

Overcoming Mental Oppression



Edison Macusi

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Mental oppression

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Jesus did not only come to heal the sick or to mend the brokenhearted. He has also come to set the captives free. There is no exception to the kind of bondage that He can set us free. His head was pierced by thorns so that even our mental oppressions and sufferings can be healed.

“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” 2 Cor 3:17

“Thou art my hiding place; Thou dost preserve me from trouble; Thou dost surround me with songs of deliverance.” Ps 32:6-7 (NASB)

“The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, And rescues them.” Psalms 34:7 (NASB)

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Preface

This is part of a series to help young Christians overcome their struggles in the light of the Scriptures. Mental oppression is a common struggle but not often discussed even among believers since it seems to border on taboo topics. There are in fact many Christians famous and forgotten who had been afflicted and tormented by this evil spirit of oppression. John Bunyan who wrote *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and *Pilgrim's progress* should be a textbook to those who suffer oppression partly because he himself has this testimony that he heard evil blasphemous voices. In the latter end, his groaning was only relieved by the cross of Jesus and His great forgiveness. We must beware of psychologists who do not base their judgments on the Word of God but on their own minds. Let every man a liar but let God be true should guide us because there is no lie in Truth. The Scriptures are clear that only the Lord can bring true healing and integrity to the heart of man. It is part of the ministry of the Lord to set the captives free and mental oppression is not an exception. The increasing darkness released these days will not only facilitate crime and terrorism but also mental problems for many people who are seeking genuine answers to issues surrounding them but could not find in mainstream Christianity and Psychology. As the Apostle John wrote, **“Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he**

knoweth that he hath but a short time.” Rev 12:12. The devil has but a short time now and trying to do all sorts of means in order to cripple the Church and oppress the people. His mission has not changed, it remains to be “to steal, kill and destroy” (Jn 10:10). Part of the inheritance of the Church is to minister freedom to all captives from diseases to oppressions of the devil. It has not changed also. Mental oppression is not a disease that science can heal because drugs do not directly heal the soul or the spirit of man. It is the Word of God which **“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” (Heb 4:12)**, which heals mental oppression by deliverance. The Church is mandated to bring deliverance to the captives because all authority has been given to Jesus Christ and which He has also given to His disciples... **“And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.” Matt 10:7-8.** Mental oppression can be a terrible suffering but take heart, cheer up for Jesus Christ has overcome the world and He has come to set the captives free.

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Chapter 1

The problem of oppression

“The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” Luke 4:18-19

Mental oppression can be experienced by new and old believers alike in many ways. For some restlessness and anxiety can both attack at the same time and for others they can hear evil blasphemous voices, even voices to commit suicide or to kill someone. Others may dream they are killing somebody. Mental oppression is not new and has been one of the oldest ways by which the enemy tries to imprison us into our own world. It is not a disease by which science can heal, if it were so, there would have been no more need for mental institutions in our country. How do we deal with this kind of oppression? How do we overcome and find deliverance? In

experimental ecology if we have a question, we do a demonstration to find out the outcome. The outcome may vary in different latitudes, geographical locations and places but there is always a pattern that emerges at each scale and time which can be interpreted to be relevant to the question asked. The nature of man must be understood so we can begin to comprehend the way we think and the way we act. Unless we do this, we will forever find ourselves asking the question “where are we” and “what brought us here”. The revealed things of the Scriptures are for us and our children while the hidden things of God, let God reveal in His time (Deut 29:29). It is always easier to understand a problem when we have a handbook written about it. When travelling in unknown place, my wife and I are glad to find the name of streets and the maps we have but we are also especially glad that they put the sign, “You’re here”. Without knowing your origin, how can you find your destination? We can only solve our problems by understanding ourselves in the light of the Scriptures. Without the Scriptures to serve like our maps, we will always find ourselves tossed to and fro about the doctrines of man that can easily obstruct our views of God and who we are.

There are many books about man, his ways and his thoughts as well as sufferings. But we will not attempt to do that here, I want to emphasize here, “how do we get deliverance from our struggles”. When Jesus walked on earth and begun His ministry, He refused no one who came for healing. Many of

them were sick in the mind but He primarily dealt with healing the soul of man. Most hospitals today have their origin from the Christian care ministries beginning with the abolition of pagan hospitals in 331 AD by Constantine who converted to Christianity. It was through this abolition that the sick were cared for by the Christian volunteers and ministers. It emphasized the care and the relationship between the sufferer and his fellow man. From this many monasteries that were later established have their own *infirmitorium* where the sick monks are healed and taken care of. During the Middle Ages, Christians continued to operate their own hospitals both for the sick and for the Crusaders. When monasteries in England were dissolved by Henry the 8th in 1540 hospitals supported by religious orders declined and saw the beginnings of transfer of responsibility from religious orders to secular hands. Our hospitals today are mostly secular in nature so that only the body is cared for except in religious hospitals where Jesus is preached as the healer no matter what method of healing He uses to bring about wholeness in the body of the sick.

There are many medical advances and breakthroughs today that we are thankful for, from x-rays, chemotherapy, Computer Tomography (CT) scans and Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), to robotic surgery. All of these are good and God can use them to heal His children because He is the God of Knowledge and Wisdom (Col 2:3). Though many among us more familiar of the notion that science came from the Greeks, it was the Lord who taught Adam about science who

in turn taught his children. Science is basically the study of things around us, how they function and how they work. The first One who taught science to man was the Lord. He taught Adam about the garden (Gen 2:15-16) and who in turn taught his children. Thus in essence, although unacknowledged by the secularists, God is the source of all true revelation whether this happens by chance or through a non-believing scientist, the true source is still the Father above who brings light on the matter, the revealer of truth and hidden things.

“Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what *is* in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.” Dan 2:20-22

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” James 1:17

Mental “diseases” therefore should not be seen as incurable for even AIDS and cancer can be healed by the Lord, for with Him, “nothing shall be impossible” (Lk 1:37; Lk 18:27). Though there are things that we do not understand and remain hidden from us, we should bring them to God who understands everything. He is the light.

