

Fighting for the soul of Ghana

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This material was first published in 2004. Now I am updating it for use in 2011. I have found that I have not changed much of what I said in 2004. I have watched the situation get worse in Ghana, because God's people were so convinced that all was well, that they would not listen to God's prophetic word. So I am trying again. If we had listened in 2004, perhaps we would not be in the situation we are in today.

Ten years ago, I was speaking in one country in Africa, and I met a Pastor from Ghana. "You must come to Ghana" he said. "There are open skies over Ghana!" Many in Ghana believe this, but even though I searched for them, I could not find them. I found something quite different. I saw that there was a battle in the heavenly places over Ghana, and we live in the shadow of that battle today. The battle is on for the soul of Ghana. The enemy means to have the nation. What is going on?

Chapter 1. A new slavery

"The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks in pieces the Cedars of Lebanon." (Psalm 29:5)

The voice of the Lord is powerful. Here are some of the things it can do:-

- * The voice of the Lord said "Let there be light, and there was light." (Genesis 1:3)
- * The voice of the Lord said "Peace, be still!" (Mark 4:39) and there was a great calm.
- * The voice of the Lord said "Lazarus, come out!" (John 11:43) and Lazarus came out from the tomb.
- *The voice of the Lord said "It is finished!" (John 19:30) and it was finished.

The voice of the Lord achieves what it speaks, and I believe that in the heavenly places the Lord has spoken over Ghana. That voice has said **"Let my people go!"** (Exodus 5:1) God is looking into the future, and has planned a new blessing for the Nation.

But the enemy has also heard this promise, and is planning action of his own. What action? The word from Exodus was a proclamation of the end of slavery, and in the heavenly places, the enemy is planning to put the people into slavery.

This is the struggle which is happening over Ghana now. It is the struggle between the unshakeable voice of the Lord, and the determination of his defeated enemy to destroy all that the Lord plans for this Nation.

It is typical of the enemy, that he should choose slavery to destroy an African Nation, and to frustrate the purposes of God. In the light of this, we have to answer this question - What is the slavery?

What is the slavery?

Slavery takes many forms. Here are some of them:-

1. "In those days the voice of the Lord was rare." (1 Sam 3:1)

What a great tragedy we see in this verse. The people of God, brought into being by the will of God, guarded and protected by the hand of God – to these people the voice of the Lord was rare. They had allowed themselves to get into a position where they had all the outward show of religion, but none of its inner power and conviction. To such a people, the voice of the Lord is always rare. The Spirit of God can find no home in the hearts of such people, and speaks rarely. **The people had come into a great slavery.** They had to depend on what they had heard and seen from the generations before, because the living reality of God's presence was rare.

Satan wants to bring this slavery to the people of God in Ghana. He wants to muzzle the pure voice of the Lord. He drains away the power of true revelation. He deafens God's people to the voice of the true prophet.

2. "These people come near to me with their mouth and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." (Isa.29:13)

The enemy hides the nature of true commitment. Preachers and teachers lose their commitment to the pure voice of the Lord. They look for power, for comfort, for profit and for the praise of man. They begin to squabble with each other and allow the body to be divided. At the same time the people of God look for a religion which satisfies their own personal desires, not to a faith which serves God. Everyone looks for their miracle, and in the process, determination, commitment and endurance grow weaker.

The prophets begin to prophesy what the people want to hear. Hard words are replaced by words of comfort. All we hear is "Come and get your miracle now. Come and hear all the good things God is going to give to you. Come and be blessed." So the powerful voice of prophecy is reduced to nothing.

Sadly, the people of God cannot see their bondage, and it will only get worse, as the enemy wraps his chains around us. He plans to stop the blessing. He is planning well. His plan is working.

3. “One says I follow Paul, on says I follow Cephas. Is Christ divided?” (1 Cor.1:12)

I don't think I have met a more divided Church than the Church in Africa. Every Pastor seems to want to be master of his own Empire. He rules it, and uses it as a fortress to protect himself against other Churches and other Pastors. When I challenge this attitude with the clear Biblical teaching on the unity of the body, I am told “But you don't understand. Others will steal my sheep if I let them. I have to protect my own.” Sadly, others do steal the sheep. Sheep stealing, a fortress mentality, a lack of love between the Pastors, a lack of mutual support and love between Churches - this is the normal situation.

The saddest thing of all is that few see that this is wrong, or want to do anything about it. So the enemy prospers. He twists the chains around the people of God, who do nothing, because they cannot act in a united way. We are not the army of God. We are thousands of tiny groups of soldiers, each fighting to their own battle plan.

4. “He who doubts is like wave of the sea -blown and tossed by the wind.” (James 1:12)

One of the chains of the enemy is the lack of commitment in the Church. Many come to the worship, but few are truly committed to the body. Africans cruise around Churches, trying this one and that one. They don't give their commitment to one Church that it might grow in strength and power. If they do not find what they want, they start their own Church. This lack of commitment gives the enemy room to move.

5. “We have divine power to pull down strong holds.” (2 Cor. 10:4)

But they are not pulled down. The Church is so concerned with personal satisfaction, getting “my miracle” or protecting “my ministry” that the strong places of the enemy are allowed space and time to grow. This could have very serious consequences in the years ahead. If we give the enemy time, he will grow stronger. Every strong place must be pulled down, yet this is not happening. These strong places will become spiritual slave forts, capturing and enslaving God's people, preventing their advance against the enemy, and of moving into the fullness of God's promise.

What can we do? We must go the Gethsemane way. Nations are saved through a number of circumstances and events, but one of the key ones is the willingness of the intercessors to go into Gethsemane again and again. Let's look at that experience.

Chapter 2: Living in Gethsemane

If we are going to fight for the soul of Ghana, then we have to be toughened. This happens in Gethsemane. In Gethsemane, intercessors struggle in prayer. It is a very personal battle, and it can go on and on and on. In this place, our frailty, weakness and humanity will be exposed again and again. Doubt and fear will attack us. This is a lonely place. So why does the Lord lead us here? Because in Gethsemane our total trust in Jesus is strengthened. Gethsemane is our strength, but there are no guarantees that we will be able to survive it. This is the frightening nature of our intercessory call. So how can we survive?

1. Do not trust men

It's a natural human desire to want friends. No one can survive long in Africa without friends and family. We need each other - it is a natural human instinct. But in Gethsemane this human emotion must be laid aside, and replaced by this spiritual principle: - **"I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me."** (Exodus 20:2-3) We have to put our trust in God, and God alone for our survival in this place. No human agent can help us. Jesus knew this. Knowing what was in the heart of man and knowing God, he trusted in God alone for his help and strength. He had to leave his friends at the gate.

