayers. When Hannah began to pray *unselfishly*, offering the longed-for baby back to the Lord, something happened in the spiritual realm. In her heart, she was releasing her hold on the blessing she sought, and permitting God to do whatever He wanted to do with it. It was almost like she was not requesting a child for herself but was asking for a servant for the Kingdom! **Her prayer became God-focused and not self-focused.** This is something else we can learn from Hannah.

I know that God hears every prayer we pray. However, with some prayer requests, our answers are released when the Lord sees that we will display maturity, responsibility and righteousness in our use of the blessing we seek. If it is a financial breakthrough you are praying for, it will explode into your life when the Lord sees that you will be an anointed channel for His prosperity to pass through into the lives of others and for the progress of His Commission. He wants to see His blessing flow through you into the Kingdom. If the buck stops with you (literally!) then the blessing dries up there; but if you pass it on, it is multiplied, like the loaves and fishes, and you will see God's heavenly provision spreading to every part of your life. The same principle applies with everything you are praying for. The bottom line is that we cannot assume possession of anything we receive from the Lord, even the supernatural gifts. There is a beautiful old Anglican prayer which is prayed before an offering is made, and which I remember from my childhood: *“All things come from thee and of thine own do we give unto thee oh Lord...”* This makes a lot of sense. We often pat ourselves on the back when we give towards the Kingdom, forgetting that Heaven was our source in the first place. *“The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it..”* (Psalm 24:1).” If we remembered that everything we are and everything we have is the Lord's, we would not cling so tightly to what He blesses us with! Hannah's much longed for Samuel became a mighty man of God, used by the Lord to lead and judge the nation of Israel only because Hannah did not cling to him, but because she released him into the hands of Jehovah God.

Elkanah, as always, gave Hannah his fullest support. This was his child as well, and special to him because of how much he loved Hannah (1:5) and how long they had waited for him. However, he stood by her commitment to give him to the Lord while he was young. He was not making any plans for Samuel's future, other than that he serve the Lord, as their family had done for generations. He said “May the Lord make good His Word”. It would seem that he was referring to the Word that Eli the priest spoke over Hannah in 1 Samuel 1:17, when he (Eli) said: “Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of Him.” Now that Hannah's prayer had been answered, Elkanah was saying “May the rest of the promise also come to pass in the sight of the Lord”, or “May this baby be consecrated by the Lord for His ministry”.

We are told that Hannah stayed home that year and did not go up to Shiloh to worship. She tended and cared for little Samuel until the time God chose to take him into the ministry. This is an inspiration to all parents who love the Lord. It may be a little difficult at times, but see your children as gifts from above! Surrender them to God and pray that He will use them one day for the glory of His mighty Name. There is no greater calling or gift than to serve the Almighty and walk in His will!

There are many threads of Truth which we can draw from Hannah's walk with God:

- **To give the best to God**
- **To keep our promises to Him**
- **To pray unselfishly, and**
- **To always be aware that God is our Source and our Blessor**

Even as God gave us the precious gift of Life in Jesus Christ, may you have the power and enabling to keep your promises to the Lord, to pray unceasingly, and see His blessing poured out abundantly in every area of your life. Your life is pregnant with the purposes of God, and He has great blessing in store for you!

Notes:

Chapter 6

A Promise Fulfilled (1 Samuel 1:24-28)

"After he was weaned, she took the boy with her, young as he was, along with a three year old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine, and brought him to the house of the Lord at Shiloh. When they had slaughtered the bull, they brought the boy to Eli, and she said to him, "As surely as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the Lord. I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of Him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord." And he worshipped the Lord there."(NIV)

In the last chapter, we saw how Hannah cared for the baby she had been blessed with. He was extra precious to her because she had waited so long for his arrival. Much as she loved to worship God in Shiloh, she did not join her husband when he made his regular pilgrimage to the house of the Lord because she would not leave her baby's side. She was to take him to the house of God when he had been weaned, according to her promise to the Lord.

The time had now come! Although the scriptures simply state the sequence of events, it is easy to read beyond the words to the struggle it must have been for Hannah, where her heart said "no" and her spirit said "yes". Many conflicting thoughts probably passed through her mind as the mother in her longed to keep the child she had committed to give up to the Kingdom. She may have said to herself that Samuel was only little and that it could make no difference to the House of the Lord whether he went or not! She may have been anxious about his well being, whether he would be fed and clothed properly, and whether he would be safe from harm and danger. She may have thought of him waking up at night and crying for his mother who made him feel so loved and special. Parents who have sent their children to boarding school, or have experienced separation trauma, even after their grown children went to college, would know what Hannah went through. The difference is that Hannah was relinquishing all rights to her child. **As far as Hannah was concerned, Samuel would be the Lord's from that day onwards**, and the years of motherhood were all the more sweet to her because they were so few, and she was surrendering him completely to God.

Jewish babies of the time were normally weaned when they were around 3 years old, so little Samuel was probably not much older than that when he began the journey to Shiloh with his mother. He was walking towards his destiny and into the plan God had for him.

Let us look at the offerings that Hannah took to the house of the Lord when she dedicated Samuel to the Lord. A 3 year old bull, an ephah of flour (about 22 litres) and a skin of wine. This was probably the "Peace" or "Fellowship Offering" which we see in Leviticus 7:11. When Eli spoke "**peace**" upon Hannah (1 Samuel 1:17), the peace of God came upon her heart, and God filled her with faith and hope for her miracle. Hannah was now at peace, with herself, with God, and with man. The Peace Offering was a voluntary act of worship and thanksgiving. **It was symbolic of the covenant relationship that exists between God and His people** - a covenant of peace, of mutual love, and the fellowship that we know with Him through the Holy Spirit and because of the blood of Jesus. Hannah loved the Lord, and was thankful for His mercy

and grace upon her life. She knew that apart from God's intervention, she would have never known the blessing of motherhood and the joy and fulfillment that Samuel brought her. She was simply expressing her heartfelt gratitude and devotion to the Lord when she brought the 3 year old bull – most likely the same age as the son she was also sacrificing to the Lord.

The flour was probably for a Grain Offering (Leviticus 2). The Grain Offering was also a voluntary act of worship, and an acknowledgement of God's goodness and provision. God had indeed blessed Hannah, and her response was loving, thankful worship. The flour for the grain offering had to be “fine flour” (Lev 2:1), where the grain had been milled, ground, and sifted. **It was the result of labor, time and effort, and the fresh produce of the harvest.** It was burnt upon the altar with oil and incense, to produce “an aroma pleasing to the Lord” (Leviticus 2:2).

Not too long ago, when I was in the presence of the Lord in worship, I asked God to break me and change me so that I would carry the fragrance of Jesus, for the Glory of His name. The Lord said to me that the “Jesus” kind of fragrance which is so pleasing before Him is the fragrance that comes only through the Cross. It is the sweet aroma that comes when beautiful flowers are crushed beyond any recognition or identity, and passed through a heating, boiling, and distilling process, to bring forth a costly perfume which blesses many. Hannah, like the grain, had been through the crushing and the sifting. When she finally saw that life was not all about her, and when she died to her own desires, hurts and disappointments, and surrendered to the Will of God, she began to see the miraculous breakthrough that changed her whole destiny and took her on to higher ground.

Friend, it is time for the struggle to cease. **God is calling us to lay down our own desires and will, and wholly surrender our lives - the substance, the effort, the labor of it all, and lay it on the altar.** As was done with the Grain Offering, God will pour the oil of His Spirit upon us, and the incense of His Word to ignite a holy offering, fragrant and beautiful in His sight, a living sacrifice, generating power and life. It will be a fire that never goes out, and a life that is a fragrant ever present aroma in a world which is stale and dark.

The wine was usually poured out as a 'Drink Offering' after the Peace Offering or the Grain Offering. People only offered the newest of their new wine to the Lord - again it was symbolic of their gratitude for God's provision and blessing through the harvest and His protection from the devourer. It is a reminder to us that **God only deserves our best, and our first fruits** in terms of time, the seasons of our lives, worship, love, and finances. Hannah was giving her best - her only child. She did not know at the time that she would have any more children but she wholeheartedly gave the one she had. Samuel was so tiny, he could barely talk or look after himself, but she knew that He had to go into the presence of God, to grow in the Glory, to learn from this young age and to become the great prophet God would shape him to be. If Hannah had listened to her maternal feelings and changed her mind, and kept Samuel at home with her, he would have grown up to be like any other boy. God has a far greater vision for you than you have for yourself! If you willingly surrender your life and give Him the best of all you are and have, God will take it and shape it, and bring you to a place and position you never would have reached in your own strength. He has plans to prosper you, Hallelujah! (Jeremiah 29:11). God has greatness in store for you as you sincerely seek Him and offer Him your best.

We are told that Hannah gave Samuel over to Eli, the priest of God, and that Samuel worshipped the Lord there. This was the beginning of his relationship with God, and his ministry in the house of God - worship and fellowship with the Almighty. He grew up in an awareness and sensitivity to the Lord which was the legacy he received from his parents. It was not long before he began to hear the voice of God and as he grew into manhood, he was so filled with the presence of God that the power and fear of Jehovah went before him with every step he took.

Perhaps you have been going through a time of difficulty where you feel like you are being crushed beyond endurance. Fear not! You are coming through it and heading for a higher place. Remember the sweet fragrance that comes with the crushing of the beautiful flowers which produce costly perfume. **God has chosen you for something very special - for the very distinct and potent fragrance of Jesus Christ to emanate from your life**, as the 'you' in you begins to be ground like the grain for the grain offering and only Jesus is seen!

It is my prayer that God will call us all to a place of worship, where we will truly offer our lives, and begin to bring to God a sweet smelling sacrifice, where by the power of the Holy Spirit, self is broken and ground beyond recognition, to bring forth the sweet fragrance of our Lord Jesus Christ. **May God be with you, and the Holy Spirit enable you to rise up and be faithful always, in Jesus' name, Amen!**

Notes:

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of Him.”

1 John 4:14 & 15

Chapter Seven

Unlocking Doors (Matthew 7:7-12)

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks the door will be opened.

Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” (NKJV)

This chapter is a reminder that nothing begins to happen in the spiritual realm until we open our mouths and purposefully pray! While teaching His disciples about prayer, Jesus gave them **three simple keys to spiritual victory.**

1) **Ask in faith.** It is true that God knows our thoughts and discerns the deepest places of our hearts. However, too many people pray a quick “let Your will be done”, without specifically declaring their heart’s desires and intentions before the Lord. Some of us may never even pray about the issues in our lives, believing that God will take care of it if He wants to. Jesus explained that we have to make a request in order to receive a response. We have to look for something in order to find it, and a closed door will only be opened for us if we knock first from the outside. None of us would adopt such a casual “que sera” attitude towards the things of the world such as our finances or relationships. We would never assume that someone would know what we wanted in order to have our expectations fulfilled, but we do this with our Father God. **Also, when you ask, believe!** The very act of asking is an expression of our faith for a response, and the Father’s heart delights in our faith. It means we take Him at His Word and believe it is true. Jesus is calling us to be purposeful, faith-filled, and focused with our prayers. He says “Ask and you will receive”!

2) **Believe that the Father desires to bless His kids.** All parents would know what a joy it is to make your children happy. We constantly strive to meet and even exceed their expectations. Surprising them with more than what they requested is always such a thrill because we love to indulge our kids! Jesus reminds us today that the heart of God the Father flows with generous love. He delights in His kids (Psalm 147:11, Psalm 37:23, Zephaniah 3:17). He loves to indulge them! He loves to see them prosper. He wants them whole, healed, blessed in every aspect of their lives, and walking in victory in the power of His name. Just as parents would not give something bad to their children, our Father God only gives “good gifts” to His. James 1:17 says *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows”*. God never changes His mind. He never gives us

anything but the best. Sickness, poverty, condemnation, disunity and depression are not from the Father of the heavenly lights.

3) Be in right relationship with other people in your life. Jesus said *“Do to others what you would have them do to you.”* Relational divisions can be the biggest hindrance to answered prayer. We cannot expect God to do something for us which we refuse to do for someone else. Forgiveness, encouragement, love, mercy, and whatever we could practically and possibly give or do for another, do it with a glad heart, and see it multiplied into your life as you go to the Father in prayer. Many of us may be interceding for the salvation of loved ones, or engaging in spiritual warfare over nations and cities, and wondering why there is no breakthrough, or why the backlash is so heavy. It is simply that we need to put right those relationships which have been broken. We may need to give forgiveness or seek it from another. This is a key that can even open territorial doors, as we pray in faith, and in the name of Jesus.

Finally dear friend, let me leave you with Psalm 37:4 *“Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart”*, and Psalm 84:11 *“For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; **no good thing does He withhold from those whose walk is blameless.**”* May all your dreams be fulfilled and may God grant you all the righteous desires of your heart, in Jesus’ mighty name, Amen!

Notes:

Chapter Eight

Rolled Away (Mark 16:1-7)

“When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone which was very large had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you'." (NIV)

This message is one of hope and life! It was written for Resurrection Sunday, and it is an empowering Word from the Lord for the new season into which He is taking us!

The Gospel writer Mark tells us how Salome, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James visited the tomb of Jesus to anoint His body. All through the Sabbath day, they must have longed to get out and go to the place their Lord had been laid, but they had to stay home in obedience to the law. These ladies were probably filled with grief, and with a deep sense of loss. They had served the Lord Jesus, and accompanied him on most of His missionary journeys. He had been such a huge part of their lives that the events of the days just passed must have left them stunned and broken, and filled with sadness. They probably relived the powerful miracles they had seen when they were with Jesus, and wondered how Jesus, the Healer and Deliverer, could have been so wrongly judged and executed like a criminal. It was a time of great confusion and pain. While they had hope in the fact that Jesus had foretold all these events to His disciples and promised them the final victory, it must have been hard to believe that these words would be fulfilled.

It was in this frame of mind that the three ladies took the necessary spices to the tomb, as early as they could - as soon as the rising sun enabled them to see their way. Their concern was that the three of them together would not be strong enough to move the huge stone with which the Jews had asked the Roman government to seal the entrance of the tomb (Matthew 27:64-66). When they got there, they saw that God had already taken care of the stone! God had also taken care of the body of Jesus. It was no longer there! They were afraid when they saw an angel in the tomb, but he told them that Jesus was risen, and they saw for themselves that the grave was empty.

The Risen Lord is speaking through this Word to many who have suffered a loss. It could also be that you have experienced a series of losses for an extended period of time, or the loss of a loved one, relationship, a job, or assets. It could be the loss of your health and joy. Maybe you look back at the past few months and ask yourself how things became so bad. When the disciples witnessed the crucifixion and burial of their Lord and teacher, they thought they had lost everything. They had lost the One who had been their light and inspiration, the One who gave them strength and peace. Now they had even lost all their hope for tomorrow and life

seemed very bleak to them. Those three days after Jesus went to the cross must have felt like a lifetime! It seemed to them like Satan had got the victory, but God had a plan, and this was all a part of it.

It may take more than a few losses for us to realize what is most important - a sweet surrender to our Eternal Father who gave His only Son that we might know life everlasting in Him! Jesus said in John 12:23 *"Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."* The old 'me' has to die so that better, bigger, more beautiful things can grow and flow through our lives where 'me' used to be big. The devil may think he has got you where he wants you - overwhelmed by your loss and unable to see beyond it. He wants you to be filled with self pity, and to experience depression and a sense of extreme hopelessness and loss. (*"The thief comes to steal, kill and destroy, but Jesus came to give life and give it more abundantly"* - John 10:10). God has a plan to turn it all around! If you will surrender yourself to Him today, and abandon your life into His hands, if you will allow your own desires to die at the cross of Jesus and ask that He live through you, you will see a resurrection, and the start of new things which the Lord will bring forth through you. His promise in Joel 2:25 is that He will restore to us all that the locusts have eaten. Whatever your need, remember that God is able. You may feel like a huge stone is keeping you trapped inside a dark place, but the power of Jesus can move those heavy stones and free you from where you are. He can restore you to a state that is better than anything you knew before! Hallelujah! Psalm 103:4 says that He is the Lord *"who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."*

This message is also for many of you who are longing to do something for the Lord, but the obstacles seem so great. The three ladies in this message wanted to serve the Body of Christ, but they were focusing on how big the stone was, and that it was going to be impossible for them to move it aside. However, God had it all under control! Be encouraged that if your heart is being stirred to serve the Lord through the body of Christ, God Himself will equip and anoint you. God Himself will move aside every hindrance and obstacle, however big or complex it may seem to be. All He asks is that we yield to His Spirit, and obey His instructions, step by step. Our Father God is the most amazing employer! When He calls His children to serve in His vineyard (the family business!), He takes care of every detail and we just have to flow with the Plan. We need to stop focusing on the greatness of the stones that are before us and focus on His greatness and omnipotence. Remember that serving God is not about us at all - it is all about Him! He is looking for usable vessels and willing hearts that are completely submitted to His hand.

Salome, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James had the wonderful experience of encountering an angel, hearing the good news of the resurrection of our Lord, and receiving a divine message to be passed on to the other disciples, all because they obeyed the calling they felt in their hearts to anoint the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you feel a calling to serve the Lord, and you know what your heart is being led to do, do not hesitate - step forward in faith. If you are not sure what you are meant to be doing, begin to pray and seek God's Will. He will give you clear direction and enable you to know the blessing and the power of walking in His purpose and His will.

May Resurrection power fill your life every day and may you do great things for Jesus. He broke the power of death and rose from the grave, and that same power lives in you!

Notes:

Chapter Nine

“I Am With You” - 1 (Isaiah 41:8-10)

"But you O Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend, I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, 'You are my servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. "

Isaiah was a great man of God, and he served as a prophet of the Lord through the successive reigns of 4 kings of Judah. Through the years, as He faithfully served the nation, he saw the fickleness of the human heart, and how people were prone to wander away from the God who saved and sustained them, only to cry for mercy and return to His feet.

This prophecy was written when the people of Israel were facing threats and oppression from other nations around them. In the midst of their difficulties, just when they thought that all hope was gone, God sent a word of assurance and encouragement through His servant Isaiah. God told the people that He was theirs and they were His, and He would never leave them, or let go of their hand! **God is reminding us today that we can trust Him.** He is able, and He will always be there for us as a strong tower in our time of need.

God addresses His people as 'Israel', which means 'he strives with God'. This is the name that God gave to Jacob when he wrestled with God through the night (Genesis 32:28), and it later came to be the name of the nation. Jacob professed to be a worshipper of God, but we know that he needed to have a change of heart. 'Jacob' means 'deceiver', and the Word of God shows us that Jacob's life was filled with deception. His heart was not right before God, until the night he wrestled with God, and surrendered to the mastery and Lordship of Jehovah over his life. It was after this that he received his new name and also his new identity! He began to experience transformation, as he submitted to the hand of God upon him.

It is powerful that God calls us 'Jacob' and the 'descendents of Abraham'. When He calls us 'Jacob', we can see that He knows us for all our weaknesses, and even the self-deceptions that may lurk in our hearts, and He still loves us, and called us to be His own. He chose us deliberately, and called us by name. He has a plan and purpose for each of us and nothing He does for us is conditional on our 'goodness'. He loves us unconditionally!

God responds to our faith in Him. His desire is that we walk in deeper faith. Abraham was the Father of Faith, so we as his spiritual descendents are children of faith; we are in a relationship with God because of faith. He refers to Abraham as 'my friend', and this is so

powerful, because it shows us that He sees us as His friends, and the children of His friend Abraham! Friends are in covenant with each other and can depend on each other. They can confide in and feel safe with each other. Friends can be expected to love and accept us for who we are. I am so thankful to be a friend of God! He will never hurt me. He will never betray me. He will never leave me or forsake me.

Not only Has God chosen us as His friends, but He has sought us out from the “ends of the earth”! It does not matter how far we are from Him, spiritually or physically, because God can reach us wherever we are. You may remember the time you first met Jesus, and how far you were from the righteousness of God at the time. He crosses the oceans and climbs the highest mountain to reach the one He has chosen, and it does not matter how 'lost' we are. His arm can reach into the deepest pit of sin and darkness. His heart cries out for the lost and hurting. He seeks them out from the ends of the earth!

We are His 'servants'. We belong to Him. Once He has chosen us, He never rejects us, even though we may let Him down a thousand times. We belong to Him, and no matter who gives up on us, our Father God never will. We are His children, and the children of His friend Abraham. We are a part of Him. We can enjoy His love, His presence and His power because we are His friends, and a part of God's family.