How torments come

God made man in His image. He fashioned him after Himself so that we have our own free will, decision making abilities, creativity and intelligence. What separates us from other forms of creation is the image of God in man whether one believes in Him or not. When Satan fell away, he has but one intent, to bring as many human beings as he can to hell with him and to do so in the most vile manner he can accomplish (Jn 10:10). Torments are meant by the devil to steal the joy of the believer in his salvation and freedom in Christ (Gal 5:1). The Lord Jesus told a parable in Matthew 13: 24 which we must remember. Parables are meant to illustrate truths in the Kingdom of God. In this parable, the Lord planted good seeds in His field but when the night came and all were sleeping, the devil crept in and sowed tares in the field of God. Tares are weeds. It symbolizes everything that the devil tries to thwart in the field of the Lord. The field can be the world; it can also be the soul of man. God brings in the good seed, but the devil tries to mix it with his own weeds.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field.

But that night as the workers slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat, then slipped away. When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew.

"The farmer's workers went to him and said, 'Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds! Where did they come from?' "'An enemy has done this!"

the farmer exclaimed. "'Should we pull out the weeds?' they asked. "'No,' he replied, 'you'll uproot the wheat if you do. Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds, tie them into bundles, and burn them, and to put the wheat in the barn.'" Matt 13:24-30 (NLT)

When the seeds have grown, the caretakers were surprised to find two kinds of plants in the field. They went to the Lord and asked what happened to the field, there were two kinds of plants growing together; one which was wheat and another which was weed. Then the Lord told them to allow both to grow until it is time to reap. The soul of man is much like a field; it can be sown with seeds of the Kingdom or the evil one through the senses. Jesus spoke that we must beware of what we hear or see for whatever it is, we will get more and more of it.

“Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides. “For whoever has, to him *more* shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him.” Mark 4:24-25 (NASB)

The Scriptures also say that we reap what we sow and when people watch and listen to dynamic preaching of the Word of God, we see many converts. When people listen to others with encouraging words, they become stronger to face their problems and struggles. But when they watch and listen to all sorts of worldly music, movies and entertainment they too are

influenced to do the opposite. Some dream of lustful scenes. Others think how to bring about their vengeance to those who hurt them. No wonder the words of the Apostle come alive in such situations, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” Gal 6:7-8. Our lives are the consequences of our accumulated decisions, right or wrong. What we have sown whether in the flesh or in the spirit come alive to our memories because they are in the soul of man. We would be able to better understand the mind of man by studying his nature and composition. In the beginning, man became a living soul by the breath of God. Out of dust, God formed man but there was no breath or life in it. It was only when He breathed life that Adam became alive (Gen 1:27; 2:7).

The tripartite being of man

Man is made up of two things, the body and the animated life of God in it. But within the immaterial composition of the life in man is composed of soul and spirit, a complex that sometimes we may not completely understand how it operates but we can take clues from what the Word of God tell us. There are proponents that suggest that man has no soul or spirit in it. This originated in the idea of spontaneous generation where living matter comes from non-living matter. They thought that life can be produced without a causal origin. Francesco Redi, John Needham, Spallanzani and later

on Louis Pasteur brought an end to this theory by demonstrating conclusively that decomposition of organic matter such as food are caused mainly by germs present in the air and that it does not undergo transformation or putrefy in such a way as to spontaneously generate new organisms within itself. With Oparin's experiments on amino acids in the 1920s, this theory has resurfaced to support the thesis of Darwin on evolutionary origins of man. But questions on proponents of this Neo-Spontaneous generation is that though amino acids and the genetic basis of life can be produced by electromagnetic sparks and concoctions, it still remains that this is largely an speculation. There are many problems it has to overcome such as the need for good mutations to occur so that a protoplasm that can be produced will bring about teeth, different skin coloration, arms, feet etc. More often mutations in nature are rarely good but always detrimental when they do occur. As organisms get more complex, new set of genes are needed to be produced to bring a genetic basis for those characteristics and traits. The question is where do the organisms get those new set of genes from teeth, eyes, nose and even fingers? Others propose that this happens in billions of years so that the needed arms and teeth can be produced in such a way. But again, the chances of producing teeth or a compound eye, how much do they stand if we truly calculate them even say 4byn years? Could life really evolve by chance? The probability of forming one protein molecule by chance is one in 10^{243} , which is a figure of 1 followed by 243 zeros. This fraction is so small that one may say that the probability is

zero. Moreover in the concept of natural selection, where good traits are supposedly favored from bad ones to survive in nature, are we really sure that nature guarantees that every turn of evolution brings in the good traits? For example, how much sure are we that even if nature produces the tear ducts, in the next turn, it does not reject it while waiting until other mutations happened that produced the lashes, slit, cornea, lens, etc.? Or would natural selection breed out the organism that had a tear duct but no other components of a seeing system simply because it was not useful alone? In the laboratory and in the natural (by way of hybridization) we can easily select for good traits but this does not necessarily bring about new genes and mutations. Moreover, for evolution to exist, it presupposes temporal suspension of the second Law of thermodynamics. That is, though energy in the cosmos remains constant, the amount available to do useful work is always decreasing (and entropy, the measure of unavailable energy is increasing). Everything then, is moving toward less orderliness or greater chaos. This, of course, runs directly contrary to what evolution teaches where through time, organisms big and small continually evolve more complex traits and apparatuses thereby creating something out of nothing. For example, the sun may beat on the protoplasm for thousands of years without ever producing additional or mutated strains with arms and feet because there is no mechanism within the protoplasm to convert that energy. It is by converting that energy into a useful form so that the protoplasm can make use of it, channel it to produce mutation

and pass that mutation to its offspring and bring about the arms and feet. There must be an appropriate energy conversion process along with a preprogrammed template to work from before solar energy can reverse the second law. Or as one evolutionist asked: “How, when no life existed, did substances come into being, which today are absolutely essential to living systems, yet which can only be formed by those systems?” (Harold F. Blum, *Time’s Arrow and Evolution* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968], p. 170). Simply said, spontaneous generation and its variant form of Darwinian evolution do not make sense at all.

Those who believe in evolution do so to their own detriments, no morals and no standards of right and wrong. We simply come alive and spend our lives in this earth in passing. They become obstinate and hold on to their views though of the plainest conviction that they failed so that Isaiah calls them, “Let favour be shewed to the wicked, *yet* will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD. LORD, *when* thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: *but* they shall see, and be ashamed ...” (Isaiah 26:10-11).