We have to face Gethsemane alone, trusting alone in God to sustain and save us. It's such a lonely experience, and we might be thinking "Well, as an intercessor, I will stay away from such a place!" If we do, we will have no power in our prayer. For it is in the loneliness of Gethsemane that we fully realise the power and humanity of our Saviour. Drawing on that strength will change us out of all recognition, and equip us to pray for the nation.

2. Embrace the loneliness

Being alone with God has a long prophetic tradition:-

Elijah knew it.

Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah: "Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there." So he did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.(1 Kings 17:2-6)

Habakkuk knew it.

**Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour.(Habakkuk 3:17-18)**

Paul knew it.

Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. (2 Corinthians 11:23-28)

None of these people liked the loneliness, but each knew that it was their path, and found the strength to walk in it. Intercessors that are in Gethsemane have to be encouraged to welcome and embrace the loneliness. This is very hard, because it goes against our need for personal friendship and advice. We need friends, but we have to survive without them in Gethsemane, otherwise our longing for human company will pull us backward and out of Gethsemane. We ultimately don't want that, because that means being out of the intimate presence of Jesus, and we do need that. We have to make a choice. If we want to be God's intercessory people, we have to walk into Gethsemane, and welcome it. If we don't want to be God's intercessory people, then we should not be in this call in the first place.

3. Understand the nature of the battle

In Gethsemane, the battle is always the same, even if it takes many forms. It can be summed up in this way: - God says to us "go!" The enemy says "no!" The enemy does all he can to stop us, and we have to have a strong enough character to resist him, and obey the voice of the Lord. This looks so easy to read, but in practice it is very painful. Our emotions are stretched tight, twisted and hurt. Our lives, our health, our family and our work all come under attack. At every level we are beaten and bruised. Our self-will is manipulated by temptations of every kind. Our resolve is weakened, darkness envelops us, and God seems far away.

This is the nature of the struggle in Gethsemane. Any intercessor who approaches such a place with anything less than deep concern is a fool. Jesus struggled in the heat of this battle. An angel had to come to strengthen him. As it was for him, so it will be for us, and we have to fight this battle many times, with little or no earthly support – perhaps on some occasions with hostility from our earthly friends. Why must we endure in this way? It is because this is where Jesus won his battle, and it is where we will win our battle for Ghana.

4. Know your spiritual weapons

A soldier is only as good as his weapons, and he has to know them intimately. For intercessors knowing the weapons is vital to survival. What should we know?

*** The power of the sacrifice**

John wrote **“Look, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”** (John 1:29) It is the sacrifice of Jesus which breaks the power of the enemy. Intercessors have to learn to draw on the strength of that sacrifice. We have to know how to release the power of the blood of Jesus, and how to take our stand on the lamb who was slain. (1 Peter 1:19: Revelation 5:6) How do we do this? We need to share in the Lord’s Supper regularly, and we need to know the Bible and how to apply it to ourselves and to the battle we are fighting. Here are some verses which we must know and apply:-

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29)

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. (1 Peter 1: 18-19)

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! (Hebrews 9:14)

Teaching about the blood of Jesus is not so common these days. But our forefathers spoke of “calling down the power of the blood.” This is something every intercessor must know how to do.

*** Crucified to the world**

The Bible says **“I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.”** (Galatians 2:20) The enemy will use everything worldly to trap and defeat us. But what can he do against the person who has crucified everything in the world, and lives only for Christ? We have to crucify self, (Mark 8:34) our love of money, (1 Timothy 6:10) our desire for security in the flesh, (Matthew 6:19-21) our longing for recognition, (Matthew 5:11-12) our physical needs, (Matthew 6:28-33) and our sexual needs. (Matthew 5:27-28) If we don’t crucify these things, we are going into battle without all our armour. The enemy will find the gap, and attack us.

*** The power of the word**

The Bible says **“I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes:”** (Romans 1:16) And again **“At the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”** (Philippians 2: 10-11)

Our strength is in the word of God. We need it so much in times of crisis. But in times of crisis, we sometimes cannot read it. When I was in hospital, I was too ill to read. That’s why every intercessor must be very familiar with the Bible, knowing it by heart, and using it daily in his life. Then when the crisis comes, he will not be unarmed.

* The victory of the cross

The Bible says **“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”** (Romans 8:37) We have won! When the enemy comes against us, don't hesitate to remind him of his defeat. He won't like it, and we will grow in confidence.

* The spiritual weapons of Ephesians 6: 10-17

The Bible says **“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the Gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”** These weapons are part of our basic equipment. We must be familiar with them, and how to use them. They are:-

* **Truth.** This word means “Something which is trustworthy.” This describes the Gospel.

* **Righteousness.** This can be God's righteousness in us, or our righteous lives lived in the power of the Spirit.

* **Gospel of peace.** We are prepared to speak, live and act on the Gospel. We are ready to move at God's command, to challenge and overcome the spiritual opposition.

* **Shield of faith.** The shield was probably the “scutum”, a shield like a door, covering the whole man, and used to provide not only individual protection but used with a group, to provide group protection, and a powerful weapon of advance. The Apostle teaches that our **“shield”** is our faith - individually and as a group. This beats back the enemy's attack, putting out his **“flaming arrows,”**

* **Helmet.** With his head protected, the soldier feels safe in battle. In the same way, the believer's' certainty of salvation gives confidence during spiritual struggles.

* **Sword of the Spirit.** In the spiritual battle, we have the promise and power of the word of God, strengthened by the Holy Spirit. We are not without offensive weapons.

5. His strength, his mercy and our courage

It can be very tough going in Gethsemane. Even with all the weapons deployed, we can still feel very desperate. What do we do then? When Peter saw Jesus walking on the water, (Matthew 14:22-32) he wanted to do the same. His faith was strong, and at the command of Jesus, he began his walk. But after a while, his faith sank, and so did he! Then he used one of the strongest and most passionate weapons we have - he cried **out “Lord save me!”** (v 30)

The heart of our God is so loving that he will never fail to answer such a cry. When we throw ourselves on his mercy, we can be sure that he will answer. (Luke 15:20) But here is the problem – many intercessors fail to do this. We either think that throwing ourselves on God is a sign of weakness, or we fail to see the danger we are in, and our need to throw ourselves on His mercy. We have to lay aside our human feelings of pride, and have the courage to jump into the arms of Jesus. The joy of serving Jesus is that he is fully human as

well as fully divine. We don't have to explain to him how we feel. We don't have to say "Lord, I am at the end of my strength. Of course you would not understand what it is like for a human being to feel like this. Perhaps I had better explain!" The Saviour understands fully what it like to be human, to be lonely, to be desperate, afraid and exhausted. He understands, and his arms are ready. We need the courage to jump.