Because of the presence of God, and the strength we receive from His assurance, we can step into tomorrow without fear. However bleak the situation may seem to be in your finances, relationships, health, or in the nation, God is saying to you: *“Do not fear, for I am with you.”* You may have heard some bad news today, but the Lord is saying to you: *“Do not be dismayed for I am your God.”* Whatever you are presently coping with, this is the bottom line - that He is your God, and you are a mighty army when He fights by our side! He will strengthen you and help you to face and overcome the challenges before you. He is upholding you with His mighty and righteous right hand. The evil one cannot fight against the righteousness of God, which covers us when we walk in obedience to Him (it is part of our armor). **Let us trust in the righteousness of our God.** We may get it wrong a hundred times each day, but He never will, and He covers us in His own holiness. **He upholds us with His righteous right hand.** Our enemies may try to slander and discredit us, and it may sometimes seem as though the darkness of hell has been unleashed against our homes, our families, our health or our finances, but God upholds us. We cannot fall into the snares of the wicked because God brings us through victoriously. Hallelujah!

If you are facing any kind of conflict or difficulties in your life, hear the voice of the Holy Spirit today. **Do not fear! He is upholding you. Do nothing in the flesh, but just keep your eyes on Jesus and stand on His Word.** Worship Him. You will see His righteous right arm moving on your behalf. He is intervening in your situation. He is taking on the enemy forces. **Be still and know that He is God.** He is able. He is mighty. He is strengthening you and helping you!

Precious blood bought child of the Almighty, be encouraged today that God loves you and is with you. You do not face your battles alone. He is sustaining you and upholding you. Stop seeing your problem as 'big' and start focusing on the awesome and powerful God we serve. He

desires that we do not give in to fear which can cripple us and destroy the faith we need to believe for any blessing from God. Instead, look to God, and know that He is with you, strengthening and holding you. No weapon formed against you shall prosper. You are the friend of God. He will never leave your side. He chose you to be His very precious child!

May you walk in the victory and the power of the name of Jesus. May you see the righteous right hand of the Lord upholding you and strengthening you as you seek to live in faith for the glory of His name, Amen!

Notes:

Chapter Ten

“I Am With You” - 2 (Isaiah 41:11-16)

"All who rage against you will surely be ashamed and disgraced; those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish. Though you search for your enemies, you will not find them. Those who wage war against you will be as nothing at all. For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, do not fear; I will help you. Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you," declares the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. See, I will make you into a threshing-sledge, new and sharp, with many teeth. You will thresh the mountains and crush them, and reduce the hills to chaff. You will winnow them, the wind will pick them up, and a gale will blow them away. But you will rejoice in the Lord and glory in the Holy One of Israel.

The previous chapter focused on Isaiah 41:8-10, and God's assurance that He is with us and will strengthen and uphold us with His righteous right hand. As we continue to look at Isaiah 41, we see that not only does God strengthen us to withstand the attacks that come against us, but He equips and empowers us to fight back and overcome! Hallelujah!

This message is an assurance for all you precious people who have been encountering enemy attacks. It could be a work situation, where people are trying to discredit you and prevent your progress, or a relationship issue, where others seem to see the worst in everything you do. Perhaps you have been meeting obstacles in your studies or ministry, or it feels as though your expenses are out of control! Maybe you have been experiencing sporadic spells of infirmity, or you feel like you meet with conflicts wherever you go. Remember that our real enemy is not a physical one. According to Ephesians 6:12: *"Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."* The real enemy is not the relative who discourages you each time you meet; it is the dark force *using* that person to cause you pain and destroy your peace. The real enemy is the spirit *behind* your difficult circumstances, the one that causes people to see you with disfavor and believe a lie about you rather than the truth. Our battle is not against the physical person or circumstance but with the powers of darkness working behind them.

This scripture tells us that God will deal with those who unjustifiably attempt to bring us down. This is a fact. While we seek to bless those who persecute us and walk in the love of God, and we would not want to ever celebrate the downfall of those who have come against us, the Lord is declaring that He will contend with those who contend with His children! He will take care of them and a time will come when we will be unable to see those enemies, even if we search for them. They will be "as nothing at all". This means that they will be of no significance to our lives because we will be immune and shielded by the Father from their uplifted swords. It also means that God will either move them out of our lives, or move the enmity and bitterness out of their hearts. I pray this to be so especially for all those God-haters around the world, who rail against the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, that their hearts will be touched and transformed by the love of God.

So how can we get to that place where we are able to stand firm and see the hand of the Lord delivering us?

- 1) **Acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus in your life.** God says through Isaiah: "*for I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand...*" Give your right hand to the Lord. Enter into a covenant with Him. Stand in partnership with Him in every decision you make in your life, however big or small. He wants to be involved in our lives. The right hand is significant of all our work and all our actions, and our Father is asking that we permit Him to be the center of everything we do. Allow Him to be Lord over it all. I remember the minister who married Manju and me many years ago, and how he had us place our right hands intertwined upon his hands, signifying the covenant relationship of interdependence and mutual submission in the sight of God. If we want Jesus to be Lord of our lives, we need to place our right hand in His, in a sacred marriage covenant, and totally submit to His way and His will.
- 2) **Do not give in to fear.** We may be like Jacob still trying to overcome carnal thinking, deceived or deceiving, as worms, as babes in our insignificance, and powerlessness to overcome in our own strength. However, **He will help us** if we trust in Him and put our hand in His! Or we may be 'little Israel' - people who have come into some maturity in our walk with God, those who have striven (as Jacob did) and come through to deeper faith. Whoever we are, and whatever the level of our walk with God, He is assuring us that He will help us so we need not be afraid. We are small in His sight, and helpless in our own right, but we can believe and know that He is fighting on our behalf, because He is our **redeemer**. We belong to the Holy One of Israel. His Spirit lives in us!
- 3) **Receive His Help and Empowerment.** God is promising that He will equip us to overcome the enemy and to become a "*threshing sledge, new and sharp with many teeth*". Threshing was performed usually by spreading the sheaves on the threshing floor and causing oxen and cattle to tread repeatedly over them. There was also a threshing sledge which was drawn over the corn to separate the kernels of grain from the chaff. After the grain was threshed, it was winnowed by being thrown up against the wind and tossed with wooden scoops. The refuse of straw and chaff was burned (Isaiah 5:24). Freed from impurities, the grain was then laid up in granaries till used.

The Lord is drawing a potent picture for us. He is promising that we will be spiritual threshing sledges if we choose to have faith instead of fear and walk under His Lordship and in His Word. He is telling us that even the biggest problems we face (the mountains) will not only be overcome, they will be crushed like sheaves of grain! They will become insignificant and invisible, and the lesser difficulties we are wrestling with (the hills) will be 'reduced to chaff', as they are winnowed and tossed into the wind. They will disappear because the wind of the Holy Spirit will cause them to be blown away forever! What seems to be a pressing aggravation to you now, and a cause for sleepless nights will not even be a minor irritation in the future. Six months down the road, your situation may be completely different. Psalm 144 verse 1 says "*Praise be to the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle.*" God is equipping you for victory!

- 4) **Rejoice in the Lord and give Him Glory.** Let us never stop worshipping and praising God for all His goodness, and let us always remember to give Him the glory for every success. He is faithful and true. Our victory comes from Him.

Precious people, we can experience the Father's faithfulness and power to the extent of our own willingness to trust in Him and believe His Word as **true**. When old enemies and old infirmities rise up against us, it is a time to pause and allow the Lord to show us what aspects of our lives have slipped away from His total Lordship, or whether faith is missing from any part of our life and work. It is also an opportunity to see if there is any chaff of carnality, vanity or unforgiveness within us, which needs to be burned in the fire of the Holy Spirit so that only true grain remains, which can be stored and used for the Glory of God alone. Once we have done this, we are ready to receive all the mountain shaking help and Holy Spirit empowerment of the Lord to rise up and thresh those hills to dust! *"In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us"* (Romans 8:37). Mountains, here we come!

May the Lord Jesus Christ who conquered death and rose from the grave fill you with His empowering presence to rise up and thresh your mountains and hills to chaff. You are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might! You are an overcomer in the mighty name of Jesus!

Notes:

“Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”

Hebrews 11:1

Chapter Eleven

Blessed! (Genesis 12:1-4)

“The Lord said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.

“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

So Abram left, as the Lord had told him” (NIV)

Abraham is known as the father of faith. We first meet him in Chapter 11 of the book of Genesis, where we are given his family lineage and told how he and his family set out for Canaan from Ur of the Chaldeans. Archaeological findings dating back to 2600/2400 BC prove that Abraham’s original family home of Ur was a wealthy city which existed in ancient Mesopotamia, which is now southern Iraq. Abraham’s name at the time was Abram which means ‘exalted father’. Abraham married his half-sister Sarai, which means ‘Princess’. He departed from Ur to Canaan, with his father, Sarai and nephew Lot, but they settled down in Haran instead. (Haran is located in Turkey). The people of Ur worshipped the moon God, ‘Sin’, as did the people of Haran. Abraham was seventy-five years old, when he first met Almighty God. God began a work in him, and Abraham spent the rest of his life learning to walk in His ways.

God called Abram while he was living in the city of ‘sin’ and told him to leave the city and all his friends and family, and move away to his inheritance. God had great things in store for him, and spoke a blessing upon Abram and his future generations. It is a blessing we can all own as we seek to walk in faith as Abraham did. God promised Abraham a sevenfold blessing:

- 1) To make him into a great nation.** (The blessing of increase and multiplication)
- 2) To bless him.** (God’s presence in his life bringing prosperity to all aspects of his life – health, long life, protection and provision).
- 3) To make his name great.** (God is the glory and the lifter of our heads – (Psalm 3:3).
- 4) To make him a blessing to others** (Luke 6:38).
- 5) To bless those who blessed him** (Matthew 10:40-42).
- 6) To permit those who cursed him to eat of their own fruit.** (This means that people who speak curses over others reap the same harvest they sow into another life. I strongly believe that God does not curse anyone and that people bring curses on themselves when they break spiritual principles. Also, the absence of blessing can be a curse.)

7) To use him as a channel of blessing to all the nations of the earth. (We have been called to bring the love of Jesus and all the blessings of the renewed life to a hurting generation around the world).