What then does the Word of God tells us? What is hidden in the Old Testament, the Lord has made clear in the New Testament. Man is made up of one body, one substance but made of three distinct layers or compositions. Just as water is made of one molecule composed of two atoms of Hydrogen

and one atom of Oxygen bonded together as one, humans are the same. We have a body, which is what we see, and soul which is the seat of man's intellect and emotions, as well as spirit which is what God often uses to communicate to man.

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thess 5:23

“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 discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Heb 4:12

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit. 1 Cor 15:44-45

We are therefore admonished to wash our minds by the power of His word (Eph 5:26). The soul of man is not simply made up of empty gas or a mist floating in the air, it is rather the whole constitution of man, his emotions, will, heart and mind. Even Jesus said, His soul was exceedingly sorrowful (Matt 26:38), well pleased (Matt 12:18) and Mary said, her soul magnifies the Lord (Lk 1:46) and Simeon who said to her, a sword shall pierce your soul that the thoughts of the hearts of

many shall be revealed (Lk 2:35). Thus, the seat of emotions, heart and mind is the soul of man. It is the soul of man that feels fear (Acts 2:43), anguish and torment (Ro 2:9), happiness (Matt 12:18; Lk 1:46), enjoys (Lk 12:19), hears (Acts 3:23), obeys (Ro 13:1) and believes (Acts 4:32). Thus Jesus came to save souls (Acts 3:23) not spirits or hearts because it is the soul which makes a man, while the body is the cage, the frame that makes up our physical being (Matt 6:5, 10:28). After death, the soul goes to heaven or hell (Matt 10:28; Mk 8:36; Lk 12:20; Acts 2:27; Rev 6:9; 20:4) while the body is left for burial (Matt 27:59; Mk 14:8). The spirit of man is where God communicates such as when God took the spirit of John during the Lord's Day to see the future events unfold before his eyes (Rev. 1:10), when David spoke with God (Matt 22:43-45), when Paul was caught up in the third heaven (2 Cor 12:2) and this is the part of man which first receives wisdom, knowledge, anointing and empowerment from God (Exod 31:3; Num 11:25; 14:24; Deut 34:9) as well as stirring, revival and strengthening (Gen 45:27; Ez 1:1, 5; Job 10:12); it can also feel terror, fear, anguish, pain and trouble, sorrow and brokenness, pride and haughtiness, merriment (Gen 41:8; Exod 6:9; Job 6:4; 7:11; Pro 15:13; 16:18,32; 17:22).

Thus, we can put endless references in the Bible which often distinguishes between the soul and the spirit in both the Old and the New Testament. The soul and the spirit of man can therefore think, feel and obey. It is however the spirit which we can call to be the subconscious characteristic of man and

which God use to communicate with the Christian because this was the part of man which has been severed from God during the fall. In the process of regeneration and renewal, God speaks through the spirit which is the inner man. In the Bible, we do not see references that say, “I was in the soul,” to denote seeing the Lord in a vision or revelation or receiving guidance from the Lord. We rather read, “I was in the spirit” or “my spirit” because the soul is subject to the person’s and world’s influence on it.

“Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, *saying*, Blessed *be* the glory of the LORD from his place. *I heard* also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing. ¹⁴ So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me.”
Ezek 3:12-14

“And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where *was* the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy.” Ezek 8:3

“ I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of *my* body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the

truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.” Dan 7:15-16

“And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God” Hag 1:14 (KJV)

“The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.” Zech 12:1

“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.” Matt 4:1-2

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.” Matt 26:41

“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.” Acts 17:16

“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” Romans 8:15-16

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” 1 Cor 2:12

“For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” 1 Cor 5:3-5

“For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ.” Col 2:5

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” James 2:26

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.” Rev 1:10-11

We do not however feel this distinct separateness of the body, soul and spirit because the bond between each is strong enough and good enough making it as one like the hydrogen bonds in water molecule. When a man dies, his body separates

and decays, but his soul and spirit goes to God. Much like when the hydrogen bond between each Oxygen and Hydrogen atoms are broken apart separating both as gases that simply evaporates or vanishes. The distinctness between the characteristics of soul and spirit is even profoundly seen by the way the Sword of God can pierce through it.

“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 discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Heb 4:12

If there would have been no distinction between the two, it would not have been mentioned at all through the Scriptures as distinct from each other. On the matter of the mind and the heart this is under the jurisdiction of the soul. This is why we are commanded to love God with all our hearts, minds and souls,

“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment.” Mark 12:30

The soul is composed of the mind, the will, the conscience and the heart of man. Differences between the heart and the mind are however less distinct in the Scriptures and often interchangeably used. Soul in the Old Testament most often denotes the whole person, his whole being such as man

became a living soul, *nephesh* (Gen 1:27; 2:7) while in the New Testament it is spoken of as the immaterial composition of man, much like the spirit. It is the seat of man's intellect and emotions giving way to his conscious personality. In medical science, we see people afflicted with multiple personality disorder or dissociative personality disorder which demonstrates to us how another spirit can control the whole being of a person from his spirit to his soul and body. A person afflicted with this disorder shows multiple personalities, each unaware of each other and calls himself with different names. The dominant personality is the real person inside that body but the demonic entity which tries to control the person makes us aware that man is not simply made of functioning body but rather has his soul and spirit altogether. The body can be subject to the soul and spirit which is why people can do stunts and weird things from piercings to walking on hot coals. Moreover, these days, we are made aware of the many experiences in the Body of Christ of people whose testimony bears witness to the truth in the Scriptures that their spirit can travel as the Lord allows them to in heaven or in hell such as sisters Rebecca Springer, Mary Baxter, Choo Thomas and brother Rick Joyner. Although this too was experienced by the Apostles Paul and John as well as the Prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel, it is of great importance to know that such occurs even now. It is however tragic to know also that even the devil can do this for people who are involved in witchcraft and allows their spirit bodies to be used to torment other people such as in sorcery.

Meeting the Storm and the Gadarene demoniac

Then Jesus got into the boat and started across the lake with his disciples.