6. Stand firm

Sometimes in Gethsemane, there is nothing to do, and nowhere to turn. The pressures are so great, that we can't go forward, we can't go back and we can't stand still. At these moments, we have to learn from Habakkuk. In chapter 3 we read: - **"Though the fig-tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour."** (Habakkuk 3:17-18) St Paul puts it this way:- **"Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand."** (Ephesians 6:13) In other words, when all else fails, just stand firm and wait. The day for moving will come. In the meantime we must obey and wait.

7. Angelic support

Jesus was given angelic support in his struggle. If he needed it, then we do as well. If angels are available to help me, then let them do it The Bible says: - **"Are not all angels ministering spirits, sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?"** (Hebrews 1:14)

Chapter 3. The power of the blood

The most powerful weapon we have as intercessors is the power of the blood of Jesus. This seems obvious, but is so easily overlooked. So let's study the theology of the blood, and then see how we might use it to break the enemy, and release our Nations.

The history of the blood

The murder of Abel

1. Blood carries the essence of life.

Two men prepare a sacrifice for the Lord. (Gen 4:1-5) Cain brings fruits of the soil, but forgets that God has already cursed the land. (Gen 3:17) Abel brings an animal sacrifice. The Bible teaches:-

"For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life." (Lev 17:11)

In other words, blood carries the essence of life in it. So to make an offering which involves sacrifice and the shedding of blood is something very powerful. The fruits of the earth have no blood and so no life in them.

2. Innocent blood demands justice.

“Now Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let's go out to the field.” And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” “I don't know,” he replied. “Am I my brother's keeper?” The Lord said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.” (Gen.4:8-10)

Now we see another issue concerning blood. It is much more than just an issue of sacrifice - *blood has power in itself*. Cain murders Abel, but the blood cries out from the ground for justice and vengeance. From this point on, we have to deal with the two issues which this passage has exposed to us:

*** Blood is to do with life and sacrifice.** “The life is in the blood” will finally bring us to the sacrifice of Jesus.

*** Innocent blood has the power to damage the spiritual flow of blessing in any heart or any nation.** It has to be dealt with, or we are forever trapped at the moment of its spilling. The blood of Abel stands as a great warning to subsequent spiritual history. It was innocent blood, and it remained unrepented of. Cain did not repent, but only complained at the unfairness of God's punishment. Lamech (Gen 4:23-24) did not repent either, and so the shed blood, unrepented of, passed down the generations.

Passover – the power of the blood

“On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn— both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.” (Ex 12:12-13)

Moving on many centuries, we begin to see the power of the blood from God's perspective. The great plague of the firstborn must have looked very frightening from a human perspective. But there was a way to prevent it entering the house - by sprinkling the blood of the lamb on the doorposts of the house. This blood “*spoke*” to God, being enough to turn away his judgment.

This is a big development in our understanding of the blood, and its power. Even animal blood, offered within the covenant setting, could be effective.

Covenant - the guarantee of the blood

“Moses got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the Lord. Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, “We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey.” Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.” (Ex 24: 3-8)

Moving on many more years, we come to this covenant, which is sealed with the sprinkling of blood. The blood marked out this event, protecting it from Satan's attack, and making it, in effect, everlasting. The new sanctuary was also sealed with blood, (Ex 29) making it an acceptable place for the Lord.

Blood -the pollution

Before we move on to the New Testament, we must consider this verse: **"Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it."** (Num. 35:33) In many ways, this verse needs to be considered along with one we have already looked at: **"What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground,"** (Gen 4:10,11)

Despite all our teaching about the blood, and despite all the animal sacrifices, the issue of pollution and justice remains unsolved in the pre Christian era. **Animal blood cannot atone for innocent human blood.** The innocent blood of so many people continues to cry out to the Lord for justice and revenge. The land is polluted. No amount of Temple sacrifice or of following the Law can change this principle. With this in mind, let's turn to the New Testament teaching.

Jesus - the perfect sacrifice

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

In order to deal with the blood, a better blood was needed. That blood was the blood of Jesus. There are many biblical verses to support this:-

*** He was "the lamb of God."**

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

*** He was the perfect offering.**

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:21)

"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." (1 Peter 2:22)

Now let's look at the theology:-

1. We must identify with the blood and it must identify with us.

To make the blood effective, Jesus teaches us that we have to be identified with that blood:- **"Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."** (John 6:53)

The blood also has to be identified with us: **"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. "This**

is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them. “I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God.” (Mark 14:22-25)

2. The blood showed its power at the death of Jesus.

“At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.” (Matt 27:51-53)

The blood was so powerful that it established its control over sin, (the curtain was torn) over nature, (the rocks split) and over death. (The tombs were opened.) The sacrifice of the blood was complete. A greater sacrifice than that of bulls and goats had achieved its mission. The Church soon began to understand this truth.

3. The blood of Jesus was the perfect sacrifice.

The New Testament writers teach extensively about the blood. Here are a few key examples:

* “and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” (Col 1:20)

* “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.” (1 Peter 1:18-21)

* “When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” (Hebrews 9:11-14)

* They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. (Rev 12:11)

Summary

This is a lot of theology to absorb, and I encourage people to struggle and get hold of it. Fortunately, it is easily summarised:

* The blood of Abel began a very sad line of theology. The innocent blood of Abel, unrepented of, continued to cry out down the centuries. Much more innocent blood was added, all crying out for justice and revenge.

* The blood of animals could not appease this blood. The life which was in this innocent blood was the life of humanity, not the animal creation. But which human could possibly atone for all this blood?

* Jesus had the purer, sinless blood of humanity and divinity. He could offer the pure sacrifice, and he did at Calvary. His blood speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

* At his second coming, all this innocent blood will cease crying out. His better word will end it all.

Using the power of the blood today

We are living in the time between his death and his return, so innocent blood can still cry out, and in that crying, damage a nation's soul. I have read people who tell me that this is not the New Testament message. But there is no division between Old and New. The Old says that unrepented blood stains the land. It did when those words were written, and it still does today. This will never end permanently until the second coming of Jesus. The Old Testament tells us that the blood has to be dealt with by the one who spilt it. Fortunately, in the New Testament we learn that Jesus is willing to stand in that place. He can deal with the spilt blood. But his blood has to be brought to bear on those situations which still harm us today. So what can we do?