God told Abraham to receive these promises in **faith** and to **believe** that they would all come to pass, but there was a problem Abraham had to overcome. His wife Sarai had no children, and was described as ‘barren’ in Genesis 11:30. He was already a senior citizen, and Sarai though reputedly beautiful (Genesis 12:11) was probably not much more than 10 years younger. They were both past their prime. Abraham was already in his seventies and had not still fathered a child, although some years later, when Abraham was 86, Sarah’s maid Hagar gave birth to his son Ishmael (Genesis 16:15). He probably felt like his life had passed him by, and God was asking him to believe that he would be the father of a great nation!

You may be reading this chapter while facing a similar situation. Perhaps you have received prophecies and words of encouragement through the servants of God about the fulfillment of a long term dream. Or you may have been given words of promise for future blessing and breakthrough, but those words are still to be fulfilled and the dream has yet to become a reality. Maybe you are wondering if you really did hear from God, or whether there is something you still need to do to see the breakthrough you are praying for. Abraham probably asked himself many times why he could not have the one thing he longed for – a son to carry his name. While his brothers’ wives gave birth to children, and all the families of his relatives and friends expanded, the years kept rolling on until all the odds seemed to be against him. He had probably tried everything he knew to do, and may have made sacrifices to all the deities of the land including the moon god who was worshipped in his city.

Abraham had grown up in the darkness of idol worship in the home of his father Terah (Joshua 24:2). He was not a worshipper of God at the time, but his heart must have longed for some real answers to his questions. He must have looked up at the stars in the skies many times and wondered if there was anybody who could feel his pain, and any god powerful enough to break the curse under which he and his wife were living – the curse of barrenness, which may have been because of the worship of idols (Deuteronomy 28:15 & 18, and 27:15).

When Abraham encountered the living God at the age of 75, God promised to make him the father of a nation. Abraham believed God and received His word, and this changed the whole course of his life. We know he trusted God (whom he had never met before) and believed His promises because he obeyed God and did what he was instructed to do. Although many years went by before he saw every aspect of the sevenfold blessing fulfilled, it all came to pass during the course of his life. We are beneficiaries of the generational blessing God spoke upon Abraham because the Lord Jesus, the Savior of the world was a descendant of Abraham through His human lineage, and representatives of most of the people groups of the world have come to know the blessing of being born into His name. Abraham became a powerful man, walking in all the prosperity and blessing of God, and he was the root and the father of what became the nation Israel. How did this happen? How did he break free of the barrenness he and Sarai were living in?

They moved on from where they were! God asked him to get out of his comfort zone and step out into the unknown. In Haran, Abraham and his family were known by the people of the town and his father was probably one of the elders of the community. It is likely that he knew everyone and everyone knew him. Everything felt familiar and comfortable to Abraham, but the city was covered in darkness. The people worshipped the moon god through various satanic rituals which were observed at night when the moon was out, especially on the night of the full moon. This brought the city and all its inhabitants under the bondage of the principalities ruling the city. What was familiar and comfortable to Abraham and his family was really a deadly blanket of evil which was binding them more each time they participated in the regular rituals and worship. What people may believe are harmless games and customs like those observed in the Western nations at the end of the month of October can in reality expose them to the evil grip of dark powers which bring death and destruction.

God may be speaking to you today, friend. You may have been crying out to God for a breakthrough in your finances, relationships, your health, or even in your ministry. Perhaps you have been waiting a long time for the right life partner. God is asking you to break out from where you have been sitting in your comfortable discomfort. There are relationships, jobs, ministries, habits and attitudes (among other things) God shows us we need to break away from. Often, we just need to take some decisive steps with our lives to see the fullness of Heaven's blessing upon everything we do. God is a faithful Father who is quick to forgive those who turn to His will! When we honor and obey Him, He honors and blesses us, and we begin to see answers to long term prayers including the salvation of loved ones, and the release of much blessing on every aspect of our lives.

Some thoughts we could take from this chapter are:

- 1) Remember that **it is never too late** for any of us or for those we love to step off the wrong path and turn to God, or to walk in God's will. Abraham was 75 when his life was touched by God, and he is known as the father of faith!
- 2) In God's book, **it does not matter what or where we came from**. It is never a disadvantage (unless we allow it to be so). Abraham's life had been steeped in pagan worship and occultic practices, but when he surrendered to God, his life was changed, and God used him to birth a nation and bless the nations of the world. Hallelujah!
- 3) **Never hesitate when it comes to obeying God's direction** upon your life, or His Word into your heart, however difficult or painful it may seem to be. Step forward in faith and see Him open doors you never could have opened for yourself. There is nothing too hard for the Lord!

I pray that the Holy Spirit will shine His light deep into your heart and show you what stands between you and your blessing. May you receive strength to rise up from where you are and move onwards, out of Haran, and into the blessed promises God has for you. The Father is calling you into a new season. It is a season of fruitfulness, blessing and joy!

Notes:

Chapter Twelve

Faith In Motion (Genesis 15:1-6)

“After this, the Word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.” But Abram said, “O Sovereign Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.” Then the Word of the Lord came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars – if indeed you can count them.” Then He said to him, “so shall your offspring be.” Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness.” (NIV)

In the last chapter we looked at Genesis 12, and how God called Abraham out of his comfort zone and to a distant land. He stepped out in obedience to God and received many promises, including that he would become a great nation. Abraham was 75 when God first appeared to him, and many years later, while he and Sarah were still childless and waiting for the fulfillment of the promise, God appeared to Abraham again.

God said to Abraham:

1) “Do not be afraid”. Fear can rob us of the blessing of God. Fear is the opposite of faith because it means we are believing for a negative thing to come to pass. Fear destroys faith. We cannot say we have faith and live in fear at the same time. To receive what God has promised us, we have to believe His Word. If we listen to the report of the world around us, we would have no faith for the supernatural to happen, and without faith we may never see the fullness of God’s blessing brought to pass in our lives. The Lord is telling each of us “Do not be afraid”!

2) “I am your shield” – If we fill ourselves with the presence of God, and immerse ourselves in His Word, we experience His favor surrounding us like a shield (Psalm 5:12). Allow yourself to be clothed with Jesus. He is eternity. He is the beginning and the end. He is the great I AM. It is His presence upon us which guards our hearts from fear and anxiety, enabling us to walk in expectancy and hope. He is the ultimate and absolute protection and covering we need. God is telling you today “I am your shield”!

3) God was his reward - Abraham had a big need in his life, and he was probably getting pretty desperate as the months and years slipped by and there were still no signs of a child; but God told him to focus on the biggest blessing of all, the fact that Almighty God was his friend! The source of all blessing and life itself was with him forever. (*“Seek first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness and all these things will be added unto you”* – Matthew 6:33). We could own the world and still have nothing if we did not have Jesus in our lives. He is the center of our existence. He is everything. Just knowing Him is reward enough.

In the years since Abraham had first come to know the Lord, he had been blessed abundantly. He had all the cattle, land, servants, camels, etc that he could want. He was wealthy, respected in

the community in which he lived, and a follower of the living God. But there was still one thing his heart yearned for more than all the things he had been blessed with – a child. It was possible in those days (as it is today) to adopt someone who was not a blood relative and make them your heir. Abraham was telling God here that all the blessings he had received were not of real value to him because there was one thing he was still waiting for – his own child. If he and Sarah did not have a child, he was going to have to leave all his abundant wealth to his servant Eliezer.

This message is for all you precious people who have been waiting a long time for the fulfillment of a promise from God. Be encouraged and know that your wait is not in vain. God's Word is true, and **is being** fulfilled in your life even as you read this page. God assured Abraham that his heir would not be his employee Eliezer, but his own son. The Lord called him outside his tent and had him look up at the stars. A clear middle eastern night sky has thousands of visible stars and there was no way Abraham could have counted those stars as God told him to. God told Abraham that although he was asking for a child, he would be blessed with a multitude and a tribe. Abraham was seeing the 'now' and thinking of one or two. God was seeing ahead down the corridors of time and seeing generations of Abrahams! Ephesians 3:20 says that God is able to do "...*immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us...*" God has something better for you than what you even wish for yourself! He is able to far surpass your biggest dreams, but the key to it all is **faith and expectation**. Hebrews 11:1 says that "*Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see*" and Hebrews 11:6 tells us that "*without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.*" It pleases God and delights His heart when His children believe His Word and receive it as true, and pray big prayers in response to the "big" Word. God told Abraham "*Count the stars – if indeed you can count them; so shall your offspring be.*" And **Abraham believed** the Lord. It felt like all the odds were against him – his age, the time he had waited already, and his wife's time of life, but **Abraham chose to believe God**.

Faith is about seeing all the signs which suggest the contrary to what we seek, and still believing God's Word. It is a choice we make. Friend, the x-rays or doctor's reports may be telling you a different story, and your balance sheet may appear pretty bleak. Perhaps the loneliness of the single life shouts loudly that you will never find the one person you are looking for. However, you can choose to believe God and not the lie of the devil. You can choose to refuse the report of the world, (the doctor, the bank, the news, your friends) and believe the good report God has for you. God prophesies good things for your life. His Word will come to pass as you wait for Him and believe!

The Word of God says that Abraham believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness! God deemed Abraham a righteous man because he believed God. Everything in the Kingdom is about believing God. In the world we have to see to believe, but in the Kingdom, we have to believe to see! Hallelujah!

Friend, Psalm 119:89 says "*Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in heaven*". God's Word never changes. God never changes His mind about some good thing He was bringing to pass in your life. Our circumstances may change, but God's Word remains true. It is sealed into eternity, and will come to pass as we believe and expect to receive.

May God fill you with faith, even as you read these words. We are all the spiritual children of Abraham, as we walk in faith. Believe the Word of the Lord, and see His hand move mightily upon your life! Do not fear, for He is your shield and your very great reward!

Notes:

Chapter Thirteen

Walking In The Blessing (Genesis 17:1-8)

“When Abram was ninety nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.” Abram fell face down, and God said to him, “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.” (NIV)

When Abram first met God (Genesis 12), God revealed Himself to Abram as His Blessor and Provider and promised to make him into a great nation. Many years later, when he was in his eighties, God appeared to him again (Genesis 15:9-21), and established a covenant between Himself and Abram, revealing Himself to Abram as his Protector (shield) and Gift (great reward). In this chapter, we see God appear to Abram yet again, and confirm the covenant He made with Abram more than ten years previously. God introduced Himself as God Almighty - "El-Shaddai". 'El' points to the omnipotent greatness of God. Shaddai seems to be derived from another word meaning 'breast', which implies that Shaddai is one who nourishes, supplies, nurtures and satisfies. It is God as 'El' who helps, but it is God as 'Shaddai' who abundantly pours out every possible blessing on those who look to Him. Up to this point, Abram had seen various single aspects of God; as Provider, Protector, Blessor. Now he was receiving a revelation of how mighty, how powerful and how abundant in loving blessing was the God who had revealed Himself to him. El Shaddai - the One who had drawn him into His everlasting arms and into an eternal encounter, a journey of revelation and power.