Suddenly, a fierce storm struck the lake, with waves breaking into the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him up, shouting, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" Jesus responded, "Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!" Then he got up and rebuked the wind and waves, and suddenly all was calm. The disciples were amazed. "Who is this man?" they asked. "Even the winds and waves obey him!" Matt 8:23-27 (NLT)

In the Scriptures, the Gadarene demoniac shows to us how demon possession is real and how the power of God can heal. Even if all the powers of hell are come against us, Jesus shall always be bigger than any hell can blow upon us. At first the disciples rode into a boat that goes far into the other side of Lake Galilee. The disciples must be wondering why they would ride a boat now, but probably are happy to be in the cruise and just enjoy the calm waters of Galilee. When all of the sudden there was a strong gust of wind, and it puff and it puff, until the waters entered the boat and they are about to sink. Then they remembered the Master who was still comfortably asleep at the rear and then they called, Lord, we are about to sink, don't you care? (seeV.24). Then the Lord woke up and rebuked the wind and the waves, then He chastised them and said, "Where is your faith?" Sometimes we

can be full of fear and our thought life so disturbed that we are cast down and can do nothing other than to sigh and like the disciples cry out, Lord, we need your help. He did not rebuke them for asking help or coming to Him, but because of the way they reacted to the waves that compassed them.

Though strong waves of fear and anxiety come upon us, we must like the Lord stand up and rebuke them out loud. “Peace be still”, the words of the Lord brought the rushing waves and feisty winds to a halt. We may not encounter the same kind of storm that the disciples encountered on their way to their mission field. But many times, waves and distractions may encompass us that aren’t any different from such storms. The only way to overcome them is to give ourselves to prayer (Ps. 109:4). Disturbance does not only cause loss of money or anxiety and fear but may even cause the loss of lives. In the Philippines which lie in the typhoon belt we expect 20 to pass every year during the wet season. What I have learned during those times is that we cannot prevent them in coming to pass but God’s power can also lessen their impact or dissipate them while still developing in the ocean or on its way to wreck havoc. A typhoon is not a simple storm but like Hurricane the devastation it can bring can only be assessed as massive once it fall on the ground and rubbed the landscape with its punishing winds and rainfall. Flying debris and house parts may kill somebody who disregard warnings to stay at home during those days. Floods can destroy rice paddies and wash away homes built of nipa huts and precarious materials. Storms can destroy lives, devastate families and cause eventual

loss of livelihood for many farmers and fishermen. What then can man do? We cannot prevent storms from occurring but we can make ourselves ready. We can be practical by saving food and strengthening our houses and building shelters which are flood proof. Apart from this, we should then pray His protection and that the storms may dissipate and bring the least damage possible.

After the storm, Jesus and the disciples pressed forward to the Gadarenes and there met two demon possessed men whom he cast out demons. These men were the only target of Jesus and one account about these two men by Luke shows that they have been suffering for a long time already, “He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs” (Luke 8:27). These two came face to face with God, their inner cries have been heard so that when they saw Jesus they ran to Him and beg for His mercy to deliver them from their bondage. They have been living in tombs because no man can bind them or keep them. This case of demon possession was highlighted by the Scriptures and one of the best cases of demon possession where a host of demons came to dwell on a person. When the Lord created man, He has also made him to be a dwelling place of the Spirit of God.

“If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that

he may abide with you for ever; *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” John 14:15-17

“If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” John 14:23

When this is empty, the void can be filled with anything. This is the reason why throughout the history of mankind, people have always carried some sort of religion. And this is also why the Lord would always command the Israelite to be wary of the idolatry of their neighbors because they can be influenced by what they were doing. Today man may not worship gods and goddesses using images of stones and trees but the idols has also evolved into new forms...these are the things that take away our attention from worshipping the true God. Idols may not be as what the Inca, or the Aztecs or the Hindus worshipped but today's entertainment industry and sports probably takes more captive than did the Inca or Aztec idols. Demon possession occurs when the person is indwelt by evil spirits rather than God. This affliction is more than torment for it controls the body and the thoughts of the person.

“When Jesus arrived on the other side of the lake, in the region of the Gadarenes, two men who were possessed by demons met him. They lived in a cemetery and were so violent that no one could go through that area. They

began screaming at him, "Why are you interfering with us, Son of God? Have you come here to torture us before God's appointed time?" There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding in the distance. So the demons begged, "If you cast us out, send us into that herd of pigs." "All right, go!" Jesus commanded them. So the demons came out of the men and entered the pigs, and the whole herd plunged down the steep hillside into the lake and drowned in the water. The herdsmen fled to the nearby town, telling everyone what happened to the demon-possessed men. Then the entire town came out to meet Jesus, but they begged him to go away and leave them alone." Matt 8:28-34 (NLT)

Satan does not only want to inflict pain on people. He wanted to do it in the most grotesque and painful manner he can do. When Jesus cast out demons, he was criticized by the theologians of his day, saying he was doing it with the trickery of the Prince of Demons, Beelzebub.

**"But the Pharisees said, "He can cast out demons because he is empowered by the prince of demons."
Matt 9:34 (NLT)**

**"But some of them said, "By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons."
Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven. Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this**

because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub. Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you. "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils." Luke 11:15-22 (NIV).

But Jesus cast it out just the same; He did it to bring about the Kingdom of God in that person's life. So Jesus set them free. Just meeting the foul smelling and naked demoniacs may have strike fear and panic to the disciples. But seeing the calmness of the Master, this could have stayed their hearts not to run away. Then when one of the demoniacs stayed with the Lord it must have made them wondering how once more, who this man was. When Jesus was besought by the people from that region to leave, he asked Him to come with them but He instead told him to stay and proclaim the goodness of God in his life.

