

I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

Revelation 22:16

It is common behaviour of satan to claim the honour and position that rightfully belongs to Christ. Indeed God gave him great honour and position that was lower than Christ but higher than other angels. Satan is however, not satisfied with anything as long as he is lower than Christ.

In Isaiah 14:12-14 satan used the words “I will” five times. Five is the number for grace. When satan said “I will” five times, he rejected the grace of God. He exhibited an independent spirit, which was full of envy and arrogance.

1. “I will ascend into heaven” – satan wanted to sit on God’s throne in heaven.
2. “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God” – satan wanted to exercise authority over all the angels of God including the archangel Michael.
3. “I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north” – satan wanted to become the ruler of the Messianic kingdom on the Holy Mount of God.
4. “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds” – satan wanted to have the glory which God alone has. He wanted to receive God’s praise and His worship.
5. “I will be like the most High” – satan wanted to be seen as the maker and the possessor of heaven and earth.

Envy is always saturated with “I will.” It is a competitive spirit that seeks to be the first and the best in everything. It drives a person to usurp positions that don’t belong to him or her. Envy breeds conspiracy and confusion. It generates a state of anarchy and uses it as the platform to satisfy its lust.

LUCIFER’S INSATIABLE DESIRE

Lucifer had a desire that could not be satisfied – he wanted to be like the Most High. We have already seen Isaiah’s description of Lucifer’s ambitions. Ezekiel also described Lucifer with glowing tributes. He referred to Lucifer as the anointed Cherub, who was perfect in beauty and was endowed with great blessings. In spite of his endowments however, Lucifer was not content – He wanted to be everything God was.

Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.

Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the

jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.

Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

Ezekiel 28:11-17

The above scripture refers to the King of Tyrus whom some scholars simply say refers to the earthly king of Tyrus at that time called Ithbaal III who had a close relationship with Baal. The reference to “king” is significant – Ezekiel used the word “ruler” most often for earthly kings. The reference to “king” here therefore means he meant more than an earthly ruler. This being was perfect from his creation – definitely no man was created in a perfect state. He is also described as the anointed cherub. Comparing the personality in Ezekiel 28 with the one in Isaiah 14:12-15 makes me believe that they refer to the same person – satan.

The scriptures in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 refer to a spirit being and not a man. The book of Daniel makes reference to the prince of the kingdom of Persia, who detained the messenger that was sent to Daniel for twenty-one days.

But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

Daniel 10:13

Daniel 8:16 gives the name of the angelic being who was sent to give Daniel understanding as Gabriel.

And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision.

So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the

From the above reference we can infer that the messenger of Daniel 10:13 was the same angel Gabriel. The messenger who was sent to release him from captivity by the Prince of Persia was the chief prince (archangel) Michael. If Gabriel is an angelic being and Michael is an angelic being, the Prince of the Kingdom of Persia is an angelic being too. Nothing less than an angelic being can withstand an angel of the ranking of Gabriel. The Prince of Persia is therefore not a human being but the spirit being who ruled Persia through the earthly king.

It is clear that the terms prince of the kingdom of Persia and King of Tyrus refer to angelic beings. The detailed descriptions of the angelic being referred to in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 refer to none other but the king of the angels of darkness – Lucifer or satan.

LUCIFER HAD EVERYTHING

God gave Lucifer everything he needed to be fulfilled in life. He was the son of the morning – a prestigious designation. In spite of this, Lucifer was not content. He wanted to ascend into heaven, he wanted to exalt his throne above the stars of God and above all He sought to be like the most High.

Satan was not satisfied with having the things God gave him. Neither was he content with what God had made him. He wanted to be like God.

Lucifer's evil ambition made God bring him down to hell – to the sides of the pit. He tried to assume an exalted position God did not give him and God found it necessary to banish him from His presence.

Envious people have their fair share of God's blessing. Yet they are not satisfied. They want what belongs to another person. You can give them everything you have but until they are like you or feel higher than you they will not be satisfied.

The scripture in Ezekiel 28 describes the extent to which God blessed Lucifer, called the King of Tyrus in this reference. Ezekiel 28:12 describes Lucifer's perfection.

Verse 12 – “Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.”

Thou “sealest” means to complete something and seal it up. Lucifer was a complete creation. “The sum” implies full measure. Lucifer was the full measure of wisdom and beauty. It is ironical that the people who are most wise and beautiful are often envious of other people's wisdom and beauty. I knew a lady who was very pretty but could never stand another pretty lady. She was very insecure any time she saw a pretty lady around her husband. She couldn't even stand the presence of a beautiful woman in her place of work or in her environment. Contestants in beauty pageants may be jealous of one another. They sometimes go as far as trying to destroy their competitors by cruel means.

History is littered with supposedly wise people who stole other people's discoveries and inventions. These envious wise ones were not satisfied with what they had. They had to deny others the credit for their inventions so that they could be seen as the only wise ones. The spectacle of wise men trying to undo and outdo one another is common. In the philosophy of the world it is not enough

to be wise – you must be wiser than someone else. People get nervous when they see someone who is wiser than they are.

Ezekiel 28:13 reveals Lucifer's placement, decoration and spiritual endowments.

Verse 13 – “Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.”

Three things are mentioned in the above verse:

- 1. Lucifer was in Eden the garden of God.** Eden means pleasure and delight. Lucifer was created and placed in conditions of pleasure and delight that were similar to those in the Garden of Eden where God planted Adam and Eve. This garden of God was not the Garden of Eden on earth though satan visited the earthly garden in the form of a serpent.
- 2. Every precious stone was Lucifer's covering, the sardius, topaz, the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, the carbuncle, and gold.** Lucifer was adorned with nine precious gemstones, which were among the twelve stones on the breastplate of the High Priest of Israel. On each of the stones on the breastplate of the High Priest was engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

And thou shalt make the breastplate of judgment with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine twined linen, shalt thou make it.

Foursquare it shall be being doubled; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span shall be the breadth thereof.

And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows of stones: the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the first row.

And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond.

And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst.

And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings.

And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes.

Exodus 28:15-21

The occurrence of these precious stones in Lucifer's adornment suggests that God entrusted him with some amount of spiritual responsibility towards the tribes of Israel. Lucifer was to represent man before God in the manner in which the High Priests represented men before God but he chose to misrepresent man. Instead of interceding for man, Lucifer accuses him before God.

Lucifer was not content with nine stones. Nine is the number for the conclusion of a matter or amen. The Apostle Paul gave a list of nine spiritual gifts and nine elements of the fruit of the Spirit. Nine therefore suggests that satan had enough spiritual right to stand before God and minister. In spite

of this, he probably felt that God should have given him twelve stones like He gave the High Priest later on. He had nine stones and not twelve suggesting that he was not given full representation of all the tribes of the world.

The Lucifer spirit is the spirit that is motivated by envy to be like the Most High and uses deception to organise rebellion against God with the aim of destabilising God's kingdom and bringing His people under its subjection.

Rather than inspire man to worship God, satan instigated him to rebel against God. Lucifer also established false kinds of worship in which he was not just the priest but the god man worshipped. When people don't get everything they think they should have, they get angry and become destructive in their activities. An envious person is not satisfied with nine out of twelve – he wants everything.

3. The workmanship of Lucifer's tabrets and his pipes were prepared in him in the day he was created. Lucifer was internally equipped with tabrets (tambourines) and pipes (flutes). Music was incorporated in Lucifer and this gift gave him access to the throne of God.

The verse 14 of Ezekiel 28 presents Lucifer as an angelic being that occupied a position of power and glory.

Verse 14 “Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.”

Lucifer was the anointed cherub that covereth – Lucifer was like one of the Cherubim that guarded the gates of the Garden of Eden or that overshadowed the Mercy Seat. God placed Lucifer in his position of power and glory. He was upon the holy mountain of God – an exalted position of rulership and power. Lucifer walked in holiness and glory like a person walking up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

Ezekiel 28:15 introduces us to the shock of Lucifer's fall from perfection to iniquity. Lucifer was blameless and without any blemish until iniquity was found in him.

Verse 15 – “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.”

Lucifer was not content with the blessings and favour God gave him and the desire to have more drove him to challenge God's sovereignty. As a result of his effrontery God cast him as profane out of the mountain of God. Lucifer's heart was lifted up and he was corrupted. God visited swift judgment on the angel who was once the envy of heaven.

Lucifer's privileges might tempt you to think he would be satisfied with who he was and what he had. On the contrary, he was filled with envy and demanded more. He stirred up violence and sinned against God. Accordingly, God cast him out of the mountain of God and promised to destroy him. Lucifer's heart was lifted up and God cast him to the ground to the amazement of the onlookers.

LUCIFER WAS CAST DOWN

God did not entertain satan's ambitions. He threw him out of heaven into the heavenlies and he will finally be incarcerated in hell forever. The book of Revelation reveals that satan was cast out of heaven during his rebellion in which he drew angels after him.

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Revelation 12:7-9

Isaiah revealed that Lucifer was brought to hell when he pronounced his five “I wills”.

Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms;

That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?

All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house.

But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet.

Isaiah 14:15-19

Ezekiel confirms that God cast satan out of the mountain of God to the ground.

Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

Ezekiel 28:15-17

The above references to how God dealt with satan’s rebellion indicate clearly that He rooted out satan’s envy by casting him out of His presence. This is a warning that you can’t overcome envy by entertaining it in your presence. God was ruthless in dealing with the devil – He took him out of His presence.

Envy is too dangerous to be allowed to mature. If it is possible to get an envious person to

repent, let us do so in love. But if there is a reason to doubt that he will repent do yourself a favour by driving him out of your presence.

Lucifer's example paints a scary picture of envy in the sense that it makes it plain to us that envy cannot be satisfied. You cannot appease the envy in a person by giving him gifts and promoting him to great heights.

THE DISGRUNTLED PASTOR

Several years ago, I knew two pastors in a city, one of whom was very envious of the other. One of the pastors had a kind heart and he tried to help the bitter and envious pastor out of his problems. The envious pastor was older than the other one and had great opportunities in life but squandered his fortunes. This bitter pastor lost his church, house and car and the younger pastor rushed in to help him. He fixed his car for him, repaired a temporary accommodation he was living in for him, put him on monthly remittance and tried to help him to resuscitate his ministry.

The older minister received all the assistance he could from the younger pastor and went further to make more demands. Meanwhile he was very critical of the younger minister, accusing him of being a prosperity preacher. He received the gifts the younger pastor gave him but attacked members of the younger pastor's church verbally and dissuaded them from attending his church because he claimed it was a hell bound church. He constantly whined and sneered at the younger pastor and his members, until the younger pastor got fed up and withdrew the support he gave him.

The disgruntled pastor was an ingrate and nothing could satisfy him. His personal failures frustrated him. He was an angry man who was critical of pastors who had cars, houses and huge churches. He forgot that he once owned all the things he criticised. At a certain point in his life he had the best car amongst the pastors in the city, he led the most thriving church and owned a house, which he purchased. He blew his chances in life only to turn around and attack pastors who looked successful. The story of these two pastors underscores the fact that it is difficult if not impossible to help an envious person. The awareness that he needs help angers the envious man. Envy goes with pride and deception.

This older pastor's character is consistent with the character of many people. Envy is a common condition amongst people including believers. It began in Lucifer's heart and he in turn injected Eve with the spirit who also passed it on to her husband Adam. Having looked at envy in Lucifer, let us consider how Adam and Eve contracted the envy virus. These two personalities who were made in God's image allowed themselves to be corrupted by Lucifer's envious nature – the friends of God, Adam and Eve, were turned into His enemies.

CHAPTER 3

THE ADAM AND EVE SPIRIT

HE discovered in the case of Lucifer that envious people may be blessed in many ways but they choose to ignore their blessings and covet things that don't belong to them. Lucifer was wonderfully created and endowed with gifts but he wanted to be like the Most High God. Similarly, Adam and Eve were created in the image of God and were given oversight over the Garden of Eden. God permitted them to eat of any tree in the Garden of Eden, including the tree of life, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but greed and covetousness moved man to desire what he was not permitted to eat.

And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Genesis 2:15-17

During the fall of Adam and Eve, some negative spirits influenced their behaviour including a subtle manifestation of the spirit of envy. The study of the spirit of envy in Lucifer in the previous chapter of this book was a great eye opener. The envy in Adam and Eve exposes other details of the spirit of envy as Satan interacted with them. Satan walked into the Garden of Eden one day and introduced the first couple on earth to the dangerous spirit of envy. He questioned the Word of God and stirred up a spirit in them that made them want to be like God. The ambition to be like God is one of the major ambitions of envy.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:1-8

Satan was envious of the relationship between Adam and Eve and God. He was therefore determined to break it by creating in them a spirit of rebellion against God. Man occupied an enviable position in God's heart and satan devised a scheme to separate him from God. Satan's mischief is common in homes, churches and businesses as envious elements work hard to sow seeds of discord amongst those who have a close relationship with one another. People lie about others and accuse them just to remove them from positions of favour.

Adam and Eve did not discern satan's intentions for questioning God's integrity and so they collaborated with him to undermine God's authority. Man took sides with satan to frustrate the grace of God in the Garden of Eden.

The Adam and Eve spirit is the spirit that moves people to collaborate with satan to undermine God's authority and wisdom, by lusting after things that satisfy the eyes, the flesh and pride, with the aim of assuming a higher position than where God has placed them.

THE SCHEME OF ENVY

Envy does not launch its venom in a haphazard manner but instead employs an elaborate scheme to destroy its target. Satan's envy had some noticeable traits that can help us identify envy when it shows up.

- Subtlety

Satan, in the form of the serpent, was craftier or cleverer than any other animal in the Garden of Eden. He was crafty and did not come to Adam and Eve as a whirlwind or an earthquake but was clothed in the body of a serpent, which was one of the animals in the Garden of Eden. That way Adam and Eve did not suspect that anything diabolical was taking place. Satan's subtlety was also demonstrated in the fact that he did not announce his real intentions to Adam and Eve. He started off by asking a question – he questioned God's motive for restricting Adam and Eve from eating the fruit so as to create doubt in their minds. Envy achieves its purpose with the subtlety of a serpent. Envious people employ intelligent arguments and patiently devise their plans to influence others against those they envy.

- Pretence

Satan pretended to care for Adam and Eve. He made it look as if God was wicked to them by denying them the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He promoted himself as the kind-hearted person who cared for them. People who envy you pretend they love you and care for you. Those who envy the person who loves you may pretend that they love you more and try to portray him or her as an evil person.

- Exaggeration

Satan asked Eve if God said she and Adam should not eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and she exaggerated by adding that God said they should not even touch the tree. Envy made her exaggerate the rules God gave her. God told them not to eat of the tree but He did not tell them not to touch it. The spirit of envy exaggerates the difficult conditions the envious person thinks he or she lives in. Exaggeration leads to anger and causes people to succumb to the spirits of malice and deception. Satan induced Adam and Eve to create an instruction God did not give them – don't even touch the fruit.

He uses the same tactic to make us feel God is austere. When a person feels deprived and denied he or she becomes angry and is disposed to rebelling against God's Word.

- Appetite

Eve saw that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise so she took it, ate and gave it to her husband who also ate. Envy creates an appetite in us for the wrong things and then it urges us to disobedience.

Without a wrong appetite envy is an impotent force.

Three things constituted the wrong appetite in Adam and Eve. Firstly, the fruit was good for food. Secondly, it was pleasant to the eyes and thirdly, it was a fruit desired to make one wise. John the Apostle refers to these three appetites as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

1 John 2:16

The lust for the things of the world stirs up envy and the verse above says this kind of lust is not of the Father. If it is not of the Father then it is of the devil.

- Criticism

Satan criticised God's motives for telling Adam and Eve not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He convinced Adam and Eve that God's motive was to prevent them from attaining a status that was comparable to His. Those who envy you criticise you and the people who love you. They use criticism as the tool to divert your attention from the person who loves you. If someone wants to snatch you from your spouse, employer or pastor he or she resorts to criticising them so that you lose faith in them. That way you fall prey to his or her schemes. The Adam and Eve spirit cooperated with the spirit of criticism in Lucifer. They did not know satan wanted to snatch them from God and also alienate them from Him.

- Denial

Satan denied the consequences of disobedience. He told Eve she would not surely die but rather derive some spiritual benefits from eating the forbidden fruit. Envy works hard to convince the people around you whom it seeks to destroy that it is not dangerous to disobey godly instructions. It instigates them to break rules and disrupt the harmony in your home or institution and convinces them their actions have no destructive consequences.

The fact that Adam and Eve ate the fruit means they believed satan's lie that they would not surely die. They believed satan more than they believed God. Their disobedience resulted in spiritual death according to God's Word.

- Conspiracy

Envious persons try to carry others along with them. Satan drew angels into his rebellion against God and God threw them out of heaven.

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Revelation 12:7-9

Not satisfied with carrying angels into his rebellion, satan went into the Garden of Eden to recruit more rebels by deceiving Adam and Eve to disobey God.

An envious person does not often act alone. He or she injects others with the venom and drags them into rebellion. The Adam and Eve spirit wanted to be like God knowing good and evil just as Lucifer wanted to be like the "most High."

Satan first deceived Eve to eat the fruit and she in turn convinced Adam to transgress. Adam did not join the conspiracy out of love for his wife. I think he ate the fruit out of envy. Probably, he believed by eating the fruit, Eve's eyes were opened and she was going to be like God knowing the difference between good and evil. Adam might have thought his wife would be wiser than him and superior to him. To avert what he felt was going to be an anomaly he also ate the fruit. It is unwise to partake of an action out of envy because you never know the implications of the action. What you think is a blessing someone has, could be a curse.

Adam and Eve underestimated whom God had made them and what He had given to them. Man was God's masterpiece but Satan convinced him that it was not enough – he wanted more.

THE MASTERPIECE OF GOD

Adam and Eve were the masterpiece of God. God created them in His own image and gave them dominion over the earth. God blessed Adam and Eve immensely and made them like “gods” on earth.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Genesis 1:26-28

The above scripture shows man really imbibed Lucifer's spirit in that, God created him in His own image and gave him dominion over creation but he was not satisfied. He wanted more than what God had given him just as Lucifer did. Man wanted to be like God and that made him fall into the trap of the devil. The wonder of man's creation and the environment in which God planted him should have made him completely satisfied but he was not. He thought he needed more. This feature of envy is prominently displayed in most of the instances of envy in the Scriptures.

Most envious people are gifted and blessed. They however, hate to see someone have what they don't have. If they even have more than everybody around them they would seek to be like God.

Satan convinced Adam and Eve that their eyes needed enlightenment. Man's eyes were already opened otherwise he could not have displayed the great insight he displayed in the Garden of Eden like naming all the animals and fellowshiping with God. God made man in His own image and after His likeness so man did not have to eat the fruit to be “as gods” – something that was inferior to God. There was no evil in the Garden of Eden until the serpent made man fall. The state of the absence of

evil was better than knowing good and evil but man chose the latter. God gave Adam and Eve every herb and fruit in the garden except the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and yet they fell for satan's temptation.

Adam and Eve ate the fruit they were not supposed to eat as if God denied them food to eat. Other trees were good for food, other trees were pleasant to the eyes and they needed the Holy Spirit to be wise and not a fruit. Man blatantly ignored divine instruction and forged an alliance with satan against his creator.

Man finds it difficult to reserve something for God without eating it. In the Garden of Eden one of two special trees belonged to man but the other one belonged to God. In other words, fifty per cent of the two trees belonged to God and the other fifty per cent belonged to man. This restriction is similar to the principle of tithing. The literal figure of ten per cent in tithing should not confuse us. We should be more concerned about the principle of tithing than the legalities of the figures.

It is absurd to see some believers struggle with the teaching on tithing. They vehemently argue that tithing is an Old Testament practice. Such people contend that it is too legalistic to give ten per cent of what we have to God. They blame tithing for the poverty of believers. These teachers forget that when people give ten per cent of what they have to God they still have ninety per cent with them. If someone is poor after tithing, the problem is not the ten per cent he gave to God but the ninety per cent that was left with him. We should believe God for an increase in what we have so that tithing and other forms of giving don't challenge us financially.

In the New Testament, it should be easier to give more than ten per cent of what we have to God because he who is forgiven much loves much. Again the mission of the Church today is so vast that tithing is not enough. The mission of the priests and for that matter the Old Testament temple did not involve global evangelisation. Today's mission is very involving and costs a lot of money. Tithing is not enough and believers must seek to go beyond it.

Human beings want things that are not rightfully theirs. If you focus on the things God says you cannot and should not have, you forget the vast blessings He has given you. It is common to hear people say God says they should not have sex. He does not say that. He says you can have it but it has to be with your marriage partner of the opposite sex. He detests adultery, fornication and homosexuality. Some have also imposed a vow of poverty on themselves by claiming that God does not want them to have money because money is evil. God hates ill gotten wealth and covetousness but not money that is rightfully earned.

THE FOLLY OF ENVY

After becoming envious of God and eating the forbidden fruit, Adam's and Eve's eyes were opened. It was then that they realised the devastating consequences of their actions. They instantly knew that they were naked – they knew good and evil. All along they were naked but they were covered with the glory of God and did not see their nakedness. After their fall the glory of God departed from them and they saw their nakedness.

Upon seeing that they were naked Adam and Eve made aprons of fig leaves and attempted to cover their nakedness. When God came into the Garden they hid amongst the trees. Leaves make up trees and by hiding amongst trees Adam and Eve were actually hiding their apron leaves amongst leaves.

This attitude of man features in the sins we commit – we hide lies in lies and immorality in immorality in our effort to cover up our sins. Man was envious of God and wanted to be like Him but he ended up becoming inferior to what he was created to be. He was created to dwell in God's presence but after His fall he dwelled amongst trees with the rest of the animals in the Garden of Eden.

What envy brings to us is never the real thing we need neither is it the will of God for us. It is not what you get that is crucial but what you can use. Through envy Judas Iscariot got thirty pieces of silver but he committed suicide without using it. Gehazi, Elisha's servant, got clothing from Naaman the leper through dishonesty but he became a leper and could not use them as he wished. There is no point in grabbing things only to be unable to use them.

A simple example can illustrate the folly of grabbing things. One evening during our teaching assembly in Bolgatanga,

I made a simple demonstration of the folly of covetousness.

I took a carrier bag from home and put a ladies' African long skirt with the matching top in it. The owner of this attire is my niece who is smallish in stature.

On the night in question, I was teaching on the subject of covetousness. At a certain point during my teaching, I called a lady from the congregation who is also smallish in structure and one male usher who carries the physique of a giant. I told them I was going to throw the carrier bag into the air and if either of them grabbed it, the person had to use the contents of the bag. I knew the big usher would catch it.

When I threw the bag into the air he snatched it and left the lady in despair as I expected. I then told him to open the bag and use the contents. When he opened it he discovered that he could not use the contents, because they were ladies' attire. Another problem was that they were too small to fit him even if he were a lady.

Covetousness may make us receive things we cannot use. Adam's and Eve's eyes were opened but they did not like what they saw – nakedness. They hid from the presence of God, which was once readily available to them. God punished satan, Adam and Eve for their disobedience and they lost their place in the Garden of Eden.

THE RESULTS OF ENVY

God reacted to the rebellion in the Garden of Eden by punishing the serpent, Adam and Eve. It is evident from the punishments meted out to them that they did not receive what they expected to have through their envy, lust and disobedience. Envy leaves a man with the opposite of what he struggles to get unlawfully.

The serpent's punishment – it was cursed, condemned to crawling on its belly and eating dust. Man did not become satan's permanent ally as the latter hoped but there was enmity between them.

And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Genesis 3:14-15

Eve's punishment – instead of having pleasure, Eve's sorrow was multiplied and she was subjected to her husband.

She did not become “as gods” but rather became subservient to her husband.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

Genesis 3:16

Adam's punishment – God cursed the ground because of Adam's disobedience and he was introduced to a life of toil and pain. Instead of the eating of the fruit satisfying man's hunger, man toiled for the earth to yield his food.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Genesis 3:17-19

After pronouncing punishments on the three culprits, God drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden.

Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

God's action against man's rebellion demonstrated redemptive love but it was also strict. He made aprons of animal skin to cover Adam and Eve pointing to the shedding of redemptive blood and spoke words that conveyed the love in His heart. Finally, God did the ultimate thing by sending man out of the Garden of Eden and positioning Cherubim and a flaming sword to prevent man from eating from the tree of life.

To overcome the envy spirit we must learn some vital lessons from the way God deals with envy. God is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. He is also perfect in love. Nothing can unsettle God and He is immortal. In spite of this He did not allow Adam and Eve to remain in the Garden of Eden. The reason for doing so is that if He had allowed man to eat the fruit of the tree of life after his rebellion, man would have lived forever in his sinful nature. God therefore sent him out to give him the opportunity to be restored to fellowship through redemption and eventually even if he dies physically he could live eternally and enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

The lesson we learn here is that envy should not be allowed to live with us. We have to prayerfully and in love cast envious people out of our environment. We don't have to chase them out with the aim of destroying them; however, to allow them to kill or destroy us is not wise. The Bible says "thou shalt not kill" but it does not say "thou shalt expose thyself to die."

If God drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden, my understanding is that driving an envious person out of your life is one of the surest ways of overcoming the envy spirit. Stay far away from envious people so as to save your life. Nothing in the Bible prevents you from employing wisdom for self-preservation.

We have seen how envy operated in Lucifer or satan and its inception in the first man and woman. Understanding the various ramifications of envy helps us to overcome the spirit when it shows up. Adam and Eve had the power to overcome the spirit of envy exuding from satan but they failed to exercise dominion over the schemes of satan. A casual study of the encounter between satan, Adam and Eve gives us some keys to defeat the serpent and the envy he carries.

DEFEATING THE SERPENT

We have seen how to deal with the envy spirit when it comes around to destroy us – cast it out. We must also be armed with the courage to ward off an envious person when he comes to conscript us into his envy conspiracy.

The devil is subtle but he can be defeated. He was not just envious of God but also of Adam and Eve. He used them against God but at the same time he was envious of the position they occupied. Armed with this awareness we should not allow him to tempt us to rebel against God.

Knowing how to overcome envy must be the priority of every successful person. Here are a few keys we can employ to overcome satan's envy against God and against us:

- Discernment

When envy is in its advanced stages it is easy to identify because even the person's body language reveals everything in the heart. At this stage envy can be seen on the face, it can be heard in the voice and it is obvious in one's actions. In the initial stages however, we must be armed with the capacity to

discern envy in people. Satan disguised himself making it difficult for Adam and Eve to identify him. Envy is embedded in the heart and until it is full blown it is difficult to detect. The envious person uses many schemes and tricks to spread his or her mischief. The key to overcoming the spirit of envy is to develop your spirit to the point where you can penetrate people's hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Defiance

Adam and Eve showed satan too much respect. They tolerated his presence for too long. You have to defy envious people. Don't entertain them and don't give them any attention. Be blunt with them when they try to inject their poison into you. They may be people you respect because of their position in society but you have to be bold all the same. Envious people are so dangerous that you can't afford to be overly cautious in dealing with them. Don't answer their questions and refuse to be emotionally absorbed in their conversations.

- Defining boundaries

The problem with envious people is they lack a sense of boundaries. Envious people don't know their limits or their territories. Neither do they know who they are. God was specific about what Adam and Eve could eat and what they could not eat. If you define your boundaries, you cannot be envious. Knowing your boundaries prevents envious people from drawing you into their conspiracy. Defining clear boundaries makes you content and you cannot easily be influenced against God.

- Decoding

Adam and Eve failed to decode what God meant by "lest ye die". They had never seen death so they could not understand what God meant. They could not also decode the spiritual implications of satan's language and tricks. When envious people talk, you have to decode their language. They speak very craftily. You must be able to decode God's instructions so that the enemy does not lure you into deception. Adam and Eve did not understand God's instructions and that allowed satan to distort what He said.

- Discipline

Lust and pride controlled Adam and Eve, thus making them easily corruptible by satan's envy. They joined satan in thinking that God had too much power and glory. God's masterpiece failed to tame their appetite for glory and self esteem resulting in their rebellion against God. Those who envy you may try to entice you to lust after what they lust after, just as satan deceived Adam and Eve, and they craved what he lusted after. When he succeeded in getting them to revolt against God, they lost their place before God and were thrown out of the Garden of Eden.

By discerning human hearts, defying toxic people, defining our boundaries, decoding the things we hear and being disciplined we can overcome the attempt of the enemy to infect us with the envy spirit. Adam and Eve failed to employ these keys that were available to them, and satan lured them to rebellion.

Studying Adam and Eve has given us insight into the subject matter of envy but the journey is far from being over because envy is so vast and varied in its manifestation that it cannot be exhausted in a few pages of writing. Different instances of envy present diverse ways in which the spirit manifests

itself and how it can be overcome. Envy did not stop with Adam and Eve but continued down their generational line manifesting in Cain. Lucifer, Adam, Eve and Cain show us some of the earliest occurrences of envy. We shall study envy in Cain's life and then look at other cases later on in this book.

CHAPTER 4

THE CAIN SPIRIT

ADAM and Eve ate the fruit of the forbidden tree with the aim of being like gods who know the difference between good and evil. God created them in His own image and gave them everything they needed. Nevertheless, they were not satisfied and resorted to treason with the hope of getting more. They thought satan had something to offer them by advising them to go against God's instructions. The occult, witchcraft and satanism thrive on people's greed and desire for more.

Adam and Eve had children among whom were two brothers Cain and Abel. They passed the spirit of envy and lust on to their son Cain. The spirit of envy reared up its head in the relationship these brothers had with God when they brought offerings to Him.

And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.

And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

Cain was the first-born son of Adam and Eve and Abel was the second-born. The name Cain means “spear” or “smith” and Abel means “breath” or “vapour”. Some Bible scholars believe that Cain and Abel were twins. They suggest that Eve “conceived” once and “bare” Cain and then “again bare” his brother Abel, making it a twin birth. Whichever way you look at it Cain was the first son and Abel was the second. Cain was a tiller of the ground whereas Abel was a shepherd. Adam taught his sons to hear God’s voice and worship Him with their offerings and in the course of time both Cain and Abel brought offerings to God.