There was so much more for Abram to know and enjoy in this God he had begun to know. Abram had still not fathered a child through his wife Sarai, and it must have seemed to him like time was running out - he was ninety-nine and had been waiting a long time! Although God had blessed him with great wealth and power, he was still to see the blessing he waited for – an heir. However, when God appeared to him and said 'I am El Shaddai', Abram fell face down on the ground. It was an eternal, supernatural moment, when He encountered the Almighty, all powerful King of the universe. His twenty four years of waiting were suddenly swallowed up in eternity as he was drawn outside of the limitations of time and space, and he stepped into the arms of El Shaddai. He lost all fear and anxiety; he was lost in El Shaddai. He was in the abundance, the fruitfulness, the timeless sweet joy of the Source of all life and blessing - Almighty God. He was in the realm of the miraculous - in the infinite, omni-possibility of El Shaddai for whom nothing is impossible! God spoke many blessings over Abram's life as He confirmed His covenant with him.

These were blessings of increase and fruitfulness, land, and the assurance of God's presence. It is powerful that God changed Abram's name. This man had been waiting twenty four years for

an heir, and here was God saying "No longer will you be called Abram (which means 'exalted father') but your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many (not just one) nations." When God decrees something, it is already done! He changed Abram's name to Abraham because He knew what He had already decreed for Abram - a son through whom nations and tribes would be born. Everything God had promised him was already his, and God was calling him to begin to live in that blessing, to believe and see it fulfilled. In the world we have to see to believe; in the Kingdom, we have to believe to see! As Abram received God's Word, believed against all odds, and began to think and live like an Abraham, the blessing released on his behalf began to be manifested in the flesh.

There are two things Abraham was supposed to do to walk into his season of blessing. **Firstly, he had to believe.** Abraham was in the glorious presence of El Shaddai and was hearing His voice. There was no way he could not believe! Dear friend, if you feel your faith is weak, spend time with El Shaddai. Worship Him and express your love for Him. Feed on the Word and hear His voice. You will feel faith rising up and leading you into the blessing you have been waiting for. Faith enables us to live like we have already received the blessing we were praying for. I know of a lady who was waiting for a child. Once a prayer of faith was prayed over her, she began to make preparations for the baby she was sure she would one day hold in her arms. Months came and went, but she kept on believing until God's Word was finally fulfilled in her life - she believed and then received! Abram had been Abram for these 99 years of his life. Now God was calling him to live as an Abraham - to begin to walk as the father of a multitude!

Secondly, God said to him " Walk before me and be blameless." God seeks our loving obedience and submission to His will. We cannot come before El Shaddai and remind Him of His promises if we are living to please ourselves and are far away from His Word. It is true that we cannot live God's way in our own strength, but because of the power of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ our Savior, we can receive the constant help of His Blessed Spirit to make the right choices daily, and walk before God "blamelessly".

Maybe you are praying daily for the fulfillment of promises God has given you, and asking God why you have not seen the evidence of it in your life. If Daddy God decreed something for you, it is already yours. Begin to believe. Begin to walk into your blessing. God wants to change your name! You are blessed, prosperous, strong, healed, free, and at peace with others. You are the head and not the tail. You are bold and powerful, and more than a conqueror in Christ Jesus. You are a part of a royal priesthood and a holy generation. You are the righteousness of God in Christ. God sees you as the mighty man or woman He has decreed you to be! Your blessing has already been released to you. You have been given a new identity and a new name! El Shaddai is your Father! He is on your side.

"Precious Father El Shaddai, I pray that Your hand will come upon each dear brother or sister reading this chapter today. Help them to see who they are in You. They are blessed beyond measure. Help them to believe Your Word, walk blamelessly before You, and see all your powerful promises fulfilled in their lives, for the glory and honor of your mighty name., in Jesus' name, Amen!"

Notes:

Chapter Fourteen

God First (Genesis 22:1-5)

“Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” Then He said, “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day, Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.

And Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.” (NKJV)

This is a story that could make any parent cringe! Sarah and Abraham had been childless for many years, waiting for the fulfillment of God’s promise. When the baby was finally born, they were so filled with joy and thanksgiving that they named him “Isaac”, which means “The one who laughs” or “laughter”. Abraham had waited many years to hold little Isaac in his arms. Although God Himself had given Abraham the assurance that he would be the father of nations, he must have had many questions in his heart each time he looked up into the starry night sky and prayed. This man was deemed “righteous” by God (Romans 4:3) when he believed God’s promise to him. **It took faith to believe the Word of God, but it took greater faith to wait it out and see it finally fulfilled.**

When Isaac came, he became the little king of the castle. It is possible to imagine how much the family and household revolved around this tiny person who had brought such joy to all. Without even realizing it, Abraham, Sarah and all their staff were worshipping little Isaac, waiting on his every need! Each night when Sarah and Abraham watched their baby smile in his sleep, and roll over on his little bed, they had no idea that he had become their idol. About 300+ years down the road and they would have been breaking one of the commandments which were given through Moses, the one that said: “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3). As the years went by, the fond parents were probably so focused on loving, nurturing and teaching their child that they had ever decreasing time for God. It is quite likely that Abraham hardly sat outside under the night sky to pray. Sometimes our attention can become so absorbed by the very thing God blesses us with that it takes the first place in our lives, which is due to Him. When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, He said (Luke 10:27) *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.”* He calls us to get our priorities right!

When God called to Abraham, he said *“here I am”*. He was fully yielded to the voice of God. He may have grown a little distant from His Lord and Blessor since the birth of his child, but his commitment to God had never waned. When God asked him to sacrifice his son as a burnt offering, many things probably passed through his mind, especially when God said *“your son”*

and emphasized further “your *only* son”, and “*Isaac, whom you love*”. God was showing him the extent of the sacrifice that was being required of him. This was the son he had longed for and loved with all his heart. This was the center of his existence, and the one who filled his life with joy. This was his whole meaning and purpose for living, and God was asking him to give him up! Abraham may have wondered if he was just imagining the whole thing, but it was all too painfully true. It was like a bad dream!

This account in Genesis gives us the impression that Abraham obeyed without any hesitation, and that he calmly and clinically went to sleep that night knowing that he would take his son to the mountain of sacrifice in the morning (the same mountain where Jesus was crucified) and lay him on an altar to God. Some Bible scholars write about the mental and emotional battle he experienced, while dramatized Biblical movies show Abraham screaming at God, and struggling to obey.

Abraham must have experienced some shock and confusion when God made His request, but as he processed the thoughts that raced through his mind, I believe he began to realize that the One who gave this precious boy to him was never going to take him away again like some perverse bully would do. He understood in the depths of his heart that he served the Creator, the life giver, the Blessor. His God would take no delight in the death of Isaac, or the potential pain this could bring to his parents. He knew his God would never take his son away and that it is against the nature of God to bring evil to His creation. How can we know this? From the fact that Abraham said to his servants at the bottom of the mountain, “*Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.*” He told his helpers what he believed and knew to be true, that he and Isaac would be coming back down the mountain together once they had worshipped.

This father of faith heard the voice of God and obeyed. Despite any confusion and conflict within him, we are told that he woke up **early** in the morning and began to make preparations to leave for Mount Moriah. He was not shuffling his feet or hesitating. On the contrary, he was very purposeful about what he had to do. However, it is likely that Abraham’s faith took a pounding as they journeyed out. His heart probably smote him each time Isaac looked at him, but he did not waver. As the first day and then the second drew to a close, he may have been feeling very discouraged and probably wondered if he was crazy to do what he was doing! Perhaps the devil’s voice asked him whether he really heard the voice of God in the first place, but Abraham knew his God. He knew the One he worshipped was faithful. He knew the gifts of God were for him to keep (Romans 11:29) and that His promises were always fulfilled. He acknowledged Almighty God as his source and his provision. He could not question the Almighty. He plodded on regardless of his many different feelings because he had no doubt in his mind that he served a **good** God, who had **good** plans for him. He was sure that if he simply **obeyed**, all would be well. This was, in fact, how things turned out for Abraham, which is what we will look at in the next chapter.

Friend, whatever situation you are facing in your life right now, remember that **God is good!** Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us of God’s heart for His kids: “*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope*”. **God has good plans for us.** He has the best in store for us. Abraham trusted God against all

odds. He knew there was no way that God could fail him. As he stepped up that mountain with his only son by his side, he went willingly to give him up, because he knew by now that whatever he released into the hands of God came back to him multiplied! **Abraham had learnt one of the Kingdom secrets of walking in the blessing – giving to God!** And with each step he took towards the top of the mountain, he became increasingly more certain that God had long life and satisfaction, and great blessing for his son (Psalm 91:16).

John 10:10 tells us that the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy, but Jesus came/comes to give us **abundant life**. He is the Way, the Truth and the **Life**, (John 14:6) and He is the **light** of the world (John 8:12). Whatever brings destruction, death, pain or hopelessness is not from God but from the darkness. We may be beset with challenges and problems from every side, but we need to know the Lord we serve, and know that He is **good, and He has the best for us**. Daniel wrote (Daniel 11:32) *“The people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits.”* James 1:17 tells us that *“every good and perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”* When we know beyond any doubt that God only desires what is good for us and has good gifts and plans to prosper us, then it is easy to lift up our hearts and hands and surrender every difficulty and every need to Him.

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:31 & 32).

God is calling us today to acknowledge and believe in Him for who He is – **a good and gracious God who loves to bless His kids**. The One who holds nothing back from the ones He loves, and who, like Abraham, readily gave His only Son to die on Mount Moriah, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life (John 3:16). Whatever you feel you have lost in your life, begin to seek it back knowing that Daddy God never took it away. God is almighty and all powerful, and there is nothing impossible with Him. He may not turn up too early, but He is never too late! He has a miracle for you. He has a blessing in store for you!