1. Be identified with the blood.

“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Through the breaking of the bread and sharing of the cup, in whatever form, we identify ourselves with the “better blood.” This releases power into the spiritual world. We should not hesitate to go to places where there is spilt innocent blood, and break the bread together. We can go to key places in the Nation and break the bread together. Don't let the “father of lies” whisper that this is a waste of time. When we identify with the blood in this way, power is released - to forgive, to release, to break down and to build up.

2. Repent and bring the sin to the blood.

“If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” (2 Chron. 7:14)

We have to follow the example of Nehemiah, taking the sin of the nation as if it were ours, and bring it to the cleansing of the blood. We need to seek out those sins which are binding and holding back the nation. We must look into our history and find where sinful events took place, and especially where these led to the shedding of innocent blood. Then we can

repent for them and bring them to the blood. This is very important where there is innocent blood. That blood is crying out for justice and revenge. We have to cover that blood with the blood of Jesus, which cries out for forgiveness and mercy. Again the enemy will mock these things. That is because he is afraid of them.

3. Expose evil

“Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.” (2 Cor. 11.14)

Part of our prayer function is to expose the lies of Satan – especially the one which says that he owns the nations, and there is nothing we can do about it. He doesn’t want to read this:-

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” (Col2:13-15)

However, this is going to be costly. The more we try to expose him, the more he will resist and come against us. But these attacks are only signs of his fear.

We expose the evil which led to the shedding of the blood, and carry out acts of repentance for that spilling. This is what Cain should have done. We must not make his mistake. We also have to accept that repentance leads to new attitudes, forgiveness, restoration and a turning to a new future, more blessed and free from the past. These things are easy to write, but have proved very hard to do. The human spirit resists repentance, or looks for an easy repentance which bears no fruit. Finding the blood opens the door to a healing process - but a very painful one.

Chapter 4. Breaking the strongholds of Ghana

Now we have seen the issues we face, and the power we have, we must turn to the battleground on which we must fight.

Humans have always put walls around their settlements or villages. This gave a feeling of protection and control, since the walls needed to be breached, before the enemy can destroy. These strong places, or “Strongholds” were designed to be hard to break, and gave a launching point for attack, and a safe place of retreat. Spiritual strongholds are represented in the Bible in the same way as physical ones. They are tough places, hard to break, from which attacks against God’s people can be launched.

As we begin to look at the strongholds of Ghana, let’s get a good biblical and Greek foundation: Here’s the key verse:-

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

“Stronghold” is a Greek word “Ochyroma” and it means “a castle, a fortress.” **“Power”** is the Greek word “dunatos” which means “mighty, strong, powerful.” The strongholds may be strong, but we are stronger!

So what strongholds are we facing in Ghana, and how can we pull them down so that the Nation can be saved? Let’s look at some of them, and then see how we might pull them down.

The strongholds of Ghana?

Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ““An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ““No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.” (Mt.13:24-30)

In this parable, the owner of the field had no idea what the enemy had planted. His servant had not watched over his field, and so the enemy had managed to spoil the fruitfulness of the field. God’s people have not been watching over Ghana. What has the enemy planted?

The stronghold of binding

Satan likes to chain and bind the people of God. Here are 3 examples:-

“During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God.” (Exodus 2:23)

“Some sat in darkness, in utter darkness, prisoners suffering in iron chains.” (Ps 107:10)

“And a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all.” (Luke 13:11)

This is his strategy, and we see it clearly in Revelation:-

“The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.” (Rev.13:15-18)

How do the chains show themselves?

*** Stopping the word of the Lord**

“The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.” (1 Samuel 1:1)

The Bible teaches us that the voice of the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon, (Ps.29:5) and yet the enemy deafens us to that voice. In this deafness he binds our spirits, and then we cannot move. Here is one of my words for Ghana, which shows this very clearly:-

“Lord, I have been trying for years, for decades - to call God’s people of Ghana back to your voice. Now the nation is in desperate danger, and they are unable to hear. If they cannot hear, how can they fight for the soul of Ghana? What hope is there for such a blind, deaf and lost people?”

Suddenly the valley was filled with light - bright golden light, so bright that I could hardly stand. As I looked, it began to shine on the small group of tired and defeated people “Stand up” I called, “The Lord is here. Worship him and call on his name.”

Nobody in the group moved. “We are too tired” they replied. “It is hopeless. We are lost.” In desperation I went up to them and said “Stand up! Worship and repent. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. He is God. Stand up, repent and worship him. Now is the time. It is not yet too late.”

If we are unable to hear his voice, then we will not take action when it is needed.

*** Tempting away with false voice**

“Dressed in their royal robes, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them. Now Zedekiah son of Kenaanah had made iron horns and he declared, “This is what the Lord says: ‘With these you will gore the Arameans until they are destroyed.’” All the other prophets were prophesying the same thing. “Attack Ramoth Gilead and be victorious,” they said, “for the Lord will give it into the king’s hand.”

The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, “Look, the other prophets without exception are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favourably.” But Micaiah said, “As surely as the Lord lives, I can tell him only what the Lord tells me.” When he arrived, the king asked him, “Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or not?” “Attack and be victorious,” he answered, “for the Lord will give it into the king’s hand.” The king said to him, “How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord?”

Then Micaiah answered, “I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the Lord said, ‘These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.’” The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Didn’t I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?” Micaiah continued, “Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne with all the multitudes of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. And the Lord said, ‘Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?’ “One suggested this, and another

that. Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the Lord and said, 'I will entice him.' "By what means?' the Lord asked.

"I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,' he said." 'You will succeed in enticing him,' said the Lord. 'Go and do it.' "So now the Lord has put a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The Lord has decreed disaster for you. " (1 Kings 22: 10-23)

When the word of the Lord is rare, people will listen to other voices – the King of Israel wanted to hear what he wanted to hear, not the true voice of God. The Bible calls these voices “deceiving.” There are many deceiving voices in Ghana, including the prosperity voice, and the “all is well” voice. Here is a prophetic word which speaks about this last voice:-

“I saw a company of angels approaching. They stood before the people, and the people were amazed. “Look at their beauty” they said.” These we should follow.” The group began to follow the vision. But I knew that something was wrong. “Stop” I called. “This is not right. We are to be directed by the word of the Lord, by the Spirit of the Lord, by the word of God. We hear from him and we follow him. This is a deception. You have fallen far from the Lord. The word of the Lord is rare in the land. You do not recognise the truth of the word of the Lord. You are being blinded by this vision. The beauty is a deception. The enemy is luring you away.” But the group continued to gaze at the deception. And this deception had a name – “All is well.”