Cain brought an offering from the fruit of the ground to God while Abel brought some of the firstlings of his flock and the fat of the animals. God accepted Abel and his offering but not Cain and his offering. The reason for God’s different reactions to their offerings is not clear but I can make a few suggestions. Abel’s offering may have involved shedding the blood of an animal – a type of redemption through the shed blood of Christ. Cain’s offering was however, the mere produce of the ground without spiritual or prophetic significance. It seems Abel was more spiritual than Cain hence his ability to discern what he had to take to God.

Besides this spiritual explanation of why God rejected Cain’s offering, a close look at the description of the offerings throws some light on why Abel’s offering was accepted and Cain’s was rejected. Abel’s offering is described as coming from the firstlings of his flock and the fat of the animals whereas Cain’s offering was merely from the produce of the ground. It seems Abel was more diligent in the preparation and presentation of his offering than Cain – he brought the firstlings and the fat of the flock. Cain just took something and offered it to God without much consideration. God’s response to the offerings of the two brothers triggered a chain of reactions – envy and confusion in Cain.

The Cain spirit is the spirit that engages in rivalry and acts of murder against others because it did not receive God’s approval. This spirit is a disgruntled, frustrated and self-righteous spirit that challenges God’s judgment and fights against divine order.

SIGNS OF THE SPIRIT OF CAIN

It is important to identify the Cain spirit so that you can preserve your life. You cannot afford to be careless around this spirit. The following are sure signs that the Cain spirit is in a person:

- Aggression

The name Cain means to strike, a lance, a spear or a smith. These words for Cain point to his aggressive and violent nature. The Cain spirit is ready to strike and shed blood. It is deadly when envy and violence combine. The envious person is a stranger to the grace of God. He thinks he can take the things he needs by force and human wisdom instead of the grace of God.

Ecclesiastes 9 points out the futility of human effort without divine assistance.

I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of

understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

Ecclesiastes 9:11

Speed does not guarantee the prize. Strong people don't always get the victory in battles. Food is not acquired by human wisdom neither do riches always accrue to men of understanding. It takes the fear of God to win some battles in life. Favour plays a major role in our acceptance before God. Others may be more gifted than you and yet God's favour can give you an advantage over them. Such people don't understand why you are blessed and they do everything possible to undermine your breakthrough.

- Recklessness

Cain gave God the wrong offering through his recklessness. Many envious people fail to realize that they are not as diligent as the ones they envy. They either blame God for being partial or they accuse those that have acceptance before God of being unqualified for their blessings.

And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

Genesis 4:6-7

Reckless people blame everybody for their problems but themselves. They refuse to accept that others deserve the success they have. Such people don't plan their lives and activities and don't utilise their opportunities well. To say the least, they are very dishonest with themselves when it comes to the realistic assessment of the cause of their failure. Envy makes a person live in denial of the fact that successful people deserve the fruit of their labour.

Cain had an ungrateful spirit and did not appreciate what God did for him. Cain was the first-born. God made him a tiller of the ground and also gave him the opportunity to come into His presence with an offering – Cain and Abel had equal opportunities. God gave Cain a brother and he killed him. This reminds us of the previous cases involving Lucifer, Adam and Eve – they were all blessed but they still chose to be envious and bitter.

- Rejection

God rejected Cain and his offering. The Cain spirit has a feeling of rejection. It is plagued with an inferiority complex and often feels undermined and insulted. That spirit constantly protests against not being treated fairly. The lack of fulfilment is a mark of the Cain spirit. People who have this spirit have no sense of satisfaction in life.

And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:

But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth,

and his countenance fell.

Genesis 4:4-5

Cain refused to repent when he realised God had rejected him. Repentance could have brought him restoration but he chose to concentrate on Abel's acceptance before God instead of his personal failure to meet God's standards.

When envious people stand before God's mirror of judgment they don't see their own image but rather see the image of others. In terms of blessing, the envious man does not see his personal blessing but others' blessings. He does not regard what he has and what others have as fair deals from an impartial God, but rather thinks he deserves more.

- Anger

The Cain spirit is an angry spirit that loves to quarrel and argue. It argues with God and man. This spirit is unforgiving and bitter. It is dejected and unhappy – Cain's countenance fell. The Cain spirit seeks to have its way and if it does not, it stirs up confusion of no mean proportions.

Jacob protested against Simeon and Levi's anger and withdrew his honour from them.

Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations.

O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall.

Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

Genesis 49:5-7

Cain's name means a "spear" or "lance". Simeon and Levi possessed instruments of cruelty. Cain's anger led him to kill Abel just as Simeon and Levi committed murder in their anger. One thing you should know about envy is that someone who is envious of you could kill you if he had the opportunity. In the same way, if you have the spirit of envy you can easily commit murder.

Cain looked for an opportunity to kill Abel. Envious people seek revenge by eliminating their rivals. They don't mind how long it takes to plan the execution of a murder plot neither do they care how much they spend on their wicked agenda.

Abel missed it by failing to realise that the Cain spirit is a spirit of murder. He maintained close ties with Cain and the latter lured him to a secluded place and killed him.

And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

Genesis 4:8

God sent Lucifer, Adam and Eve out of His presence to avert the dangerous effects of envy but Abel chose to embrace the Cain spirit. Abel was too nice to Cain even after he realised the envy in him. It was natural that he loved him as his brother and was in a dicey situation, but he should have been more cautious with his life.

Abel could not overcome the envy spirit and remain alive though his blood spoke from the ground unto God. His blood cried out to God and He heard him but it was too late – he was dead.

- No accountability

The Cain spirit refuses to be accountable to anybody. It does not want anybody to control it. When God asked Cain where Abel was he retorted, “am I my brother’s keeper?” He was sarcastic. He went right out of God’s presence after being punished for slaying his brother. He should have remained there for restoration. King David pleaded with God not to cast him out of His presence when he sinned against God and He restored him.

Cain resisted God’s effort to demand accountability of him by being sarcastic in his remarks. His attitude reminds me of the ungrateful servant in Jesus’ parable of the talents who accused his master of being an austere man.

Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.

For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 25:24-30

The ungrateful servant failed to produce results not because he received one talent instead of five talents. After all, another servant received two talents, not five, invested them and made profit. The ungrateful servant’s problem was laziness, fear, insecurity, jealousy and wickedness. It is likely that this servant was envious of the servants who had received five talents and two talents. He might also have been jealous of his master – maybe he thought his master had too much while he had too little.

Poor people could be envious of rich people. Like Cain, the envious servant found someone to blame for his unwillingness to make profit.

I knew a pastor who refused to make a church grow because he thought that if the church grew his General Overseer would transfer him from the church and replace him with one of his favourite pastors. This pastor had a bad opinion of his General Overseer. He was jealous of his overseer's success, fame and prosperity. He had a slave mentality by thinking that he was working for his General Overseer. Many pastors think the same way – they have a slave mentality.

JUDGMENT OF THE CAIN SPIRIT

God judged Cain for his envy and murder. The Cain spirit does not receive praise from God but rebuke, curses and correction. This spirit is particularly wicked because it destroys a close relative – a blood brother. Envy is dangerous when it shows up in families and amongst people who have strong bonds of relationships. God is not silent when envy shows up in a home or group. He punishes the guilty party for harbouring the dangerous spirit. Cain received divine judgment for his acts of wickedness and indiscretion.

And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden

Genesis 4:9-16

The voice of Abel's blood cried unto God from the ground demanding vengeance from God. By the blood crying from the earth some think the Bible means Abel's wife and children cried unto God. I think the meaning is spiritual rather than physical. Blood represents life and anything that has life

communicates in a certain manner. Cain spilled Abel's blood on the ground and the blood which spiritually speaking had life in it, announced that it was Cain who had shed it. Cain was cursed from the ground because it had received Abel's blood. It was the platform on which Cain committed murder. God's judgment on Cain came in various forms. I will summarise this judgment under two headings – rejection and curses.

- Rejection

God did not respect Cain's offering and the evidence of this was obvious to him. Cain's own conscience might have condemned him. If God does not approve of us we know it. Probably Cain had observed that Abel was visibly blessed whereas his own fortunes in life were being eroded away. The ground was restrained from yielding its full strength to Cain. God rejected Cain by driving him out of His presence – he became a fugitive and vagabond on earth and stood the risk of being killed by anybody who found him.

- Curses

God cursed Cain from the earth. By this curse God reiterated the curse on the ground after Adam's fall and added further curses to it. It is significant to note that the earth was the avenger of Abel's blood. The scene of the crime punished the crime. The location of the crime was the location of the punishment. Cain received his punishment on the platform on which he committed his sin. We know that whatsoever a man sows that also he reaps. Cain's punishment tells us that in some cases "wherever" a man sows there also he reaps the harvest. Cain sowed murder on the earth and he reaped a curse from the earth. Heaven did not execute the judgment – the earth did.

Let us not make a mistake about this – God curses people when they break His laws. The loving God curses erring people for their own good with the aim of bringing them to repentance. His curses are aimed at preserving those who might be influenced by rebellious elements to follow their example. If God does not judge the wicked they will destroy righteous people and the good works they do. After the demise of Abel, God had to find other worshippers on earth to do what Abel did. Your life is so important to God that you have to exercise great wisdom to stay alive.

God disciplined Cain by making him a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth. Having punished Cain for his sin, God demonstrated His love for him by setting a mark on him to preserve his life. God's love moves Him to temper His acts of judgment with mercy. Cain was forced to leave God's presence but the LORD showed him mercy as he walked away. This demonstration of love is similar to the way He made aprons of sheepskins and covered Adam's and Eve's nakedness before He put them out of the Garden of Eden.

We notice from the above punishment God meted out to Cain that His way of dealing with envy is consistent, in that just as He drove Lucifer, Adam and Eve out of His presence, He also drove Cain out of His presence. The quickest and most effective way of dealing with envy is to

remove it from your presence. The principle of love is not compromised when you drive the envious person out of your environment.

THE CAIN SPIRIT'S REACTION TO GOD'S JUDGMENT

Envious people react negatively to God's verdict on their lives and actions. By listening to them react to God and by observing their actions you can easily detect envious individuals. It is worthwhile to summarise Cain's conduct after he had murdered his brother.

- 1. Cain was full of sarcasm instead of reverence** – Cain asked God in a sarcastic manner if he was his brother's keeper. Envious people are generally disrespectful. Nothing is sacred to them and their manners are bad.
- 2. Cain offered an explanation to God instead of repentance** – Cain argued with God without apology or repentance. Any act of wrongdoing, which is discussed with the wrong doer over a few minutes, lacks the element of repentance. If the wrongdoer argues and explains himself it is likely that there is no remorse in his heart. Those who truly repent don't spend time explaining their actions.
- 3. Cain had an independent spirit** – Cain's independent spirit made him resent being accountable to even God. He asked God "am I my brother's keeper?" He cared about himself and no one else. The Cain Spirit does not consider other people in the house when it takes action.
- 4. Cain was self-righteous** – Cain argued with God that his punishment was too great for him. He forgot that he had killed his brother. He committed the first act of murder in the world. People often think that their punishment is bigger than their offence.
- 5. Cain left the presence of God** – Cain went out of the presence of God. Like Lucifer, Adam and Eve, Cain lost the most important thing in his life – the presence of God. Out of protest and pride he did not stop to plead with God not to cast him out of His presence. We have a choice to negotiate with God even when He rejects us. If we are not proud but humble ourselves, repent and plead with God, even after we have sinned against Him, He will restore us to His presence. Repentance and humility are the keys to staying in God's presence. Cain's situation was not completely useless. He succeeded in making God devise a system to protect him from being killed by anyone who found him. God's love allows us to reason with Him. He made us in His image and He loves to have any form of interaction with us including discussions on how we feel about issues.

CAIN'S POWER OF NEGOTIATION

In spite of Cain's envy and murder, God allowed him to negotiate his future. God alleviated his sufferings and he settled down and raised children though he had been cursed to be a fugitive and a vagabond.

And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.

Genesis 4:13-17

Cain raised children and built a city, which he named after his son Enoch. The fact that God blessed Cain even after cursing him means that he did not have to kill Abel to be blessed. If God loved Cain enough to give him grace to raise children, settle down in a place and build a city even after his act of murder, it means that God loved him all along. When God blessed Abel it did not mean that God hated Cain. There is enough room for more than one person to be blessed.

Unlike God who moved swiftly to remove Lucifer, Adam and Eve, from His presence and so prevent death, Abel accommodated the envy spirit in Cain until it killed him. Abel neither moved away from the envy spirit nor cast it out of his presence and the consequences were devastating.

No amount of faith or love can make you immune to the destructive nature of envy. God is omnipotent but He will not do anything about the envy spirit around you until you are willing to get rid of it – He does not deliver you from what you love and tolerate. One preacher rightly said that God delivers us from our enemies and not our friends.

Envy is a vast subject and the case studies we have made reference to so far are very insightful. The Bible features countless instances of the workings of the envy spirit. We shall study as many of them as we need to in order to get a good understanding of how to overcome this spirit. One of the most detailed cases of envy is the case of Absalom. Many leaders face “Absaloms” frequently in their lifetime. The rampant occurrence of the Absalom spirit is making it difficult to raise leaders and successors in many parts of the world. The Absalom spirit is a common spirit in homes, churches and institutions and the next chapter will prepare us adequately to deal with it.

CHAPTER 5

THE ABSALOM SPIRIT

THE Absalom spirit features the envy of a son towards his father. Absalom envied David his father and developed an elaborate plan to oust him from his throne. Absalom was one of David's sons and was blessed in so many ways. God did not deny Absalom the human qualities and gifts that could give him satisfaction and a sense of fulfilment.

But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him.

And when he polled his head, (for it was at every year's end that he polled it: because the hair was heavy on him, therefore he polled it:) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight.

2 Samuel 14:25-26

Absalom's name means "father of peace". It is ironical that with such a name he led the great revolt in his father's kingdom. He was David's third son by his wife Maacah, the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur. He was his mother's only son. Absalom was known for his personal beauty – no one was more handsome than Absalom in the entire land of Israel. His hair was heavy and it was cut every year and the weight was publicised. The various references to Absalom in the Bible point to his great skills, charisma and the favour he had with his father. He also had favour with his father's henchmen and the people of Israel in general.

To avoid the laborious detail of Absalom's story I wish to summarise the events of his life before his envy for his father's throne set in. Absalom had a sister called Tamar whom he loved very much. Amnon, Absalom's half brother lured Tamar into his bedroom and raped her, an action that infuriated Absalom for a long time and eventually made him devise a scheme to kill Amnon. After killing him, Absalom went into exile in Geshur to Talmai his maternal grandfather and stayed there for a while until Joab, David's army commander negotiated with David and he came back to Jerusalem. David refused to see Absalom after his return from banishment. The king perceived his son to be a murderer and refused to open his doors to him.

Joab orchestrated another plan to convince David to allow Absalom into his immediate presence and this action paved the way for Absalom's revolt; a revolt that would visit devastating consequences on the king and his palace. This part of the story of Absalom's life can be found in 2 Samuel 13 and 14. Absalom pressurised Joab to bring him to the king who received him with a kiss of affection as a father.

And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither; that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? it had been good for me to have been there still: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me.

So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom.

2 Samuel 14:32-33

Absalom had everything he needed. He was the son of a king (David). His mother was a king's daughter. He lived in wealth with his father and even in exile he lived in wealth with his grandfather who was also a king. As a prince, Absalom enjoyed the status of a royal. Though he murdered his brother, his father forgave him and restored him to the position of sonship in the palace. In spite of the power and privileges Absalom enjoyed, he coveted his father's throne. Absalom was so bitter in life that he seized his father's throne and drove him into exile so that he could avenge all the sufferings he had gone through. Envy and vengeance combined to turn the handsome prince into a monster. He led a great revolt and stole the hearts of the people of Israel.

THE HEART-STEALER

Absalom thought he was meant to be the next king of Israel and he resorted to dubious means to achieve his ambition by false humility and pretence. He put together a show of piety and a display of cunning, which convinced the people that he cared for them more than King David did.

And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel.

And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee.

Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice!

And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him.

And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

2 Samuel 15:1-6

Absalom stood at the gate and gave everyone who had a grievance a favourable verdict. He told the people that if he were the king of Israel justice would prevail on the land. When people attempted to bow down to him as they did to sovereigns he lifted them up and gave them a kiss – a show of false humility. With such acts of craftiness Absalom stole the people's hearts.

The Absalom spirit is prevalent these days as people are becoming more ambitious. Selfless individuals are becoming rare. People are not content with being princes or princesses – they want to be kings and queens. They don't want to occupy the position of an assistant – they want the ultimate position, which is the throne.

Absalom did not only crave for the things in the palace – he wanted the whole palace. The controversial prince coveted the souls of the people. He tried to beat his elder brothers to the throne and he was so impatient that he could not wait for his father to vacate the throne before he took over. He wanted it immediately. The fear of his father giving the throne to another son instead of him drove the handsome rebel to cast God's anointed king out of the palace.

Absalom was a heart-stealer. He diverted the people's hearts from the king to himself. It is common to see associate pastors who have the Absalom spirit in churches. Business partners and workers use the Absalom spirit to poach unsuspecting souls out of other people's businesses and use them to set up their own businesses. Envy does not only crave things but also craves the souls and hearts of men.

The Absalom spirit is a pretentious spirit that uses love for the people as a pretext to usurp authority by dislodging the legitimate ruler from the hearts of the people and from the throne.

The Absalom spirit is the spirit of pretence and rebellion, which seeks to undermine authority and usurp power through deception. This spirit envies the position of a superior and does everything possible to take over.

Friends steal the hearts of their friends' wives and husbands. Wife snatching and husband snatching are on the increase even in the Church. A married pastor lamented to me that a lady in his church had been possessed by an evil spirit that convinced her that he (the pastor) was her husband instead of his own wife's husband. This kind of scenario is common. I know of instances where ladies fast and pray for the pastor's wife to die so that one of them will take over because they believe that his wife is not the will of God for him.

Envy is so obsessed with getting what it desires that it does not care about the destruction it causes in its attempt to achieve its ambition. Envy pushes and shoves others. It destroys harmony in order to receive homage from those it seeks to control. Absalom's envy generated a great conspiracy.

THE GREAT CONSPIRACY

The Absalom spirit is not easy to detect because it disguises itself with a cloak of peace, love and humility. The name Absalom means "father of peace" and yet the personality was a troublemaker. The Absalom spirit enters people you have raised, given birth to or mentored, making it difficult for you to fight against it.

After his return from exile Absalom went to David and sought permission to go to Hebron and fulfil a vow he had made to God. David in his innocence and clear conscience allowed him to go and

do as he wished. The King did not know what was at stake – a great conspiracy was at an advanced stage of conception.

And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron.

But Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the sound of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron.

And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing.

And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

2 Samuel 15:9-12

Absalom left the king's presence and sent spies throughout Israel to proclaim him king as soon as they heard the sound of the trumpet. They were instructed to say, "Absalom reigneth in Hebron." The people who were conscripted to carry out Absalom's directives did not understand the implications of their actions. To give the conspiracy some kind of credibility Absalom secured the participation of Ahithophel, David's counsellor. Ahithophel was a suitable candidate for the rebellion because of his perceived wisdom and experience. Absalom brought him on board because he had been with David long enough to know how to get rid of him. It is also likely that Ahithophel had personal grievances against David for seducing Bathsheba who was his granddaughter.

Bathsheba meaning "daughter of the oath" was Uriah the Hittite's wife, whom David married after committing adultery with her and murdering her husband. Eliam, one of David's "Thirty" was Ahithophel's son (2 Sam. 23:34) and Bathsheba was Eliam's daughter (2 Sam. 11:3). 1 Chr. 3:5 also shows that Bathsheba was Eliam's daughter by referring to Bathshua (Bathsheba) as the daughter of Ammiel who was called Eliam in 2 Sam. 11:3. Therefore Bathsheba was Eliam's daughter and Eliam was Ahithophel's son making her Ahithophel's granddaughter. Probably Ahithophel saw the rebellion as an opportunity to seek revenge on David for defiling his granddaughter.

Ahithophel was called into the conspiracy when he was offering sacrifices. He was religious but he could not discern a rebellious spirit and distance himself from it. He pretended to love the King but he harboured resentment against him. It is sad when people surround a leader but don't love him enough to protect him from dangerous elements. David's confidante did not get rid of bitterness from his heart and this made him an easy prey to the spirit of conspiracy. This conspiracy was strong enough to carry a leader like Ahithophel along. A conspiracy is a spiral of confusion that increases in intensity through deceit, trickery and violence.

Those who seek to hurt you know the aggrieved persons around you who they can use against you. Envious people target disgruntled people in your ministry, home or business. They capitalise on their offences and convince them that you are a bad person, thereby using them as weapons to destroy you.

Ahithophel offered himself as a tool to fight against a king who trusted him. He convinced Absalom to depend on him as the repository of truth and wisdom. The young prince was not supposed to look to anyone else for counsel. The fact that a man of Ahithophel's calibre could be deceived is a

caution to anyone who occupies a sensitive position around a leader – never think you are too spiritual and too sincere for the enemy to use you against your leader. We must all be on the alert.

The Ahithophel spirit is the spirit, which controls and influences those in authority to depend on it as the sole custodian of wise counsel. By entrenching itself as the only source of wisdom, it manipulates affairs to achieve its personal interests.

Absalom was vicious in his ambition to stage his coup d'état. He moved the people against the King who had led them to victory in many battles. David was the king after God's heart whom God anointed and yet Absalom's revolt shook his kingdom. The people who sang that David had killed his ten thousands suddenly rose up against him. It was a strong conspiracy that ousted the greatest king of Israel. The king who had never fled in battle took to his heels because of the magnitude of the conspiracy and also because he was battle weary by that time. David loved Absalom too much to fight against him so he chose to abdicate the throne for him.

Absalom advanced towards Jerusalem while David mobilised his loved ones and fled the city. The brave shepherd who slew the lion and the bear with his bare hands did not have any answer to the threat posed by his own offspring – he could not handle his fellow human being. The giant slayer panicked at the approach of the young prince who was not as skilful as he was in warfare. Absalom's inexperience in war showed in the manner of his death when the branches of a tree caught him by his hair and handed him to his enemies. The great worshipper who dwelt in the presence of God succumbed to the fear Absalom generated in his revolt – the warrior fled.

And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.

And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword.

2 Samuel 15:13-14

Absalom's envy was a complicated type being mixed with anger and the strong desire for vengeance. He wanted the throne and at the same time he sought revenge. Ahithophel made things worse by injecting his personal agenda into the conspiracy. Absalom drove David out of Jerusalem and ascended to his throne. This was not enough. Ahithophel influenced him to sleep with his father's concubines on the rooftop in the glaring view of the public.

And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong.

So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel.

And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel

both with David and with Absalom.

2 Samuel 16:21-23

Absalom ended up having his father's throne, his city and his concubines. Anger and resentment drove Absalom to do the unimaginable by sleeping with his father's concubines on the rooftop. There were many women he could have committed sexual sin with even as a promiscuous person but he chose to do it with his father's concubines. It is immoral to commit adultery but sleeping with your father's concubines is madness. Maybe he blamed David for what Amnon did to his sister Tamar. Amnon deceived David into allowing Absalom's sister Tamar to come to his house where he raped her. Ahithophel also sought vengeance for Bathsheba – the King stole her from her husband and murdered him.

David could not completely deal with the Absalom spirit. He was better off when Absalom went into self-imposed exile but he lacked the emotional capacity to handle Absalom's absence because he missed him. His love for his son coupled with Joab's schemes made him vulnerable to the Absalom spirit. We can improve on the way David handled the Absalom spirit by observing his attitude and response to Absalom closely.

OVERCOMING THE ABSALOM SPIRIT

1. Don't allow the Absalom spirit to come close to you.

After murdering Amnon his brother Absalom went into exile to his grandfather, the king of Geshur. His departure was a blessing in disguise. David was fortunate for Absalom to leave on his own volition. If your "Absalom" chooses to stay around, you must have the guts to ask him or her to leave.

You can do this in love without resorting to diabolical means. It is difficult to combine walking in love with dealing with the Absalom spirit. Your weak conscience may suggest that you are being wicked by expelling an Absalom. Love however, involves seeking the wider interest of everybody in the home, church or company and that may demand the expulsion of the Absalom spirit. Expelling "Absalom" could lead him to repentance.

But Absalom fled, and went to Talmai, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur. And David mourned for his son every day.

So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years.

2 Samuel 13:37-38

Although it is no fun to ask someone you love to leave your presence, you must learn to ask "Absalom" to stay away in love. If an associate or subordinate pastor has an Absalom spirit, you are not under any obligation to keep him or her around you. Walking in love does not mean walking in ignorance and carelessness. In ministry, you may have the bitter experience of having to ask some ministers to leave peacefully. You love them but their attitudes show that they are not meant to stay with you. Some of them have the ambition of setting up their own ministries and you have no choice but to let them go.

The Bible does not only tell us to cast out devils, it also commands us to cast out the scorner.

Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

Proverbs 22:10

A senior pastor had to ask an associate pastor with an Absalom spirit to leave his ministry. This associate pastor was the pastor in charge of prayer and the senior pastor permitted him to hold some church prayer meetings and counselling sessions in his house because that was convenient for him. With time he started criticising his senior pastor and demanding gifts from the people. He usurped authority in the prayer meetings that took place in the church and tried to restrain the senior pastor from running the prayer meetings. He refused to submit to authority and insisted on doing things his own way.

This gentleman's independent spirit became unbearable and the senior pastor asked him to resign after he had refused to commit to the ministry fully and abide by the code of ethics prescribed by the church board. When he was asked to resign he moved out and started his own church and drew a sizable following after himself. He succeeded in convincing his followers that the senior pastor had mistreated him. The Absalom spirit is very convincing and the best way not to be influenced by it is not to listen to it at all. Many senior pastors are afraid to let an Absalom leave for fear that he or she may draw a following after him or her. It is better to expel "Absalom" and let him go with those he has influenced with his spirit than to keep him in the church.

2. Develop emotional discipline against the Absalom spirit.

David allowed his emotions to overwhelm him by missing Absalom. He was depressed about the absence of his son and this triggered a series of activities to bring him back. It is not easy to part ways with your own son – you need a great amount of discipline to do that. David missed Absalom after he had been in exile for three years. Although Absalom murdered his brother, David ignored his crime and longed after him. There was nothing wrong with feeling this way but David was dealing with the wrong candidate for sympathy.

So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years.

And the soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead.

2 Samuel 13:38-39

David's emotional disposition compelled Joab to initiate some steps that eventually brought Absalom back home. Joab was one of the three sons of Zeruiah and also the "captain of the host" during David's reign. In order to secure the well-being of the king, Joab orchestrated a plan to restore Absalom to David from his self-imposed exile.

Now Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom.

And the king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again.

And Joab fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and thanked the king: and Joab said, To day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant.

So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem.

And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face.

2 Samuel 14:1, 21-24

Absalom came back to Jerusalem but he did not have the opportunity to meet King David. He was not happy with this situation and pressed for more. He demanded of Joab to see the King and after a while David caved in and allowed him into his presence, an action that created room for Absalom to set his agenda in motion.

3. Be careful about giving “Absalom” a second chance.

Absalom stayed in Jerusalem for two years without coming into the king's presence. His frustration led him to put pressure on Joab, David's army commander, to bring him to the king. David gave Absalom a second chance by allowing him to be brought back from banishment and subsequently into his presence.

So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face.

Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he sent again the second time, he would not come.

Therefore he said unto his servants, See, Joab's fire is near mine, and he hath barley there; go and set it on fire. And Absalom's servants set the field on fire. Then Joab arose, and came to Absalom unto his house, and said unto him, Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire?

And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? it had been good for me to have been there still: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me.

So Joab came to the king, and told him: and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king: and the king kissed Absalom.

2 Samuel 14:28-33

It is godly to give people a second chance but it has to be done prayerfully. David who was accustomed to enquiring of the LORD before doing things did not ask God for counsel on this

occasion. He simply followed his heart and Joab's counsel.

My general observation is that many people who get a second chance abuse it. It is not impossible for an Absalom to have a change of heart but it is very difficult. We are not told that Absalom had a change of heart when he came back home. He did not repent and he showed no signs of remorse. His attitude was different from the attitude of the prodigal son who came back with repentance. Paul asked Philemon to receive Onesimus back because Onesimus repented of his past life. Absalom remained defiant and bullied his way into seeing David.

4. Remove the Absalom spirit from your gates.

God dealt with Lucifer's, Adam's, Eve's and Cain's envy by casting them out of His presence but David permitted Absalom to stand at the gates and deceive the people of Israel.

And it came to pass after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him.

And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel.

2 Samuel 15:1-2

A "gate" is a strategic part of the city where legal and business affairs are conducted. David allowed Absalom to occupy this strategic part of the city. It is dangerous to allow someone with the Absalom spirit to be an associate pastor or resident pastor in a church. Departmental and committee heads with Absalom spirits should be handled wisely. You cannot take even your son or daughter who has the Absalom spirit for granted. Delegating authority to envious people leads to disaster.

5. Educate the people around you to detect and resist the Absalom spirit.

Those who joined Absalom in his rebellion did so out of ignorance. They were not educated enough to know that a man's own son could stage a coup d'état against him. It is the responsibility of every leader to teach his people how dangerous envious and ambitious people can be.

And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called; and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing.

And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. And the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

2 Samuel 15:11-12

Two hundred men invited from Jerusalem went with Absalom. They went innocently, knowing nothing
{about Absalom's plans}.

2 Samuel 15:11 (GW)

Two hundred men went with Absalom from Jerusalem. But they had been called together knowing nothing of the plot and made the trip innocently.