According to Matthew 6:33, when we give God the first place in our lives, He takes care of everything else, and there is nothing we can lack. I pray that the Holy Spirit will enable you to release every aspect of your life to Jesus and hold nothing back from Him. Whatever has slipped out of your hand or He has asked you to lay on the altar, is coming back to you multiplied, pressed down, shaken together and running over (Luke 6:38). Your blessing is on its way!

Notes:

Chapter Fifteen

Living Sacrifice (Genesis 22:6-12)

“So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son: and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father?” And he said, “Here I am my son.” Then he said “Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”

And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” So the two of them went together. Then they came to the place which God had told him, and Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.

And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said “Abraham, Abraham!” So he said “Here I am.” And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” (NKJV)

For three days, Abraham had been sure about what he had been called to do, and although he experienced some moments of doubt, God’s instructions to him resounded in his heart. However, this was where the rubber met the road! Abraham had to fight his own emotions as he panted up the mountain with Isaac, “the one who laughs”. Neither of them were laughing, or even smiling as they took slow steps up the side of the mountain in silence, the wood on Isaac’s back, and the fire and knife in Abraham’s hands.

Isaac had probably been up the mountain of sacrifice with his father many times before, but this time was different. It is likely that their helpers normally went up the mountain with them, carrying the fire, the implements, and the ram or lamb for the sacrifice. He probably wondered why it was just the two of them this time. He wondered why there was no lamb!

When Abraham said “God will provide for Himself the lamb”, he was expressing his faith in God, and his absolute belief that he was not going to lose Isaac. He was also unwittingly making a prophetic statement that God would provide His only Son, Jesus, the perfect lamb without spot or blemish, as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of all people and for all time.

Isaac and Abraham built an altar and placed the wood on it. Then, Abraham bound his only son and laid him on the wood in the same way a lamb would have been secured to the altar. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but shall have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). Jesus said to his disciples in John 10:17-18: *“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”* It is believed that Isaac was a teenage boy at this time. Abraham was an old man and could not have forcibly restrained a strong young boy and offered him as a sacrifice. Isaac (like Jesus) willingly laid down upon the altar at his father’s command, because of his absolute **trust** in the love of his father. Abraham

was able to ignore his own fatherly feelings and command his son to do this because of his own trust and faith in the love of the heavenly Father! When we willingly let go of what God is asking us to lay down, we always receive back something more or something better. It also takes us to higher ground spiritually and increases our faith.

The next few minutes must have been engraved into Abraham's mind in slow motion! He probably sweated with the anguish he was experiencing, and the knife in his hand was poised over his beloved child, when he heard from Heaven and the Lord stopped him taking Isaac's life. We do not know if he would have actually brought that knife down upon his son's heart, but intervention came in the nick of time! The Word of God does not speak about Isaac's feelings in this, but the whole experience must have been an extremely traumatic one for the boy, and it was probably also a very painful experience for Abraham.

Most of all, Abraham had passed a heavenly test. The divine voice said to him *"for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."* This tells us something. God always gives us the freedom of choice, but if we truly love and revere Jehovah God, we would hold nothing back from Him. Many of us struggle to give him the time, the tithes, the relationships or even the worship that He requires of us. It all boils down to whether we love and fear the Lord more than anyone or anything else. God really needs nothing that is ours. He is the ruler and owner of everything (Psalm 50:9-13), but He seeks the heart with which our offerings come. He saw how hard it was for Abraham to see the trust in the face of his child and do what he did. He saw his inner struggle he had as he walked to Mount Moriah, telling himself that obeying God was more important than anything else, and that everything he had belonged to the King of kings. What really was a sweet smelling offering to the Lord was the **heart** with which Abraham laid his son upon the altar, and his **faith** which told him that "God would provide a lamb"! The father of faith had been placed on the scales and passed the test, because without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). He pleased God!

Let me leave you with these thoughts:

- 1) **God never promised that it would always be easy to obey His Word but obedience brings a blessing.** It can be often painful and difficult to obey, and for many of us, it would be easier to flow with the world or with our own instincts and wishes, rather than to do what God wants. It hurts to say 'no' to the flesh and take the narrow path, but what a joy becomes ours when we do what pleases Daddy. What a sweet peace can flood our souls, and what awesome protection comes from walking in the center of God's will and saying 'no' to everything else. Does that mean that the struggle ceases, or that you will not be pulled in multiple directions? No! So long as we walk in this colorful world, we will be faced with a myriad challenges and choices daily, but it always comes down to the basic choice God gave to His people in Deuteronomy 30:19-20: *"I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give them."* Daddy God is good! He has long life and satisfaction, and great joy for all His kids. But He has given us the freedom to

choose, and every choice has a consequence, good or bad! Abraham could have chosen to ignore the voice of God and gone hunting with Isaac instead, but in obeying the Lord, he stepped up into a higher level of faith and blessing, as well as great revelation and joy. The same is true for us.

- 2) **Know that what you give to God will come back to you pressed down, shaken together and running over, multiplied and increased!** Jesus died upon a cruel cross two thousand years ago as a sufficient and holy substitution for every sacrifice that ever needed to be made. He said “It is finished” as He hung between life and death and gave up His Spirit. He did a complete work when His blood was shed, so that we do not have to physically lay any living thing on an altar today. However, **He asks today if we love Him enough to lay our whole lives at His feet; to open our hearts and hands and surrender everything to Him.** What parts of our work or friendships or finances have we shut away from His gaze? What aspects of our past or memories do we cover from the light of the blessed Holy Spirit? Daddy God has paid a huge price to buy our freedom – He gave His only Son to die upon a wooden altar, the cross. He paid the ultimate price through the blood of Jesus Christ so that we could live in forgiveness, in freedom, and in wholeness of body spirit and soul. He now seeks our loving response which is an acknowledgement of His omnipotence, His grace, and His sovereignty over our lives. He says “Give it all to Me, lay it down at my feet. I have plans to prosper you. I have plans to increase my presence and my blessing in your life. I have such great things in store for you!”
- 3) **Do not ever doubt that God Himself will provide everything you need for your life and the work He has called you to do.** Abraham was one of the most prosperous people of his time. He had a real revelation of the provision of Jehovah Jireh, and trusted Him implicitly to provide for everything - even the sacrificial lamb!
- 4) **The sacrifice God desires most from us is a life lived for Him.** He says to you and me today from Romans 12:1: *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.”* Let your life be a holy altar and a place of worship. Let Jesus truly be Lord of your life!

I pray that as you yield to the moving of the sweet Holy Spirit, He will enable you to lay your life wholly at the feet of Jesus. I pray that you will step into a place of complete surrender and that you will invite Him to come in and take the reins of your life. He has the very best in store for you. He has plans to prosper you! May everything that has been a hindrance in your walk with God be placed upon the altar today, and crucified to the cross. Daddy is taking you to higher ground and greater things. He has a wonderful future for you!

Notes:

Chapter Sixteen

The Lord Has Provided (Genesis 22:13-18)

“Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, “The Lord Will Provide”, as it is said to this day, “In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”

Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son – “Blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants, as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed because you have obeyed My Voice.” (NKJV)

During the days that had passed, Abraham had felt his heart constantly pulled between fear and faith, as the loving father in him wrestled with the obedient servant of God. However, despite all the pressure he experienced, he stayed firm in his resolve to do what God had asked of him. Now he saw his faith in God fulfilled at the eleventh hour when Heaven intervened, with Isaac just a breath away from being sacrificed. What a moment for them both! When Isaac previously asked Abraham where the sacrificial lamb was, Abraham replied that the Lord would provide one. His words were seen to be prophetic, for we are told that Abraham saw a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. God provided an animal for Abraham’s sacrifice!

God never intended that Isaac should lose his life or that Abraham and Sarah should be deprived of their only son. He just wanted to give Abraham the opportunity to demonstrate his obedience and love, a love which would hold nothing back from Him. Abraham passed the test and progressed to another level of faith and blessing. He received a promotion!

Friend, whatever need you are facing today, God is reminding us that He is Jehovah Jireh, the Lord our Provider. There is nothing He cannot do, and no need He cannot fill. He is looking to earth today, to see if we trust Him enough to tithe even when the bills are mounting up, or to keep our commitments to serve Him even when we have a healing need in our lives or are pressed for time. He is looking for faith in the hearts of His kids, because faith pleases Him. It takes faith to believe the Word of God when all your circumstances tell you different and when things turn out contrary to your expectations. It takes faith in God to know that however bad things might seem to get, He has given you the power to overcome and that you will see the victory in the end. Abraham spoke words of faith, even when he could have believed that all was lost and that he had no way out. He spoke out what he knew to be the truth about God when he said that God would provide a lamb for the sacrifice. He voiced his faith in the Truth that **El Shaddai is the ultimate provider. Everything we need is found in Him.** Paul said in Acts 17:28: *“For in Him we live and move and have our being”*. He is our source of life and power. He is our source of victory.

Abraham's faith pleased God. The Lord said to Abraham that because he had been willing to give to God what was most precious to him (his only son), he would inherit a very special and powerful blessing. He was to walk under the blessing of God in all aspects of his life, he was to be the patriarch of a tribe which would grow to uncountable proportions (as the stars of the heaven and the sand on the seashore), and he and his posterity would have victory over their enemies as they expanded their borders. God also affirmed the promise He had already given to Abraham, that he and his descendents would be channels through which God would bless those who did not know His saving grace.

Friend, we may have all received promises from God, through the lips of His prophets or from the Word. Let us look at how Abraham activated the blessings resident in the promises given to him:

- 1) **He believed the Word of God and trusted the omnipotence of God to be sufficient for any situation.** He had walked with God for many years and knew that the Almighty would not let him down however uncertain the situation might seem to be. He never doubted the truth of God's Word.
- 2) **He spoke his faith out loud.** ("God *will* provide a lamb"). As these words were spoken out in faith, they turned a supernatural key to a blessing already granted but behind a closed door. Life and death are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21). There is great power in the tongue to release what is good, or (sadly), even what is bad! Faced with the life and death situation of his son, Abraham activated the power of life! If only parents knew the power resident in them to influence the destiny of their children, they would be more purposefully positive about everything they spoke over the lives of their kids!
- 3) **He obeyed wholeheartedly.** The blessing that was spoken over his life from heaven was a direct result of his obedience to the Word of God. He was told "***because*** you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son – "*Blessing I will bless you...*" God asked Abraham to do something extremely difficult, but he resolved to obey the Lord no matter what. **Obedience keeps us in the blessing.**
- 4) **Obedience results in a generational blessing.** Our actions impact not only our lives but the lives of those who come behind us. When God gave Moses the commandments (Exodus 20:5-6) He said "...*You shall not bow down to them nor serve them* (the carved images). *For I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.*"

In Matthew 9:29, Jesus said "*according to your faith shall it be done unto you.*" When we believe what God has said to us, we begin to draw on His Word and activate the blessings that are resident in His promises. God is delighted when we have faith for the impossible, and He provides according to our faith. (He is also grieved when we doubt Him and when we run away from challenges and refuse to stand in faith).