False voices will not be a problem to those who are used to hearing and responding to the true voice of the Lord. But to people who are not used to hearing from God, the false voices will easily deceive, and bind God’s people.

Has the enemy bound God’s people in Ghana? Are they so weighted down with chains that, even if they wanted to respond, they could not?

The stronghold of deception

Deception has been a stronghold for the enemy from the beginning as Eve found out:-

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'” (Genesis 3:1-3)

The deception is in the words **“Did God really say...?”** What really happened to Eve? Did she just want fruit? Was she hoping to increase knowledge? Was it her undisciplined human spirit which caused the problem? These may have all played their part, but whatever it was in her thinking, the heart of her problem was that she was deceived. The enemy deceived her into thinking that there was something better than God's presence. She desired that, and was unaware of the consequences. They came to her soon enough, but by then it was too late. Jesus warned us that Satan was the father of lies. From this point on in the Bible,

the serpent deploys many deceits, so that he can control God's people, and from that position, to control God. These deceits are to be found in Ghana.

* **The deceit of power**

When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, Pharaoh and his officials changed their minds about them and said, "What have we done? We have let the Israelites go and have lost their services!" So he had his chariot made ready and took his army with him. (Exodus 14: 5-6)

Pharaoh thought he had the power to destroy God's people, and he was very nearly successful. Even Moses was pushed to the limit of faith, before God strengthened him. Pharaoh thought that he had the power of life and death over people, in much the same way as Nebuchadnezzar and Goliath did. In each case, one person was not deceived – Moses, Shadrach and David found the answer. Face them down, whatever the cost. But those with weaker characters are easily frightened by power.

* **The deceit of the spirit**

The deceiving spirit likes to use spiritual powers to deceive. The Pharisees show this spiritual deception at work. When Jesus challenges the demonic, they reply: - **"By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons."** (Luke 11:15) The real danger of this kind of spiritual darkness is that it allows the deceit of the demonic into the heart of religion. There it can hide and control.

* **The deceit of religion**

The Jews believed that they did not need to open their minds to anything new, because they were safe with their religion. Having Abraham as father (John 8:39) did nothing to correct the sinfulness of their natures, but they were deceived away from seeing this truth, hiding behind the walls of religion. We see this everywhere today. People have the belief that the right kind of ritual can change things, but the heart needs an internal, not an external change. The spirit of control loves ritual, and loves people to get drawn into it. They learn to love the ritual, and depend on it, rather than Jesus.

* **The deceit of the darkness**

Jesus said **"I am the light of the world"**, and he did not hesitate to shine that light into many dark places, to break the enemy and bring freedom. But that didn't stop the darkness trying to invade creation. Jesus taught that light has come into the world, but added **"men preferred darkness."** The battle continues, even though the light has triumphed at Calvary, and will continue to triumph. Satan is always seeking for open doors for his darkness to enter. He found one in Judas (Luke 22:3) and in Balak. He found one in Alexander, (2 Timothy 2:14) and in the Pharisees. He knows that men prefer the darkness, rather than light.

We see these open doors today in humanism, secularism, unsanctified science and in other religions which seek to chain, rather than release. Millions of people fail to ask the questions, or examine the claims, and become prisoners of the darkness. Once the mind is darkened by evil, it becomes darker. The journey is downwards. (King Saul. 1 Samuel 13)

There are so many darkneses in Ghana, which are deceiving, and consequently weakening, God's people.

The Stronghold of control

This is a very dangerous spirit – and very dangerous to God's people. We see this in the story of Balak.

“A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed.” (Numbers 22:5-6)

The people of God were fulfilling the purposes of God as they travelled towards the Promised Land. Balak was afraid of them, fearing for his land and people. So he tried to get control over them – *using spiritual powers to get control*. This is a good demonstration of the spirit of control. It tries to:-

* **Upset the purposes of God.** The command to God's people was clear - they were to take their land of promise, and they were acting on that command. They had God's commission to pass through Balak's land, but Balak wanted to upset this purpose.

* **To control the people of God,** so that they cannot or will not respond to those purposes. This is a major activity of the spirit of control. It cannot allow any free movement of the Spirit because it cannot control that free movement.

It hates verses like **“the wind blows where it wants”** (John 3:8) and **“you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”** (John 8:32). The spirit of control wants to assist the enemy in getting control over God, in order to be God.

How does this spirit gain its control?

* **To dominate by power and strength.** Nebuchadnezzar is a very good example. When Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to worship his gold statue, he tried to control them by dominant power:-

“This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language. As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.” (Dan. 3:4-6)

Maybe Nebuchadnezzar didn't know what he was doing. Perhaps he just wanted to exalt himself, but the controlling spirit saw an opportunity to control God's people, and restrict their freedoms. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were strong. They lived a sacrificial faith, and they would rather sacrifice themselves than surrender any loss of freedom of the Spirit.

* **To deceive.** Satan wanted to destroy God's work, so what better way than to deceive Eve away from the way of truth, into following her own human desires? So he says. **“Did God really say..?”** (Gen.3:1) Satan controls by deceiving. He drags people away from the

covering of God's blessing, and into the area of his control. He deceived Ananias and Sapphira, (Acts 5:1-11) Demas, (2 Timothy 4:10) and many others.

*** To make us afraid.** This is very common. Look at what Goliath says:-

“This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other.” On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.” (1 Sam 17:11)

*** To control through intellect.** The western world likes thinking and philosophy. Problems are solved, and progress made, by thinking and study. But there is a problem with thinking people – they often find it hard to see, spiritually, what is going on. The spirit of control finds it easy to make a home in such cultures. Look at Caiaphas and the intellectual way he deals with the “problem” of the resurrection of Lazarus:-

“Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, “You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.” (John 11:9)

This shows the controlled mind, and it led to serious consequences:-

“So from that day on they plotted to take his (Jesus) life. Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead he withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.”(Jn11:53, 54)

Religion in the West is seriously controlled. Freedom in the Spirit is limited by the traditions of men in almost every denomination. The Spirit can no longer blow where he wills. Committees and systems control those who try to move freely in his love. The controlling spirit within religion is one of the greatest threats we are facing in these difficult days. The threat to Jesus came from within religion, and that is where we see the controlling spirit at its most powerful and most dangerous. How does the spirit of control work within religion?