“When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city and *out* in the country. *The people* went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened. Those who had seen it reported to them how

the man who was demon-possessed had been made well. And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were gripped with great fear; and He got into a boat and returned. But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him; but He sent him away, saying, “Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you.” So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.”
Luke 8:34-39 (NASB)

Many times we may wonder where God is in our lives. Like rushing turbulent water, problems may surface and overwhelm us. The pressure it creates can damage not just our arteries or heart muscles but even relationships, the words we hope never to say may in one unguarded moment spew out like a gush of spray, damaging friendships and even our families. Though we may not be demon possessed, the torment and pain of problems can cause us to breakdown. I have a boss who broke down and needs to be hospitalized for a while because of too much pressure in her work. It was not easy for her because she got Bell palsy afterwards. Sometimes we make things more complicated by looking at how big the problems are and not looking at how big Jesus is who can help us solve those problems. Though oppressed and greatly suffering in anguish of pain and torment, the Gadarene ran towards Jesus. He may have been entombed already, ready to kill himself to end his suffering but the Lord rescued him. Beloved, though a host of demons may encamp against us, let us not be afraid, for the

Lord can rescue us. With God, nothing is impossible. He was healed and in his right mind providing us a template that there is no mental disease or disorder that God cannot heal.

The foolishness of the Gadarenes

One of the most foolish decisions I have ever seen by a group of people apart from the rejection of the Jews of Jesus Christ was also the rejection of the Gadarenes of Him. They saw His power at work within the man whom they tried to heal and pacify for so long and yet did not even thank Him one bit that now, their city and region would be at peace. Instead, they deliberately asked Him to go away. This just shows us that even if God can do a mighty miracle in front of many people, it won't guarantee that they would also follow Him. This is why even Abraham whom the rich man entreated that Lazarus should preach to his family was given a no answer because people who do not listen to proclamations from the mouth of His servants here will not also listen even if someone rises from the dead.

"He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'" Luke 16:31 (NIV)

The heart of man can be hardened and blinded but that does not mean the Lord has not tried to reach out to that person. The judgment of people will be determined by how much light they have seen and how much they have obeyed. Since Israel

rejected the Lord, this is also the reason why the anti-Christ himself will persecute them and in fact throughout history since the Babylonian exile, Jews have faced almost total annihilation from the Romans to Hitler. Jesus denounced cities who did not listen to Him even when mighty miracles and wonders were done in them (Matt 11:21-23). Needless to say, the Lord does not easily give up on them, for through that healed man, he proclaimed God's kingdom throughout the region and he did not do it in just one city but in ten, Decapolis (Mk 5:20). We may not completely know how much the fruit of the preaching and publishing of this man, but he was healed and the town of Gerasenes eventually heard him again preach the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God. Sometimes we may not completely know and understand why the Lord would ask us to do the same, to heal a person, or to pray for someone and preach His salvation to that friend. But later we will know that God has His plans for his life and we are thankful that we have been partaker of his ministry also. To those who are feeling the anguish and bondage of oppression, I want to encourage you that the forces of darkness cannot overpower God's anointing in the believer. Just as Jesus cast out the legion of demons in the Gadarene men, He called us to do the same in people who are suffering this captivity. Some people may suffer a breakdown, while others may suffer a multiple personality disorder but God is the same living God who healed the demoniac, He can heal you too.

Let us pray. Father I pray that right now you would set free your suffering child. Heal him Oh God of any mental anguish and suffering, set him free from fear and anxiety and let your peace rule in his heart and mind. I speak your wholeness upon his body, upon his mind, upon his heart. Lord right now I pray your divine healing has come upon this person and your Kingdom has come upon him. In Jesus name. Amen.

Chapter 2

My experience with oppression

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” 1 Peter 5:8-9

I was a freshman in college at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) taking up BS Biology when I came to know Jesus Christ. I do not know the exact date or the exact time when I actually received Him as my Savior and Lord in my life. What I know and understand was that whereas I have been powerless to overcome my unholy desires, now I can control them better than before and that I feel like the holiness of God has come inside my body. Whereas I hate to read the Bible before, now I feel like it is indeed filled with life and seems alive. The people seem to be alive and they brought me memories of my kindergarten years when we listen to Bible stories during Sundays. I seem to be able to piece all the

information better than before and could understand why those things happened. My taste for reading changed also for whereas my goal was to be a complete man, well read in the sciences as well as in the humanities and letters, now I found myself buying books about Christ and His church, about His mighty acts in the lives of others and about His doctrines. My goal was not anymore to be a complete man, rather to be a whole man. I seem to have changed in my perspective too as whereas I hated before the Brothers who come to dwell in our apartment because my friend was a born again Christian and who has a computer which we all share, now I like them and I love to hear their stories and their testimonies. It was like as if something truly changed within me. I was not struck by lightning or saw a vision of heavenly light. I did not hear any voice of God or heard any thundering sound. I just understood something happened to me and I love the feeling of it. I was on fire. Somewhat John the Baptist's statement came true in me, Jesus shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matt 3:11). I was so happy for no apparent reason like David, I felt like, He has put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and new wine abound (Ps 4:8). I seem to feel like jumping up and down, just like when I was doing it in my elementary days.

As far as I remember I did not immediately go to Metro Manila and preached the gospel to the 11 cities like the healed Gadarene did, but certainly I took my diary and wrote about what happened. Then I took my yellow pad and started

scribbling my letter to my mother and father. I was so ecstatic that when I finished writing, it was more than 3 pages in length back to back. I got my clues in writing a letter from a friend of mine who became a lawyer and who wrote long and meaty letters. I told myself that one day, I will also write long and meaty letters, so I did. After that I went to a Christian bookstore and bought some Chick tracts and inserted them in my letter. I was hoping that my father and mother would somehow read those tracts and become as myself...then there would be no problem and all would be well. Noah was called, he and his household into the Ark of God (Gen 7:1) and the Apostle Peter preached that you and your household shall be saved, so I believe him (Acts 11:14).