2 Samuel 15:11 (MSG)

You must take pains to instruct the people around you who they receive instruction from. Ignorance and disorder are the breeding grounds of the Absalom spirit. Many institutions are fertile grounds for the manifestation of the Absalom spirit because there is no defined command chain. The leader is too weak or disorganised to set his house in order.

6. Build an “army” to counteract “Absalom’s” rebellion.

“Absalom” is not a performer or entertainer. He is dangerous. He is ready for war. You cannot overcome the Absalom spirit without an army. “Absalom” executes his rebellion with an army and you must have your own army to counteract his activities. The “army” is not necessarily an army that uses physical weapons because the Absalom spirit is a demon and not a physical force. The army you should build is a spiritual army that employs the power of God, the wisdom of God and the love of God to overcome the enemy.

Joab led David’s fighters to fight Absalom’s fighters.

And David numbered the people that were with him, and set captains of thousands and captains of hundreds over them.

And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Joab’s brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite. And the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also.

But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now thou art worth ten thousand of us: therefore now it is better that thou succour us out of the city.

2 Samuel 18:1-3

The army you require in a church to fight against the Absalom spirit is a prayer force. You may also need a team of experts to deal with the complications the Absalom spirit generates. For example, the Absalom spirit destroys the testimony of a Senior Pastor and the church and you need faithful men and women to do reparations and bring about healing.

The Apostle Paul had to deal with some individuals in the Corinthian church who operated in typical “Absalom style”. The veteran apostle warned the church about the arsenal that was available to him to deal with the pretenders amongst them. He pointed out that the weapons of his warfare were not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in

presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you: But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when

I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

2 Corinthians 10:1-6

The Bible enjoins us to live peaceably with all men but it does not ask us to offer ourselves to senseless killing. Employ the power of fasting and prayer to deal with the Absalom spirit. You cannot wish that spirit away. It must be overcome with spiritual weapons.

7. Don't be hasty to destroy the "Absalom person".

Absaloms destroy themselves eventually. Absalom died in battle when the hair he prided in hanged him on a tree. He was David's son and David could not destroy his own son. It is difficult to deal with the Absalom spirit because it indwells someone you love. The best way to deal with it is to let others engage it in battle in a spiritual and scriptural manner. David warned Joab to protect Absalom yet Joab and his men slew him.

And Absalom met the servants of David. And Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away.

And a certain man saw it, and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak.

And Joab said unto the man that told him, And, behold, thou sawest him, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? And I would have given thee ten shekels of silver, and a girdle.

And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in mine hand, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing the king charged thee and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom.

Otherwise I should have wrought falsehood against mine own life: for there is no matter hid from the king, and thou thyself wouldest have set thyself against

me.

Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak.

And ten young men that bare Joab's armour compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him.

2 Samuel 18:9-15

It was a good thing that David did not go to the battle himself because he could not have stood the torment of seeing his son destroyed in battle. David did the right thing by seeking to protect Absalom in spite of his rebellion. The young man's deeds however, did not permit him to live. He worked out his own death.

8. Love "Absalom" even in death.

The King after God's heart mourned when Absalom died – he did not rejoice. Don't rejoice when you see "Absalom" destroyed. Many spiritual fathers, biological fathers and leaders have been traumatised to see their loved ones destroyed by the Absalom spirit. They did not curse these "Absaloms" before their destruction. The law of sowing and reaping catches up with Absalom and even his father may not be able to do anything about it.

And the king said unto Cushi, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Cushi answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is.

And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

2 Samuel 18:32-33

David mourned for Absalom. He loved him so much that he wished he had died for him. It is a wicked thing to rejoice at the demise of someone you have close ties with. Some leaders take pride in the destruction of young people who disobey them or misbehave around them. They use this destruction to measure how anointed they are. It is not the will of God that any should perish but that they should be saved.

The envy spirit in Absalom coupled with his anger made him dethrone his father and unsettle his brothers. David did not score full marks in dealing with the Absalom spirit and many leaders would find it difficult to deal with it because it occurs in a close relation. The lessons we learnt from Absalom's misguided ambitions have taught us a few things we must do when envy reveals itself in an "Absalom" in our camp.

Every case of envy in the Scriptures is peculiar and has a different lesson to teach us. Looking at envy case after case provides compelling evidence that envy is no respecter of persons. Kings can be envious of nomads and wanderers. Sons and daughters are envious of their fathers and mothers.

Fathers are sometimes envious of their sons and superiors are envious of their subordinates. These must not come to us as surprises because we discovered earlier in this book that envy wants everything and even when it has everything it seeks to be like God.

A clear case of a superior person who was envious of his subordinate is the case of Saul being envious of David. The spirit here is the Saul spirit that is envious of its subordinate or spiritual son because of insecurity. David experienced envy from his son as well as from a father figure. Saul played the role of a father in David's life by bringing him into his home and giving him the opportunity to identify with his son Jonathan as a brother. The initially beautiful relationship turned sour when Saul became envious of David.

CHAPTER 6

THE SAUL SPIRIT

PAUL's envy against David is an interesting kind of envy to study because it is so unreasonable that when we see it in someone, we may be tempted to deny its existence.

It is inconceivable that King Saul could be envious of David who was an insignificant person. The disparity between the two men was so vast that it is almost absurd to think that Saul could envy David.

Saul was a blessed man and yet he envied a young man who was a mere shepherd. Some Bible references show the insignificance of David compared to Saul. Two of such references highlight instances in which David pleaded with Saul for his life when the latter was pursuing him. He referred to himself as a flea and wondered how Saul could expend so much energy pursuing him.

After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea.

1 Samuel 24:14

David saw himself as a flea compared to Saul. He wondered why a king would pursue a dead dog or flea with such intensity. Senior pastors sometimes persecute their prayer warriors and music leaders by mobilising the entire church board against them. They pummel them from the pulpit and exude a vehement heat of hatred against someone God has raised to pray for them and minister to the Lord in song. Such senior pastors are not content to be the head of the church. They hate the thought that another person has any form of recognition and honour.

Curses are released from the pulpit at the least provocation against ordinary members of the church. Pastors are envious of businessmen in the church especially if they don't give them huge sums of money. Husbands are envious of their wives and would do anything to hinder their progress because they think if the women made any progress in life they would become proud.

David pleaded with Saul to spare his life. He did not see himself as capable of fighting against the anointed king of Israel. Saul on the other hand saw David as a formidable opponent.

Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD: for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

1 Samuel 26:20

Envy made a king arm himself with dangerous weapons and mobilise a band of assassins to comb obscure places in search of a harmless young man. The amount of effort Saul put into David's destruction was disproportionate. The king should have felt too big to pursue a little man into

mountains, caves and bushes. Besides, King Saul was a blessed man who did not need to be envious of another person's blessing. Sadly, the little honour God showed David got Saul irritated. He ignored the fact that he was a blessed man and expended all his energy in a fruitless effort to extinguish another man's fortunes.

SAUL WAS A BLESSED MAN

God blessed Saul in countless ways including good looks. He was the most handsome man in Israel and he stood head and shoulders above the crowd.

Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power.

And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people.

1 Samuel 9:1-2

Saul was a choice young man. With such a physical stature he was supposed to be insulated against insecurity from the appearance of a shepherd boy. His description reminds me of Lucifer's splendour and Absalom's beauty. In spite of their beauty Lucifer and Absalom were not content. They allowed envy to consume them, leading to their eventual destruction. Like Lucifer and Absalom, Saul was not content with his natural endowments. He hated to see David prosper and have favour with God.

God chose Saul to be a king when he least expected it. He was on a mission to search for his father's lost donkeys when the Prophet Samuel prophesied to him that God had chosen him to be king. The donkey-seeker's donkeys were found and he received God's election to be the first king of Israel. This was a great honour God bestowed on Saul.

And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them; for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel? Is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house?

And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me?

And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons.

1 Samuel 9:20-22

Saul was obviously elated when Samuel honoured him by inviting him to sit amongst the distinguished invited guests in the parlour of his house. He was however, later on in life envious and

grieved when God honoured David.

Many people who receive their share of blessing and honour from God plunge into moods and rage when God honours others. Saul received the highest honour anybody could receive from God but the crumbs of blessing that fell to his neighbour infuriated him.

Besides the honour of being seated amongst distinguished guests in Samuel's house Saul received the highest honour by Samuel anointing him king over Israel.

Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?

1 Samuel 10:1

Saul was spiritually blessed when the gift of prophecy came upon him after his interaction with the company of prophets who were descending from the hill of God.

And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.

And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?

1 Samuel 10:9-11

He prophesied to the amazement of everybody and they asked if he was also among the prophets. People marvelled at his spiritual ability.

Saul was not an arbitrary choice for the throne. He possessed sterling qualities that made him suitable for the highest office in Israel. David described Saul's endowments and gifts in his lamentation after his death.

The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!

Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.

From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided:

they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

2 Samuel 1:19-24

David described Saul and Jonathan his son as the “beauty of Israel” meaning “the gazelle or antelope of Israel” – an expression of elegance. The refrain in the above song “how are the mighty fallen!” points to the warrior-like nature of Saul and Jonathan. Saul’s sword did not return empty when he struck – it always drew blood. He was a lovely and pleasant man who was swifter than an eagle and stronger than a lion. David alluded to Saul’s generosity by mentioning that he clothed the daughters of Israel with scarlet, ornaments of gold and other delights.

God blessed Saul tremendously with beauty and charisma. He was elevated to the throne of Israel under extraordinary circumstances and the people of Israel loved and adored him. He enjoyed his monopoly of honour, power and recognition until David showed up. Saul was “a somebody” at the time he met David who was “a nobody” but their encounters afforded the latter the opportunity to showcase his gifts and abilities.

WHEN “A SOMEBODY” MET “A NOBODY”

At a certain point in King Saul’s life he was oppressed by demons and David was brought to him to play music on the harp for him in order to assuage his demonic oppression. David was a complete stranger when he stood in front of Saul to minister to him. Saul loved David greatly and he became his armour bearer.

But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him.

And Saul’s servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee.

Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. Then answered one of the servants, and said,

Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him.

Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep.

And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul.

And David came to Saul, and stood before him: and he loved him greatly; and he became his armourbearer.

And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me; for he hath found favour in my sight.

And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

1 Samuel 16:14-23

A battle between the Philistines and Israel afforded David the opportunity to meet King Saul again. This encounter must have been a few years after David had been to the palace to minister to Saul with music when the evil spirits oppressed the king because Saul did not seem to recognise David.

In this battle, the Philistine champion Goliath challenged the Israelites to elect a champion from their camp to face him in order to determine the winner of the battle. David offered to fight against Goliath and those who heard him drew Saul's attention to his intentions. Saul reposed confidence in David when he convinced him that he could kill Goliath. After David had killed Goliath Saul invited him to appear before him and in the conversation that ensued between the two men he sought to know more about this stranger on the battlefield – a somebody (Saul) invited a nobody (David) into his presence.

And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell.

And the king said, Enquire thou whose son the stripling is.

And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand.

And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.

1 Samuel 17:55-58

Saul took David home from the battlefield and accommodated him in the palace permanently. He put him in a position of authority and permitted his son Jonathan to relate to him as his own brother. The king did not feel threatened by little David and took the necessary steps to make him a part of his household.

And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

1 Samuel 18:1-2, 5

It is important to note that Saul loved David initially and gave him many opportunities – he made him who he was. Something must have taken place to make Saul turn around and attack the person he discovered, developed and deployed. Saul's envy of David started when a group of women sang a song that ascribed more success in war to the latter than the former.

SAUL ENVIED DAVID

Saul was not envious of David's gift as long as the gift helped to secure his throne and kingdom. He protected him and gave him opportunities to operate.

The Saul spirit is a man user and man abuser. As long as you use your gifts to serve the Saul spirit it is comfortable with you. It only turns against you when you no longer serve its purpose or when it realises that you are attracting people's attention.

In a song by some women during a triumphal procession after the battle in which David killed Goliath they insinuated that Saul had killed his thousands and David his ten thousands and thereby precipitated the culture of envy in Saul. The song ignited a flame of envy in Saul's heart, which developed into an inferno.

And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick.

And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.

And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?

And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul's hand.

And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice.

And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul.

The women showered more praise on the subject than on the sovereign and Saul naturally did not take kindly to this. The speed with which Saul switched from love to envy is mind-boggling. “And Saul eyed David from that day and forward” describes a grave condition of envy. Saul changed instantly from a father to a fighter. He descended from the height of a king into the abyss of a killer. David’s coach became his competitor.

The spirit of envy in Saul opened him up to the demons that oppressed him in the past. This demonic oppression was a complicated kind because it was mingled with a spirit of prophecy. Saul operated with a mixed spirit and David tried to assuage the oppression as usual by playing on the harp. Saul sensing David’s unsuspecting posture threw a javelin at him to pin him to the wall and kill him but being an experienced marksman himself he dodged the javelin. Because of Saul’s envy, David playing his harp could not suppress the demonic oppression.

The Saul-kind of envy can be summarised as follows:

1. It envies someone lower in stature than the person who has the envy.
2. It envies the person he or she helped to develop. The producer envies the product.
3. It envies someone who has not yet arrived at his destination or has not yet received his promise.

David was not yet a king and Saul should not have been jealous of a man who only had a prophecy of being a king one day.

4. The Saul-kind of envy envies potential, gifts and abilities. David was not rich in material things and he was not yet a great man. All he had was his potential and gifts and yet Saul burned with envy – he eyed him.

The Saul spirit is a spirit of envy that is directed at a subordinate or subject who is perceived to be a threat to a superior’s position by virtue of the former’s gifts and potential.

The Saul spirit is associated with insecurity and fear. It lives in the constant apprehension of being overthrown. This spirit makes all effort to eliminate competitors through the use of blackmail and even murder.

Saul was distracted from ruling Israel as he pursued David into caves and the jungle. The king of Israel was so distracted that he did not concentrate on the Philistines who were his real enemies. He was killed with three of his sons in a battle against the Philistines probably because he spent more time and resources planning the destruction of David than the Philistines.

THE DESTRUCTION OF SAUL

Saul fell on his own sword in the battle against the Philistines and died. The Saul spirit does not know its actual enemies. It pursues the wrong people. Saul tried to abort God’s plan of making David king and he ended up cutting his own life short. The man who was a beneficiary of God’s mercy tried to stop another person from receiving an act of grace from God.

Now the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa.

And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul’s sons.

And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers.

Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him.

So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armourbearer, and all his men, that same day together.

1 Samuel 31:1-6

Saul died in battle with three of his sons and David became the king of Israel. Envy endangered him and his family. The anointed king of Israel died as if he had not been anointed with oil and the manner of his death moved David to make a lamentation over him and Jonathan. David lamented the fall of the great king instead of rejoicing over it.

The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!

Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.

From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.

2 Samuel 1:19-25

From the above lamentation we can deduce that David was not covetous of Saul's throne. On several occasions he refused to kill Saul in order to ascend the throne. He was clearly not in contention with King Saul. Envy is a wasted effort. Some of the people we are envious of may not even be aware of our existence. David survived Saul's envy and went on to become the king of Israel – he overcame the spirit of envy. His example teaches us many lessons on how to overcome envy from someone in authority or a higher position who seeks to eliminate us.

OVERCOMING ENVY – DAVID’S SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

David devised a number of strategies to survive Saul’s attacks on him. We can learn from his survival strategies and stay alive in the midst of persecution.

- Act wisely.

David behaved himself wisely. He knew that some of the opportunities Saul pretended to create for him were pits for his downfall. David was wise enough to know that some of the palace folks and Saul’s servants who hung around him were the king’s spies and not his (David’s) friends.

And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul’s servants.

1 Samuel 18:5

Wisdom is a major key in overcoming envy. Envious people are schemers who try to set you up at the least opportunity and you have to be wise to escape their snares.

- Dodge the javelin.

David developed the skill and habit of dodging Saul’s javelin. He got out of Saul’s presence when he had to. David was sensitive and alert when he was with Saul. **In one instance, just before Saul released the javelin against him Saul was prophesying but the prophesying did not deceive David. Saul’s state of prophesying could have deceived many people into thinking that he was not a dangerous man. Saul mixed prophesying with murdering. Don’t be fooled by people’s spiritual pretences into thinking they cannot kill.**

And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times: and there was a javelin in Saul’s hand.

And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice.

1 Samuel 18:10-11

David did not assume that because he was the person who could deliver Saul from his demonic oppression Saul would not harm him. Envious people seek to eliminate those they are envious of so much that even if the ones they envy are those who keep them alive, they would still do anything to destroy them. In Africa, it is common for witches to employ the power of witchcraft to kill the

breadwinners of their own families. They don't care if they eliminate the breadwinner and the rest of the people die of starvation including the witches themselves who killed the breadwinner.

The practical way to dodge a javelin is to refuse to stay in the vicinity of the javelin thrower. Javelins include things like false accusations, negative words, evil prophecies, wrong advice, soulish prayers, wrong doctrines, lies and bitterness.

Many of us are acquainted with the young prophet from Judah who was deceived by the old prophet into eating bread in Bethel. This old prophet was jealous of the young prophet's exploits and he threw the javelins of "prophetic lies" into the young prophet's mind. He convinced the young prophet to change what God told him earlier (not to eat bread in Bethel) and lured him into his house impressing upon him to eat bread thereby disobeying God.

And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the LORD came unto the prophet that brought him back:

And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the LORD, and hast not kept the commandment which the LORD thy God commanded thee,

But camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which the LORD did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.

And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him the ass, to wit, for the prophet whom he had brought back.

And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcase was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcase.

1 Kings 13:20-24

It is ironical that the old prophet who had told the young one God had told him to bring him back to eat bread was the same person who pronounced God's judgment on him (1 Kings 13:18 - 21). Envious people use the name of the Lord to deceive unsuspecting victims. You must have the courage to rebuff their antics and gimmicks.

Nehemiah escaped Shemaiah's trick to blackmail him by asking him to go and hide in the temple. He dodged this "javelin" by refusing to go into the temple because he perceived that Tobiah and Sanballat had employed Shemaiah.

Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee.

And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.

And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me.

Nehemiah 6:10-13

Javelins generate a fear in us that make us compromise the Word of God. A true man or woman of God should have the discerning power to detect the onslaught of javelins and the courage to refuse to submit to their influence. The Saul spirit is very intimidating and you need courage to resist its influence over your life.

David evaded Saul's javelin and escaped into the wilderness. He was not deceived by Saul's cunning display of religion in his pretentious prophesying. Nehemiah displayed courage in overcoming the spirit of manipulation from Tobiah and Sanballat but the young prophet from Judah lacked the courage to resist the spiritual manipulation of the old prophet.

- Don't touch the LORD'S anointed.

David overcame the temptation to kill Saul with his own hands when he had the opportunity. His men impressed on him to kill the king and end their sufferings in the wilderness but the God-fearing would-be-king resisted the pressure of the people. His men wanted him to take advantage of a situation in which Saul was vulnerable and ascend to the throne of Israel.

And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.

So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way.

1 Samuel 24:5-7

“Saul” is the anointed servant of God no matter how much he errs. He is not your servant but God's servant and you cannot stand in judgment against him. It is God's prerogative to remove him from the throne and not yours. You don't decide when an anointed person should be eliminated.

David's heart smote him when he cut off a piece of Saul's skirt. By this God gave him a strong warning not to harm King Saul. No matter the persecution the Saul spirit launches against you, you must avoid the temptation to undertake a campaign to destroy “Saul”. Vengeance is the Lord's and He will repay.

*Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.
If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.
Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it
is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.
Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so
doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.
Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Romans 12:17-21

We are to overcome evil with good. Evil has no place in our lives. Don't speak maliciously against "Saul". Refuse to adopt a disrespectful attitude towards him. Overcome evil with good. While it is spiritually prudent for believers not to destroy their leaders, the latter must be humble enough to accept correction and criticism when there is reason for them to amend their ways. Leaders sometimes recklessly quote "touch not mine anointed" and proceed to destroy themselves and their followers.

- Endure the wilderness life.

One of the greatest secrets to overcoming the Saul spirit is to develop endurance for the wilderness life. "Sauls" invariably drive you into the wilderness and you must develop the capacity to survive. The wilderness is a place that is far from God's will for your life. It is a life of lack and pain.

David fought wars in the wilderness and devised many survival strategies to provide his needs and those of his men.

*And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain
in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him
not into his hand.*

*And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the
wilderness of Ziph in a wood.*

1 Samuel 23:14-15

The wilderness life is rife with uncertainty and fear. You don't know what is going to happen next as unpredictable circumstances take their turn to torture you. God preserved David in the wilderness until he was crowned king of Israel. He meditated on the Word of God and wrote psalms in the wilderness. The king-in-waiting fought many wars in the wilderness, which prepared him to lead Israel in war when he became king. The wilderness life is always a learning stage in a person's life.

David built a strong relationship with his men and their families in the wilderness. Through this, he created a team that provided formidable leadership for Israel when he became king. Don't spend your time whining and moaning in your wilderness – use the time wisely and constructively. Be

patient in the wilderness as you wait for your time. Use the wilderness time to build up your prayer life. You have all the time in the world to pray in the wilderness.

The Saul spirit is a character builder in those who are waiting to become leaders. A positive attitude towards “Saul” leads to promotion. Anybody with a future cannot avoid being envied – he will be envied even before his breakthrough comes. Saul envied David when he saw clear signs that he would be king in the future.

Cain slew his brother Abel, Absalom overthrew his father David and Saul attempted to kill David with a javelin and drove him into the wilderness. The case of Balak and Balaam who were moved with fear and envy to prevent Israel from inheriting their promise is another case of envy that is eye opening. Balak foresaw the children of Israel taking over the Promised Land and he employed Balaam to destroy them. Balaam used spiritual means in his effort to stop the Israelites from possessing the Land and when that failed he tempted them to commit fornication and idolatry. Balaam employed spiritual weapons and soulish manipulations against Israel that were different from other schemes and weapons used in the cases we studied earlier.

CHAPTER 7

THE BALAAM SPIRIT

GOD brought the Israelites out of Egypt and took them to the Promised Land. Led by Moses, they crossed the Red Sea and conquered several nations en route to the land God promised to give them. These lands were occupied by other nations which they had to uproot before they could occupy them. Naturally, every nation felt threatened by Israel's approach, having heard of what God did to the Egyptians and the nations that occupied the route to the Promised Land.

One nation of significance towards the end of the journey was Moab because of the actions of its king. Israel encamped near the borders of Moab – their last encampment before they entered the Promised Land. The king of Moab at this time was Balak the son of Zippor. His name means “the spoiler, the emptier or destroyer” and indeed he attempted to spoil God's plan for Israel. He made a frantic effort to empty the land of Israel's presence by destroying the Israelites.

Moved with fear and envy, Balak the king of Moab, employed Balaam the heathen prophet of the Midianites to curse Israel for him. When the curses failed, Balaam counseled Balak to seduce Israel into committing fornication and idolatry and this later plan succeeded.

Churches and their pastors feel threatened when other churches show up in town. When they see the banners and sign posts of new churches in their cities they are moved with envy to devise schemes and use intimidation to thwart the efforts of the new churches. Because these older churches and their pastors think they are the repositories of God's power and wisdom, they undermine every other church and pastor. They hold prayer meetings to pray against the new churches and curse them. When their curses fail to serve their purpose they resort to lying and blackmailing.

There is a Balaam spirit in the world that seeks to curse the church. Churches exist alongside shrines, cults and heathen institutions that employ curses and witchcraft against them. Some of these cults and witchcraft covens go to church premises at odd hours to cast spells on the churches. Through the Balaam spirit they also slowly and craftily seduce believers to have sexual relationships with unbelieving partners and even marry them. Believers lose their businesses, ministries and lives through sexual relationships and idolatry every now and then.

The world employs the Balaam spirit to deny God's people their rightful inheritance. It is sad to note however, that believers use the Balaam spirit against one another because of envy and greed. We are so worldly that envy eats us up when we see other believers having a breakthrough in life and ministry. We are constantly planning the downfall of one another.

Apart from believers' greed for material things, they are obsessed with the desire to outdo one another in spiritual gifts. We compete in fasting and prayer. Who is the greatest in the kingdom of God is the question of this generation. Preachers resort to blistering criticism of other preachers' ministries out of envy. Balaam displayed this kind of envy when he attempted to curse Israel. His motivation for trying to curse Israel was not just because of the wages of divination but also because his false prophetic ministry was in danger as Israel approached the Promised Land led by Moses, the greatest prophet on earth at the time.

It is important to mention that Israel's prophet and deliverer Moses died in the land of Moab. Balaam must have heard about Moses and his prophetic exploits before the children of Israel arrived there. Balaam's monopoly over the prophetic office was threatened and that made him interested in Balak's plot against Israel.

And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the LORD shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan,

And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea,

And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar.

And the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.

So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.

And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

Deuteronomy 34:1-8

The Moabites were the descendants of Lot who was Abraham's nephew. Abraham the father of Israel had experienced bitter envy and strife with Lot in which Lot had chosen what he thought was the better part of the land. The approach of Israel towards Moab must have reminded Balak that Israel was back in contention for the land as in the days of Abraham and Lot. He knew that the superiority of Abraham over Lot was the result of a divine blessing and not the force of arms, therefore he invited Balaam the son of Beor to curse Israel.

And Moab said unto the elders of Midian, Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. And Balak the son of Zippor was king of the Moabites at that time.

He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam the son of Beor to Pethor, which is by the river of the land of the children of his people, to call him, saying, Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me:

Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure I shall prevail, that we may smite them, and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed, and he whom thou cursest is cursed.

And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.

Numbers 22:4-7

Political parties are at daggers drawn with one another. The politics of insults is threatening the fragile democracies of many countries. Businessmen double-cross one another for financial gain. Businesses and political parties employ “Balaams” to destroy one another with witchcrafts and charms. Politicians go as far as burying live cows and making human sacrifices to demons just to gain advantage over their opponents. Sportsmen employ demonic powers to terminate one another’s careers. Unhealthy competition is destroying vast potential. People with great potential have their lives truncated by devils released against them by people who regard them as enemies. “Balaams” are all over the place parading their gimmicks without shame. “Strange fires” and deceptive practices are desecrating the pulpits of churches.

Balaam’s name means lord of the people, foreigner or glutton. The meanings of his name reflected who he was – he dominated the people as a lord, he was a foreigner to the prophetic office who manoeuvred his way into the office and he loved the wages of divination making him a glutton.

Balaam was a man of great importance among the Midianites. Though he lived amongst the heathen, he could hear God’s voice and operate in the prophetic gift. Balak thought he could employ Balaam to undo Abraham’s blessing on Israel because those Balaam blessed were blessed and those he cursed were cursed.

THE UNHOLY ALLIANCE

Balak was very smart in trying to form an alliance with Balaam to destroy Israel because Israel did not advance towards the Promised Land with a solitary leader but a strong leadership team comprising Moses, Aaron and Miriam.

For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.

Micah 6:4-5

Envious people form alliances in their operations. They find each other and pool their resources and strength because of the magnitude of the opposition they deal with.

The Apostle Peter referred to the Balak-Balaam alliance in 2 Peter 2:15, 16. He mentioned Balaam by name but not Balak. He said Balaam loved the wages of unrighteousness. Nobody pays himself wages therefore we can conclude that Peter was referring to Balaam and Balak who paid him the wages of unrighteousness.

Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.

2 Peter 2:15-16

Peter refers to the WAY OF BALAAM putting emphasis on his conduct and character. He was a covetous man and sold his conscience for gain – he loved the wages of unrighteousness. He knew he could not curse Israel and yet for the sake of material gain he tried to do it. His reasoning and conduct were tantamount to madness.

Like Peter, Jude mentioned the error of Balaam for reward. We know from the background story that it was Balak who offered Balaam a reward for his divination.

Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

Jude 1:11

Jude places emphasis on the ERROR IN BALAAM'S effort to abort God's plan for Israel. Balaam's move constituted error because it was an error to attempt to curse a people whom God had blessed. It was an error to be associated with a king who was trying to fight against God's people. Balaam's actions were regarded as error because they led to his death with the Midianites instead of life when the Israelites fought against them (Numbers 31:8).

John the Apostle also mentioned Balak and Balaam in Jesus' letter to the church in Pergamos.

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

Revelation 2:14

Jesus referred to Balaam's counsel to Balak as A DOCTRINE because he did not only walk in his error but HE TAUGHT Balak how to destroy the Israelites. He showed Balak the secret of how to make the Israelites provoke God so that He will turn against them.

And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive?

Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.

Numbers 31:15-16

It is obvious from Balaam's life and teachings that he was a prophet amongst the heathen whose spirit was contaminated by greed for reward and money. He turned himself into God's enemy and misled His people to commit abominable practices like fornication and idolatry.

The Balaam spirit is the spirit of divination, which pronounces curses on God's people and turns them against Him with the aim of obtaining a reward and maintaining its spiritual control over the people by making them commit idolatry and fornication.

Politicians, pastors and businessmen forge alliances to destroy others. "Balaks" and "Balaams" come together to destroy innocent souls. Prayer meetings are held to kill people and orchestrate plans to destroy churches. Unholy alliances are ruining ministries and businesses. Life in the kingdom of God is becoming more and more dangerous. The Balaam spirit is dangerous and life-threatening and anyone who becomes a target of it must know how to overcome its influence.

DEALING WITH THE BALAAM SPIRIT

Prayer, purity and power are the three forces Israel employed in dealing with the Balaam spirit. You can't deal with the Balaam spirit through negotiation and compromise.

PRAYER

Prayer is the supernatural ability to prevail on God in heaven to act on earth. Prayer is the key weapon in dealing with the Balaam spirit. The Balaam spirit is an unseen force and that is why prayer is the most effective means of dealing with it. The spirit is unseen in the sense that you don't see the person who is dispatching missiles against you. The Balaam spirit invokes demons and curses against you and so you can only counteract it with spiritual force. The kind of prayer to be used against the Balaam spirit must be strategic and combined with fasting. As you pray you should listen to God to hear specific instructions to be obeyed. Disobedience and effective prayer are not good neighbours.