***Silences all opposition.**

Nebuchadnezzar again:-

“Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?” (Daniel 3:12-15)

Kill the messenger, and then the message will die. Get rid of the opposing voice, and then all voices will agree. Over the history of our Faith, the opposing voice has often been the right one, (and often a prophetic one). But that doesn't stop the method being successfully employed over and over again.

***Shut people's minds to the truth of what is happening.**

The city of Laodicea was ruined by an earthquake in 60 C.E. but the inhabitants refused any assistance to rebuild the city and restored it from their own means. They must have been a very go-ahead group of citizens, with plenty of finance - just the sort of place you would want to live. But look at what the Bible says about it:-

“You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.” (Rev 3:7)

The people were blind to the spiritual truth and a prophet had to come and tell them that they were poor, naked and blind. I have been in the position of such a prophet, and the response is almost always the same - silence the voice. God's people in Laodicea were blind, and in my experience, this same blindness is, today, worldwide.

***Lock people in to a system which gives them position.**

This is a real prison. People are so trapped in the system that they cannot break out of it, because if they did they would lose everything. The Jews who heard the profound challenges in John chapter 8 replied: **“We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”**

I have met so many leaders who are in this position. Once they moved freely in the Spirit, but then they begin to “get on”. They get good churches, and are well respected and trusted. But the fire begins to dim. The controlling spirit pulls them back, hems them in, damps them down and draws their passion from them. But by now they owe everything to the system which gives them their salary, their pension, their house, their honour and respect. They are locked in, and useless to the life of the Spirit. Yet such people often rise high in the system and draw others in as well. Before long, there is a small circle of like-minded locked up people controlling large areas of church life. Then slowly they begin to destroy all those who would move freely. The radical edge of the church is neutered, and those who want radicalism are excluded.

***Destroy the moving of the Spirit.**

This is the goal of the spirit of control. Isaiah warned against it:

The Lord says: “These people come near to me with their mouth and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.” (Isa 29:13)

The king of Israel exercised it against Micaiah:-

The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, “There is still one man through whom we can inquire of the Lord, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah son of Imlah.” (1 Kings 22:8)

Zedekiah exercised it against Jeremiah:-

“Then the officials said to the king, “This man should be put to death. He is discouraging the soldiers who are left in this city, as well as all the people, by the things he is saying to them. This man is not seeking the good of these people but their ruin.” “He is in your hands,” King Zedekiah answered. “The king can do nothing to oppose you.” So they took

Jeremiah and put him into the cistern of Malkijah, the king's son, which was in the courtyard of the guard. They lowered Jeremiah by ropes into the cistern; it had no water in it, only mud and Jeremiah sank down into the mud. (Jer. 38:4-6)

The Jews exercised it against Stephen:-

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:59-60)

The controlling spirit is one of the most dangerous powers we will ever face. The lively moving of the Spirit will be replaced with dull formalism and ritual, ("These people honour me with their lips") which people will believe will make them safe. They are totally unaware of the spiritual danger they are in. Any who speak the truth will be reviled, (Micaiah) thrown out, (Jeremiah in pit) or killed. (Stephen) Rooting out such a spirit is very hard - almost impossible in fact. Only a deep cleansing of the church can do it, and that is very painful.

Stronghold of the Occult

The enemy uses occult things to maintain his strength, and to break the people of God. Where is the strength of the occult in Ghana?

Fetish

The Akan people of Ghana and Ivory Coast believe in a supreme god who takes on various names depending upon the region of worship. Akan mythology says that at one time god interacted with man, but that after being continually struck by the pestle of an old woman pounding fufu, he moved far up into the sky. There are no priests that serve him directly, and people believe that they may make direct contact with him.

There are also numerous spirits who receive their power from the supreme god and are most often connected to the world. These include ocean and river spirits and various local deities. Priests serve individual spirits and act as mediators between the gods and mankind. Nearly everyone participates in daily prayer, which includes the pouring of libations as an offering to both the ancestors who are buried in the land and to the spirits who are everywhere. The earth is seen as a female deity and is directly connected to fertility.

Often, God is worshiped through lesser deities and ancestral spirits. The deities and spirits are honoured through libation and sacrifice (of animals, vegetables, or precious metals). The will of God is sought by the believer through divination.

Traditional religions

Traditional religions believe in a Supreme Being, referred to by the Akan ethnic group as "Nyame" or by the Ewe ethnic group as "Mawu", and lesser gods who act as intermediaries between the Supreme Being and human beings. Worship of ancestors is also found because ancestors also provide a link between the Supreme Being and the living. The religious leaders are referred to as priests and are trained in the arts of healing and divination. These

priests typically operate shrines to the supreme deity or to one of the lesser gods, relying upon the donations of the public to maintain the shrine and for their own maintenance.

One known group, Afrikania, also known as the Afrikan Renaissance Mission (ARM), actively supports traditional religious practices. Afrikania often criticizes the Government, foreign diplomatic missions, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for corrupting traditional values and imposing foreign religious beliefs. Afrikania leaders claim the movement has more than 4 million followers; however, no independent confirmation of the claim was available.

Witchcraft

Belief in witchcraft remains strong in many parts of the country. Rural women may be banished by traditional village authorities or their families for suspected witchcraft. Most accused witches are older women, often widows, who are identified by fellow villagers as the cause of difficulties, such as illness, crop failure, or financial misfortune. Many of these banished women go to live in "witchcamps," villages in the north populated by suspected witches. The women do not face formal legal sanction if they return home; however, most fear that they may be beaten or lynched if they return to their villages. The law provides protection for alleged witches.

Voodoo

Voodoo originated in the Africa almost 6,000 years ago. The word "voodoo" comes from the Fon language, in which it means "sacred," "spirit" or "deity." The Fon kingdom was located in what is now southern Benin. People also practice Voodoo in Togo, Ghana and other countries in north western Africa. Approximately 30 million people in Togo, Ghana and Benin practice Voodoo today.

Since Voodoo is primarily an oral tradition, the names of gods, as well as the specifics of different rituals, can change in different regions or from generation to generation. However, African Voodoo has several common characteristics:-

- Veneration of ancestors.
- Rituals or objects used to convey magical protection.
- Animal sacrifices used to show respect for a god, to gain its favour or to give thanks.
- The use of fetishes, or objects meant to contain the essence or power of particular spirits.
- Ceremonial dances, which often involve elaborate costumes and masks.
- Ceremonial music and instruments, especially including drums.
- Divination using the interpretation of physical activities, like tossing seed hulls or pulling a stone of a certain colour from a tree.

Ancestor worship

Life after death is a universal belief in Ghana. The ancestors are the kith and kin of the living who have passed into the world of spirits through physical death.