Then I was so absorbed about my letters that I thought they were good, so I started writing again. I wrote to my former friend from whom I stole some books and did not return it. I still feel guilty about it so I asked her forgiveness and plan to send her some books as my replacement to hers. I then did the same to others for who I also took for granted their friendships, helps etc. Then I wrote another letter for my brothers who were studying in the same High School where I studied...advising them about what courses to take, what books to read and what to look for in this life. I told them Jesus. Because I have a wonderful friend by the name of Chester Dabalos and Reginald Cordial, these two brought me also to their fellowship and without them I would not have meet many likeminded people and friends who also helped me

on the Way. I can compare that youth fellowship differs so much from the adult fellowship which I have been into in many Protestant congregations. Some do so by praising God using hymnals and readings, others with bands and singing while still others do so with simple praises. What I like most and which I am biased because of my likes is praise and worship with bands. Whereas I was brought up in a church where people stand and pray to God using hymnals, I like my new experience with singing and dancing before the Lord much like a concert where people even cry and faint for the rock bands. This time we don't necessarily fade and faint with the bands, rather we look to Jesus and allow His Spirit to minister to us as we minister to Him also and bring Joy by our worship (Neh 8:10; Jn 4:4). Whenever I go back to my province in Kalinga, I still participate in the Hymnals and do not think that they are outmoded or evil, simply, there are things that we can work out and we do not need to compare and disagree with the method of how we praise God; we can do so by dividing people in various services with their different preferences or do a combination. Some of my friends outrightly reject the older congregations and those based on hymnals as outmoded, even so, this is pride and we must acknowledge that without the blessed organ and piano, there would have been no synthesizer and combo bands. Each instrument has its own time to function and bless the people with.

As I remember now, it seems funny, but I was also glad that I did it. I am glad I wrote those letters because I was far and I do not have the courage to say “I am sorry” face to face with them. I am happy to report that my siblings and I are all born again and followers of the Lord. My Parents too are in the process and we are thankful for what God is doing in our lives. What I want to relate to you now is one of my struggles immediately after some months following my conversion. One day while in my dormitory room at the International House, I found myself very tired and heavy. I was reading a book on spiritual deliverance when all of the sudden I felt heaviness and fear come upon me. I was a little bit afraid, but I continued to read the book. Later on, I could not rest and I felt agitated. I thought God will surround His people with peace, and David said, I will both lie down and sleep for You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety (Ps 4:8). I think it would be better to say fear came and almost totally overtook me because of the graphic descriptions in my reading. I could not get them over my head so that my thoughts turned into imaginations and my imaginations seem so real. But I could feel also goosebumps; some of the Brethren tell that goosebumps can be sign of God’s presence, but when one is afraid or agitated, sometimes goosebumps also occur such as watching movies, so I do not entirely believe that when goosebumps occur, an evil spirit is there, or that God is there. This is a natural body reaction to fear or excitement. What I do know is that when fear overcomes us, our faculties can sometimes freeze. It happened to me. I did not freeze like ice,

rather, I turned to myself inwardly so that all that I could hear about are evil voices; blasphemous and simply evil that my mind could not seem to get over. Paul wrote that if we look inside ourselves, there is nothing good in it (Rom. 7:18).

I now know by hindsight that it was aggravated by my own fear and inability to know it before hand. In fact when it happened, I ran out of fear from my room to Gideon's room, another friend and brother. I asked that he pray for me....and that he should pray for me, always. He said yes. I went out and the next day, I asked him if I can be in his room. He has another empty bed so that I asked to transfer to his room. The matron who knows me did not object. This brother however keeps on telling me to ask God first. I did. I did not hear a strong voice telling me to transfer or go to Gideon's room, but I understood that it was also the Lord's will to bring me to this brother's room when in my reading that day, my eyes fell on the words, "do not be yoked with unbelievers". It was like a great relief. It was like Heaven. Great! In my first room, I know the people inside, my roommates but we do not have anything in common. I was the youngest and certainly they do not like the way I act...sometimes with a Christian music...probably loud to their ears and tormenting to them but pleasing to me. I was insensitive and foolish according to most missions; I should have pleased my neighbors.

Time passed by. I was still depressed and even in my classes I could still hear the voices. When I consulted our pastor, he

told me that even John Nash experienced them and he told me that I must be strong or otherwise I would be brought to the mental hospital. That really unnerved me. Though he did not explicitly told me that I would be brought there, I thought it would have been easier for me to not have read that book and avoided it but my curiosity drove me like a mad dog to nose through books. I wanted to know all that I can. To really understand whether what Jesus said in His word still happens...does He still open the blind eyes? Does He still heal the lame, the mute, the demon possessed? Does He still baptize with fire and Holy Spirit? Are there sorcerers and wicked men who gave their souls to Satan for power and might? Can someone really visit heaven and hell? And what happens after death? I visited the brothers and my former roommate. In their bigger place, it was like Heaven in atmosphere although I see cluttered plates, curtains and unswept floors, I think the joy was there and that makes the difference. Sometimes they do not contribute for food together so they go out and eat outside. They eat well and good. Sometimes food is also scarce and money from the province does not come easily. Then they would have to fast, just strum the guitar and lay flat on their beds. Some brothers or sisters may visit and then bring good foods. At times I bring bread or lend money. I still remember Eloi, a brother who is also a good preacher. He finished Forestry from the UPLB upper campus but right at that time when I was with him he has no job yet. He was looking for one. So he stayed for a while with the brother's house...he lend me some books

and counseled me that the things I cannot overcome will overcome me if I will not. I wondered, how can I overcome even this mental anguish I was suffering? He prayed for me. When I was talking with them, when I was with them, I do not hear it. I can also sympathize with them...sometimes life looks like full of problems even when you are not yet done with college. I heard one schoolmate in high school who killed himself because of problems. Well, Paul said that we are to strengthen our feeble arms and weak knees and make a level path for our feet (Heb 12:12-13) and we must through tribulations enter through the Kingdom of God (Acts 14:22). I won't allow myself to get dragged into the mental hospital, or to put a bullet in my head. I was too afraid for that.

Then one day, as I was walking through to go to my classes, I suddenly found release. Now I do not hear the voices, I finished the two books I was reading about spiritual deliverance and religiously did all what they said. I bound all the demons I thought was affecting me. I rebuke all that I could. I did not hear a big bang, I did not see anything physically happen, but even through my suffering I felt the Lord with me. It's not the goose bumps anymore but when you know Him. You know His presence and you understand it. One does not need to have a Pentecostal theology to discern it. One simply needs to know Him and that He is there. Meanwhile after the semester, my grades suffered terribly so that I have to catch up...it seem I am out of

circulation with my fellow Biology folks. I was gearing to finish medicine when I mounted up to come to UPLB.

After my anguish with hearing voices another problem surfaced in. I was reading my KJV bible for my evening readings when I encountered the verses about the falling away of God's people.