The following are some of the prayer tips against the Balaam spirit:

- Call on the LORD to arise.

Moses constantly called on the LORD to arise and scatter His enemies before the Israelites moved the Ark in the wilderness. In this way God fought against His enemies, seen or unseen, who were also enemies of the Israelites. God does not

slumber or sleep. To say let God arise simply means to acknowledge that God leads us in battle and conquest.

And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee.

And when it rested, he said, Return, O LORD, unto the many thousands of Israel.

Numbers 10:35-36

I believe that for some time the Israelites did not know Balak had employed Balaam to curse them. However, Moses' prayer cleared the way for them to advance. If you have a promise from God there may be a Balaam lurking in the wilderness ahead of you. As a precautionary measure Moses' prayer should be your prayer before you make any move in life – "Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered;" You don't have to see the enemy physically before you pray this prayer – it is a prayer anyone who is embarking on a journey of purpose should pray.

- Ask the LORD to release His angels against the Balaam spirit.

The angel of the LORD stood in Balaam's way and warned him not to continue in his efforts to curse Israel. Angels are God's messengers that execute His counsel including warning His enemies and attacking them.

Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.

And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times? behold, I went out to withstand thee, because thy way is perverse before me:

And the ass saw me, and turned from me these three times: unless she had turned from me, surely now also I had slain thee, and saved her alive.

And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD, I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again.

And the angel of the LORD said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.

Numbers 22:31-35

God did not create angels just to sit in heaven and worship Him. He created them to minister to His saints and you should take advantage of the power of their ministry.

Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:

Psalm 104:4

Israel did not ask God to send His angels to attack Balaam neither did they speak directly to angels to attack him. However, as a New Testament believer you have the privilege through your redemptive right to ask God to send His angels to assist you. You have the benefit of revelation knowledge of God's Word and will that the Old Testament saints did not have. Talking to angels directly can lead to deception and so it is more prudent to ask God to send His angels because they are His servants and not your servants. Jesus said that if He needed angels He would ask the Father to send them.

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?

Matthew 26:53

Jesus did not indicate He would send angels directly, probably to set an example for us not to go dabbling with angels. Ask the Father to release angels to impede "Balaam". In answer to our prayers God employs angelic intervention to impede "Balaam".

- Pray to frustrate the Balaam spirit.

The angel of the LORD frustrated Balaam by standing in his way. He stopped Balaam's donkey from going in the direction he wanted it to go. The donkey subsequently frustrated the prophet by crushing his feet into a wall.

And God's anger was kindled because he went: and the angel of the LORD stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass, and his two servants were with him.

And the ass saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and the ass turned aside out of the way, and went into the field: and Balaam smote the ass, to turn her into the way.

But the angel of the LORD stood in a path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side, and a wall on that side.

And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she thrust herself unto the wall, and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall: and he smote her again.

And the angel of the LORD went further, and stood in a narrow place, where was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left.

And when the ass saw the angel of the LORD, she fell down under Balaam: and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.

And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?

And Balaam said unto the ass, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now would I kill thee.

Numbers 22:22-29

God frustrates “Balaam” by surrounding him with an adversary in the person of an angel. He diverts Balaam’s attention by turning him aside. “Balaam” crashes into a wall and bruises himself. God narrows “Balaam’s” way giving him a narrow vision and limited resources. Balaam felt insulted and mocked by his donkey and struck it several times. Finally the donkey spoke to the covetous prophet. Peter referred to the dumb ass reacting to the prophet’s madness. God raises people who are less than “Balaam” – people who are comparable with dumb asses – to speak to “Balaam” and expose his folly.

Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice forbad the madness of the prophet.

2 Peter 2:15-16

God frustrates and immobilises the Balaam spirit. He frustrates them by disrupting their plans and makes them mad by causing them to think illogically and fall into their own traps. “Balaams” retrogress in life. Those who envy God’s people don’t make any progress in life, ministry or business. The knowledge of “Balaams” is turned into foolishness.

That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;

That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof:

Isaiah 44:25-26

God honours His servants by confirming their words and performing their counsels. He fills the habitations of His people with people and builds their cities.

- Ask God to reverse “Balaam’s” curses.

You can ask God to reverse “Balaam’s” curses and also as a New Testament believer you have the authority to personally bind and loose things spiritually. Whatsoever you bind on earth is bound in heaven and whatsoever you loose on earth is loosed in heaven. You have the power of attorney to reverse the curses “Balaam” seeks to put on you or others.

Balaam attempted to curse Israel but God turned his words into blessing. Balaam's own words indicate that he spoke what God put into his mouth. In other words God turned the curse into a blessing.

And Balak said unto Balaam, What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether.

And he answered and said, Must I not take heed to speak that which the LORD hath put in my mouth?

Numbers 23:11-12

Balaam conceded that God had commanded him to bless Israel and he could not reverse it. If God had blessed Israel irreversibly then it means if someone filled his mouth with curses against Israel the curses would be turned into blessings.

You are so blessed that it is better for your enemies to be silent about your success than to curse you, because any evil they say about you or against you would be turned into a blessing.

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.

He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.

God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.

Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!

Numbers 23:19-23

The book of Nehemiah states clearly that God turned Balaam's curse into a blessing.

On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people; and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever;

Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing.

Nehemiah 13:1-2

Turning curses into blessing should be something you do constantly. Evil and envious people are so many that you should not take your life for granted. It is okay for you to speak blessing upon your life and those around you daily. Apart from waging war against the Balaam spirit it is crucial for us to examine ourselves and repent of the things we do to contaminate ourselves with the Balaam spirit.

PURITY

The Balaam spirit works by cursing God's people and when the cursing fails it deceives them to engage in idolatry and fornication. Prayer is the means to counteract the curses but the means to counteract idolatry and fornication are power and purity respectively. We shall consider the aspect of fornication and purity before we look at idolatry and power.

Purity is the supernatural ability to have dominion over the desires of the flesh, impurities of the spirit and bondage of the soul.

Building a life of purity is the most efficient way to kick fornication out of your life. The war against fornication must be won from within and not from without. Purity is attained through a life of repentance – completely turning away from sin and rebellion against God. A life of repentance is paramount to defeating the Balaam spirit. Jesus in His letter to the church in Pergamos told them to repent.

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Revelation 2:12-16

You are vulnerable to destruction when you live in sin at the time when you are surrounded with envy. Israel was surrounded by envious nations but she was constantly engaging in acts of rebellion and sin. Israel's sins turned God against her and He allowed nations to destroy her again and again.

The Balaam spirit does not only get God's people into fornication, it lures them into marriages with the heathen. Those who envy you can arrange marriages for you that will destroy your life.

Saul gave his daughter Michal to David as a wife and she became a snare to him. Michal was a constant source of torment to David. Not every husband or wife is a blessing – some of them are snares the enemy brings into our lives to torment us and possibly abort our destinies.

And Michal Saul's daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him.

And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son in law in the one of the twain.

1 Samuel 18:20-21

A Christian leader in an idolatrous and polygamous town was enticed into marrying a woman who pretended to be a believer. This town was rife with divination and the people of the land were envious of this leader's success. They contended with him verbally and openly but failed to subdue him. The devil's next move was to get him to marry a lady of doubtful spiritual background. The marriage collapsed after a while and his business went through turbulent times. This leader was a good man but the enemy took advantage of his indiscretion in marriage and destroyed his business.

Pastors, businessmen and leaders are enticed into adulterous relationships that eventually destroy their marriages and ministries. The Church must take the envy of the world against it seriously. The world hates to see the Church prosper. They take advantage of the obvious human failures of believers and pastors and unleash blistering persecutions and insults against us and when their open attacks fail, they devise subtle methods of infiltrating our ranks. We should be watchful and disciplined not to fall into the traps they set for us.

In another case, I encountered a gentleman who was cursed by his father to be a fornicator throughout his life. This man got married later on and had children. After several years of constantly falling into adultery he lost his business and later divorced his wife and ran away with another woman. There is a Balaam spirit in the atmosphere that is constantly luring God's men and women into sinful relationships.

Nehemiah rebuked the men of Israel for marrying women from ungodly nations.

In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab:

And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people.

And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair; and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves.

Nehemiah 13:23-25

Paul commanded the Corinthians not to enter into marital unions and other intimate relationships with the ungodly.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18

The ability to abstain from sin is a major weapon in defeating the Balaam spirit, hence Jesus' exhortation to the church in Pergamos to repent. Self-control is needed to be pure. Your covenant relationship with God must be so strong that no enticement of the flesh can make you break it.

The Balaam spirit forms an alliance with kings to destroy God's people and so we need God's power to deal with it. A destructive spirit like the Balaam spirit cannot be destroyed without an emphatic manifestation of the power of God.

POWER

The children of Israel killed Balaam and the kings who were associated with him by slaying them with the sword. The act of slaying one's enemies with the sword is a display of power. God has made His power available to you to fight against the spiritual powers of the Balaam spirit. The power of God is released through the move of the Holy Ghost, the anointing on the believer and the Word of God.

Power is the supernatural ability to change events and situations on earth through the agency of God's wisdom and influence.

The sovereignty of the Holy Ghost is demonstrated when He moves on earth to ensure the establishment and growth of the Church. He destroys the works of satan and directs the affairs of the Church. The anointing is the power of God within the believer, which operates to fulfil his or her mission. God releases the gifts of the Holy Ghost in believers to win souls and edify the saints. The Word of God is God's agency for creation, reconstruction and the execution of divine counsel. Where the Word of God is there is power.

The Balaam spirit diverts people's hearts from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Israel was going into the Promised Land with their God and company of prophets. This was a threat to Balak's dynasty and

Balaam's "spiritual" authority. Balaam had to divert Balak and the other kings' attention from God, Moses and the Israelites to himself but God destroyed Balaam with His power.

Paul employed the power of God to destroy Barjesus' plot to divert the attention of the deputy (proconsul or governor of Cyprus), Sergius Paulus from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus:

Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. Now when Paul and his company loosed from

Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

Acts 13:6-13

The power of God struck Barjesus (Elymas) with blindness and the governor believed the gospel and was saved. The Balaam spirit is immobilised when the power of God is on display.

The Israelites waged war against the Midianites and their kings and slew Balaam with the sword in the process. The sword is the equivalent of the power of God in the physical realm.

And they warred against the Midianites, as the LORD commanded Moses; and they slew all the males.

And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.

Numbers 31:7-8

Jesus commanded the church in Pergamos to repent or else He would fight against them with the sword of His mouth. Pergamos (Pergamum) was noted for its idolatry. I believe that the worship of

Zeus, the Roman emperor and Asculapius (the god symbolised by a serpent) combined to make Jesus refer to Pergamos as the seat of satan.

Jesus called it the place where satan dwelt because the idolatry was just too much. The sword of His mouth is doubtlessly the judgment of His mouth, which is conveyed in His Word.

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

Revelation 2:12-17

Jesus sent a strong warning to the church in Pergamos for harbouring members who held the doctrine of Balaam. The doctrine of Balaam has three characteristics:

It teaches the enemies of God's people to cast stumbling blocks before them.

It teaches God's people to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

It teaches God's people to commit fornication.

Those who overcome the doctrine and practices of Balaam will be rewarded. God promises that the overcomer will eat of the hidden manna. The hidden manna is Christ who is hidden from us until we become partakers of His perfection and eternal life. Christ is the bread from heaven, the spiritual food that will be our source of life and nourishment. The overcomers will also receive a white stone. In Bible times different colours of stones were used for admission to public celebrations. White stones were also used for medical purposes in Judea. In judicial matters black stones were used to vote for a person's guilt but white ones to vote for innocence.

The Israelites overcame the Balaam spirit and went in to possess the Promised Land. In the same way the overcomer in Christ receives admission into the kingdom of heaven and he or she assumes a perfect state of spiritual health and is declared innocent before the Father.

Jesus threatened to deal with the Balaam spirit with His Word and you have no better option in dealing with this spirit. You can't deal with it with your mind or by human argument.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6

The sword represents the Word of God and it is a symbol of power. The Word of God is powerful – it pierces or penetrates secret places, it divides between seemingly indivisible things and it is a discerners (it exposes) of motives and purposes.

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerners of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

Balaam revealed in his own words that the way to defeat the Balaam spirit is through the Word of God, when he said God would do what He says He would do and He would fulfil His promises.

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.

He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.

God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.

Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!

Numbers 23:19-23

Israel eliminated and destroyed Balaam. The frustration Balaam's donkey gave him was not enough to convince Israel that he would not continue to be a thorn in their flesh. They went all out and eliminated him. We must not entertain the Balaam spirit. We must not stand idly by while it practises its acts of divination.

It is crucial for believers to study the various spirits that sought to dominate and contaminate the churches of Asia Minor to whom Jesus dictated his messages. These spirits exerted their influences through false doctrines and spiritual manipulation. As we saw earlier, the church in Pergamos had to contend with the Balaam spirit. This spirit was moved with envy to curse the children of Israel and contaminate them with idolatry and fornication.

Another spirit that was motivated by envy was the Jezebel spirit, which dominated the church in Thyatira. The Jezebel spirit operated in the church of Thyatira by also teaching the church to commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols. Further investigation into the life of the woman called Jezebel in the Old Testament reveals an envious woman who resorted to killing in order to take what she wanted from people.

CHAPTER 8

THE JEZEBEL SPIRIT

THE Old Testament features a dangerous queen named Jezebel who has come to be associated with idolatry and witchcraft. An individual who has a controlling and domineering nature is said to have a Jezebel spirit. In the New Testament a woman called Jezebel dominated the church in Thyatira. With eyes like a flame of fire, the glorified Jesus discovered the operations of “Jezebel” and asked the church to liberate itself from her influence.

*And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;
I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.*

Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

Revelation 2:18-20

Men as well as women can manipulate others if they have the Jezebel spirit. Church leaders and the congregation sometimes undermine the pastor’s authority by using spiritual means to control members’ lives. The pastor is supposed to be the teacher and leader of the church. He is God’s voice to the church. The church in Thyatira had another voice, which controlled and manipulated the people. It is important to note that though the pastor is the leader of the church his style of leadership and the spirit with which he operates can make him or her a “Jezebel.” The spiritual infl in the church of Thyatira was not the Holy Spirit but a witchcraft spirit called the Jezebel spirit. The Jezebel spirit created its own territory in the church.

The Jezebel spirit is envious of the pastor’s position. In a marriage it dominates a spouse especially in the case of a domineering wife though a husband can also have the Jezebel spirit. This spirit seeks to control people’s souls and make them do its bidding without reasoning. This spirit refuses to acknowledge the leader God chooses and uses emotional manipulation and spiritual control to establish itself as the leader.

The Jezebel spirit is similar to the spirit that possessed Aaron and Miriam. They were envious of Moses’ leadership and questioned God’s wisdom in making him a special kind of prophet.

And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.

And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it.

(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)

Numbers 12:1-3

Miriam and Aaron reasoned that Moses was not the only person God spoke through. They believed that God spoke through them also. Envy drives many people into pretending to be who they are not. Pastors who are not prophets force themselves to prophesy and mislead many in the process. Too many forced ministries and pretentious gifts are showing up in the body of Christ. God condemns the act of doing things out of insecurity without His approval just to prevent the people from leaving a church. When Saul forced himself to offer a sacrifice God took the kingdom of Israel out of his hands.

Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.

And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.

But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.

1 Samuel 13:12-14

The Jezebel spirit in the church in Thyatira in the book of Revelation can only be understood by understanding the Jezebel of I and II Kings. The books of I and II Kings contain enough references to Jezebel to enlighten us about the danger she posed to God's prophets and the people of Israel. Jezebel envied, seduced, persecuted and killed God's people.

JEZEBEL IN I & II KINGS

The name Jezebel perhaps means "noncohabited, un-husbanded or chaste" suggesting someone who is free from moral contamination. We however, know that the person who went by this name in the books of I Kings and II Kings was far from being chaste and uncontaminated.

Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre and Sidon, and queen to Ahab. According to Josephus, Ethbaal (called Ithobalus) was a former priest of Astarte (Greek name for Ashtoreth) who killed his brother Phelles and took his throne. He lived for sixty-eight years and reigned thirty-two years. Jezebel must have obtained her idolatrous and wicked practices from her father. The Jezebel spirit originated in a man and it is unfair to see the Jezebel spirit as a woman thing. The first mention of Jezebel in Scripture is her marriage to Ahab.

And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him.

And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

1 Kings 16:30-31

Jezebel imported the worship of Phoenician gods into the kingdom of Israel and turned King Ahab's heart after strange gods. Jezebel fed not less than 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the groves whereas the prophets of Jehovah were slain at her orders.

Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.

1 Kings 18:19

Jezebel stirred up her husband Ahab to practise great acts of wickedness against God and humanity. The Jezebel spirit is a domineering and controlling spirit. Even King Ahab was controlled by Jezebel's domineering nature. Both Jezebel and Ahab were compelled by the spirits of envy and wickedness to destroy prophets. They hated any form of opposition and competition and they did everything possible to eliminate those who seemed to compete with them even if they were prophets.

Ahab and Jezebel killed others just to have their way. They were envious of Elijah's prophetic gift because unlike the prophets of Baal he refused to use his gift to serve their perverted desires. This evil duo envied their subjects for their spiritual gifts as well as physical and material things. Naboth was unfortunate when Ahab and Jezebel located his vineyard and wanted it.

NABOTH'S VINEYARD CONFISCATED

The example of Naboth's vineyard clearly portrays the envious nature of Ahab and Jezebel. They were the sovereigns of Israel and were in possession of everything but they were not satisfied – they wanted Naboth's vineyard, which was close to the palace to use as a vegetable garden.

And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.

And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.

And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?

And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.

And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth.

And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people:

And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.

And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them.

They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.

And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.

Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead.

And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead.

And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

1 Kings 21:1-16

The above scripture shows how the spirit of envy operated in Jezebel and Ahab. Ahab saw Naboth's vineyard and wanted it. He approached Naboth to either exchange it for what he thought was a better one or receive money for it but Naboth refused. The king became sad after failing to convince Naboth to give him the vineyard. Jezebel noticed her husband's sad countenance and devised a plan to confiscate the vineyard for him. She organised two men to bear false witness against Naboth and say that he had blasphemed God and the king. Subsequently he was stoned to death. After Naboth's death Jezebel prevailed on her husband to go in and possess the vineyard.

Jezebel controlled her husband. Her role in handing Ahab Naboth's vineyard reveals the operations of a Jezebel in another person's life.

- 1. Jezebel provoked Ahab's spirit by pointing to his power to do anything and have anything** – “Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel?” “Jezebel” says things to puff you up. She provokes you to do things to prove that you are strong and this leads to your destruction.
- 2. Jezebel assured Ahab that she would hand him Naboth's vineyard** – “arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.”
- 3. Jezebel took charge of the process to deliver the vineyard to Ahab** – “So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth.” “Jezebels” take the lead. They don't want to be followers or assistants.
- 4. Jezebel controlled the elders and nobles of the city dwelling with Naboth** – “Jezebel” has influence over people in authority and she makes them do the things that please her.
- 5. Jezebel knew the power of fasting and prayer. She employs spiritual methods to achieve her purposes** – “And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.” It is common to see Jezebels go on long periods of fasting to invoke the spirits of witchcraft.
- 6. Jezebel worked with like-minded and kindred spirits to achieve her purposes** – “And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.” Two scoundrels (worthless fellows) accused Naboth of blaspheming God. The Jezebel spirit is in league with liars, gossips, slanderers, fornicators, adulterers, blasphemers and warmongers.
- 7. Jezebel operated in the name of God and the king** – it brings fear on its victims by bringing God into the picture. The worthless fellows claimed that Naboth blasphemed God and the king. They knew that if they said he blasphemed just the king it would not be enough to kill him so they brought God into the picture. This dangerous spirit makes the king equal with God. Anybody who offends the king and the queen is considered guilty of offending God. You see this spirit in our churches and homes. The pastor or family head ties himself or herself up with God and insists that anyone who offends him or her has offended God.
- 8. Jezebel was meticulous and detailed in planning and organisation** – “And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them.”
- 9. Jezebel isolated Naboth and set him up so he could be destroyed** – “they proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.” The Jezebel spirit convinces everybody around you that you are evil and turns them against you.

- 10. Jezebel used false accusation as a tool to destroy** – “And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king.”
- 11. Jezebel ostracised Naboth from the society so that he could be stoned to death** – It removes you from fellowship thereby denying you friendship, covering and support – “Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.”
- 12. Jezebel demanded accountability from Naboth’s killers** – Naboth’s death was reported to Jezebel and not Ahab who was the king – “Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead.”
- 13. Jezebel gave directives, commanded, instructed and dictated affairs** – “And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead.”

Jezebel and her husband’s envy for Naboth’s vineyard was cruel. They wanted the vineyard for two baseless reasons. Firstly, they wanted it because of its strategic position – it was close to the palace. Secondly, they wanted to use it as a vegetable garden. Naboth regarded this vineyard as an inheritance of his fathers. It was something he was prepared to die for. Considering the fact that Ahab had so much land and could have had any other land of his choice he did not have to kill a man and take his land.

Naboth’s answer to Ahab and Jezebel should be your answer to Ahabs and Jezebels who try to rob you of your godly inheritance. He bluntly refused to give Ahab and Jezebel the vineyard. Naboth died an honourable death. Jezebel killed the true prophets of God and Naboth also died as a faithful steward of his fathers’ inheritance.

And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.

And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

1 Kings 21:2-3

We sometimes overcome only through death. A person can save his or her life and still be declared a loser in God’s sight. Death does not always mean defeat and staying alive does not always mean victory.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Revelation 12:11

Envious people take what others hold dear to their hearts only to use them for lustful pleasure. Naboth's inheritance was confiscated and used as a mere vegetable garden. An envious person takes another person's wife or husband just for the pleasure of having a mistress or sex partner. David had many wives and yet he forcibly took Bathsheba, Uriah's wife just for pleasure and later killed him and added her to the list of his existing wives.

People who are filled with envy don't necessarily need what they crave for. They kill for what they already have. They just hate the idea of another person having something. A successful pastor can be envious of other pastors having thriving churches. A businessman wants his business to be the only one in town. A politician expends a senseless amount of energy to destroy other politicians. The lies politicians tell about one another just to win political power make the scoundrels Jezebel employed look amateurish. Envy has no limit to what it can do. It resorts to cruel means to achieve its aims. An envious person is evil. A believer should not allow this spirit to come into his or her heart.

Jezebel extended the onslaught of her envy and wickedness to Elijah the prophet. Elijah threatened her spiritual influence and she hated the attention he enjoyed as a prophet. Elijah was a hindrance to her and her prophets. The prophet did not submit his spiritual gift to Jezebel to entrench her witchcraft. He challenged Jezebel's prophets up on Mount Carmel and God answered by fire falling down from heaven to prove that He was the true and living God.

ELIJAH PURSUED

During the contest of Mount Carmel, Elijah slew the prophets of Baal after fire had fallen down from heaven. This act infuriated Jezebel and she threatened to take Elijah's life and he fled. You can't underestimate the power of a woman who is able to intimidate the fearless Elijah enough for him to escape for his life. Elijah killed Jezebel's prophets but he could not withstand her.

And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.

Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.

And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.

1 Kings 19:1-3

Jezebel made Elijah utter confessions, which were unbecoming of a prophet of his calibre – he was extremely negative. The prophet who is largely associated with boldness and faith wished himself dead because of Jezebel's threats.

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.

Elijah asked God to take his life. His encounter with God in this wilderness effectively ended his ministry. It is not far-fetched to conclude that Jezebel retired Elijah from the ministry. Elijah found himself in a situation of discouragement and seeming failure like his fathers – for example Moses. Moses complained to God about the people of Israel until he disobeyed God by striking the rock twice. This disobedience made God disqualify him from entering the Promised Land. After Elijah's complaints God asked him to hand his ministry over to Elisha maybe because he could not withstand Jezebel's onslaught anymore.

And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria:

And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

1 Kings 19:15-16

The influence of Jezebel's idolatry was so strong that there were only seven thousand people in Israel who had not bowed down their knee to Baal. She survived her husband Ahab fourteen years and continued to exert influence on her son Jehoram and the people of Israel.

The Jezebel spirit isolates a prophet of God and makes him feel he is the only follower of God.

And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

1 Kings 19:10, 18

The Jezebel spirit silences the true prophets of God.

The Jezebel spirit makes the anointed servants of God flee the church or leave the city.

The Jezebel spirit produces depression and discouragement in preachers.

The Jezebel spirit kills prophets and retires them from the ministry.

In spite of the power Jezebel displayed, Jehu the army commander who was anointed king of Israel destroyed her. Jehu destroyed Jezebel because he had the mandate to do so.

THE DESTRUCTION OF JEZEBEL

Jezebel's judgment came by the hand of Jehu the army commander of Israel during the siege of Israel by the Syrians at Ramoth-gilead. A young prophet from Elisha gave

Jehu God's commission to punish Ahab's family for their sins and for the killing of God's prophets. Jehu began his mission by first killing the kings of Israel and Judah. He marched to Jezreel and confronted Jehoram (Joram), the king of Israel with his mother Jezebel's whoredoms and witchcrafts.

And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?

2 Kings 9:22

After killing kings Ahaziah (king of Judah) and Jehoram (king of Israel) Jehu proceeded to kill Jezebel. When Jehu entered Jezreel and hastened towards Jezebel's palace she painted her eyelids to give the eyes a darker border so that the eyes would look larger and brighter, possibly to seduce Jehu.

And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window.

And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?

And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs.

And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot.

2 Kings 9:30-33

The Jezebel spirit seduces some of its victims sexually. Sometimes seductive women entice men to sleep with them by painting their eyes and using other substances. They use sex to drain anointings and pollute the spirits of pure vessels of God. The Jezebel spirit can be found in men who also use sex as a tool to either control others or satisfy their lust. A married woman reported a case to me in which a married preacher had a sexual relationship with her over a long period. In spite of this preacher's sexual escapades, some kind of anointing manifested itself anytime he went to minister sometimes just after sleeping with her. One day she had the courage to ask him why he lives in sin and still appears so powerful and his response was that the more he sleeps with women the more the anointing flows. This is a clear case of the manifestation of the Jezebel spirit.

God is ruthless in dealing with the Jezebel spirit because of the danger it poses to the Church. This ruthlessness is seen in Jehu's unrestrained assault on Jezebel. Jehu ordered some royal eunuchs to cast Jezebel down and they did so killing her instantly. Jehu secured the services of eunuchs to destroy Jezebel because she could not seduce them. She fell in front of Jehu's chariot and later nothing was found of her but "the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands," because wild dogs had torn other parts of her body and carried them away according to Elijah's prophecy.

And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin. And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying,

The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.

Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat.

But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

1 Kings 21:22-25

Jezebel died a terrible death, being eaten by dogs because of her idolatrous practices, whoredoms and witchcrafts. The Jezebel spirit is destroyed by two main factors:

1. The zeal of Jehu. Someone must be on a mission in order to destroy “Jezebel”. He must hear clearly from God. You can’t undertake the mission to destroy “Jezebel” presumptuously. Even Elijah could not handle her. Once you have the mandate from God you must hasten to destroy the spirit with zeal. A half-hearted approach to “Jezebel” is dangerous.

And the watchman told, saying, He came even unto them, and cometh not again: and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously.

And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot.

Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: for remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the LORD laid this burden upon him;

2 Kings 9:20, 24-25

So Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his kinsfolks, and his priests, until he left him none remaining.

2 Kings 10:11

2. The sanctity of the Eunuchs. The most potent force against the Jezebel spirit is purity and self-control. Just as eunuchs are emasculated you must reckon yourself dead to sin before you can overcome the Jezebel spirit.

And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?

And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who is on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs.

And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot.

2 Kings 9:31-33

We could go on and on with the Jezebel spirit in the Old Testament but we must look at this spirit in the New Testament also. In the New Testament Jezebel appears in the church in Thyatira where she displays a domineering presence. The tendencies Jezebel portrayed in this church are the ones we see in many churches, homes and businesses. “Jezebel” is everywhere with us.

JEZEBEL IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The spiritual condition of a church depends on two main things namely **teaching and leadership**. A pastor who possesses these two qualities has a great chance of building a strong and influential congregation that glorifies God. The Jezebel spirit seeks to gain control of these two vital things in the church in order to destroy the church.

The Jezebel spirit is the spirit that manipulates others with a false spiritual gift and a domineering leadership attitude.

Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

Revelation 2:20-23

The scripture above shows how the church in Thyatira allowed itself to be controlled by the Jezebel spirit. By studying some key words and expressions in the scripture we can discover how to overcome the Jezebel spirit.

“Thou sufferest” – the people surrendered to the Jezebel spirit. The Jezebel spirit takes over people’s souls and spirits when they cooperate with it. We overcome this spirit by refusing to cohabit with it or listen to it. Don’t entertain the Jezebel spirit.

“That woman Jezebel” – Jezebel is called a woman because it is likely the imposter of Thyatira was a woman. Some Bible scholars translate ‘that woman’ as ‘thy wife’ making Jezebel the wife of the Bishop of the church as Jezebel was Ahab’s wife. Others identify Jezebel as a woman fortune-teller in Thyatira who was an oracle called Sambathe. Jezebel was a member of the church so that couldn’t be the case. There is another school of thought, which identifies her as Lydia the purple seller from Thyatira whom Paul converted at Philippi (Act 16:14). It is suggested that she went back to Thyatira and became an evil influence because of her wealth. Lydia was Paul’s first convert in Europe. Looking at the text in Revelation closely I believe that Jezebel was a woman in the church with an evil influence, which was similar to that of the Old Testament Jezebel – her preoccupations were harlotries (whoredoms) and witchcrafts (sorceries).