Two thousand years ago, God allowed His only Son to be slain upon an altar in our place so that all humankind could receive the power of His sacrifice and receive life everlasting. When Jesus was facing the cruel cross, He could have called upon legions of angels to deliver Him, but He willingly lay down His life that we might go free. He now asks us to believe in what He has done and to receive all the power and potential of the cross, and all the living blessings in His Word. *“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”* Daddy God loves you, and there is absolutely no good thing that He withholds from you when you walk in His ways (Psalm 84:11). So invite the blessed Holy Spirit today to help you to lay your burdens down at His feet and lay your life upon His altar. **There is so much Jesus has made possible for you to know and to receive, as you believe and obey.** I pray in Jesus’ name that you will receive all the victory and blessing decreed for you as you look up (as Abraham did) and see that God has already provided!

Notes:

Chapter Seventeen

Rest In God (Psalm 62:1-8)

“My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

How long will you assault a man? Would all of you throw him down – this leaning wall, this tottering fence?

They fully intend to topple him from his lofty place; they take delight in lies. With their mouths they bless, but in their hearts they curse.

Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from Him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I shall not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God; He is my mighty rock, my refuge.

Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our refuge.”
(NIV)

This psalm of David's is a confession of absolute dependence on God. It was written during a time when David had to face many challenges. It is a word which excites and encourages others to lean on Almighty God and receive strength from Him.

David experienced betrayal and attack from many sources over the years, even the master he served (King Saul), as well as members of his own family (his son Absalom). There were times in his life when he had to live on the run, a fugitive from his own home and place of service. He learnt the hard way that there is no one who fully measures up to our faith and trust like the Almighty. He knew there was no person on planet earth who could restore his sense of peace and wholeness like God can. He understood that when he drew near to God and worshipped Him, his world was made stable again!

Let us draw from what David speaks about in Psalm 62:

1) David found his strength in God. (“My soul finds rest in God alone.”) This verse in the King James Bible is: *‘My soul waiteth upon God.’* The way to be strengthened and renewed is to *wait* on God, ie, to worship and serve Him, and to rely on God to do what is necessary, or direct you in the steps you need to take. Isaiah 40:31 says *“Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.”* It is really not necessary to manipulate our circumstances, and make things happen, and this revelation can be so restful and healing! We can trust our Abba to work it out better than we ever could. 1 Samuel 30:1-6 tells us about how David was facing a time of stress and anxiety but in the midst of his pain, he stepped aside to find strength in the Lord. Although David had many faithful warriors and friends who surrounded him, he knew there was

no one who could preserve him and keep him strong like His heavenly Father could! He claimed the Lord as his 'rock' and his 'salvation', the fortress which is so strong and solid that it cannot be shaken. When we run into the presence of God, we are enveloped in His impenetrable strength so that we cannot be moved because we are in Him. He is the rock upon which we can stand – Jesus, the rock of our salvation and our dependable, firm foundation forever! Sometimes God calls us into His presence to simply be still and know that He is God; to feel His might and invincible power; to step into His arms and encounter infinity. He is God. He is omnipotent El Shaddai for whom nothing is impossible. When we glimpse His glory we see our problems in the light of His greatness – and realize: *“Is there anything too hard for the Lord?”*

2) Enemies could not destroy David so long as he was held within the divine embrace. David experienced attack from many directions. His enemies used every weapon they could, even slandering him and spreading rumors about him. They were serious about destroying his life and his reputation as a leader. You may be able to identify with how he compares himself to a tottering fence and a leaning wall. There comes a time when you feel like you just cannot take any more, and you tell yourself that if one more thing goes wrong, you will explode! The gossip and insincerity becomes too much to handle – *“With their mouths they bless, but in their hearts they curse”!* You may be feeling like a leaning wall or a collapsing fence, but you can do what David did – lean into the arms of our Lord! We can collapse into His holy presence. He is able to hold us through the storm. He is able to fill us with strength and lift us up to ride over the wind and the waves and rise up in the power of His Spirit with wings like an eagle's! Hallelujah. In our weakness He is our strength, and nothing can separate us from His love!

3) David looked to God for answers. Psalm 20:7 says: *“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.”* He had experienced disappointment and betrayal many times and knew the arm of flesh would fail him. He says *“trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our refuge.”* David knew that coming to God in prayer and worship, and pouring out his heart to God released him from anxiety, stress and hurt. He also knew what Jesus said to His disciples *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”* (Matthew 7:7-8). God has been showing me that I often assume that He will give me what I seek because He knows what is in my heart! However, He wants His children to come to Papa and ask Him for what we need. Matthew 7:9-11 reads: *“Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him!”* God has good gifts for His children and He gives them to those who ask.

So be encouraged today dear friend that although you may be facing difficult times, Almighty God is on your side. Do not seek the help of man or rely on your own wisdom or understanding (Proverbs 3:5). Stop looking for the help of people in high places. You know the One who has the name above all names, the king of all the universe – our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who

loves you so much that He gave His life for you. Demons tremble at the mention of His name. His name is higher than the name of every sickness and disease. Do what David did and turn to Him alone. He will heal your pain and disappointment. He will fill you with peace and strength. He will direct your steps and lift you up from the difficulty you are facing. As David said: *“Trust in Him at all times people”*. With God all things are possible!

Notes:

Chapter Eighteen

Ask, Knock, Seek ... (Matthew 7:7-12)

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks the door will be opened.

Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” (NIV)

This chapter is a reminder that nothing begins to happen in the spiritual realm until we open our mouths and purposefully pray! While teaching His disciples about prayer, Jesus gave them **three simple keys to spiritual victory.**

1) **Ask in faith:** It is true that God knows our thoughts and discerns the deepest places of our hearts. However, too many people pray a quick “Let Your will be done”, without specifically declaring their heart’s desires and intentions before the Lord. Some of us may never even pray about the issues in our lives, believing that God will take care of it if He wants to. Jesus explained that we have to make a request in order to receive a response. We have to look for something in order to find it, and a closed door will only be opened for us to go through if we knock first from the outside. None of us would adopt such a casual “Que sera” attitude towards the things of the world, our finances, relationships, etc. We would never assume someone would know what we wanted and wait for them to meet our expectations, but we often do this with our Father God. The very act of asking is an expression of our faith for a response and the Father’s heart delights in our faith. It means we take Him at His Word and believe it is true. **Jesus is calling us to be purposeful, faith-filled, and focused with our prayers.** He says “Ask and you will receive”!

2) **Believe that the Father desires to bless His kids.** All parents know what a joy it is to make our children happy. We constantly strive to meet and even exceed their expectations. Surprising them with more than what they requested is always such a thrill because we love to indulge our kids! Jesus reminds us today that the heart of God the Father flows with generous love, and He delights in His kids (Psalm 147:11, Psalm 37:23, Zephaniah 3:17). He loves to indulge them! He loves to see them prosper. He wants them whole, healed, blessed in every aspect of their lives, and walking in victory in the power of His name. Just as parents would not give something bad to their children, our Father God only gives “good gifts” to His. James 1:17 says *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”* God never changes His mind. He never gives us anything but the best. Sickness, poverty, disunity and depression are not from the Father of the heavenly lights.

3) Be in right relationship with other people in your life. Jesus said “*Do to others what you would have them do to you.*” Relational divisions can be the biggest hindrance to answered prayer. We cannot expect God to do something for us which we refuse to do for someone else. Forgiveness, encouragement, love, mercy, and whatever we could practically and possibly give or do for another – do it with a glad heart, and see it multiplied into your life as you go to the Father in prayer. Many of us may be interceding for the salvation of loved ones, or engaging in spiritual warfare over nations and cities, and wondering why there is no breakthrough, or why the backlash is so heavy. We need to put right those relationships which have been broken, or forgive and seek forgiveness from others. This is a key that can even open territorial doors, as we pray in faith, and in the name of Jesus.

Finally dear friend, let me leave you with Psalm 37:4 “*Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart*”, and Psalm 84:11 “*For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; **no good thing does He withhold from those whose walk is blameless.***” May all your dreams be fulfilled! May God grant you all the righteous desires of your heart, in Jesus’ mighty name, Amen!

Notes:

Chapter Nineteen

In The Presence (Psalm 91)

“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him will I trust”.

Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence.

He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge;

His truth shall be your shield and buckler.

You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day,

Nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.

A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you.

Only with your eyes shall you look and see the reward of the wicked.

Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, Even the Most High your dwelling place,

No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling;

For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways

In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.

You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.

Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him;

I will set him on high, because he has known My name.

He shall call upon Me and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble;

I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him,

And show him My salvation.” (NKJV)

Some of us may have learnt this psalm as children, and many of us may be familiar with it. It is a collection of powerful promises:

- 1) Deliverance from the attacks and traps of the powers of darkness.
- 2) Divine protection and covering.
- 3) Freedom from fear, and disturbances to sleep.
- 4) Protection from epidemics and sickness in general.
- 5) Victory in spiritual warfare.
- 6) Empowerment to live above the daily struggles of life.
- 7) God's guarantee that He will answer when we call
- 8) His presence in difficult times.
- 9) Angelic protection and prevention of accidents and sudden disasters
and
- 10) God's covering on the home.

This psalm is God's personal promise for "long life and satisfaction". It is a guarantee for victory over every challenge that life could bring. While it is wonderful to meditate on the promises and stand on them, especially when the going gets tough, all the blessings listed in this psalm have a condition. They can be claimed by those who are living in the "*secret place*" and "*abiding in the shadow of the Almighty*". They are for those who love the Lord and seek to know Him better.