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, ² Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit. For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame.” Heb 6:1-6

It was like, I kept on thinking again about the words of the Bible much in the same way as I blew up about the spiritual deliverance...then boom and suddenly I felt afraid. What if I fall away, then there is no more salvation of God for me? It was really a fearful condition. I do not want to be fried in hell, if there was certain death, where one simply vanishes away like a mist, I would have preferred that. But then God has made us like Himself, one with eternal soul. The disobedient goes to

hell and the obedient to heaven. Heaven and hell look like a magnet of their nature, self organizing organisms that zap in souls that die, the redeemed to heaven and the disobedient to hell. No one wanted to be there until they have died and found themselves in the pit (Luke 16:22-23). Too much work and revelry and they forsook the eternal over the temporal (Luke 9:25).

“The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God.” Psalms 9:17

“The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, *even* into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.” Psalms 18:5-7

“The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God *is* merciful. The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, *and* my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.” Psalms 116:3-9

“Hell and destruction *are* before the LORD: how much more then the hearts of the children of men?” Prov 15:11

“Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied.” Prov 27:20

“Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet *thee* at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, *even* all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.” Isaiah 14:9

“Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it. And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled.” Isaiah 5:14-15

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Matt 10:28

“But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.” Luke 12:5

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.” Luke 16:22-23

“If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and *in his* Father's, and of the holy angels.” Luke 9:23-26

I was afraid of hell. I read about the sufferings of those thrown in hell by the books of Mary Baxter, Divine Revelations of Hell and Choo Thomas' Heaven is so real. It was really fearful to be tormented day and night without end. Pastor Ed Lapiz said, “we have already suffered too much on earth, why chose to suffer again after death when we can chose to have life?” The offerings of Jesus for life in exchange to damnation was really a positive motivation for me, apart from being useful for the Kingdom of Heaven, I think life eternal is one of the dominant motivations in the Kingdom of Heaven. I would not exchange it one bit to Midas' touch or to Bill Gates' billions. Following Jesus has become a lifestyle for me, He was the best and the greatest philosopher this world has ever seen. I do not follow Him only because of that, but of course because He is the Teacher, the Mentor and the Captain of my soul. Indeed to follow Jesus, we must surrender all, He did not come to save us only, He came to kill us too! Then one day after some months of self searching, I told God that I have committed my life to Him and that there is no

turning back. I asked Him that if ever I move away from Him, that He would bring me back to the right path. I also tried to ask my other friends and they too had the same questions with me about backsliding, about falling away. They heard some did fall already and are living in sin, much worse than the first time they came to Christ. It was not an easy decision but I bet it was the best. I counted the cost as Jesus told (Luke 14:28).

Then after some more weeks and months, finally I got over my struggles and settled my accounts. The Holy Spirit breathed the following verse to my heart while reading in my meditation. Most often this is the way the Lord communicates with me. He uses His word to speak what He wants to tell me. I never doubt it was Him because I know my God. Sometimes the Lord speak by reminders too such as it comes to my memory suddenly.

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ...” Phil 1:6

I found that the Lord did the same with the Apostles before as they could speak and write from memory the things they have known from Jesus or from the Scriptures (see Peter’s preaching in Acts 2:16 and Paul’s in Acts 28:25). Jesus moreover said that we should not worry for He will reveal to us what we need to say or do.

“Settle *it* therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.” Luke 21:14-15

“For I [Myself] will give you a mouth and such utterance and wisdom that all of your foes combined will be unable to stand against or refute.” Luke 21:15 (AMP)

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” John 5:39

“But the Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengtheners, Standby), the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name [in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf], He will teach you all things. And He will cause you to recall (will remind you of, bring to your remembrance) everything I have told you.

Peace I leave with you; My [own] peace I now give and bequeath to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. [Stop allowing yourselves to be agitated and disturbed; and do not permit yourselves to be fearful and intimidated and cowardly and unsettled.]” John 14:26-27 (AMP)

Chapter 3

The root cause of oppression

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” 1 Peter 4:12-13

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” James 1:2-5

As I look back, I have been delivered even without my own notice. God works wonders and miracles. I wanted to share to you that there are certain principles we need to learn when suffering under this kind of struggles. Sometimes we may

come under them or not at all. It is true that we must tremble before the Word of God (Isa 66:2) and that we must fear Him (Ecc 12:13), but there are certain things we need to separate such as the unhealthy fear of the Lord, certainly this does not come from Heaven. Depression and then abandoning the Word of God, and stopping to fellowship with others and altogether shutting down ourselves. I thank God this did not happen to me, but I must confess that I did tremble with the Word of the Lord but my undue fear and thoughts on the negative have rather made matters worse. I kept on thinking about backsliding, about the “ifs” of life and what will happen then. Jesus simply said, do not be anxious about tomorrow or be concerned about these things because God is able to take care of these things for us. Yes, even though Jesus was speaking about food and clothing on these verses, He too was referring about spiritual provisions for us...that is whatsoever will happen tomorrow or our future, Jesus will take care of it, one thing at a time.

“So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” Matt 6:31-34 (NIV)

Most of our struggles in this life are rooted in saving our own skin. When we are more concerned about saving our own lives, we find it that we will tend to lose it eventually. The more concerned we are about ourselves, the more inwardly we turn to be and there is nothing good found in us. Depression may come in and we will find ourselves in greater struggle than before. Many workaholics do so out of saving for riches, buying more properties and trying to find significance in temporal matters. Life is not meant to be all work and use it as a reason to cover ourselves away from God. Work should be a partnership between God and man. We will find our lives not apart from God but with God...true significance come only when we have the eternal One residing in our hearts. Thus, when we dwell on the negative, we will tend to see things bleak and our hearts will cover in fear. I praise the Lord that during those times, He provided me friends and people who comforted me making things better and eventually I was able to focus my eyes again on Jesus. There are principles we can extract from my experience and the experience of other people to set us free and refocus our devotion to the Lord.