She employed the various things a woman uses to control her victims namely sex and emotional manipulation. She is called a woman because she had the capacity to reproduce herself rapidly. It must however, be noted that a man can have the spirit of Jezebel too. To overcome the Jezebel spirit we must allow the Holy Spirit to bring under control and uproot the negative things that are sometimes identified with women. These things include emotionalism, gossip, sexual manipulation and division. A clear definition of levels of authority also prevents “Jezebel” from pretending to be

what she is not. Those who are in authority must be responsible and have power with God and man otherwise “Jezebel” will have room to operate.

The Jezebel spirit calls herself a prophetess – the Jezebel spirit operates with a counterfeit gift. It imitates prophecy because it is easy for people to be manipulated when gifts and messages are delivered in the name of the LORD. To overcome the Jezebel spirit every believer must be grounded in the Word of God. Know people by the spirit and not the flesh. Don’t allow the titles and flatteries of men and women to hypnotise you. Too many flattering titles are hypnotising believers who don’t want to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. We have a prophet-dependent-syndrome generation.

The Jezebel spirit teaches – it exerts influence through the impartation of knowledge. “Jezebel” teaches by employing controlling and manipulating spirits. This spirit sounds very convincing. It uses the Bible as the basis for its authority and majors on the portions of Scripture that point the people to the power of men and women of God. The anointing abides in you and you have no need for any man to teach you anything that conflicts with the voice of the Holy Spirit in you.

But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

1 John 2:27

The Jezebel spirit is a dominant voice in the church other than Jesus’ voice through the Holy Spirit. It can operate through a man or woman. It is a manipulative spirit that silences the voice of the true prophets of God. It displaces legitimate authority and takes over. The Jezebel spirit could operate through the head pastor or an associate pastor.

The Jezebel spirit seduces God’s people to commit fornication – witchcraft moves with fornication and adultery. To overcome the Jezebel spirit we should present our bodies as living sacrifices to God. We are the temples of God and the Holy Spirit dwells in us. Consecration is necessary to defeat the Jezebel spirit. It is common these days to find church ladies competing to take turns in going to bed with preachers who claim to have special anointings. Some of these ladies become envious of one another and eventually expose themselves and bring the preachers down with them.

The Jezebel spirit seduces God’s people to eat things offered to idols – to overcome the Jezebel spirit we must overcome the human weaknesses and pressures that make people seek the assistance of idols. The greed for money, power and success drives many into idolatry and spiritual bondage. Believers consult all manner of spirits and spiritualists who they know are not from God just to acquire certain things other believers have. Envy moves believers to dabble in the occult just like Saul consulted the witch of Endor.

OPPORTUNITY TO REPENT

Jesus said He gave Jezebel the opportunity to repent but she did not do so. It is difficult to repent from the Jezebel spirit. Jesus warned the church in Thyatira that

because Jezebel refused to repent he would destroy her. Her destruction was going to be similar to the destruction of Ahab's wife Jezebel.

And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

Revelation 2:21-23

- **I will cast her into a bed** – this bed refers to the bed of sickness, the bed of the grave and the bed of hell. Jezebel killed God's true prophets and Jesus was going to kill her and condemn her to hell.
- **They that commit adultery with her would go into great tribulation.** These ones who commit adultery with Jezebel are those that flirt with her or look on while she commits her acts of adultery. This flirtation could be physical fornication or spiritual contamination. Don't allow Jezebel to prophesy to you or to lay hands on you otherwise you become a partaker of her sins.
- **I will kill her children with death** – Jezebel killed Jesus' children (the believers) and He determined to kill Jezebel's children (her disciples and spiritual children). In the book of Kings Jezebel's sons and the seventy sons of Ahab were all destroyed (2 Kings 10:1-7). The Jezebel spirit is so diabolical that God wipes out all her offspring to prevent her from showing up in her seed.
- **I will give unto every one of you according to your works** – God judges "Jezebel" and everybody who practises her abominations. No one can escape after practising "Jezebelism".

TO THE REMNANT

In spite of how powerful and seductive Jezebel was, seven thousand people in Israel refused to be dominated by her. They did not bow down to Baal. These people were the remnant who did not compromise. It is encouraging to know that every generation has a remnant.

And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

1 Kings 19:10

There was a silent remnant Elijah did not know about but they were true to the God of Israel. We are not losing the war against the Jezebel spirit. A breed of strong believers is coming up who are uncompromising. They are not the big preachers or the noticeable believers in our churches. These

overcomers are simple people who serve God secretly but with sincerity. Ironically, while they refuse to compromise with the Jezebel spirit the prominent preachers run from her out of fear.

Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

1 Kings 19:18

There was also a remnant in the church in Thyatira. Jesus made reference to them by calling them “the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine”.

But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

Revelation 2:24-25

The assurance Jesus gives to overcomers is always encouraging. There is a reward for faithfulness. Dealing with the Jezebel spirit is difficult because “Jezebel” spares no effort in seeking to control a whole nation. Those who try to resist “Jezebel’s” temptations face great persecutions and trials. Jesus promises to reward these overcomers in Revelation 2. The reward is proportionate to the temptation. The promises Jesus made to the overcomers in Thyatira are strong.

And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

And I will give him the morning star.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Revelation 2:26-29

Jesus’ promises to those who overcome and keep His works to the end are as follows:

- **“To him will I give power over the nations”** – the believers shall have authority over the entire earth under the heavens during the millennial rule of Christ when they overcome the Jezebel spirits of this age. Power over the nations involves the freedom and the right to make decrees in the nations as well as make use of the facilities and opportunities in the nations.
- **“He shall rule the nations with a rod of iron”** – the overcomers shall participate in the rule of Jesus as the shepherd over the nations. We shall sit in judgment with Christ to punish the sins and abominations of the world. We are not going to rule over the nations simply because we are born again – we must overcome something to rule with Christ.
- **“I will give him the morning star”** – the overcomer will receive from Jesus the morning star meaning Jesus will be his or hers and make him or her shine like Him in brightness. At the close of

the age nothing will shine like Jesus Christ – He is the Morning Star. As He shines brighter and brighter His light makes us shine as we stay close to Him.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” The revelation on the Jezebel spirit is not for the faint-hearted or those that are dull of hearing. It requires spiritual understanding to comprehend. We must overcome this spirit to rule with Christ and it is comforting to know that there is always a remnant that is not contaminated.

The spirit of envy has led to uncountable cases of murder and acts of wickedness on the face of the earth. The biblical cases we have cited in this book show that we must deal with this spirit in every sphere of life. We cannot allow it to destroy our homes, businesses, ministries and nations. It is urgent at this point to consider two case studies of covetousness and envy in which Gehazi and Judas Iscariot lost their opportunities to walk in great anointings because of the spirit of covetousness in them. Judas Iscariot’s case is a direct case of envy and we shall consider it later on. Gehazi’s case on the other hand is not specifically a case of envy but it raises some ethical issues of covetousness that are related to envy. Most cases of envy are the result of covetousness. It is difficult for someone who is not covetous to be envious.

CHAPTER 9

THE GEHAZI SPIRIT

THE tenth commandment warns us not to covet the things that belong to our neighbours. God issued this commandment because of the human tendency to covet what belongs to others. Your neighbour can spend his life coveting your house, wife, manservant, maidservant, ox, donkey or anything that is yours. He or she wants what is yours and would do anything to get it.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Exodus 20:17

Covetousness is a compelling desire to have what is not yours or what you are incapable of having. Covetousness is directly related to envy but the difference is that the former focuses on what another person has whereas the latter targets the person himself or herself. Covetousness wants something but envy is a combination of the covetousness for things and the hatred of people. Most cases of envy are motivated by covetousness. If we want to overcome the spirit of envy we must block covetousness from entering our hearts. Failure to stop covetousness makes us likely candidates for envy.

Covetous people eventually become envious and you don't have to wait for them to fully develop into destroyers and killers before you deal with the spirit in them. Every successful leader has a plan to raise a successor – someone who would receive his mantle when he leaves the scene. Leaders spend time, money and energy to develop successors and it is important to look at the subject of envy and covetousness closely because these spirits can abort the leaders' plans to raise successors.

A biblical example of covetousness as seen in Gehazi who was the Prophet Elisha's servant helps us to understand how covetousness can truncate someone's dream of making impact in life and ministry. Gehazi means the "valley of vision" but this biblical character did little to show that he wanted his life to be consistent with his name. Gehazi did not look dangerous but he was a carnal man. Some of the references to Gehazi clearly demonstrate that he loved his master Elisha but his covetousness disqualified him from the anointing. The Scriptures give some suggestions that he made modest attempts to walk in the anointing. He seems to be a man who tried initially to follow in his master's footsteps but the flesh did not allow him to go all the way.

BIG OPPORTUNITIES

God presented big opportunities to Gehazi just like Elisha had his own opportunities in the past. Many people who are envious of others had their fair share of

opportunities in the past. Such people blow their chances in life and later on become covetous of things they cannot afford.

- Elisha consulted Gehazi.

Gehazi was first mentioned in an instance when Elisha sought to reward the Shunammite woman for her hospitality towards him. Elisha was an astonishing prophet who could hear God's voice on relevant matters. His spiritual gifts notwithstanding, the prophet sought Gehazi's counsel on how to compensate the Shunammite for caring for him. This move by Elisha suggests that Gehazi was a credible person. Elisha considered him wise enough to give counsel and in this regard Gehazi was a blessed man.

And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him.

And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? Wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people.

And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old.

And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door.

And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid.

And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.

2 Kings 4:12-17

To be consulted by a seasoned prophet like Elisha about a decision is no mean favour. Gehazi was spot on when he said the woman had no child and Elisha spoke the Word of God, which led to her having a son. Gehazi was in many ways a friend to Elisha.

- Gehazi handled Elisha's staff.

During the period of the interaction between Elisha and the Shunammite woman her son died and she went and called the prophet to come and raise him from the dead. Instead of going personally at once, Elisha gave Gehazi the special privilege of taking his staff and placing it on the dead son of the Shunammite with the aim of raising him from the dead.

So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite:

Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.

And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not told me. Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?

Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child.

And the mother of the child said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her.

And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked.

2 Kings 4:25-31

Gehazi laid the staff on the child but the expected miracle did not take place until Elisha came and raised him from the dead. Looking at things from the positive point of view, Elisha must have seen in Gehazi some desire to demonstrate God's power before he dispatched him with the staff.

Gehazi was blessed with the potential for miracle working power. The assignment to raise the Shunammite's son required discipline as the messenger was not supposed to answer to any greetings on the way. Elisha considered Gehazi disciplined enough to do the job.

Unfortunately the boy did not revive when Gehazi laid the staff on him. We don't know why Gehazi could not raise the boy from the dead but we can make some speculations. The reason may be connected to Gehazi's dishonest receiving of Naaman's items, which Elisha refused. Naaman gave the items to Elisha as a reward for curing his leprosy and whereas Elisha refused them, Gehazi went after Naaman and took them from him.

Although the case involving Naaman took place after the death and the raising of the Shunammite's son, the Naaman incident reveals Gehazi's heart. **If Gehazi received a dishonest reward for the healing of Naaman, which he did not perform, it is likely that if he had raised the dead boy he might have demanded a huge reward from the Shunammite. He might also have fled the city with the miracle rod with the hope of being in a miracle business throughout his life. A man who rewards himself for no work done will over compensate himself for work done.**

We cannot conclude the occurrence of covetousness or envy in Gehazi at the time he failed to raise the boy. However, it is not far fetched to say Gehazi was covetous, since covetousness, envy and strife are common in the ministries of healing the sick and the demonstration of power. In the case of Elisha and Gehazi the former was not jealous of his servant and gave him the opportunity to raise the

boy from the dead. The latter might not necessarily have been envious of the former but the element of covetousness made him do what envious people do.

Many leaders today will not give their associate ministers the opportunity to minister to people especially prominent people like the Shunammite with the fear that he would reap some material benefits from them. Out of envy senior pastors keep good teachers and ministers in the pews for fear that they will divert the people's attention from them. Senior pastors undermine their associate pastors openly and embarrass them because of fear and insecurity. Some pastors don't invite other pastors into their pulpits because of envy – they don't want their congregations to be exposed to other gifts and anointings.

We constantly compare ourselves with others and try to destroy them out of envy. The Corinthian church was guilty of having people who were eager to outdo one another in everything.

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

2 Corinthians 10:12

Associate pastors use ministry opportunities to compare themselves with their leaders. When miracles occur in their ministries they use them to undermine their leaders by insinuating that their leaders are not spiritual enough to operate in the supernatural. It is wise for associate pastors to remain humble and pure when they receive the blessing of ministry opportunities.

Preachers are engaged in preaching out of envy just to provoke others. They do things to show that they are better than everyone else. Paul the Apostle wrote about folks who preached the gospel out of envy just to provoke him.

And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

Philippians 1:14-17

Some people preach the gospel just to inflict pain on other preachers. Such zealots show up at the time when another preacher is facing crisis. They wait until you are sick, financially handicapped or struggling with accusations from the public before they engage in organising events, raising publicity and engaging in philanthropic activities.

Preachers engage in unhealthy competition because they fail to consider their individual blessings. We are all blessed in peculiar ways and not necessarily like others. It is a shame when we inflict pain on others out of envy. Every true man or woman of God must know that it is inevitable for people not to do things out of envy. In that regard we must arm ourselves with the philosophy that will preserve us from the dangers of envy. Paul's philosophy was the gospel first and his feelings second. His

interest was to see the gospel preached and he did not care who did what and why he did it. Whether they preached out of love or envy he rejoiced that the gospel was preached. This is the way to overcome envy.

- Gehazi stood before great people.

Gehazi received the blessing of being a confidant of Elisha the Prophet. He was also privileged to handle the miracle staff of the prophet. He stood before a prophet. Furthermore, God blessed Gehazi by giving him the opportunity to stand before the king.

The book of Proverbs says that those who are diligent in their business stand before kings and not mean men. Gehazi must have been a diligent man to stand before Elisha and the king of Israel.

Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.

Proverbs 22:29

Joseph, Daniel, Nehemiah and Esther all had the honour of standing before kings. Gehazi was a partaker of this favour too. The occasion under consideration is when the Shunammite returned from exile and went to Jehoram the king of Israel's palace to ask for the restoration of her house and lands. On the visit to the king's palace she found Gehazi with the king recounting Elisha's wonderful works.

Then spake Elisha unto the woman, whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn: for the LORD hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years.

And the woman arose, and did after the saying of the man of God: and she went with her household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years.

And it came to pass at the seven years' end, that the woman returned out of the land of the Philistines: and she went forth to cry unto the king for her house and for her land.

And the king talked with Gehazi the servant of the man of God, saying, Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done.

And it came to pass, as he was telling the king how he had restored a dead body to life, that, behold, the woman, whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life.

And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that was hers, and all the fruits of the

field since the day that she left the land, even until now.

2 Kings 8:1-6

There is a little argument about whether the incident of Gehazi appearing before the king happened before Gehazi became a leper or after. If this incident occurred after Gehazi became a leper, the honour is amazing because that would mean that even after Elisha had put Naaman's leprosy on Gehazi he was still allowed into the king's presence.

Gehazi was blessed in many spiritual and social ways but he did not appreciate it. Blessings are not always physical in nature – they are sometimes spiritual in nature. The Apostle Paul told the Ephesians that they were blessed with all spiritual blessings.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

Ephesians 1:3

No one is blessed with all material or physical blessings but as believers we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Gehazi did not appreciate the spiritual blessings God gave him. He walked with the prophet, handled the prophet's staff and talked with the king and yet he wanted Naaman's garments and wealth.

When ministers minister to people in healing and deliverance the recipients of the ministry sometimes reciprocate by giving the ministers some material gifts and blessings. Sadly, the finances and other material things that come into the ministry are responsible for most of the envy and strife amongst believers.

The manifestation of healing in Elisha's ministry stirred up the covetous spirit in Gehazi because the ministry attracted a wealthy man in the person of Naaman. His desire for material gain flushed him out of the ministry and denied Elisha a successor. In the dramatic case of the healing of Naaman the leper, Gehazi displayed gross indiscretion by receiving Naaman's goods, which Elisha had rejected. Materialism disqualified Gehazi from receiving Elisha's anointing. He denied the next generation the benefit of the anointing through his greed.

The Gehazi spirit is the spirit of covetousness that makes people place more value on material things than on spiritual blessings thereby making potential candidates of the anointing forfeit their anointing.

MATERIALISM AND MINISTRY

Gehazi thought material things were more important than spiritual things. Naaman was healed of his leprosy and when he brought some gifts to Elisha he refused to receive them. Gehazi followed Naaman and lied to him that his master needed some of the items and money and Naaman gave them to him. The dishonest servant of the prophet returned to the prophet after hiding the items and he cursed him with Naaman's leprosy.

But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him.

So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, Is all well?

And he said, All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments.

And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him.

And when he came to the tower, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed.

But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither.

And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and

vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?

The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

2 Kings 5:20-27

The rationale behind Gehazi's actions is not difficult to deduce. He had heard how Elisha's master, Elijah went into heaven in a whirlwind and left him no material possessions and wealth except a mantle for working miracles. Thinking Elisha might also be taken away soon without leaving him any worldly inheritance Gehazi decided to work out his own reward for his services to Elisha. He thought since Elisha had rejected the items there was nothing wrong with him receiving them.

Many protégés are making this same mistake today. They covet titles their mentors and fathers in the ministry don't have. They drive in cars and live in houses those who entered ministry decades before them don't drive and live in. Covetousness is producing dangerous envy in the body of Christ. We covet one another's success and breakthroughs. Pastors engage in a fleshly display of power and hilarious showmanship just to appear successful. We compete in fasting and prayer and miracles are stage-managed to keep us in business.

Envy and strife are not just problems amongst unbelievers – they are alive in the Church. It is a complete waste of time to pretend that they don't exist. The most spiritual ones amongst us are not exempted from the spirit of envy. Knowing this helps you to be sensitive when you are sharing your testimonies with others. Joseph's brothers hated him when his father made him a coat of many colours. Eventually, the hatred developed into envy when he shared dreams, which suggested that he

was going to have preeminence over them. Don't provoke people with your testimonies like Joseph did with his dreams and words.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.

And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

Genesis 37:3-11

Hatred and envy existed in Jacob's house though he was the source of the chosen tribe of Israel – he was not too spiritual for envy to rear its ugly head in his household. There might be envy around you and amongst your people and it is time to stop pretending that it does not exist and do something about it. Paul warned about the rampant occurrence of envy and strife in some of the churches under his stewardship. He told the Corinthians that envy and strife had reduced them to mere men.

For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

1 Corinthians 3:3

The veteran apostle cautioned Timothy about strange teachers who use divisive words and actions to gain recognition and material wealth in the churches. He ordered Timothy to withdraw himself from such people.

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness;

He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,

Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

1 Timothy 6:3-5

The Apostle James also warned about the danger of envy and strife. He exposed the dimensions of the danger of envy and strife. Envy uses devilish wisdom to achieve its aims.

But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

James 3:14-16

Envy and strife are the mothers of every evil work. Envy leads to every evil work such as murder, fornication, adultery, division, divorce and death.

Family members are in constant conflict because of envy. Churches are being formed out of envy by pastors who feel they are not being adequately rewarded by their senior pastors. Politicians turn to the occult to antagonise their opponents. Envy is the spirit behind most of the crimes we have in society. We must overcome this spirit.

Gehazi might not have been envious of Elisha directly but his covetousness made him act exactly the way an envious person would act – he lied, pretended and stole. This potential prophet did not concentrate on his tutelage as a young prophet. The material wealth and other benefits of ministry diverted his attention.

THE ELIJAH-ELISHA-GEHAZI CHAIN

I have seen three generations of ministry in succession around the world that are relevant to the question of envy and covetousness. The first generation is the faithful ministers who featured in the 1970s through the 1980s or earlier than this. This generation endured hardships and operated in a traditional setting without any outward signs of prosperity and success. They did not drive in luxurious cars and they did not boast of millions of dollars. Most of these simple preachers did not have the opportunity to travel abroad and preach the gospel. They were modest in their lifestyles and their emphases were holiness and the power of the Holy Spirit. This class of robust preachers became the fathers and mentors of many of the ministers today. It is comparable with the Elijah generation because like Elijah most of them

were not affluent ministers. The raven and the widow of Zarephath sustained Elijah. He hid in obscure places just as this group of preachers lived anonymous lives.

The Elijah generation of preachers of the 1970s and 1980s raised another generation who came onto the scene from the 1980s to the 2000s. This generation grew up under the Elijah generation who had very little in terms of material wealth. The 1980s to the 2000s generation of preachers is comparable with the Elisha generation. It is clear from the Scriptures that Elisha was more financially and materially resourced than Elijah. The wealthy Shunammite woman sustained Elisha whereas a poor widow of Zarephath sustained Elijah. Elijah hid in caves but Elisha had the luxury of living in more comfortable homes including the estates he developed with the sons of the prophets. Elisha's encounters with kings, army generals and affluent people brought him a considerable amount of prosperity compared to Elijah. Like Elisha God graciously blessed the 1980s to the 2000s generation with some amount of favour and prosperity. The ministers of this generation appear successful with the crowds following them and giving them the "man-of-God feeling". This is the feeling that makes one feel he or she is anointed, blessed and successful. The preachers in this category travel around the world and carry a semblance of kingdom 'celebrity' status. Unfortunately, they have become the standard by which success in life and ministry is measured in a materialistic and carnal world.

This generation of the 1980s up to the 2000s has raised a generation of preachers from around the beginning of 2000 to 2010 and beyond who are characterised by great energy and high visibility. The material things around the lives and ministries of the 1980s to the 2000s generation have unfortunately confused the 2000 to 2010 and beyond generation which I term a Gehazi generation. The Gehazi generation is not necessarily a bad generation. There are countless good ministers in this younger generation. It is however, sad to observe that a good number of ministers in this generation concentrate on the benefits of ministry instead of the burden of ministry.

In the Elijah-Elisha-Gehazi chain, Elisha focused on Elijah's mantle, which was a symbol of his power. He received a double portion of Elijah's spirit and went on to do exploits for God. There was no wealth or affluence around Elijah to distract Elisha. Unlike Elisha, Gehazi was raised in an environment of prosperity. He saw the stream of opportunities and blessings that constantly came Elisha's way and he was distracted. Gehazi focused on material things instead of the spiritual mantle.

Gehazi's attitude towards life and ministry describes the lives of many ministers of the 2000s and beyond generation. They are absorbed in moneymaking gimmicks instead of the miracle working power of God. Sound biblical doctrine is vanishing faster than the depletion of the ozone layer. Holiness and right living are regarded as outmoded virtues. This generation is charismatic and can be credited with numerous exploits in ministry but they are victims of their time. They were born into a sea of false standards and fleshly manipulation of souls that are directed at feeding the insatiable desires of the previous generation.

The generation before them set wrong standards, which they struggle to cope with. Their mentors taught them the wrong things and they are drowning in a covetous and envious world. Some of the ministers of the Gehazi generation are driven by envy like many humans are. They find themselves copying lifestyles and attitudes they did not intend to copy. The generation before them played the music and they are dancing to the tune. However, there are many well-meaning ministers in the young generation but they are hardly noticed.

The issue of tithing comes to mind. Many senior pastors insist on receiving tithes from younger ministers as conditionality to father or mentor them. Most of these young pastors have small churches

that can barely support themselves. As a result of the pressure from the senior pastors on the younger ones to bring tithes, offering, first fruits or any other name we give to such things, the younger ministers use all kinds of methods available to them to fleece the sheep. It is biblical to tithe and to give offerings but we are to bring them to the Lord in the spirit of love and not bondage. We are to bring our tithes to the Lord and not to men. We have an obligation to honour the men and women God uses to bless us but we must be careful not to deify them.

The falsehood of insisting that younger pastors tithe to more experienced ones and give them offerings before they receive them as spiritual sons and daughters has no biblical basis. Joshua did not give Moses any offerings. Timothy did not tithe to Paul. The twelve apostles did not sow seeds into Jesus' life and ministry. These protégés served their masters faithfully and that was enough to make them sons to their mentors. Today's fathers in the Lord, even the very young ones, don't value the services one renders them even if one lays down his or her life for them. All they care about is money and material things. It is more common in the Bible to see fathers give to their sons than vice versa. The Lord's model prayer defines the spiritual father's role by saying "Our Father who art in heaven ... Give us this day our daily bread." Fathers are givers and not takers. Don't snatch the bread from your spiritual children's mouths. If sons and daughters are in a position to bless their fathers it is okay but they must not do so out of fear.

I hear many ministers from older generations lambast the younger generation and write them off as non-serious people. I have a slight feeling that the older generation should be humble enough to accept some responsibility for the lifestyle of the younger ones and their practices. Covetousness pushed Gehazi to commit several deadly errors in life and ministry. We have already mentioned some of these deadly mistakes indirectly in this chapter. Nevertheless, I wish to pinpoint them so that we can easily recognise them and avoid them. The mistakes we shall consider are the ones he made after the healing of Naaman the leper.

EIGHT DEADLY MISTAKES OF GEHAZI

Gehazi made at least eight deadly mistakes during the Naaman episode because of covetousness and probably envy. Naaman presented Gehazi with the opportunity to either pass a test or make mistakes and Gehazi chose the latter. He was blessed with spiritual blessings like the privilege to stand before the prophet, the Syrian army commander and the king of Israel. In spite of these blessings covetousness lured him into playing games that cost him dearly.

Maybe Gehazi was sincere in his relationship with Elisha but that was not enough to prevent him from incurring a curse on his life. He was sincere but naïve. He was emotionally attached to Elisha but lacked tactical discipline.

After Naaman's healing in the Jordan he came and stood before Elisha with gifts but the servant of God refused to receive them. He probably refused the gifts because he did not want Naaman in his characteristic pride to think that he had bought his healing with money. This reminds me of Abraham who refused to receive the gifts of the king of Sodom because he didn't want the king to say he had made him rich (Genesis 14:21-23).

And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant.

But he said, As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused.

And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD.

In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing.

And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way.

But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him.

So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, Is all well?

And he said, All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments.

And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him.

And when he came to the tower, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed.

But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither.

And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants?

The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

2 Kings 5:15-27

Gehazi received gifts of two talents (one hundred and fifty pounds) of silver and two sets of clothing from Naaman and went and hid them. According to the Dake's Annotated Bible two talents of

silver are equivalent to \$3,840, making it a small amount of money for someone to exchange his destiny for. Elisha confronted Gehazi about his act of dishonesty and his reaction was a string of mistakes that proved that he was a wrong candidate for Elisha's prophetic mantle.

1. Gehazi did not learn from his master.

Gehazi's first mistake was that he did not learn discipline from his master. He accepted the gifts his master refused. If you want to receive the mantle your master has you have to hate what he hates and reject what he rejects. I often come across younger pastors who desire the anointings of senior ministers but are not willing to pay the price for these anointings. They want to live anyhow and do anything they want to do and still be anointed. If a person is anointed it is partly because of the unrighteous things he or she does not patronise and you must abstain from those things if you want his or her anointing.

2. He did not recognise the fact that the house was Elisha's house.

Gehazi tried to hide his stolen goods in another man's house. He forgot that God would not permit him to desecrate his master's house. Many people who commit offences in homes, ministries and businesses forget that these places don't belong to them. If there is anything the master of the house would not do or cannot do, others should refrain from doing it. People find it difficult to know their boundaries when they hang around the leaders they claim to love and serve. On separate occasions two of my associate pastors used my personal laptop computer and my wife's without our permission. They took advantage of our relationship with them and failed to respect our privacy. Asking for permission before you use people's items is a basic act of courtesy.

3. Gehazi pretended before his master.

After hiding the items the dishonest servant stood before his master as if nothing had happened. He returned to his position to perform his usual services without taking cognisance of the fact that he had sinned against God and needed to repent instead of functioning in ministry. Ministries are functioning below capacity because envious and covetous people don't do any heart searching before they stand to minister.

4. He lied to his master.

Gehazi responded that he did not go anywhere when Elisha asked him where he had been. Covetousness and lying are bedfellows. Covetous people frequently hide their possessions and lie that they don't have anything because they don't want to share what they have. If you need assistance from covetous and envious people they lie to

you that they don't have what you are asking for. They fight hard to conceal the secret behind their wealth and achievements so that no one can match them. A good number of covetous people obtain what they have through lying. Gehazi lied to Naaman and Elisha.

5. He ignored the man of God's discerning power.

Gehazi knew that Elisha possessed the ability to know things through supernatural revelation but on this occasion he chose to ignore it. After Gehazi had denied that he received the goods, Elisha revealed to him that his heart went with him when Naaman turned from his chariot to meet him. Simon the sorcerer made a similar mistake with Peter when he attempted to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit with money. He did not know that Peter had discerned what was in his heart (Acts 8:19-23). The contents of Simon the sorcerer's heart were evil and Peter pronounced that his money perish with him.

6. Gehazi's sense of timing was wrong.

There is nothing wrong with having money and material blessings. It is when we get them at the wrong time or get them from the wrong source that they constitute a problem. Timing is crucial in acquiring things. The time in Gehazi's life when he went for Naaman's goods should have been dedicated to staying close to the prophet in order to receive the anointing. He misfired by chasing wealth and Elisha chastised him for that – he told him it was not time to receive money, garments, oliveyards, vineyards, sheep, oxen, menservants and maidservants. If you seek wealth at the wrong time you miss the anointing.

7. He did not know that leprosy was spiritually transferable.

Naaman was happy to part with his goods after his healing. Gehazi unfortunately exchanged his health for material wealth. He did not know that just as money could be transferred from Naaman to him, leprosy could be transferred from Naaman to him. Covetous and envious people should remember that in the same manner that they can draw material things to themselves other people can push spiritual things and diseases onto them. Several years ago a woman repented and turned to the Lord with her family through the ministry of a man of God. After the radical conversion of this family they decided to get rid of the worldly movies they did not consider wholesome for Christian viewing. To their amazement the man of God who led them to repentance collected the movies and carried them to his house for viewing. This indiscriminate grabbing of things leads many leaders to receive things that carry diseases, demons and destruction.