There are times for special sacrifices and libation. There is dancing, which is a key part of most social and religious performances in Ghana. The festivities help to reunite the living with the invisible dead. These libations, sacrifices and dances supplement the day to day reverential behaviour due, and given, to the ancestors.

The departed kin of the living live in the spiritual world which has no geographical location. The world of the ancestors is around or in the solid earth on which human life exists. Libation is poured as the usual way of invoking these ancestral spirits, but the spirits can be invoked by mere words without the act of libation. The ancestors are regarded as elders to the living and must be given respect. If anything, they command more respect in death and must be taken more seriously, since they are, in their new status, 'spirit'. As spiritual beings, they are capable of interceding for their living kin. They are nearer God than mortal men. Prayers passed through them have a shorter course to travel to reach God or the superior deities.

The Generational curse

The type of curses handed down as a result of **an ancestors sin** is automatically atoned for on the cross, providing we don't hide the sins of our forefathers in our hearts. But there's another kind of generational curse that is handed down, and it's a spoken curse that takes a toll on future generations as well. We can see this kind of curse in action in Genesis 9:24-25,

“When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, he said, “Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers.”

As the Bible goes on to say, this curse ended up affecting an entire nation! These kinds of curses may need to be renounced and broken.

How does the enemy use the stronghold of the occult? What effects does it have?

*** Separates us from God:-**

“For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king.” (1 Samuel 15:23)

*** Then we cannot fulfil the will of God.**

“You, Lord, have abandoned your people, the descendants of Jacob. They are full of superstitions from the East; they practice divination like the Philistines and embrace pagan customs.” (Isa.2:6)

*** Enemy has victory**

People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?” (Rev 13:4)

Many homes and villages, businesses and farm lands are trapped in this way – under the cloud not of glory but of the occult. This hinders the growth of Ghana:-

- * Freedom love joy and hope cannot flourish.
- * Good things wither away.
- * Faith grows weak: Beginning of slide?
- * Enemy grows in strength.

Stronghold of Destruction

The enemy is a destroyer: - “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy:” (Jn.10:10)
The enemy wants to destroy. He is a thief, and he wants to kill all the things of God, and especially the church of God. We are the only ones who know his nature, and who have the power to break his strong places – “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.” (Col.2:15) This is why he has to destroy us.

The seeds of destruction can be seen in many places in a nation:-

- * The weakening of faith.

“These people come near to me with their mouth and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.” (Isaiah 29:13)

- * Individual greed and sin.

“But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things; Achan son of Carmi, the son of Zimri, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of them. So the LORD’s anger burned against Israel.” (Joshua 7:1)

- * The threat to the heritage.

“When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.” (Matt.2:16)

- * Decrease in morality.

“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father’s wife.” (1 Cor.5:1)

- * Failure of the economy.

“Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.” (Haggai 1:5-6)

* Unfairness in wealth and resources.

“ Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their Jewish brothers. Some were saying, “We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain.” Others were saying, “We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine.” Still others were saying, “We have had to borrow money to pay the king’s tax on our fields and vineyards. Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our countrymen and though our sons are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others.” (Nehemiah 5:1-5)

* Disaster.

“The Babylonians set fire to the royal palace and the houses of the people and broke down the walls of Jerusalem. Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard carried into exile to Babylon the people who remained in the city, along with those who had gone over to him, and the rest of the people.” (Jeremiah 39:8-10)

* Inter- cultural or religious strife.

“The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans).” (John 4:9)

All these can be used to pull down a nation. But the seeds of destruction are also to be found in the church. When there is a dullness of worship, a cool faith which does not seek to serve, an inability to recognise the true voice of the Lord, an unwillingness to pray, to sacrifice, to struggle and endure - all these things are the beginnings of destruction.

Stronghold of innocent blood

From the middle of the 15th century, Africa endured devastation and depopulation at the hands of Europe. From then until the end of the 19th century, Europeans began to establish a trade for African captives. The transatlantic slave trade began during the 15th century when Portugal, and then other European kingdoms, were finally able to expand overseas and reach Africa. The Portuguese first began to kidnap people from the west coast of Africa and to take those they enslaved back to Europe.

It is estimated that by the early 16th century as much as 10% of Lisbon's population was of African descent. After the European discovery of the American continent, the demand for African labour gradually grew, as other sources of labour - both European and American - were found to be insufficient.

The Spanish took the first African captives to the Americas from Europe as early as 1503, and by 1518 the first captives were shipped directly from Africa to America. The majority of

African captives were exported from the coast of West Africa, some 3,000 miles between what is now Senegal and Angola, and mostly from the modern Ghana, Benin, Nigeria and Cameroon.

In the end, just over 11 million people were taken to Europe. Of those, fewer than 9.6 million survived the passage across the Atlantic, due to the inhuman conditions in which they were transported, and the violent suppression of any on-board resistance. Many people who were enslaved in the African interior also died on the long journey to the coast.

Africa was the only continent to be affected in this way, and this loss of population and potential population was a major factor leading to its economic underdevelopment. The transatlantic trade also created the conditions for the subsequent colonial conquest of Africa by the European powers and the unequal relationship that still exist between Africa and the world's big powers today. Africa was impoverished by its relationship with Europe while the human and other resources that were taken from Africa contributed to the capitalist development and wealth of Europe and other parts of the world.

On the African side, the slave trade was generally the business of rulers or wealthy and powerful merchants, concerned with their own selfish or narrow interests, rather than those of the continent. Rich and powerful Africans were able to demand a variety of consumer articles and in some places even gold for captives, who may have been acquired through warfare or by other means, initially without massive disruption to African societies.

However, by the mid-17th century the European demand for captives, particularly for the sugar plantations in the Americas, became so great that they could only be acquired through initiating raiding and warfare. There is no doubt that some societies preyed on others to obtain captives in exchange for European firearms, in the belief that if they did not acquire firearms in this way to protect themselves, they would be attacked and captured by their rivals and enemies who did possess such weapons

How much innocent blood was spilt by the slave trade? This innocent blood cries out for justice and revenge. This cannot be ignored. The enemy feeds on this. From this come ethnic cleansing, genocide, racial hatred and murder. We need, among other things, to release the power of the blood.

Stronghold of poverty

When we think of poverty, we usually think of money or economics, but the spirit of poverty may or may not have anything to do with these. The spirit of poverty is a stronghold established for the purpose of keeping us from walking in the fullness of the victory gained for us at the cross, or the blessings of our inheritance in Christ. How does this stronghold show itself? Physical poverty of course, but there is more to poverty than lack of food:- poverty of resources, poverty of education, poverty of hope and vision for the nation and many more. It's an attitude of mind which reduces people, and then the Nation to beggary.