In Old Testament times, there were only a chosen few who could enter into God's Secret Place, and Moses was one of those who could go into the presence of God any time and hear His voice. He was hungry for the glory of God. In Exodus 33:18-23 he said to God "*Show me Your glory*", and the Lord permitted him to see Him and experience His presence as he had desired. Today, the Lord Jesus has made it possible for hungry seekers to find the Secret Place and to know Him through His blessed Spirit. He longs for His kids to come to Him because they want to be close to Him and enjoy the intimacy of sweet fellowship and heart to heart communion, with Him. He has made open the way. He invites us in!

Some years ago, I was sitting in an airport lounge, waiting to board a delayed flight. I was reading my Bible, from the book of Job Chapter 36, and was struck by verse 16, which reads "*He is wooing you from the jaws of distress to a spacious place free from restriction, to the comfort of your table laden with choice food.*" I meditated on the words I had read, and the word '*wooing*' resonated deep into my spirit. I pondered about how and why the Lord would seek to 'woo' His creation - the ones who should be wooing Him! It amazed me! It stirred

within me a hunger and a longing to really recognize and respond to the wooing of the Holy Spirit. As I turned the words over and over in my heart, longing to know more, I suddenly felt the presence of God come over me in a very special way. Although I was surrounded by other people conversing with each other, and the noise from a television mounted on the wall, I experienced a rush of coolness sweep over me, as I felt like I was being lifted up into another dimension, a place of light and laughter, and intense joy! Now I was hearing (through my heart) not the sounds of the airport, but the sound of deep stillness and peace. It was a state of divine completeness and deep rest. I knew I was in the arms of the Lord as His laughter echoed in my heart, and I felt the glorious sense of welcome, and belonging by His side. I had stumbled on the entrance to the Secret Place and it can only be described as Beauty. It is hard to say how long this went on (not long enough!) but too soon I found myself alert once more to the sounds and sights of the airport lounge, and the fact that it was time to board our flight - and I had not been asleep!

Friend, this was the beginning of a whole new journey for me. I realized that it is possible to live this earthly life in the "Shadow of the Almighty". The Secret Place is a place of safety and rest. To live in God's Secret Place means that we are safe and secure, protected from the many things that could come against us and run us over. It is a complete covering; a divine blanket. It is a sense of oneness with the Father and the Son, wrapped into them through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is something we can all discover and enjoy, as the precious Holy Spirit seeks to woo us into deeper intimacy with Him. I was hungry for more, and as I sought the presence of God in worship, and focused ever more on the sweetness of the Holy Spirit, I found the key to the doorway into the Secret Place – Jesus-hungry worship. I began to see victory in many battles I had been fighting, including the gradual healing of a long term immune system condition which medication had only made bearable until then. It was all about learning to live in the Secret Place!

If you are battling with sickness, enemy activity, financial difficulties, or any other issue, may I encourage you to begin to seek the Secret Place. God has a place of safety and rest for you, and you will find it as you begin to seek. (Jeremiah 29:13 & 14: *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord"*). In the same way a father may carry his little child safely through an angry mob, living in the Secret Place is resting in the Father's hands as He carries you through the trials and terrors of life. You walk through them, but you are safe, protected, and in His peace!

As I continue to seek to live in the Secret Place, each day is a new adventure in this exciting real-life learning experience, with the blessed Holy Spirit as my teacher. I can only claim to know what He has taught me about the Secret Place and this is what I share with you today:

1) God's presence is a *Secret Place* (Psalm 18:11). It is not accessible to those who are not in relationship with Him.

2) It is open to all who have given themselves totally to God through the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:19).

3) The door is found by those who hunger for the glory of God, as Moses did (Exodus 33), and purpose to seek His presence.

4) We can enter through worship and thanksgiving (Psalm 95:2, Psalm 100:2) as the Holy Spirit draws us in. When we worship, it is like knocking on a secret door, which the Holy Spirit opens to let us in!

5) Once we find the way into the Secret Place, the challenge is to learn to stay there. We may find ourselves ‘dislodged’ many times in a day, but **if we stay aware of where we want to be**, there is always a way back in! It is possible to be dealing with all the issues of this life and still be enclosed in the presence of God, held in Daddy’s arms!

6) Living in the Word and walking in faith. The Word of God is the language of the Kingdom. We are dislodged from the Secret Place whenever we focus away from the Word and allow doubt to unsettle us, and the concerns and anxieties of life to overtake us.

4) Walking in love. This can be the biggest challenge to staying in the Secret Place. We grieve the Holy Spirit when we are careless with our words or impulsive in our actions, and cause a person pain, or when we harbor offense or unforgiveness in our hearts. But if we are quick to repent and forgive, God is quick to restore us into the sweetness of the Presence.

Precious friend, God is calling all His sons and daughters to fellowship with Him in the Secret Place. He longs for you to hear His heart beat and know His voice. Maybe you used to spend time soaking in the presence of God, but the relentless pace of life has taken you away from the awesome refreshing of the Secret Place. Our Father wants His kids to need Him, depend on Him, and come to Him because they love Him. Jesus told His disciples that they had to be like little children to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. One of the reasons He said this is that small children are more dependent than adults. As a mother of a teenager, I can see how much less my son depends on me or seeks my direction than he did as a toddler or an infant. Sometimes I wistfully recall the little bundle of need who used to cling to my side! Even if he wandered away in play, he would always come back to check that I was around because he felt safe when he was near me.

I believe that this is how our Daddy God remembers how we once sought and needed Him. He wants us to seek Him the way we used to! I urge you to set aside time to focus on Him and seek His presence. There is so much power in His Presence! There is no need to retreat into a forest or the mountains to experience the Secret Place – God can meet with you right where you are – even in a busy airport lounge! He loves you and wants to take you to higher ground. Remember the last few words of Psalm 91: ***“Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver***

him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble;

I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him.”

God has victory, promotion, long life, and answered prayer for you when you abide in His presence. May you see all the promises of Psalm 91 fulfilled in your life from this day onwards. May you walk in the power and the purposes you will find in His Presence!

Notes:

Chapter Twenty

Forceful Advancers (Matthew 11:11 & 12)

“Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.” (NKJV)

The NIV says: “From the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.”

In the verses preceding this passage of Scripture, Jesus spoke to his listeners about John the Baptist. He spoke about all the wonderful attributes of John, and added that John the Baptist was a greater prophet than any others before him because John experienced Jesus, while the other prophets only knew of Him as the One who was to come. However, He said that although John was mightier than any prophet who came before him, every born again believer washed in the blood of Jesus was greater. We are the inheritors of the new Kingdom, and partakers of the new Covenant. We have been given the power and authority of Jesus. **We are the forceful advancers of Heaven on the earth!**

Since the demise of John the Baptist, and since the victory of Jesus upon the cross, the Kingdom has “suffered violence”. It has had to “forcefully advance”, because we entered the ‘last days’ and the kingdom of darkness has stepped up its onslaught. Revelations 12:12 tells us that the devil is filled with wrath “because he knows that his time is short”. Jesus won the ultimate victory on the cross, but the enemy refuses to admit defeat and give up! He musters the full fury of all his forces to stop the advancement of the Kingdom in this final hour.

God is speaking to His kids through these verses today. He wants us to begin to see our inheritance and press in to receive everything that is ours. You may be tired of having to battle to receive what is rightfully yours by the power of the stripes and the shed blood of Jesus. We have already been given healing, but when we fall sick, it seems like we have to feed our faith, and contend in prayer to see the full manifestation of it upon our bodies. Daddy has blessed us with increase and prosperity according to His riches in glory, but the devourer tries to stop us walking in our inheritance. God has given us righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17), but all the good gifts from heaven rarely simply fall upon our laps, because we have an enemy who seeks to hinder our upward walk, and constantly tries to stop us enjoying the abundant life.

We cannot lie down and let him walk all over us, my friend. We cannot waver and vacillate between faith and fear. It is time to experience a revelation of just who we are in Jesus Christ! It is time to rise up and know that no weapon formed against us can prosper (Isaiah 54:17), and that

the enemy was defeated by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of our testimony (Revelations 12:11). In these last days, the Father seeks warrior worshippers who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23 & 24), love warriors who will love Him more than anything or anyone else, and stand strong on the firm foundation of His Word. He calls His kids to know who they are in Him. Jesus said that we (born again believers) are greater than the great John the Baptist! He has cleansed us by His blood, and broken Satan's power over our lives. He has filled us with His Spirit. He has given us all the power and authority of His name. There is no way we can fail, unless we believe we cannot win!

Friend, this God given life of blessing is ours by the power of the blood covenant on which we stand. Let us press in and take it all by "force", assertively, strongly, and with authority. When we do this, we are stepping up to take what is ours by right, and we receive Heaven's full backing, as the Father smiles and says "Well done", and the Holy Spirit helps us to receive the fullness of our inheritance. There is so much more which has been given to you and me in the name of Jesus, and it is now time to receive!

Whatever you are facing in your life today, Daddy wants to encourage you with some simple steps for victory, as you keep pressing in to take the Kingdom by "force".

- **Set your face like flint** (Isaiah 50:7) and determine that nothing shall hinder you from receiving what is yours in Jesus – fullness of life (John 10:10), health, strength, peace and prosperity.
- **Know that God wants to bless and prosper you.** (Jeremiah 29:11).
- **Keep your eyes fixed on the prize** awaiting you. (Philippians 3:14).
- **Stand firm** where you are and do not waver. (Ephesians 6:13 & 14).
- **Resist the devil** and he will flee from you (James 4:7).
- **Refuse to believe his lies!** (John 8:44).
- **Submit to God**, draw near to Him, and walk in obedience in all things (James 4:7 & 8).
- **Keep praying** and leaning in to the Father – your breakthrough is coming. (Ephesians 6:18).

Friend, the Father says to you and me today "***All that I have is yours***" (Luke 15:31) and "***There is no good thing that I would withhold from you***" (Psalm 84:11). He wants us to step into our inheritance and it delights His father heart when we begin to walk in His blessing. He longs for His kids to walk in a mindset of victory instead of defeat, and to boldly stand up to take what is theirs by right! Some things can only be taken by those who know they have the authority of Jesus and the power of His name.

May the sweet Holy Spirit sink this Word into our hearts, and may He open our eyes to see the verdant pastures laid out before us, and all the goodness and glory which are ours in Jesus. You are blessed and victorious. You are His very precious and special child!

May you walk towards your divine inheritance from this day forth, in Jesus' name,
Amen.

Notes:

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