8. He went from Elisha's presence without repentance.

Gehazi left Elisha's presence without repentance. Unlike Cain he did not make an attempt to have his punishment reduced. When God told Cain he would be a fugitive and a vagabond on earth, Cain pleaded that his punishment was too much for him. After his complaint to God, He put a mark on him to preserve him. Cain later settled down and built a city, which was named after his son Enoch (Genesis 4:13-18). On the contrary, Gehazi slipped out of Elisha's presence with leprosy without pleading for clemency. Leprosy is very humiliating and covetous people being proud cannot stand it. Probably, Gehazi was so disgusted that he left without proper procedure.

People who are envious end up with the leprosy of sin, sickness, depression, misery and death. Envy led to the fall of Satan. Envy ended the stay of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and turned their son Cain into a murderer. This foe, envy, was at hand again to stir up hatred in Saul's heart for David. Absalom metamorphosed into a rebel because of envy and bitterness. Envy turned Balaam into the enemy of God's people. Jezebel killed to possess a vineyard only to be brutally killed and eaten by dogs. In all the cases we have studied the end result of envy was devastating.

Gehazi was a happy man until covetousness with a possible combination of envy introduced him to the world of lepers and denied him the anointing of the prophet. Gehazi's loss is similar to that of Judas Iscariot who exchanged his apostleship for thirty pieces of silver. Judas' case was a clear case of envy – he envied his Saviour and betrayed Him. Judas Iscariot allowed envy to eat him up bit by bit until he sold out none other than the Son of God to be crucified. After executing his mischief Judas hanged himself.

CHAPTER 10

THE JUDAS ISCARIOT SPIRIT

JUDAS Iscariot is widely known as the man who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. What I seek to address in this chapter is the spirit of envy, which stirred Judas up to betray Jesus. Several factors culminated into Judas betraying his master and one of these factors is envy. Judas was envious of the privileges and blessings Jesus received from the people. This envy made him sacrifice Jesus by betraying Him in order to get thirty pieces of silver. The Judas Iscariot spirit sacrifices human beings for material gain. Betrayal has cost many good people their lives because they did not realise that those who pretended to love and follow them were envious of their success.

The Judas Iscariot spirit is the spirit that moves a person to betray his trusted friend because of envy, covetousness and self-righteousness in order to obtain a reward.

You must develop a sharp sense of discernment in identifying the Judas Iscariot spirit. Don't sit idly by and let it destroy you with the notion that even Jesus was a victim of Judas' antics. Some decent but naïve Christians say even Jesus had a Judas so they don't have to do anything about a Judas in their camp. In dealing with the Judas Iscariot spirit you have to remember that Jesus had to die by the betrayal of Judas but you are not called to die like Jesus to save the world. You don't have to allow the Judas Iscariot spirit to destroy you and God's work.

Judas Iscariot like other envious people was personally blessed in many ways. The Scriptures catalogue the Apostle Judas Iscariot's blessings in several places. It is surprising that, after all the privileges Judas Iscariot enjoyed he was not content but did the unthinkable by betraying the Son of God. The life of Judas is a mystery the Church is yet to fully understand. He generates a lot of theological debate. Our study of Judas in this chapter is not a theological exposition but a simple exercise in order to understand how the envy spirit moved him to betray his master.

THE MYSTERY OF JUDAS ISCARIOT

The mystery of Judas Iscariot lies in the fact that he was blessed with several privileges and blessings and yet he resorted to betrayal to cut off his own source of supply. A careful study of his life will enable us to deal with the Judas Iscariot kind of envy.

- Judas was Jesus' familiar friend.

The Psalms pointed to the life of Judas Iscariot before he was physically born. His life was prophesied and in one of the prophecies he was portrayed not only as someone who rose up against Jesus but also as one who was His familiar friend.

Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?

And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it.

All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt.

An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more. Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

Psalms 41:5-9

The above scripture is a prophecy about Jesus and some of the hostilities He encountered on earth. The prophecy indicates that someone who was an enemy would be in close proximity with Jesus. The person in question who related to Jesus was Judas Iscariot whom Jesus regarded as a friend. He was a secret enemy but Jesus treated him as a friend.

Jesus gave Judas as well as the other disciples the privilege of being called His friends. He elevated them from being His servants to being His friends.

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

John 15:14-15

Few people have the privilege of being called God's friends in the Bible. God spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend. The relationship between God and Moses was special – He revealed His secrets to Moses, He showed him His ways and worked miracles through him.

And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.

Exodus 33:11

Abraham was also God's friend. God drove away the inhabitants of the land and gave it to Abraham's seed because Abraham was His friend. Abraham was God's friend to the point that He did not hide anything from him (Genesis 18:17). God entered into a covenant with Abraham and blessed the families of the earth through him.

Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?

2 Chronicles 20:7

As we realised earlier Judas Iscariot was Jesus' (God's) friend. But unlike Moses and Abraham who reciprocated God's friendship to the best of their ability, Judas Iscariot pretended to be Jesus' friend until he betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver. Judas organised a mob and brought them to the secluded place where Jesus was to arrest Him.

And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.

And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.

And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

Matthew 26:47-50

In the above scripture Judas Iscariot addressed Jesus as “master” while Jesus called him “friend”. Judas received undeserved friendship. He had a servant mentality but Jesus reached out to him and embraced him with friendship. This explains why it was such a blessing for Jesus to call him His friend – he did not deserve it. Moses and Abraham related to God as friends but Judas related to Jesus in a hypocritical manner – he called Him master. Friendship is reciprocal but Jesus' friendship with Judas was a one sided affair.

Don't always expect “Judas” to come to you armed with a sword. He comes accompanied by dangerously armed people but he does not arm himself with a weapon. His greeting or kiss is as dangerous as a weapon – this is an expression of the mystery of Judas Iscariot.

The Judas spirit is a great pretender. It isolated Jesus with a kiss. Don't allow yourself to be deceived by people who bow to you and call you “master”. Some of them could be very dangerous people. The Judas spirit is a mystery and it takes spiritual senses to detect it. It is also a mystery because it is difficult to understand why Judas behaved the way he did seeing the kind of blessings he had.

We must be careful whom we call our friends. Until a few years ago, I used to call many people my friends. My deliverance came when a sister in the Lord drew my attention to the fact that I was using the word “friend” rather too casually. On this occasion, I was talking to a man I knew on the phone and after hanging up I remarked to the sister who was sitting with me that I had just finished speaking with a friend. I went further to mention the friend's name. She knew the person I was referring to well and that drew an unfavourable response from her. She said he could not possibly be my friend because his character was far from being Christian in conduct and what he stood for in life was diametrically opposed to what I stand for. She then added “Pastor Eastwood, you have too many people you call friends and you have to be careful.” As I prayed about this comment later on the Lord told me she was right. From then on, I became more careful about who I call a friend.

A true friend sticks closer than a brother.

A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Proverbs 18:24

Judas Iscariot did not stick closer than a brother. When Jesus was in trouble he was nowhere to be found. In fact, he betrayed Him and led the Roman soldiers to His hiding place to arrest Him. The risk with friendship is that you are likely to reveal your secrets to your friend and that is exactly what Jesus did – He showed Judas His hiding place. If a friend is not a true friend he can use your secrets against you. Unfaithful friends become jealous of our blessings and join our enemies to attack us. Be careful whom you call “friend”. An envious friend is a dangerous person to have hanging around you.

Whereas a Judas is not willing to share your pain, a true friend is prepared to lay down his or her life for you.

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:12-13

Jesus laid down His life for His friends and He commanded us to do likewise. We don't have many friends who are ready to lay down their lives for us. Someone who is ready to lay his or her life down for you is not likely to be envious of you. The so-called friends we have cannot rejoice at our success and blessing.

John the Baptist said the friend of the bridegroom rejoices at the voice of the bridegroom.

He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

He must increase, but I must decrease.

John 3:29-30

John regarded himself as the bridegroom's friend, Jesus being the bridegroom. He rejoiced to see people who would form the Church (the bride) follow Jesus instead of him. Some of his disciples deserted him and followed Jesus but he knew that he had to decrease while Jesus increased. If John had been asked at that time what his mission statement was, he would have said “He must increase, but I must decrease.” This sounds negative and defeatist but that was God's counsel concerning the greatest man born to a woman before God redeemed man with the blood of Jesus. John the Baptist rejoiced at Jesus' successful ministry at the time when his own ministry was on the decline. Many so-called friends would do everything possible to undermine the efforts of a person who succeeds at the time that they are going through difficulties. Politicians refuse to leave office even if they are defeated in elections. This leads to wars and mayhem in many parts of the world. Leaders of ministries who have lost their way and moral authority insist on remaining as the heads of their ministries thereby causing many well-meaning people to leave the ministries and either join others or start their own works.

- Jesus chose and named Judas as an apostle.

Judas Iscariot was blessed that Jesus called him friend but he did not appreciate it because of his evil heart and envy. He was blessed in many other ways for which he should have been too grateful to betray his master. The apostle-turned-betrayer was one of the twelve apostles Jesus chose and ordained after praying all night.

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,

Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes,

And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

Luke 6:12-16

When you consider the fact that Judas Iscariot was part of Jesus' team of apostles it is naïve to think we don't have "Judas Iscariots" in our teams of ministers. It is necessary for us to pray earnestly and diligently before we choose people to serve in the ministry. In spite of Jesus' spiritual power, He had one Judas in His team. The Son of God prayed all night and still had one Judas. You are likely to have many of them in your ministry or business. You can overcome the Judas spirit by praying to God to give you discernment so you do not select a Judas. It is difficult for "Judas" to repent and this makes departure the more likely option when dealing with the Judas spirit – pray for "Judas" to leave.

- Jesus gave Judas power for ministry.

Judas received the power to heal the sick and to cast out devils. By betraying Jesus he cut himself off from the source of his power. The act of betrayal alienated him from the other apostles thereby severing him from the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and the apostles. As an apostle nothing should have been more important to Judas than spiritual power but the carnal man of God placed mammon above God.

And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.

And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,

And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils:

And Simon he surnamed Peter;

And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:

And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite, And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house.

Mark 3:13-19

Judas did not know that if he had exercised his spiritual gifts well God could have blessed him materially and he would not have had to steal to meet his needs. If we seek the kingdom of God first, all other things follow us. If we concentrate on exercising our spiritual gifts we won't have the time to envy others and covet material things.

- He was Jesus' treasurer.

To be considered worthy of being Jesus' treasurer was a massive favour. This position suggests that Judas was a diligent man. A leader of Jesus' calibre would not make a careless person his treasurer. Money is so important to life and ministry that Jesus had to choose one of his best disciples to be his treasurer and that was Judas Iscariot.

Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him.

For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.

John 13:26-29

After exposing Judas' intentions to betray Him, Jesus told him to do what he intended to do quickly. The disciples mistakenly thought Jesus was asking Judas to either purchase items for the feast of the Passover or make a donation to the poor. I believe they thought this way because of the discretionary powers Judas exercised in the financial matters of Jesus' ministry. The disciples recognised Judas' position as the comptroller of Jesus' ministry.

- Judas was an intelligent man.

Judas did not occupy an unmerited position – his intelligence earned him his position. An example of Judas' intelligence is seen in his reaction to Mary's pouring of costly spikenard ointment on Jesus' feet. Judas displayed amazing intelligence by instantly

estimating the cost of the oil and reasoning that it could have been sold and the money given to the poor.

There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,

Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

John 12:2-6

The oil exposed the contents of Judas' heart. Envious people who have the Judas spirit use the poor as an excuse to criticise those God blesses with good things. They argue that no one should enjoy the good things of life because others are poor. The fact of the matter is that even if one sells all he has and gives it to the poor, most of the poor will find a way to be poor again. A person is not poor because another person is rich but because of his or her own actions or attitudes.

Some detractors in a city which had a thriving church, used the poor to fight battles against the church. Several years ago, some people left the church because they had built a large and beautiful auditorium for worship. Those who deserted the church contended that it was wrong for the church to build a beautiful building because there were poor people on the land who had no food to eat.

Apart from the church auditorium, the church built a first-class school to serve the community. They also supported orphans in school and provided for widows. They were involved in many relief activities. In spite of this, the community insisted that they should be denied any form of comfort. Interestingly enough the government officials who receive tax and other services from the poor live in relative comfort and the people don't complain about that. The world tries to exploit the weak conscience of Christians to keep them in poverty by using the poor as an excuse.

Judas' intelligence is not difficult to trace. In another development he displayed great intelligence in the plan he formulated to betray Jesus. The leaders of the Jews found it difficult to capture Jesus but Judas found a way to make it possible. He was so intelligent that he maintained an effective link with the treacherous leaders of the Jews while he was in Jesus' camp. God blessed Judas with intelligence but he perverted it. A fool cannot be a Judas – it takes perverted “intelligence” to be a Judas.

- He ate with Jesus at the same table.

It is a great honour to be at table with great personalities – Judas dined with Jesus at the same table. This honour should have motivated him to be faithful to Jesus but he opted to do the opposite by being unfaithful. **Judas was an envious man. He did not want to dine at another man's table – he wanted to have his own table. Again dining at Jesus' table was not enough for him – he dined with Jesus and His enemies concurrently.**

And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:

For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.

Luke 22:13-21

Apart from Jesus eating with His disciples at table, He promised them He would eat with them again in the kingdom of God. This was a promise any serious person would guard earnestly but Judas who was blindfolded by greed and mischief threw away the eternal opportunity. Honour did not mean anything to the covetous apostle.

He knew Jesus' hiding place and he preferred betraying him to enjoying the blessings of eternity.

When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.

And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.

Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.

John 18:1-3

Many carnal believers trade glory for gold and respect for reward. They are not spiritual enough to be satisfied with spiritual honour - they equate material gain with godliness.

- Jesus made Judas a strategic person.

He was a functional member of the twelve apostles and that is why the apostles had to replace him after his death. After Judas had hung himself the disciples cast lots and selected Matthias to fill the vacancy his departure created.

And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)

Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.

Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas,

who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Acts 1:15-26

Judas was numbered with the twelve apostles and had a part in the ministry. His role was important in the ministry hence the effort to replace him. Knowing how much he was needed in the ministry, Judas should have been careful with the manner in which he conducted himself. Unfortunately, this apostle of greed conducted himself in a manner that made it obvious that he did not care about Jesus or the other disciples – he only cared about himself.

- Judas was given the chance to repent.

In the book of Psalms the Scriptures warned that Judas would betray Jesus. We don't know for sure whether Judas knew this Jewish Scripture or not. Nevertheless, because he was an apostle of the gospel of Christ I will not be surprised if he was acquainted with the prophecy.

Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

Psalm 41:9

Jesus personally told Judas that he would betray Him and he should have repented but he chose not to. These warnings should have brought Judas to repentance but he insisted on his way of transgression. Many are destroyed without warning but Judas was blessed to be warned.

And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him:

but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

Matthew 26:21-25

The voice of conviction was drowned by the noise of covetousness in Judas' heart. He ignored his conscience and treated the Son of God with contempt. Judas Iscariot envied his own master and was destroyed in the process. Many people find themselves in similar situations in ministry, at work and in the family. They envy those who are obviously greater than they and who deserve what they have. Drivers are envious of their masters, associate pastors detest the attention head pastors receive from the congregation, housemaids think their masters love their wives too much and secretaries covet their masters' privileges. Envy is a senseless thing. It defies logic and betrays sanity.

STRATEGIC PRAYER AGAINST THE JUDAS SPIRIT

The Bible states clearly that Judas betrayed Jesus because satan entered into him. He did what he did because of a strong satanic influence. One may argue that if he was under satan's influence and if the Scriptures prophesied the betraying and killing of Jesus then it was not Judas' fault that he did what he did. The fact of the matter is that

Judas was responsible for his actions in that he could have chosen to repent because he received prophetic warnings. In spite of the prophetic warnings he came under satan's influence because of the spirits of envy and covetousness he had allowed to possess him.

And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people.

Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.

Luke 22:2-3

The knowledge that satan entered into Judas and possessed him means that we cannot overcome the Judas spirit in the flesh. The most effective way to deal with the Judas spirit is prayer, the reason being that Jesus' prayer played a key role in the issues concerning Judas and Himself. Jesus chose Judas after prayer. Judas led the Roman soldiers to arrest Jesus just after He had finished praying. The apostles also prayed before they selected Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot. The Judas spirit and prayer are closely connected. You cannot deal with the Judas spirit if you are not prayerful. The prayer against the Judas spirit must be strategic in nature. You must know how and what to pray. We have different types of prayer for special situations. Paul called these kinds of prayer "all prayer and supplication in the Spirit".

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Ephesians 6:12-18

Jesus prayed for Peter when satan desired to sift him like wheat. If Jesus prayed for Peter who denied Him later, I think he might have prayed for Judas initially until it was obvious to Him that

Judas would not repent. Jesus prayed before He chose Judas and it is not far-fetched to guess that He prayed for him before he slipped out of His presence to commit treason.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Luke 22:31-32

Satan tempted Peter and moved him to deny Jesus three times but he recovered from his fear and rallied the other apostles for the mission of Christ. Judas on the other hand was so obsessed with getting money that he was immune to the convicting power of prayer.

Jesus did not stop Judas from carrying out his plans because it was God's will for Him to die and save the world. He told Judas to do what he wanted to do quickly.

And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

John 13:27

You are not Jesus. If you choose to allow the Judas in your life to execute his or her plan you may die in vain. God expects you to overcome the Judas spirit and that means stopping any Judas in your camp from destroying your family, home or business. At this juncture, I wish to outline some guidelines for strategic prayer against the Judas Iscariot spirit.

1. Pray for discernment not to choose and anoint “Judas”.

The fact that Jesus had Judas in His team does not mean you will by all means have a “Judas” in your team. Pray for God to lead you to choose the right people to work with.

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

Luke 6:12-13

Jesus prayed all night and yet He had one Judas Iscariot. If we don't pray before we select and lay hands on people we may end up with many Judases.

2. Destroy the spirit of jealousy in the house.

A demon is responsible for the envy and betrayal in Judas Iscariot. Before you deal with the “Judas person” you must deal with the Judas spirit. This spirit operates in

homes, businesses and ministries with the aim of revealing secrets and exposing leaders to be destroyed. The Judas spirit is satan's "fifth column" that operates from within to destroy families, ministries and businesses.

Judas Iscariot was not happy to see expensive oil being poured on Jesus' feet. This kind of attitude exposed him to satan's trap.

Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,

Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

John 12:4-6

Pray that any hidden Judas Iscariot in the house should be exposed and expelled. Until you pray the Judas spirit can remain concealed and do great damage to the system. Never think your camp or home is too sanctified for the Judas spirit to penetrate – even Jesus' house was penetrated.

3. Condemn the critical spirit of self-righteousness.

Don't wait for Judas to execute his plans before you do something about him. Seeds of envy and criticism grow into mountains of betrayals. Judas does not begin his mission by killing you. He begins with seemingly harmless criticism. The name "Judas" comes from "Judah" meaning, "celebrated" but Judas refused to celebrate Christ. "Iscariot" means "to show yourself man" or "to be manly" but Judas failed to identify with His master like a man in the face of danger – instead he took sides with the enemy.

Judas pretended to love and care for the poor more than Jesus did. By insinuating that the oil could have been sold and the money given to the poor he was making himself more righteous than Jesus. Jesus condemned Judas' self-righteousness and told him he could not fight for the poor.

Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,

Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

It is Judas' strategy to accuse you falsely and attribute righteousness to himself. You must condemn every tongue that rises up against you. You condemn the Judas spirit by refuting what it says. Jesus refuted Judas' pretence about the poor by saying "the poor always ye have with you;" Envious people use the poor as human shields to fight their war against those they perceive to be successful. Many wealthy people would have loved to share what they have with the poor but casual observation reveals that a good number of poor people will remain poor even if the wealthy people shared everything they had with them. Some people choose to fail and to be poor.

No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.

Isaiah 54:17

Remember that Judas Iscariot was an apostle. The Judas spirit loves to possess pastors and church leaders – it is clothed in religious regalia. This way it is difficult to detect it. "Judas" practises envy by preaching care, righteousness and spirituality – it uses these virtues to cover up deep-seated hatred and envy.

4. Uproot the spirit of spiritual prostitution.

The Judas spirit is a spirit of "prostitution". It is an unfaithful spirit that maintains close ties with its friends' enemies. To overcome the Judas spirit you must train and instruct those in your house to understand the power of your critics and detractors to corrupt them. Judas Iscariot had a relationship with the chief priests that enabled him to go to them at will. I think initially this link did not look bad to Judas – it was a harmless relationship. When the occasion demanded it however, satan used this same relationship.

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,

Matthew 26:14

The Bible commands us not to keep company with those that have a form of godliness but deny the power of God.

Judas did not live by this scriptural counsel.

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

*Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,
Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;
Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

2 Timothy 3:1-5

“From such turn away” is a very strong statement. It involves turning away, without hesitation, from people who have a negative spirit. If those around you don’t avoid those people they will take advantage of the moment when they are hurt or offended or they are in need and influence them to inflict injuries on you. We are vulnerable to the spirits of deception when we are offended.

Judas knew that the elders of the Jews envied Jesus and yet he went to them. He knew about the elders’ hatred for Jesus because even Pilate who was not close to Him knew that they were envious of Him.

Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?

For he knew that for envy they had delivered him. When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

Matthew 27:17-20

The leaders of the Jews envied Jesus for breaking their monopoly on religious affairs. Judas was envious of Jesus for receiving too much attention from people. With this common identity they struck an alliance just as Balak and Balaam did. Your love for those in your house should make you do the hard work of teaching and training them to stay pure from contamination.

5. Uproot the love of mammon.

To overcome envy we have to apply the power of the Word of God to cast out and keep out the love of money from the hearts of the people who are associated with us. It is dangerous to have a money-loving leader or a money-loving follower because he or she will betray you for money.

Soon after Judas had criticised the act of anointing Jesus’ feet with expensive perfume oil he took this negative spirit to a higher level by going to the chief priests and negotiated financial terms for the betrayal of Christ. He went to them – they did not come to him. I suspect that the chief priests might have indicated to him directly or indirectly that there was a price on Jesus’ head and it was his for grabs.

*Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,
And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And
they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.
And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.*

Matthew 26:14-16

The ransom money of thirty pieces of silver was enough for Judas to give away his own familiar friend who trusted him. Peter revealed in his address to the apostles in the Upper Room that Judas Iscariot took the thirty pieces of silver to purchase a piece of land.

It seems that he identified the land and was set to pay for it when he died. This explains why the leaders of the Jews bought the land with the money Judas had returned. They knew his intentions. They knew the land and they carried out his wishes by purchasing that same land presumably on his behalf.

*Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned,
repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests
and elders,*

*Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said,
What is that to us? see thou to that.*

*And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and
hanged himself.*

*And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put
them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.*

*And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury
strangers in.*

Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.

Matthew 27:3-8

Covetousness and envy turned an apostle into an opportunist. Judas returned the money to the chief priests later on but it was too late – Jesus had been captured and was standing trial. It is important for you to have a home or business in which your people cannot be tempted with money.

The scriptures we just read seem to suggest that Judas Iscariot confessed and repented of his sins. If that was the case God would have forgiven and saved him from destruction. A close examination of the scenario shows clearly that he did not repent. What he portrayed was emotional remorse because of the shame of the consequences of his actions. He could not face the world with everybody knowing he was a traitor. If Judas truly wanted to repent he would have gone to God in prayer instead of going to the chief priests to complain. A person who repents does not commit suicide. Judas killed himself out of spiritual pride – he could not live with his sin. The notoriety of an apostle who had betrayed his master to death, was too much for the apostle of greed to bear so he ended his life. This was not repentance.

The fact that Judas did not repent so he could receive forgiveness from God is a warning that when someone sins against the Son of God or is responsible for shedding His blood or rejects the forgiveness in His blood, that person reaches a point where he or she is beyond redemption. There is a sin called a sin that is unto death. Spiritual treason is a deadly sin.

If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.

1 John 5:16

Judas hung himself and probably fell and burst his bowels as described by Peter.

*Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.
... Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.*

Acts 1:18, 25

Peter concluded Judas' journey to destruction by saying that he went "to his own place." His own place is no other place but hell.

6. Deny "Judas" the benefit and use of what he gains through betrayal.

Use the medium of prayer to frustrate the progress of the Judas who has risen up against you. Judas Iscariot sinned against Jesus and was not forgiven because he did not truly repent. However, those who betray us can repent and be forgiven. We should not seek their destruction out of a bitter and wicked heart but we have to stop their activities from destroying others.

David prayed against those who planned evil against him. He was a man of war who knew the battles he could fight directly and the battles he had to allow God to fight.

Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.

Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help.

Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt.

Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them.

Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them.

For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul.

Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.

Psalms 35:1-8

If you pray against your detractors' malicious activities, God disrupts their plans and inflicts punishment on them, which may bring them to repentance. Walking in love does not mean one should sit idly by and allow a Judas to destroy him or her and the work of God. We are God's stewards and that entails protecting the legacy He has put in our care.

Your prayer confuses those who betray you and seek to destroy you. They become restless and are incapable of executing their plans. Your prayer torments them making it impossible for them to enjoy the things they take from you forcibly or through theft. Judas was so tormented that he could not benefit from the thirty pieces of silver he took from the chief priests.

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

Matthew 27:3

We noticed earlier that the kind of repentance Judas showed was one of emotional remorse and not godly repentance from a heart of humility and spirituality. His was an act of the flesh. He returned the pieces of silver primarily because he was tormented and not because of genuine repentance. Note that apart from the biblical Judas who betrayed no other person than Jesus, any other Judas Iscariot can repent. Judas' activities led to the death of the Son of God. Jesus said offences would come but woe to him through whom they would come and Judas elected himself for this accursed assignment. He sinned against Jesus by selling Him to His enemies. His action was tantamount to selling the blood of Christ in the market. There was no room for repentance for him. People have to be careful about sinning against God, men of God and children of God because it is possible to cross the line and blaspheme the Holy Spirit.

Your Judas may not cause death or any major destruction. His sin may not be the sin against the blood of Jesus or blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. In that case it is possible for him or her to repent and be saved. If someone betrays you remember that you are not the Son of God and that leaves room for the person to repent.

7. Release the fear of the end of Judas on any "Judas" in the house.

Judas Iscariot was tormented with fear and he was driven to return the money he had received from the chief priests and later on hung himself. Judas wanted the money he took from the chief priests so badly that it must have been difficult for him to return it to the temple.

And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Matthew 27:5

Judas might have experienced the kind of nightmares Pilate's wife experienced when he sat in judgment in Jesus' trial. She told Pilate that she suffered many things because of Jesus in her dream. God gives warnings to people in dreams and cautions them not to touch His anointed vessels.

When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

Matthew 27:19

On many occasions in the Bible, God used fear to scatter armies that came against His people. Panic was generated amongst advancing forces causing them to flee and leave their valuables behind. Prayer sends fear into the camp of those who seek to destroy you, which causes them to abandon their plans and flee. Judas could not use the money he betrayed his master to obtain. Envious people sometimes kill to obtain things but they are not able to benefit from them.

8. Pronounce the judgment on Judas on any “Judas” in “the house”.

The Bible enjoins us to condemn in judgment any tongue that is raised against us. The Scriptures specifically pronounced judgment on Judas Iscariot and that pronouncement should guide us in our pronouncements against the Judas spirit.

Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents.

Psalms 69:25

Let his days be few; and let another take his office.

Psalms 109:8

Peter made a pronouncement against Judas Iscariot according to what was written in the Psalms.
LET HIS HABITATION BE DESOLATE.
LET NO MAN DWELL THEREIN.
LET ANOTHER PERSON TAKE HIS BISHOPRICK.

For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.

Acts 1:20

You have to pray that “Judas” habitation would be made desolate so that his spirit does not multiply in others. “Let no man dwell therein,” means Judas’ habitation is deserted. Pray that good people don’t go near “Judas Iscariot” to be contaminated. Finally, demand in prayer for “Judas” office to be filled by another person.

9. Pray for God to raise men to take the bishoprick of “Judas Iscariot”.

After prayer the apostles cast lots and elected Matthias to take Judas’ place in the ministry. Judas occupied a key position in the apostles’ ministry and he had to be replaced. We may not have to resort to the casting of lots to elect a new person after “Judas”, nevertheless we need wisdom, discernment and courage to replace him.

For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.

That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Acts 1:20, 25-26

The apostles cast lots and chose Matthias but a more reliable way to choose a person for a spiritual position is to pray and allow the Holy Spirit to lead us. The Holy Spirit named Paul and Barnabas through prophecy to embark on their apostolic journey.

Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Acts 13:1-3

Some Bible scholars believe that the casting of lots to choose Matthias was an act of the flesh and that was why Jesus called Paul to be an apostle. They contend that after the selection of Matthias in Acts 1 the Scriptures did not mention him again. On the contrary, Paul, after his call was then elected by the Holy Spirit for the mission to the Gentiles.

I believe that the selection of Matthias was an act of God as much as the calling of Paul was an act of God. The apostles lost Judas but they received more than one person in his place. God

called many apostles including Matthias and Paul into the ministry and they turned the world upside down with their preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The replacement of Judas Iscariot by a great company of apostles is the point where defeat is turned into victory. The peak of overcoming the Judas spirit is raising men and women to take the place of a lost Judas. The Judas spirit caused Jesus' death but the overcoming spirit of the Church inspired the apostles of the Church to preach the death and resurrection of Christ for the salvation of the world.

God turns the actions of the Judas spirit into victory. The power of God turns the intentions of the princes of this world into victory. The princes of this world thought that crucifying Jesus was the end of His life. They did not know that through His death the power of death and hell would be broken.

Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

1 Corinthians 2:8

In the same way God turned Jesus' death into victory, He turned the mischief caused by Joseph's brothers who had sold him out of envy into slavery in Egypt, into saving the world from starvation. God turned what Joseph's brothers intended for evil into good.