Stronghold of despair

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. (2 Cor. 4: 7-17)

Despair is the loss of hope. (2 Cor. 4:8/9.) It comes when we lose any sense of purpose, and any vision, when we see the heritage being wasted, the things of God fading.

We are that earthen vessel, that fragile clay pot! Our bodies, our outward appearance, our essential humanity, our physical disabilities, our shattered dreams, these are all elements of our jar of clay. None of these things can bring meaning or a sense of value to our lives. If we focus on our human side, despair is bound to set in.

How are they broken?

"We have divine power to demolish strongholds." (2 cor.10:5)

Let's take a look at what we are demolishing. The bible gives us a glimpse of the inner workings of a stronghold at Jericho.

* They are built on fear. **"A great fear of you has fallen on us,"** (Joshua 2:9) Fear fills the strongholds of the enemy. It is a fear which neutralizes people, (Mark 4:38) but much more it is a fear of God's people, and what they can do, inspired by the spirit of God. That's us! The strongholds are afraid of us.

* They are shut up. **"Now the gates of Jericho were securely barred."** (Josh. 6:1)

This is a fundamental truth about strongholds. They close the way. We are opposed, there is no way past and no way in to these demonic strongholds - that's what we are meant to think. The impression we are given is that the way is locked. But history proves this an empty threat. The Jebusites, who held Jerusalem against King David, said - **"You will not get in here. Even the blind and the lame can ward you off."** But David's men did get in, and took the stronghold and made it central to the purposes of God for the next three millennia. Goliath and Nebuchadnezzar made the same mistake. The truth is simple – nothing can

stand in the way of God's people, filled with the power of God. Any stronghold which suggests this is the case is lying - taking after its father.

* They are bound. **"Some sat in darkness, in utter darkness, prisoners suffering in iron chains."** (Ps 107:10) There is an imprisonment within the stronghold. Jericho was "tightly shut." From the outside, this looked like strength, but that is not the truth within. Satan binds those who are under his domination. He binds people (Luke 13:11. Woman bent double); he binds nations (Judges 6:13. The Midianite oppression). He even binds his own demonic forces, leaving them in misery. (Mark 5:10. Legion). We, however, are in the unbinding business, (Matthew 16:19) and every stronghold and work of the enemy knows this as a divine truth.

* The knowledge of defeat. **"The Lord has given this land to you."** Jericho knew that it would lose, even before the battle. This is a facet of strongholds which we can so easily overlook. The power against us can look so massive. But it's a losing power. The stronghold is fatally flawed. So let's pray in these ways:-

Approach with confidence.

Rahab said this, and it should echo in all our hearts:-

"I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below." (Joshua 2: 9-11)

Jesus said:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Matt 28:18)

Let's take the power, and triumph.

Apostle Paul said:-

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:31-39)

Approach with determination

When we start to pray against strongholds, there is no time for nice friendly prayer! Sometimes I hear people praying in ruthless situations as though they were planting nice pretty flowers in the garden, or knitting a suit for a new baby. That kind of prayer will not bring down strongholds. David was ruthless towards Goliath. At no point did he yield his ground. He asserted the positive truths about God and then, even after the stone had killed him, we read: **“David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine’s sword and drew it from the sheath. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword. (1 Samuel 17:51)**

It’s war. (Ephesians 6:10-17) It’s war to the death, or in our case, victory. **“For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.” (1 John 5:4)** We have to press hard against the enemy, and the stronghold will eventually fall, because divine principles say that we have diviner power to pull them down.

Approach with faith

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” (Hebrews 11:1)

The strongholds will fall, however strong they seem to be. This faith, which has passed down the generations is what the enemy fears most of all. When the Roman army attacked, the soldiers linked shields and came towards the enemy. If one man fell, another took his place, and the advance went on. It was a terrifying wall of shields, backed up by well trained and determined soldiers. This is what the enemy has to see - the people of God, linked, determined, believing, coming at the strongholds down the ages. If one goes to glory, another will take his place. As the older ones go to glory, the younger ones will step into the wall of spiritual advance. Our faith is simple. Nothing can stop us. This kind of faith will bring down every stronghold, until the Lord returns and winds everything up. Marana Tha. Come Lord Jesus.

Approach to Destroy

“David ran and stood over him. He took hold of the Philistine's sword and drew it from the scabbard. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword. When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran. Then the men of Israel and Judah surged forward with a shout and pursued the Philistines to the entrance of Gath and to the gates of Ekron. Their dead were strewn along the Shaaraim road to Gath and Ekron. When the Israelites returned from chasing the Philistines, they plundered their camp. David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem, and he put the Philistine's weapons in his own tent.” (1 Samuel 17:51-54)

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: **“Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. (Rev 12:10)**

Our ultimate goal is to see the enemy thrown down for good, and it seems that heaven agrees with us. In the meantime, we need to adopt David's attitude – destroy the occult powers that stand against us, so that God's people can be released to move forward in victory.

How do we pray?

With Authority

Every believer has the right to use the authority of Jesus' name to bind and take authority over Satan's activities. **“No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house”** (Mark 3:27). Issue a spoken command to the devil that he is bound and he must leave the stronghold. Exercising authority in the name of Jesus will expel the Devil's influence.

Together

We need to come together with other believers to pray and intercede against strongholds until we get results. There is intensified power in the gathering of more believers. Prayer with fasting intensifies **faith, and faith will break strongholds. “Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast him out? However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.”** (Matthew 17:19,21).

Establish

We need to establish the presence of God. Where Satan has been commanded to leave, we must fill the empty space with God's presence. Where the presence of the Lord is, the Devil isn't! Satan doesn't want to hang around where people are lifting up Jesus in worship, in singing and prayer. The presence of the Lord displaces the Devil. **“For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?”** (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Resist

Never give in! **“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”** (James 4:7).

Occupy

Give no place or vacancy to the Devil. With Satan departed, fill the void with God. Let righteousness be the standard rule and behaviour. Provide no pocket of rebellion, corruption or immorality in which Satan can find refuge to rebuild his influence or strength. The scripture says to not **“give place to the devil”** (Eph. 4:27).

Fortify

We must clothe ourselves with God's armour. Take on daily the full array of God's spiritual equipment that we may be battle-ready. With the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit and the other links of armour (Eph. 6:13-17), we will be ready to resist any satanic assault, and will be ready to engage the strongholds in others. **“Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil”** (Ephesians 6:11).

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