And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God?

But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

Genesis 50:19-20

The Judas spirit indirectly caused the triumph of the Church. It created circumstances that made God raise an army of preachers and ministers to spread the gospel. Supernatural power was released in the Church that brought the world to its knees. Joseph secured victory out of the temptations his envious brothers had generated for him. Slavery in Potiphar's house was the launching pad into prison where Joseph met the butler. The prison became the sanctuary for the interpretation of dreams that brought him face to face with Pharaoh and gave him the opportunity to become the Prime Minister of Egypt.

An interesting example of how we can turn the envy of the world into positive results of success is the case of Isaac and the Philistines. The Philistines resisted Isaac's efforts to dig wells and possess the land. Their attitude towards him is common with people who are envious of others and do all they can to stop them from being successful. The Philistine spirit frustrates the efforts of numerous men of God, businessmen and professionals. We shall proceed to look at the Philistine spirit in-depth in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 11

THE PHILISTINE SPIRIT

BLESSINGS, anointing and success attract enemies. They invite hostility from envious people who would do anything to disrupt your joy and sense of fulfilment. The anointing does not only attract friends, admirers and allies but enemies as well.

The anointing does not attract harmless and beautiful butterflies but stinging and noisy bees. It draws your way the attention of enemies who have the capacity to hurt you like bees. It does not attract nice people who decorate you with praise and make you feel good.

The Philistines were notorious adversaries of Israel and their enmity against Israel is worth studying. Israelite history features hostile encounters with the Philistines in which they were moved with envy to frustrate the Israelites and prevent them from possessing their God-given land. They attacked Israel and the notable men of God whom He had raised on the land. After many years in the wilderness, David was anointed King of Israel. David's anointing attracted the Philistines – the adversaries.

But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the hold.

The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.

And David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand.

And David came to Baalperazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baalperazim.

And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them.

2 Samuel 5:17-21

The nation of Israel and some notable anointed men God raised in it came face to face with the Philistines on countless occasions. In the above scripture they came to attack David when they heard he had been made king. Who were the Philistines?

The Philistines were a powerful sea people who settled in the coastal strip in South Western Palestine, extending along the Mediterranean from Joppa to the south of Gaza. They occupied the fruitful, well-watered Maritime Plain about fifty miles long and fifteen miles wide and developed into a strong rival of Israel. They frequently attacked Israel and there was no lasting peace between the two nations. On several occasions the Philistines succeeded in bringing some of Israel's tribes under servitude.

The enmity between Israel and the Philistines continued until the time of Hezekiah when the Philistines were completely subdued. However, they occupied their territory and resurfaced to disturb Israel's peace once in a while. They occupied the five cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath. Israel had the arduous task of overcoming the Philistines.

The Philistine spirit is the spirit that resists the progress of the kingdom of God and attacks God's anointed people by the use of intimidation and seduction, though it sometimes appears cooperative and friendly. Overcoming the Philistines involves identifying, defeating and taking the booty from them.

In Bible times the danger about the Philistines came from the fact that they sometimes pretended to offer Israel a safe haven, friendship and relationship. They pretended to accommodate Abraham, Isaac and David but they were enemies. They obstructed and frustrated Israel by combining force, trickery, intimidation and demonic manipulation though they were not always total and outright enemies like the Canaanites. We shall proceed to examine the attributes of the Philistine spirit and how to overcome it.

PHILISTINES ARE OPPORTUNISTS

Philistines take advantage of your unfortunate situation. The Philistine spirit is a pretender and an actor. It pretends to love you and to have a relationship with you. The Philistine is your "friend" who can sleep with your husband or your wife. He or she is your friend or relative who can steal your wife, husband, finances or position. This spirit pretends to help you but destroys more than it helps. It makes you a slave in the name of giving you a job.

Abimelech the King of Gerar, a Philistine city, portrayed the nature of the Philistines when he tried to take advantage of Abraham's wife Sarah. Abraham and Sarah found themselves in Gerar during their nomadic movement. Their status on the land of the Philistines exposed them to fear and intimidation with Abraham being afraid that the Philistines could kill him and take his wife because she was a pretty woman. To avoid the danger of losing his life Abraham introduced Sarah as his sister instead of his wife.

And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.

And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.

Genesis 20:1-2

Abimelech took advantage of Abraham's condition. He knew that Abraham felt intimidated, being in a strange country with no human rights. The patriarch was a needy man who had to survive at all cost. He was prepared to risk the safety of his wife for his personal safety. Abimelech ignored God's commandment not to covet your neighbour's wife and sent for Sarah to satisfy his sexual lust.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Exodus 20:17

We often hear of strange situations where women including married ones are sexually exploited in times of need. They go to men who are friends of their husbands, close relatives or bosses at work to ask for financial assistance and the men demand sex in exchange for what they give them. Many women are defiled in this manner and Sarah was nearly a victim of this spirit.

God fought against the spirit of covetousness and lust in Abimelech that stirred him up to invite Sarah into his palace with the intent of sleeping with her. Abraham's compromising nearly made him a victim of the Philistine spirit but divine intervention saved the situation. Abraham overcame the spirit of covetousness in Abimelech as God stepped in to stop the king from defiling Sarah. It is reassuring to know that even in our moments of fear and uncertainty, God delivers us from the Philistines who try to take advantage of us.

God rebuked Abimelech in a dream and compelled him to restore to Abraham his wife whom the king had taken away. In addition to restoring his wife to him, God made the Philistine give Abraham prosperity by giving him sheep, oxen, menservants, womenservants, land and silver.

But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife.

And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and womenservants, and gave them unto Abraham, and restored him Sarah his wife.

And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee.

And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver: behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes, unto all that are with thee, and with all other: thus she was reprov'd. So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children.

For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife.

Genesis 20:3, 14-18

God turned Abimelech's intention to harm Abraham into a blessing. Your enemies' envy provokes God to take blessings away from them and give them to you. As they seek to take advantage of your situation, God uses the traps they set for you as avenues to bless you.

The opportunistic nature of the Philistine spirit seeks to add pain to your pain but God overturns its

intentions and gives you gain instead of pain. Another attribute of the Philistine spirit is its mischievous blocking of your wells from which you draw water. The Philistine spirit is a “well blocker”.

PHILISTINES ARE WELL BLOCKERS

A well is a shaft sunk into the ground to obtain water, oil or gas. Spiritually speaking, a well is a shaft sunk into the spirit of man that gives him the ability to draw on the spiritual gifts and life God has placed in him. The Philistine spirit works by blocking your gifts from expressing themselves. They stop your finances from coming in and from multiplying. Philistines strive with you and do everything possible to sabotage you.

Apart from the attempt made by the king of Gerar to take Abraham’s wife, the Philistines also covered over Abraham’s wells after his death. They resisted his son Isaac fiercely by contending with his servants for wells and land.

Isaac, Abraham’s son, lived amongst the Philistines and prospered in the famine by receiving a one hundred fold increase on his agricultural effort. The Bible says Isaac waxed great, went forward and grew until he was very great. He had possession of flocks, herds and servants. The consequence of his prosperity amongst the hostile Philistines was obvious – they envied him.

And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar.

And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of:

Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him.

And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great:

For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him.

For all the wells which his father’s servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth.

And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we.

And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of

Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.

And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is ours: and he called the name of the well Esek ; because they strove with him.

And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah.

And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

And he went up from thence to Beersheba.

And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

Genesis 26:1-2, 12-25

The Philistines envied Isaac and filled his father Abraham's wells with earth. They strove with him forcing him to move from one location to another. They ostracised Isaac with strong words "go from us; for thou art much mightier than we." Isaac overcame the Philistines' envy with a great display of resilience. He re-dug his father's wells, which had been blocked, and when the Philistines strove with him for a well he moved on to uncap another well – he was unstoppable.

The names Isaac gave to the wells he dug describe the nature of the envy and opposition he faced. He called them by the names Abraham called them and this proves that the Philistines strove with Abraham also and finally blocked the wells after his death. Isaac called one of the wells he dug Esek because the Philistines strove with him for it. The Philistines contended that the well was theirs. Many hardworking foreigners face stiff opposition from envious indigenes who don't understand why a foreigner should prosper in their country.

- Esek

Esek means "strife" or "contention". Esek is the stage in life where people who occupied a certain position for a long time become envious of new people who show up. These envious folks forget that when they sabotage newer businesses they destroy the progress and development of an entire community. The Philistines told Isaac in no uncertain terms that the water was theirs.

There was a situation in a country where one airline dominated the market and had to itself all the passengers making the long distance on a certain route in the country. After many years of sacrificial and diligent service another airline came in to provide service to the people. The older airline

perceived this as an act of competition and some form of rivalry showed up. The new airline offered cheaper fares and its planes were more modern and bigger. The time of departure and arrival of the new airline also favoured some of the passengers.

A considerable number of passengers automatically switched to the new airline to the chagrin of the older airline. Their officials were unhappy with some familiar passengers who had turned to the new airline and accused them of being disloyal. I guess they were filled with envy to see another airline compete with them and yet this is what business is all about. After all, the older airline also got their passengers either from another airline or the road transport system. The passengers sympathised with the older airline but some of them moved over to the other airline anyway. With time the scales were balanced and each of the airlines had their fair share of passengers. Sometimes both airlines were overbooked – there were more than enough passengers for both of them. Most of the competitions we engage in are completely unnecessary because there is more than enough of everything for all of us to have enough.

This phenomenon of existing organisations and individuals contending with emerging ones is common. In church circles, churches in particular places spend a lot of energy fighting against newer churches that try to establish themselves in those places. Families fight over lands and other properties they call inheritance. One day as I was flying into Tamale in the Northern Region of Ghana I viewed with great admiration the vast land God has blessed us with. I was sitting next to Ghana's minister for communications and I remarked to him that I don't understand why we have tribal wars over land when there is so much undeveloped land throughout the country. This scenario is applicable to many parts of the world – we fight over things that are not scarce.

If you want to achieve anything meaningful in life and glorify God you must be willing to contend with the spirit of envy. The envy and strife of the Philistines at the well Esek did not stop Isaac from digging more wells. He went on to dig another well, which he called Sitnah meaning hatred or accusation. Envious people hate the successful ones and accuse them of wrongdoing even when they are guilty of no offence.

- Sitnah

Sitnah means “opposition” or “accusation”. Envy moves people to oppose you. Kings, diviners, backsliding religious leaders and ordinary folk will take turns at opposing you and accusing you of crimes you know nothing about. Isaac had to deal with the Philistines' envy. Moses had to deal with Pharaoh and Elijah had to contend with Jezebel.

I heard a story about a conflict between a young pastor and his senior pastor. The senior pastor embarked on a smear campaign against the younger pastor by manipulating a lady to accuse the younger pastor of having an affair with her. The younger pastor refuted the allegation and went ahead to start his ministry. After some months the lady went and joined the younger pastor's church and confessed to him that it was the senior pastor who manipulated her to lie against him. This is the extent to which men of God are prepared to destroy one another.

Sitnah is the place of opposition through accusation. It is the place where envious people use all kinds of dubious means to ruin others' reputation. After the struggle in Sitnah Isaac moved to a different location and dug another well and the Philistines did not contend for that one. The Bible says

“And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth;”

It is strategic for you to move away from envious people. Change the level at which you operate and they cannot contend with you. Envious people operate in mediocrity and settle for the average. If you set a new standard for yourself and change the circles in which you operate they can't figure you out.

Isaac “removed from thence”. He was not static and so the Philistines could not predict his activities or keep pace with him. The man of God was constantly changing places and methods and that made it difficult for his enemies to find an antidote to his success. At Rehoboth the enemy could not cope with Isaac – he was too much of a force for the enemy to handle.

- Rehoboth

Rehoboth means “enlargement”, “avenue”, “area” and “broad place”. By moving to Rehoboth Isaac created space for himself. He moved from the overcrowded places to an enlarged place where it was not easy to operate in. Places that are easy to operate in are often choked. At Rehoboth everything shifts to make room for you. When you operate in Rehoboth you free yourself from competition, you raise your standard and you find your niche.

Rehoboth makes you heavenly minded. Many believers are very earthly and carnal. If you develop your spirit and become mindful of the things that are above, you defeat envy because your affection is on things that are entirely different from what envious people love and pursue. Carnal people love position, power, prosperity and the praise of men. Spiritual people love righteousness, humility and peace. If you change the centre of your affections your enemies lose sight of you because you seek different things in different places.

Personally, I have enjoyed a great deal of peace and joy since I passed on the leadership of our church, the Fountain Gate Chapel to a new Chairman. I founded the ministry in 1987 in Bolgatanga and remained the Chairman of the International Presbytery of the ministry until 2009. On the whole the Fountain Gate Chapel is a thriving ministry with pure- hearted and hard-working pastors. The congregations of the church are zealous, loving and pure. The church grew and spread into many branches in Ghana and around the world. This growth was accompanied by some human challenges such as insecurity in some pastors, isolated cases of strife and unjustifiable grievances.

At a certain point in my leadership of the church I realised that some of the pastors were not sure whether they were working for me or for the Lord. My spirit detested lording it over the ministers of the church and I wanted a church where I could say “our ministry” and not “my ministry”. I wanted a principle-oriented ministry instead of a personality cult. To achieve these goals and many other laudable goals I decided to pass on the mantle of leadership. I felt the Lord wanted me to do that.

My decision to step down as the leader of the church has released me to minister to the Body of Christ. The pastors of the Fountain Gate Chapel have a greater sense of ownership in the work they do than previously. Strife has gone down considerably and the tendency of pastors to misunderstand and misinterpret my motives has dwindled remarkably.

In some cases releasing an office or position of authority is a way of ending conflicts. Nations are torn apart by leaders who don't know when to quit. These greedy leaders hold on to power until a

state of anarchy ushers them into a political wilderness. Some heads of state have lost their lives and the lives of their family members due to their determination to cling on to power when it was obvious that they had to vacate their positions. Unreasonable politicians constantly endanger innocent women and children. The normal politician is so greedy for political power that he or she prefers a nation to be plunged into civil war to losing power. A politician who chooses life, peace and righteousness above power can be said to operate in Rehoboth. He or she operates at a higher level than others because his or her value system is different.

Heavenly mindedness is a sign that you are at Rehoboth. Heavenly things are rare in most people's minds. You have little competition when you fall in love with heavenly things instead of earthly things. The majority of people want earthly things.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Colossians 3:1-4

Paul reminded Timothy that we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. We did not bring houses, cars, titles and money into the world. Earthly things are "nothing". The name of anything a person acquires on earth and which has no eternal significance is "nothing". The pursuit of these vanities leads to the destruction of humanity. The apostle further warned Timothy that the love of money is the root of all evil.

But godliness with contentment is great gain.

For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

1 Timothy 6:6-12

We are strangers and pilgrims on earth. Envy is only dangerous when you prioritise the things others envy you for. If people envy you for earthly possessions but you see yourself as a stranger and as a pilgrim on earth, their envy becomes impotent because there is no tug of war between you and them.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Hebrews 11:13-16

Rehoboth takes you so far away from envious people that even if they want to destroy you they cannot because you are beyond their reach. Isaac did not stop at Rehoboth. He moved on to Beersheba and his servants dug another well there. Beersheba is the place where the enemy seeks to make peace with you – he knows he cannot do anything about you.

- Beersheba

Beersheba means the well of the oath or covenant. High anointings and blessings go with serious oaths and vows. To be a John the Baptist you must have a Nazarite vow. To be an Isaac you must have a covenant with God that distinguishes you from others. God appeared to Isaac at Beersheba and assured him of his presence and Isaac responded by building an altar there.

And he went up from thence to Beersheba.

And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phichol the chief captain of his army.

And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you?

And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a

covenant with thee;

That thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the LORD.

Genesis 26:23-29

God made a covenant with Isaac in Beersheba and his servants dug a well there. God promised to bless and multiply him for Abraham's sake in Beersheba. Isaac was already blessed but God chose to add blessings to a blessed man. Rehoboth did not make Isaac complacent – he dug another well in Beersheba. This well seemed to be a brand new well and not one of the wells Abraham had dug earlier. Isaac did not stop at the inheritance his father left for him. He created his own legacy.

After God entered into a covenant with Isaac, Abimelech came looking for him with one of his friends and his army commander. He wanted to make peace with Isaac so desperately that he went with his army commander to negotiate peace terms with him. His observation of Isaac's relationship with God was without any uncertainty – “we saw certainly that the LORD was with thee.” Abimelech requested a covenant with Isaac and the latter obliged. Abimelech who once hated Isaac pleaded to be friends with him. If your ways please God, He will cause your enemies to be at peace with you.

When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Proverbs 16:7

It is important to observe that Rehoboth did not make Isaac backslide. Many people backslide when their coasts are enlarged. Power and prosperity have the tendency to draw us away from dependence on God. Isaac was not corrupted by his blessings but rather deepened his relationship with God.

At Rehoboth you find a place but at Beersheba you find God.

The well-blocking attitudes of the Philistines did not stop Isaac from breaking through in life. He overcame their envy and dug wells at Esek, Sitnah, Rehoboth and Beersheba. The Philistines were opportunists who tried to take advantage of Abraham's nomadic challenges. They also tried to inhibit and intimidate Isaac by blocking his wells. Another Philistine ploy was to employ seduction to weaken some of the choice people God raised in Israel. Samson was one of the key persons these notorious enemies seduced sexually.

PHILISTINES ARE SEDUCERS

We have already studied how Balaam used the weapon of fornication to defile the people of Israel in his effort to stop them from possessing their inheritance. The Philistine spirit used a similar method to entangle Samson and diffuse the danger he constantly posed to them. Philistines use tricks to discover the secret of your success and strength.

Philistines spy on you.

Philistines know your weaknesses.

Philistines employ seducers to fool you.

The Philistines employed Delilah to seduce Samson. Entire bands of soldiers could not capture him. Ropes and chains could not bind him. The strong man detached gates with the posts from walls and carried them away with ease. On one occasion Samson caught three hundred foxes and set their tails on fire. This man who looked invincible had a weakness when it came to women and the Philistines took advantage of it. In one of his escapades with women he fell in love with a woman named Delilah in the valley of Sorek.

Delilah means “languishing”, “emptied”, “dried up” and “impoverished”. Sorek means “choice wine”. Delilah makes her victims languish in agony. She empties them of glory and spiritual virtue. Delilah dried up Samson’s anointing and impoverished him of grace. It is likely that Delilah deceived Samson to drink wine and that was why he fell asleep on her lap. Whoever is surrounded by envious people must bridle their carnal appetites lest their enemies take advantage of them by introducing strange men or women into their lives.

And it came to pass afterward, that he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength lieth, and by what means we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred pieces of silver.

Judges 16:4-5

Samson fell in love with Delilah and the Philistine lords saw an opportunity in the wayward direction of the heart of the man of God. The Philistines knowing Delilah’s proximity to Samson, offered her money to entice him to reveal the source of his strength. Delilah chose money over love as she betrayed Samson for eleven hundred pieces of silver from each of the Philistine lords. She immobilised the strong man by making him sleep on her lap and handed him over to the Philistines after shaving his hair.

And she made him sleep upon her knees; and she called for a man, and she caused him to shave off the seven locks of his head; and she began to afflict him, and his strength went from him.

And she said, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself.

And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him.

But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house.

Judges 16:19-21

The Philistines who could boast of many mighty men like Goliath could not stand the presence of Samson in Israel. They captured him, shaved his hair, gouged out his eyes and subjected him to dehumanising treatment. With time, Samson's hair, which was the source of his strength, grew and his strength returned to him. The growth of Samson's hair was a breakthrough for him.

God created an opportunity for Samson to unleash his restored strength on the Philistines by making them embark on an unending mission to humiliate him beyond recovery. As if the punishment they meted out to him was not enough they arranged a festive occasion to celebrate their god for supposedly delivering Samson into their hands. At this festival they hauled Samson in before thousands of spectators to entertain them by exhibiting his strength. This was a heartless effort to bring Samson to the lowest level any person could be brought to.

Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven.

Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand.

And when the people saw him, they praised their god: for they said, Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.

And it came to pass, when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars.

And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them.

Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport. And Samson called unto the LORD, and said,

O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes.

And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left.

And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.

Judges 16:22-30

The Philistines might have thought they had full control over Samson. God sometimes permits your enemies to think they are in full control of your life. Samson wondered why his enemies had so much power over him and as he made his way to the temple of the Philistine god Dagon, he vowed not to accept any further humiliation. It was God who had hardened the Philistines' hearts to bring Samson

in to make fun of him just as He had hardened Pharaoh's heart to pursue the children of Israel into the Red Sea. The Egyptians were drowned in the Red Sea in their effort to annihilate Israel. This act of God to lure the enemy in to destroy himself is what made Nebuchadnezzar's servants heat the burning fiery furnace seven times hotter in order to burn the Hebrew young men but the fire killed them instead.

Finally, the stage was set and what was intended to be a form of entertainment turned into a nightmare for the Philistines when Samson demolished the temple by leaning against its two supporting pillars. The building collapsed on thousands of people and killed them, making the dead on that day more than all the people Samson had killed in his lifetime. The people alone that watched Samson from the roof on that day were about three thousand.

Envious people are not satisfied to see you suffer – they want you dead. They want you so disgraced that you are compelled to commit suicide. They attack you even when you are hurting.

Samson's blindness was not enough to satisfy his enemies. His weakness could not pacify their thirst for vengeance; neither was his incarceration demeaning enough to give them a feeling of victory over their enemy. They wanted to make him feel less than a human being.

The Philistine spirit is an opportunistic spirit that takes advantage of your vulnerability to take the things that are dear to you from you. This spirit is a well blocker that frustrates you by stopping your gifts from expressing themselves and by blocking your opportunities. The Philistine spirit is a seducing spirit that preys on your lust for carnal things to conquer you from within. It destroys you by seducing you to sin against your flesh thereby weakening you. This spirit can only overcome you when you compromise your righteousness. Another characteristic of the Philistine spirit is that it is an Ark capturer. The Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant and carried it to their land and placed it in the temple of their god.

PHILISTINES ARE ARK CAPTURERS

The Philistine spirit desecrates the holy presence of God. The propensity of this spirit to desecrate holy things is seen in the capturing of the Ark of the Covenant by the Philistines. It was an extremely delicate exercise to carry the Ark of God from one place to another. A biblical example of how delicate it was to carry the Ark is seen in an episode involving Uzzah. During the reign of David he gathered thirty thousand choice men to go and bring the Ark of God from Kirjath-jearim. They arbitrarily placed the Ark on a new cart, contrary to the prescription of the law that the Ark should be carried on the shoulders of the Levites by means of poles passed through golden rings attached to the Ark. This was not the way they brought it out of the house of Abinadab. This misjudgment on the part of David, Ahio and Uzzah set the stage for error.

And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.

And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark.

2 Samuel 6:3-4

The unexpected happened as David and his men drove the Ark towards Jerusalem. The oxen shook the Ark and Uzzah instinctively moved his hand out to support it, quite contrary to the requirement of the law that no one should touch the Ark or look into it (Exo. 25:14, Num. 4:15, 20). God reacted sharply by striking Uzzah dead for his error.

And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it.

And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.

2 Samuel 6:6-7

Prior to the incident that led to Uzzah's death for his error of touching the Ark, the Philistines had defeated Israel in a battle and had taken away the Ark. In the light of the circumstances surrounding Uzzah's death, it is unimaginable that the Philistines could capture the Ark of God in battle. They killed the sons of Eli and transported the Ark to their land.

And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen.

And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain.

1 Samuel 4:10-11

The Philistines foolishly housed the Ark of the Covenant in the same room with their god Dagon. God broke Dagon, the god of the Philistines into pieces and brought judgment on the Philistines. They were smitten with emerods (tumours) and they hastened to despatch the Ark out of their land.

And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod.

When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon.

And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again.

And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon

and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him.

Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.

But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof.

And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is sore upon us, and upon Dagon our god.

They sent therefore and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? And they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath. And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about thither.

And it was so, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts.

Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron. And it came to pass, as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people.

So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay us not, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there.

And the men that died not were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

1 Samuel 5:1-12

Dagon means "corn" or "fish". He is the principal deity of the Philistines who was represented as having the body or trunk of a fish, with a human head and hands. Dagon is described as the god of grain (corn). As the god of fertility, Dagon is associated with agriculture and is described as the father of the great god Baal. Dagon was revered among the early Phoenicians. He had importance as the national god of the Philistines and they erected temples in his honour at Ashdod, Gaza, and other places. Numerous towns were named after him, such as Beth-dagon (Joshua 15:41).

God destroyed the supreme god of the Philistines. They tried to make their god coexist with Jehovah in the same place and He visited His wrath on them. The Philistine spirit mingles devilish and carnal things with spiritual things. It tries to place the devil side by side with God. Philistines infiltrate God's camp. They mingle with God's people and take holy things for granted. Witches are not afraid to eat communion with believers. Philistines are in the choirs of our churches, our ushering departments, our Sunday schools, our prayer departments and even our pastoral teams. They don't respect spiritual things. They mimic spiritual gifts and partake of the Lord's Supper without any fear.

They disguise themselves as angels of light and marry unsuspecting believers. Satan is envious that we have the presence of God from which he was expelled. Satan's people get angry when believers boast of knowing the Lord and having His presence. To undermine the authenticity of what we have, Satan infiltrates our camp with pretentious elements. The devil seeks to cheapen God's presence by introducing counterfeit believers and ministers into the holy things of God. The Philistine spirit is a glory stealer, it is a power parasite and it is a holiness masquerader.

The Philistine spirit is jealous of the pre-eminence God has given the Church. It knows that the Church has victory over the world because of the Ark – God's presence. It therefore does everything possible to defile God's holy altars and desecrate His sanctuary. By doing this, the devil has weakened many churches and believers. God is a jealous God. He is on a mission of vengeance against the strange fires that are burning on His altars. Lying signs and wonders are being judged and pretenders in the kingdom of God are being exposed. God is in the process of cleansing His Church from the mischief of the Philistine spirit.

We can dwell on the subject matter of the Philistine spirit as an Ark capturer for an indefinite period but for the want of time, I wish to proceed to another feature of the Philistine spirit and that is the fact that it is an intimidator. The Philistine spirit employs seducers to destroy God's people. When its subtle use of seduction does not work the Philistine spirit resorts to the overt tactic of presenting a Goliath to intimidate us. This is open defiance.

PHILISTINES ARE INTIMIDATORS

Philistines discourage you in order to put your dreams beyond your reach. They put fear into you and make you run away from the battle. In a battle with Israel, the Philistines put forward a giant champion by name Goliath who challenged Israel to present their champion.

And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span.

And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me.

1 Samuel 17:4, 8

The winner of the fight was to determine the outcome of the battle between the two nations. The Israelites were so intimidated that they feared and trembled at the sight of Goliath until David appeared and killed him.

And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.

When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid.

1 Samuel 17:10-11

David slew Goliath and the army of Israel pursued the Philistines and gathered the booty. The people of Israel overcame Goliath's intimidation because one man offered to challenge him.

And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine.

And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth.

So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David.

Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled.

And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines, until thou come to the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaaraim, even unto Gath, and unto Ekron.

1 Samuel 17:48-52

David was quick to dispose of Goliath because he had defied God's people for far too long. Goliath individuals and Goliath groups rise up against us every now and then. We need David's kind of courage to face them. Courage is a major factor in dealing with the Goliaths. God has not given us the spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind.

Our ministry in Bolgatanga faced a lot of opposition from various individuals and groups who felt we should not exist. In the early days of the ministry a prominent man and his wife, who was the head of an educational institution confronted me in their house when I went there to explain some issues concerning some students who had been suspended from school because our church had baptised them. This couple insulted me and one of our pastors who had given me a ride to their house, then they set their dogs on us. They also invited their houseboy to fight us physically and threatened to burn the motorbike, that had brought us to their house. We hurriedly left their house under a rain of insults and curses . We narrowly escaped being attacked by their dogs.

Envy has made surviving in Bolgatanga a great challenge for our ministry. Government officials used their office to fight against our efforts to build places of worship and even schools. District Assemblies conspired against us frequently. On some occasions even the Police Regional authorities have attempted to lay claim on some of our properties. I have been invited to answer questions about the legitimacy of the activities of the church in offices of various representatives of the government. An educational institution fired five of our members who were teaching in their school because they belonged to our ministry. One day the natives of a neighbourhood in which we worshipped broke into our church service armed with various weapons and disrupted the service. I believe that most of the attacks we experienced in Bolgatanga could be attributed to the envy of religious organisations who

thought the church was drawing away their following. They were quick to label us false prophets. These knights of religion used governmental institutions and individuals to fight against us.

Your success exposes someone's failure. If you succeed in difficult places and under difficult circumstances, you disarm others of the excuses they give for their failure.

The Philistine spirit seduces and intimidates God's people. It works against your progress in life and ministry. This spirit hinders you from getting what you need or desire. It hates to see you have any form of comfort and vows to limit you to mediocrity. The Philistine spirit is a hindrance.

PHILISTINES ARE HINDRANCES

Philistines stand between you and your dreams. They stand between you and your desires and wants. The Philistine spirit does not mind if you have just enough to eat and scanty clothing for your body. What it detests is to see you prosper and live in comfort. The Philistine spirit is the opposite of the spirit of David's mighty men who risked their lives to draw water for him from the well of Bethlehem. King David one day yearned for water from the well of Bethlehem but the Philistines were in Bethlehem making it difficult to draw water from the well. Philistines stand between you and your rest, peace and joy represented by water from the well of Bethlehem. David's men knew that he had fought many wars and deserved a little comfort.

The Philistines stood between David and water from the well of Bethlehem. His mighty men broke through the Philistine garrison and drew water from the well.

And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem.

And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!

And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD.

2 Samuel 23:14-16

David's mighty men broke through the host of Philistines and drew the water; that is exactly what you have to do before you can have the desires of your heart. The world refuses to think you deserve any form of comfort or blessing. If you are a minister of the gospel they insist that you should be poor to show that you are holy and humble. If you are a believer they make it difficult for you to enjoy your blessings without feeling guilty.

Leaders in the kingdom of God receive many attacks from the world because they think these leaders are too comfortable. I do not endorse flamboyance and showmanship by a man or woman of God, but I think it is unfair for the world to determine how someone should live. Hardworking and

successful people who deserve what they have and who they are should be commended and men and women of God are no exception.

A young man was upset to see pastors from his country who are far older and more experienced than him fly business class on a flight. He was a young medical officer who was flying business class himself. Yet he was angry about pastors who fly business class though these ministers have been in ministry for well over twenty years. He complained bitterly to two other ministers who were on the flight about pastors who fly business class. These two pastors tried in vain to explain to the doctor that the pastors he named were qualified to fly business class. The young doctor's warped mentality is the state of mind of many people. They don't bother to find out that many of the pastors who travel don't pay their own airfares. The churches and corporate bodies that invite them to minister pay the fares. Sometimes two groups or more come together to purchase one ticket. Some of the pastors also have legitimate sources of income that enable them to pay their airfares. Individual businessmen also help them. It is important to note that some ministers travel frequently and do a lot of work while on board the plane. They are so fatigued in some instances that it is necessary for them to have some compulsory sleep on the flight. That is what flying business class is all about. Pastors should be able to fly in economy class when a higher class cannot be afforded or is not available. To consider it unethical or sinful for them to enjoy the comfort of a business class or first class is however, preposterous. Critics of these pastors are sometimes godless, heartless and without any sense of logic.

The ministry, like any other field of human endeavour goes by the law of sowing and reaping. If a minister sows the seed of hard work, honesty and faithfulness he or she could be rewarded with success and prosperity. Church folks must see their leaders as examples of success and do what they can to bless them just like David's mighty men brought him water from the well of Bethlehem. In some unfortunate situations church elders and members are envious of their pastors. They expose them to the world in typical Judas Iscariot fashion. David's men were not envious of him so they risked their lives to get him the water he wanted.

The main aim of the spirit of envy is to stop you from being successful in life. If it fails to stop you from succeeding and from winning God's approval it will resort to dubious means to kill or destroy you. Maybe someone wants you dead. Someone might be more preoccupied with how to stop you than how to make progress himself or herself.

In all the chapters of this book we have studied the nature of the spirit of envy and how to overcome it. In the following chapter, which is the last chapter, I wish to dwell on instances of envy which throw more light on the opposition we face in the kingdom of God from the world and from within the church itself. Envy results in opposition and this explains why successful believers, businesses, families and churches are constantly struggling with antagonistic individuals and organisations. Opposition is the open manifestation of envy and we must know how to deal with it if we wish to sustain our success in life, ministry and business.

CHAPTER 12

OVERCOMING OPPOSITION

OPPOSITION is unavoidable in a life of success. It is naïve to assume that if you play fair and do the right things you will not be opposed by detractors. You cannot be too pure or innocent to be opposed. Opposition will come as long as you are doing something meaningful. Opposition to your spiritual and physical blessings is real. Sometimes those who oppose you are the most unexpected people. They are very close to you and yet they oppose you. Some oppose you out of ignorance, others because of traditional beliefs, some because of religious prejudice and some out of envy.

In this chapter I wish to dwell on some instances of opposition in the Bible that will help us to understand the oppositions we face and how to deal with them. One interesting case is Joseph's opposition of Jacob when the patriarch placed his right hand on Ephraim's head to bless him. This is a case of someone's own father opposing him.

NOT SO

With the words “not so” Joseph opposed his son Ephraim by trying to divert his blessing because of tradition. In the episode under consideration Joseph brought his sons Manasseh (the first-born) and Ephraim (the second-born) to his father Jacob for the purpose of laying his hands on them and blessing them. Joseph arranged the boys according to the traditional norm of the first-born being to the right hand of the person who is blessing the candidates. Thus, Joseph put Manasseh the first-born at Jacob's right hand and Ephraim the second-born at his left hand.

By spiritual discernment Jacob crossed his hands and put his right hand on Ephraim and the left hand on Manasseh. When Joseph observed what he thought was an anomaly he protested that his father Jacob reverse the order but he refused saying he knew what he was doing.

Joseph did not have any bad intentions for seeking to divert the blessing of the right hand from Ephraim – he was merely following his human reasoning, which suggests that the right hand should be placed on the head of the elder brother. Although Joseph had no evil intentions about what he tried to do, his action could have affected the two boys and generations yet unborn.

And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him: and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head unto Manasseh's head.

And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father: for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head.

And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

Genesis 48:17-19

Joseph tried to remove Jacob's right hand from Ephraim's head. He contested his son's election by insisting "Not so, my father". Joseph did not know that he did not have the power to determine who should be favoured above the other. This incident was the first recorded instance of the laying on of hands to impart a blessing. Nevertheless, I suspect that there were other occurrences in the past that informed Joseph's actions. There might have been a tradition that the right hand should be placed on the first-born. It is ironical that Joseph thought it was improper for the birthright to go to Ephraim seeing that Joseph himself and Judah had received preeminence over Reuben the first-born son of Jacob.

There are several cases in the Bible in which the second born or the younger person was preferred to the elder one. Abel was preferred to Cain. Shem had preeminence over Japheth. Isaac was more blessed than Ishmael. Jacob received the ten-fold blessing whereas Esau settled for the crumbs of the five-fold blessing. Joseph and Judah were blessed above Reuben. God elected Moses to lead the Israelites and to stand in His presence and called Aaron to assist him. Again David was chosen above his envious older brethren. In all the cases I have just cited the people who were not elected opposed the elected ones. They could not understand why God elected them. They thought God had made mistakes in electing His choices and they also accused the elected ones of using dubious means to gain preeminence over them.

There are many people working against you who think you don't deserve your position. They are busy scheming against you by telling anybody who is showing you favour – "not so, he or she does not deserve it." They contend that you are too young, they make reference to your skin colour, your educational background and some simply refer to your gender. The atmosphere is filled with the words of protest – "not so!" Some shout these words in prayer. They are daring enough to remonstrate against God by saying "not so!" as they pray against God's will for you.

The case of opposition involving Joseph and Ephraim was not a case of opposition because of envy but because of tradition. I referred to it to let us know that opposition can come from the most unexpected person like your own father not because he hates you but because of tradition. This is a tricky case of opposition – opposition from a very unlikely person.

In Africa it is common for parents to resist the marriage of a younger person because an older sibling is not yet married. They insist that the senior one must get married first. This unhealthy tradition occurred in the biblical case where Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Leah before he married Rachel. Funerals are deferred indefinitely because the funerals of earlier deaths have not been performed. In some families there can be backlogs of more than three generations of funerals. If someone in a later generation wants to perform his father's funeral he has to go back and perform the funerals of his great grandfather and grandfather before he can perform his father's funeral.

FORBID THEM

The Bible cites a case of opposition involving Joshua, Moses' servant. In this incident God asked Moses to select seventy men on whom He would put His Spirit so that they would bear the burden of leading Israel with him. On the set day and time the seventy men presented themselves for the impartation service with the exception of two of them called Eldad and Medad. The LORD came down in a cloud and put His Spirit on the men who had gathered in front of the Tabernacle and they prophesied. Quite interestingly Eldad and Medad who were still in the camp but not at the Tabernacle also received the impartation of the Spirit and prophesied.

Joshua opposed Eldad and Medad because they exercised the spiritual gift of prophecy and urged Moses to forbid them. In this tricky case of opposition someone is envious on the behalf of another person and tries to oppose others from competing with him or her. This was a case in which Joshua was envious when he saw that Medad and Eldad prophesied but they were not at the tabernacle to receive the impartation of the Spirit directly from Moses.

And the LORD came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease.

But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp.

And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them.

And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!

Numbers 11:25-29

The above case of envy was not because of material things. It involved the exercising of a spiritual gift. Joshua did not want others to prophesy independent of Moses' jurisdiction – he detested the idea that Moses' "sole proprietorship" over God's affairs was threatened. If they prophesied it had to come from Moses but since Eldad and Medad's anointing could not be traced to Moses, Joshua was envious.

Joshua reminds me of people who surround many of our spiritual leaders today. They act as cheerleaders who provoke the leaders to jealousy with their comments. These sycophants elect themselves to fight against anyone who appears to be competing with their masters.

Spiritual pride makes us think God should not bless people who are not in our little group or denomination. We often think everybody should be in our group to qualify for God's blessings.

They have to reason like us, talk like us and act like us to gain God's approval. This attitude makes us oppose others and do all we can to deny them their legitimate blessings.

The Jewish believers in the New Testament were guilty of the spirit of self-righteousness. They laid exclusive claim to the Christian faith and the gift of the Holy Spirit. This spirit of self-righteousness made them oppose the gentiles as the gospel spread into the gentile world. Peter's first mission to the gentiles was his invitation to the house of Cornelius to preach Christ to him and convert him to the Christian faith. The Jewish believers who accompanied Peter on this trip were astonished to see the Holy Spirit fall on the gentiles in Cornelius' house, prompting Peter to ask if any man could forbid him from baptising them.

CAN ANY MAN FORBID?

Cornelius was a Roman Centurion who is traditionally held as the first gentile convert to Christianity though this belief can be contested by another school of thought that presents the Ethiopian Eunuch as the first gentile convert. A Centurion was the commander of one hundred men in a Roman legion, the number of centurions in a legion being sixty. The ordinary duties of the centurion were to drill his men, inspect their arms, food and clothing and to command them in the camp and on the field. The centurions mentioned in the New Testament were praiseworthy men who did good deeds towards the Jews both in the gospels and in the book of Acts. They were noted for their courage and determination to do the right thing.

God's election of Cornelius as a candidate for the gospel of Jesus Christ was a decision based on the quality of life Cornelius lived. Though a gentile, he feared God with his entire household, gave alms to the poor and prayed always. The name Cornelius is Roman and it belonged to distinguished families in the imperial city making Cornelius a man of Roman blood. He lived among the Jews who had probably shared the message of the Jewish expectation of the Messiah with him.

One day while in prayer Cornelius saw a vision in which the Lord directed him to send for Peter to bring him the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,

A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

Acts 10:1-4

Cornelius' messengers went to Peter and delivered the invitation for him to come to his house and minister to him. They introduced Cornelius to Peter with strong words that showed the depth of his devoutness.

And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

Acts 10:22

Peter obeyed God and went to Cornelius' house after overcoming his initial prejudices and the Roman Centurion received the apostle gladly being in all readiness to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ. The attitude of this seeker of the gospel won God's approval and resulted in him being saved.

And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

Acts 10:30-33

Cornelius was favourably disposed towards the Jews. However, he was a gentile and had to deal with Jewish discrimination. He did good deeds and prayed always but that was still not enough to save him. Some people mistakenly think they can be saved by their good deeds. The example of Cornelius proves otherwise – in spite of his good deeds, he was an unbeliever who needed to be born again. In Peter's vision he saw the person he was about to deal with as a "common" or "unclean" person, which shows that Cornelius was not saved before Peter's ministration.

But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

Acts 10:14

His devotion, alms, prayers, and visions (Acts 10:2-3) signify that he was likely to be a Jewish proselyte. Nevertheless, he was not regenerated, baptised and filled with the Holy Spirit as the believers in Christ were. When Peter observed Cornelius' commitment to God he remarked that God

was not a respecter of persons. Peter was prejudiced when he thought that some things were common or unclean but God was not prejudiced.

Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

Acts 10:34-35

To avert the unbelief and resistance of the Jewish believers against Cornelius' salvation the Holy Spirit moved strongly in his house. While Peter was yet speaking the Holy Spirit fell on the audience. One sure way of God dealing with the opposition we face is the release of a strong move of the Holy Spirit to silence our critics. He does things that convince skeptics that He is with us. The power of prayer, almsgiving and the fear of God combined to release the power of the Holy Spirit.

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Acts 10:44-48

Six notable things occurred in the verses above. These things show us the simple things God does to make us overcome opposition. Some of them are God's sole responsibilities whereas others are our responsibilities.

1. The Holy Spirit moved with speed and spontaneity.

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." Cornelius feared God so much that the Holy Ghost moved in quickly while Peter was still speaking. A swift move of the Holy Ghost is a sign of God's presence. When the Holy Ghost moves in your life you don't have to explain yourself. My father who worshipped idols opposed me and the gospel of Jesus Christ until one day in 1994 when he asked me to pick him up for one of my services in Bolgatanga. That night the Holy Ghost moved in the meeting with great miracles and manifestations of

the Spirit. As soon as the meeting was over my father asked to be saved. I invited an elderly pastor to lead him to Christ. Within one week he broke down and burnt his idols and he was filled with the Holy Ghost.

2. The move of the Spirit astonished the Jews.

“They of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter.” The Jewish believers were astonished because in their prejudice they did not think the gentiles were included in God’s salvation plan and manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The fact that the Jews were astonished shows the extent to which they looked down on the gentiles. Their prejudice was even seen in their prayers. Tradition teaches that male Jews especially the Pharisees prayed as follows – “Lord, I thank thee that I am not a gentile, I thank thee that I am not a woman and I thank thee that I am not a slave.” God shocked them with the move of the Holy Spirit.

3. The sovereignty of God was displayed.

“On the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.” God uses His sovereign power to determine whom He blesses. This is why it is vain to be envious of a person God blesses. We can’t stop His purposes. The Jews were God’s chosen people but that did not prevent God from blessing others. It is frustrating for you to try to control what God does with His power and love. You may suffer needless heartache as you see Him bless people you hate and those you think are unqualified. He sometimes blesses those who don’t work as hard as you do and He shows favour to the less qualified.

4. Cornelius’ faithfulness in physical things released spiritual gifts to him.

Cornelius’ household spoke in other tongues. Faithfulness in almsgiving, prayer and the fear of God leads to faithfulness in spiritual things. Those who envy others for their spiritual gifts refuse to accept the fact that the anointed individuals pay a price of obedience before they are able to receive the spiritual gifts they have. In some cases obedience involves giving offerings and presenting other forms of sacrifice. Cornelius was faithful with money and God entrusted him with spiritual gifts. Jesus said if one is not faithful with the unrighteous mammon no one would entrust to him or her the true riches (Luke 16:11).

5. Cornelius’ household magnified God.

Cornelius and his household worshipped God. To magnify God is to give Him glory for His acts. The people in Cornelius’ house responded to God’s gifts of salvation and the Holy Ghost by praising God in the Spirit. As you magnify God for His wonderful

works you move Him to perform more. A “worshipper” and a “thanker” cannot be denied God’s blessings. The more envious people are of a worshipper, the more he or she increases. Thanksgiving and praise draw a person towards God whereas envy draws a person towards the devil.

6. No one could forbid them from being baptised.

“Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptised, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?”

The Jewish “opposers” were embarrassed to see the Holy Spirit upon Gentiles. Peter must have read their thoughts when he asked, “can any man forbid water?” The Jewish believers might have regarded the gentiles as being unqualified for water baptism and Holy Ghost baptism. Peter was initially doubtful about his mission to the gentile Cornelius because he could not see how God could save his household. The wisdom of God in making the Holy Ghost fall quickly upon the gentiles was to prevent the Jews from opposing their baptism. If the Holy Ghost had not moved first the Jews would have resisted any attempts by Peter to baptise them.

It took a lot of asking, seeking and knocking for Cornelius to receive salvation and yet the Jewish believers would have forbidden him from being baptised but for the timely intervention of the Holy Ghost. God overruled the prejudice of men.

Balaam revealed that when God decides to bless a person no one can overrule His intentions.

God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.

He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them.

God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.

Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!

Numbers 23:19-23

The case of the Jewish believers and Cornelius was more of a case of prejudice than a case of envy. Envy and prejudice work together to deny us access to God’s grace. We have sown enough seeds of love and obedience to God to expect His blessing on our lives. No man can forbid our blessing. No man can forbid our healing and deliverance. No man can forbid the flow of the gift of the Holy Ghost through us.

Opposition does not seek to stop at denying you the things you desire. It seeks to kill you. In the days of the Apostle Paul a group comprising more than forty people bound themselves with an oath

that they would not eat or drink anything until they had killed Paul. These people sought to commit murder in God's name. Paul did not sit idly by and allow their plans to be hatched. He prayed and worked his way out of their trap. We have a role to play as far as our deliverance from men's traps is concerned.

THE VOW TO KILL

Understanding the level of hatred people have for you is important for the fulfilment of your assignment. If you don't know the scale of the opposition you are facing you are likely to fail in your mission and perish. Your memory will be obliterated if you are naïve.

The world hates believers and preachers. Many people turn off their radios and televisions when a church or a pastor starts to speak or appears on a show. Most of the hatred comes from envy. Unbelievers get angry and envious when a believer says he is a child of God but they are not. They detest believers for claiming that they are heaven bound while unbelievers are hell bound. Jesus warned the Church that the world would hate them.

And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.

But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls.

Luke 21:17-19

Paul faced a strange kind of opposition when some Jews bound themselves with an oath not to eat until they had killed him. Don't rule out the fact that someone wants you dead. Paul was a preacher of the gospel of peace and yet some Jewish zealots sought to kill him.

And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

Acts 23:12-15

The nature of the opposition Paul faced is eye opening. The Jews banded themselves together, meaning they were a certain kind of people. The group was carefully and painstakingly formed. It was an organised group that was well constructed. It is likely that they were of the class of zealots called "the sicarii" – a class of fierce zealots who were later called the assassins. These fanatics thought

they were envious for God's Law. This kind of envy is fierce because those who have it don't bear any guilt. They insult and condemn others in the name of God. They curse and pray against those they hate and if they have to kill with physical weapons they do so without any hesitation.

The reason why "the sicarii" wanted to kill Paul was that they thought he was a heretic. They regarded him as a false teacher who taught doctrines that were contrary to the Law of Moses. They were possessed with the spirit of religion. They were envious for the Mosaic Law. To legitimise their action these assassins went to the chief priests and elders who constituted the council or the Sanhedrin for permission to execute their intentions. Many acts of wickedness are done in the name of God. Religious leaders are involved in the acts of assassination and genocide around the globe.

It is scary for a group of people to place a curse on themselves not to eat until they kill someone. These opposers anathematised themselves by binding themselves with a solemn oath. Determination is involved in this action. By binding themselves with an oath they gave their mission a religious tone. Many people who destroy others do it by religious means. They employ fasting, paying of vows and other forms of consecration. People don't care what they lose or how much they hurt if only they can destroy you.

Paul's enemies denied themselves food and drink. They had a goal to kill Paul and they did not mind if they were hungry. The attitude of these negative fellows has a lot to teach the average believer who is not prepared to sacrifice anything for his or her faith. We do nothing to protect our pastors and leaders. We don't seem to know that some people want them dead. We should come to church with the aim of protecting our pastors and the gifts in the church. Some of the anointed vessels God has placed in the body of Christ are so strategic that we have to do all we can to protect and support them.

The assassins asked the Sanhedrin to request that Paul be brought from the castle to the meeting place of the Sanhedrin to defend and explain himself. This offer looked like a great opportunity for the apostle but it was a trap to ambush and kill him. Beware of false opportunities, easy assistance and ways of escape. Your enemies can use them as traps to destroy you.

Paul employed every spiritual and physical means available to him to counteract the opposition he faced. Don't sit idly by and be destroyed with the excuse that God will take care of you. God indeed takes care of us but we have a part to play in our preservation. Paul was a man who was endowed with massive spiritual gifts. He healed the sick, he abounded in revelations, he raised the dead, he struck Elymas with blindness, a serpent bit him but he did not die, his presence in a ship prevented the people from dying, prison gates were opened when he sang and prayed and he went into the third heavens. In spite of these supernatural powers Paul possessed, he made use of physical methods and human assistance to protect himself and escape danger.

Many believers refuse to use wisdom and human assistance with the excuse that Ezra did not accept any assistance from the king on his journey from Babylon to Jerusalem. Ezra refused human help and chose to depend on the supernatural help of God not because it was wrong to seek help but because he was ashamed to ask.

Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him.

So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.

Ezra 8:21-23

Paul received similar divine interventions on several occasions without human assistance. Nevertheless, on this occasion when the assassins vowed to kill him he employed the relationships, resources and systems around him to overcome opposition. Paul was a master at adapting to various circumstances and in this situation he knew exactly what to do. He rallied all the resources available to him to overcome the opposition of the Jews.

And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me.

And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;

And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor.

And he wrote a letter after this manner: Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor

Felix sendeth greeting.

This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.

And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council:

Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds.

Acts 23:16-17, 22-29

Paul's survival strategy in the above passage of scripture is a useful tool to help us overcome opposition. If some people want you dead you must know what to do. Paul knew what to do – he was not ignorant of the devices of the enemy. I will extract a few simple survival tips from the passage for us to use. These tips are simple as opposed to the complicated things we do like binding the strong

man in spiritual warfare. Prayer and binding and loosing are potent supernatural keys to overcoming the enemy, nevertheless common sense means of survival are also available to us.

1. Relationships.

Acts 23:16 mentions the intervention of Paul's sister's son. He eavesdropped on the plot to kill Paul and he went and told him. To overcome opposition we must use the relationships God gives us. Some of them are family members, others are friends and some may be our church members. Don't ignore the usefulness of the people around you. The Holy Ghost may choose to use people to speak to you.

2. Information.

The young man went into the castle and told Paul about the plot to kill him (Acts 23:16). Don't withhold vital information from your loved ones if you hear of a plot to destroy them. Believers must be on the alert when they walk in the midst of unbelievers so that they can pick up the schemes of the enemy. It looks like we are incarcerated in our own environment barely knowing what goes on around us. Even when we are in the secular world we are quite unconscious of what goes on around us. The believers who are privy to the schemes of the enemy don't attach any sense of urgency to what they know. When Paul's nephew knew that some people were plotting to kill him he acted with dispatch.

3. Connections.

Paul called one of the centurions and asked him to take his nephew to the chief captain (Acts 23:17). The chief captain in question was Claudius Lysias (Acts 23:26). Lysias (a Greek family name) was a Greek by birth who probably assumed the Roman name Claudius when he purchased his Roman citizenship. He was in command of a garrison stationed in the castle that overlooked the temple in Jerusalem. Paul had access to people in authority. He knew how to establish strategic connections. It is good to be connected to people at your level and people of your kind, but it is highly advantageous to connect with others who can help you. God's people should prayerfully build connections with the police, the army, politicians and other people who matter in the society.

4. Reinforcement.

The Centurion by himself could not save Paul. He needed the assistance of the chief captain who in turn had to send Paul to the governor Felix. This was a case of reinforcement – if one person's power was not enough to deal with the situation a higher authority was brought in. We must not be ashamed to ask for help in certain

situations. God has placed strategic individuals in key positions to assist us. They may even be unbelievers but they are in their positions for our sakes. It is wrong to think that everybody in authority is against us. If an objective evaluation of your strength suggests that you don't have enough strength to deal with a situation you should call for reinforcement.

5. Confidentiality.

Acts 23: 22 says the chief captain warned Paul's nephew not to tell anyone he had talked with him. "See thou tell no man" should be the instruction any person who is facing opposition should give to the people around him. Confidentiality means tell no man what you know or what you have seen. If you are a target of envy it is dangerous to be surrounded by people who can't keep secrets. There is too much gossip and lying amongst believers. We are unable to keep any secrets and this makes it difficult for us to wage good warfare. The enemy finds it easy to attack us when we leak the secrets of our strengths and possessions. Boasting about our possessions and blessings gives the adversary the opportunity to attack us.

6. Intimidation.

In Acts 23:23 the chief captain requested two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to accompany Paul safely to Felix the governor. The enemy loves to intimidate us and it is sometimes okay for us to present an intimidating force against the forces of resistance. A scanty group of people around you may not be enough to give you the needed protection from the kind of opposition you are facing. You need an intimidating force around you to intimidate those who oppose you.

7. Secrecy.

In spite of the quantum of the force that accompanied Paul, he embarked on his mission at the third hour of the night, which is 9 pm (Acts 23:23). He did not presumptuously go in broad daylight. A certain amount of secrecy is needed for self-preservation. By secrecy I don't mean keeping relevant information from people who should know the truth. We noted earlier that confidentiality means tell no man. Secrecy is related to confidentiality but secrecy is your responsibility whereas confidentiality is others' responsibility towards you. It is your responsibility to keep your affairs secret and it is the responsibility of those around you to keep your issues confidential. Secrecy involves the blocking of information about your operations from leaking to those who oppose you.

8. Equipment.

The chief captain directed his men to provide horses for Paul to ride and to ensure that he was brought safely to Felix the governor (Acts 23:24). In practical terms this means the provision of equipment, machinery and technology for our safety and efficiency. Paul did not walk on foot to Felix the governor. You don't use your natural strength and ability to fight certain battles in life. Science and technology have provided safer and easier means of doing things. If your opposers are ahead of you in technology they are likely to defeat you. Those who envy and oppose you are likely to acquire the most efficient technology to destroy you and you must be able to outmatch them.

9. Process.

It may take a while for you to overcome your opposers and you should have the patience to go through any process that is required to do that. A centurion was involved in Paul's case and later on the chief captain came in, who in turn referred him to Felix the governor of Judea (Acts 23:24). Felix lived in Caesarea about sixty miles away from Jerusalem. His name was Antonia Felix but Josephus called him Claudius Felix because he was in favour with Emperor Claudius who made him the governor of Judea.

Felix was a freed man of Antonia the mother of Emperor Claudius. He married three wives all of whom had royal backgrounds including Drusilla the sister of King Agrippa. He was an austere ruler – an unrighteous governor, an immoral and corrupt man. Felix had the power to free Paul but he kept him for two years in prison with the hope of getting a bribe.

And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

Acts 24:24-27

Paul suffered great injustice at the hand of the authorities of the day especially Felix, but he was patient in his defence. Opposition is sometimes protracted and one must have the patience to go through the process. In any warfare we need patience, self-control and wisdom to deal with our opposers.

10. Identity.

Claudius Lysias, the chief captain introduced Paul as a Roman citizen to Felix (Acts 23:27). Paul was handled with great caution because he was a Jew with Roman citizenship. It is important to know who you are. In the natural one's citizenship, nationality or tribe can affect his or her mission. Being a native of the Upper East Region of Ghana has helped me to overcome some of my challenges on the land. On several occasions the natives of the land and the authorities have threatened to stop our ministry in many ways. In their plans to destroy the work and drive us out of the land they remind themselves that I come from the land as well as most of our members and they cannot do anything about us.

Physical or natural origin is not as important to the believer as spiritual origin. We are the citizens of heaven. Our authority is from heaven. God protects us and provides for us from heaven. Our wisdom from above and power from on high make us superior in function.

11. Blamelessness.

Although Paul faced stiff opposition from the Jews, he was a blameless man who did nothing to deserve death. The Jewish zealots bound themselves with an oath to kill an innocent man. Lysias told Felix the governor that Paul was innocent.

Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds.

Acts 23:29

To overcome envy and opposition we must ensure that we are blameless. Wrongdoing makes us vulnerable to the attacks of those who seek to destroy us. Our Lord Jesus Christ faced great opposition when he walked on the face of the earth. The Jews accused Him of all manner of evil things and constantly sought to kill Him. He overcame them not just because He was the Son of God or because He was anointed but because He was blameless. He dared the self-righteous religious leaders to point out any wrongdoing in him but they could not.

Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?

He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. Then answered the Jews, and said unto him,

Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.

And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

John 8:46-50

In the above verses of scripture Jesus laid bare the secret to victorious living – blamelessness. It is impossible to eliminate critics and envious people from our lives. We must however, ensure that we are blameless before God. The issue of blamelessness is important to surviving the attacks we face in life and ministry. Our critics must be one of the reasons why we should live holy lives and be blameless.

This chapter on “overcoming opposition” featured Paul’s handling of opposition by envious Jewish zealots. The strategies he employed are enough to guide us in our struggle against the forces of opposition we face. As I conclude this book, may I point out two weapons you should arm yourself with in life. These weapons are prayer and wisdom.

THE WEAPONS OF PRAYER AND WISDOM

There is nothing more potent in dealing with envy and opposition than prayer. The prophets of old prayed to God to deliver them from envious people. Jesus prayed to the Father to deliver Him from the hour of brutality and from the attacks of His enemies. The early disciples used PRAYER as a weapon to counteract opposition. Paul enjoined the Thessalonians and other believers to pray for him. His plea was passionate – “PRAY FOR US.” The apostle needed prayer because of the unreasonable and wicked men he constantly encountered.

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-3

Prayer releases power and wisdom for warfare. Believers appreciate the place of power in warfare but what they neglect is the use of the weapon of wisdom.

In addition to prayer biblical characters employed the **POWER OF WISDOM AND EFFICIENT STRATEGY** to overcome envy and opposition. Prayer is good but we must have a strategy for warfare. We must put a winning plan in place.

The book of Ecclesiastes says wisdom is a weapon of defence.

Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun.

For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.

Ecclesiastes 7:11-12

In consonance with the verses from Ecclesiastes, the book of proverbs says a house is built through wisdom and a wise man is strong. The wise man directs in the book of proverbs that we wage war with wise counsel.

Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established:

And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength.

For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war: and in multitude of counsellors there is safety.

Proverbs 24:3-6

This book is a timely tool in your hands. The Holy Ghost moved me to write it for you – just for you. Your success is attracting critics, envious people and opposers. Remember that the anointing does not attract harmless butterflies but noisy and stinging bees. May the wisdom and power contained in this revelation make you overcome envy. Your success will not be aborted. You have seen nothing yet – your increase is on the ascendency. Be prayerful, walk in wisdom and OVERCOME THE SPIRIT OF ENVY!

THE LOVE REVOLUTION CONTINUES – CHARITY ENVIETH NOT

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Securing The Destinies of Homes, Ministries, Businesses And Nations

Second Edition

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