1. Unhealthy fear

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” 1 John 4:18

There is a great difference between a true fear of the Lord and one that is unhealthy fear. To fear the Lord means to obey Him, to not allow the seeds of disobedience to pollute our minds. But one can also obey Him without loving Him. So the

Apostle John wrote we must love God because fear has torment with it, it is in love that the fear of the Lord is perfected. When the Apostle John who could arguably be the most intimate disciple with the Lord saw visions of Jesus in the isle of Patmos, he would often times described as trembling and falling before the Lord (Rev 1:17). We can be intimate with God and still have a healthy fear of the Lord. When we fear to read His word because we are hurt and we do not like what is written in it, this is the unhealthy fear inside of us. The only way for us to overcome our own fears is to submit it to Jesus because He can calm our anxious hearts like He did the turbulent waves of the Lake. Sometimes we become arrested by too much thought on our future, on our children and these can overwhelm us. King David prayed, Elijah prayed and the Lord promised us that when we come before Him, He will answer us. The secret is to bring our struggles before Him, including the way we feel at certain things. The Lord loves to hear His children pray and speak with Him.

“...but I *give myself unto* prayer” Psalms 109:4

“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” Matt 21:22

“And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.” Acts 10:31

“Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.” Romans 12:12

2. Depression

“In the year of King, Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts,, The whole earth is full of His glory." And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.

Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined!, Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips;; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Isa 6:1-5 (NASB)

Depression is the result of seeing things by our own eyes. When I kept on looking at the future, the only thing I saw was hopelessness. But when these Seraphims reported back to God, they can only tell the Lord that the earth is “full of glory”. How can these Seraphims tell that the earth is full of glory? The secret is they were beholding the Lord in His very presence. When John saw the Lord in Heaven and the people of God, he only saw rejoicing and worship, even those creatures on the earth and under the earth.

“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four *and* twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.” Rev 5:11-14

Heaven is heaven because of God’s presence. Even if it were a paradise, without the presence of God, we will not see things rightly. The prophet Isaiah said, “woe is me... for I have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” Why should Isaiah be afraid of the Lord? This tells us how holy God is, and even prophets whom we may think to be holy could only see their drabness when they focus on themselves such as Isaiah. But when one looks on the Lord, we will be transformed day by day into His image. Paul the Apostle wrote, **“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith... consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Heb 12:2-3).** It is only by looking to Jesus that we will find true comfort because He has experienced same trials we will undergo and even more because He obeyed the Father and was crucified.

We will always find fault when we look to ourselves and when we look to others. This is why we must always behold the Lord like we are looking to a mirror for as we look to Him, we will reflect Him more and more.

“But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.” 2 Cor 3:18 (NASB)

“So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.” 2 Cor 3:18 (NLT)

In the Old Testament, when the Bible describes “downcast soul or face” this speaks of depressed people. Hannah for example had a downcast face because she does not have any children and she cried that God give her one (1 Sam. 1:18). When Cain’s offering was not accepted, he was angry and depressed and felt jealous that God accepted his brother’s but not his (Gen 4:5). And when Jeremiah was grieving, he too was depressed (Lam. 3:20). King David had probably written most of his bouts of depression in the Scriptures and how he had overcome them by putting his hope and praising the Lord making him our best model on how to overcome depression.

“Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon — from Mount Mizar.

Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me.” Ps 42:5-7(NIV)

“I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. Psalms 30:1-3

To overcome depression, one must put his focus back to God. We must not dwell on the negative and we must learn to forgive offenses when others hurt us. Anger and depression is a tale tell sign that we are not walking in faith.

3. Forgetting the Word of God

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” Josh 1:8

**“How blessed is the man who does not walk in the
counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.”**
Psalms 1:1-3 (NASB)

The Word of God serves as a map in the Kingdom of God. It is full of life and full of wisdom that if Plato and Aristotle could have laid their hands on, they would have both agreed that this is life eternal. Even the Apostles gave priority over the word of God and prayer in their ministries. It is a book that has determined the rise and fall of many. King David and Joshua both lead a successful army and organization because they read the word of God and meditated on it day and night. What makes the Word of God essential to our lives as pilgrims on earth? First, the word of God is our map and guide (Josh 1:8, Ps 119:9). Second, the word of God washes the filth away from our minds (Eph 5:26). Third it is used to judge doctrines, traditions, theology and Christian experience ranging from prophetic visions and dreams whether they are biblically sound or have antecedents (Mk 7:13, 2 Tim 2:15; 1 Cor 10:6). Fourth it is food for the nourishment of our spiritual bodies, **“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”**

(Matt 4:4). And fifth, it is used for equipping the saints to teach them to do ministry and follow the way of the Lord Jesus bearing witness of His testimony (Acts 6:2, Heb 4:12; Rev 1:2)

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” 2 Tim 2:15

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” 2 Tim 3:16-17 NASB

“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 discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Heb 4:12

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” Psalms 119:9-11

In short, the Word of God serves as a way by which the Lord speaks to us and confirms our doctrines and experiences. We cannot validate every experience of the Christian to be sent from the Lord because some of it are probably allowed but maybe authored by the devil. For example there are cases of

spiritual manifestations which cannot be validated by the Word of God this includes Virgin Mary apparitions and worship of saints and prayer to saints...these are not Scripturally sound. Visions and prophetic dreams are valid as there were many antecedents in the Scriptures such as in the Prophets, the Apostle Peter, John and even Paul who saw the Third Heaven and Joel's prophetic declaration, **“But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Acts 2:16-21.** What we need to watch out is the source of dreams and visions as even Satan can sow tares when we sleep and do not watch our hearts.

4. Forgetting Prayer

“...but I *give myself unto* prayer.” Psalms 109:4

There are many books written about prayer that we can chew and should apply. The best however is to really pray and go down on our knees daily. There is actually no formula how we should pray before God or what should be done first before praying. Prayer is our simple way of talking before our own Father. We must see God as our family. It is by seeing Him as member of our family do we really see that He is our father and that we are His children. Many have evil thoughts about their earthly fathers so that they can't really see the point why they call Him father. So they settle to call Him Lord. Jesus taught the disciples how to pray. And when He did, the first thing He taught them was to call Him, Our Father. If you have been brought up in a family which is surrounded with love, you can understand that your father can be your best friend as well as teacher. You can tell him all that is in your hearts without the fear of hiding anything that may detest him, because you are comfortable with him. God is not a faraway God; this is why Jesus became man so that He can show the Father to His people. It was for love of the Father that He sent the Son (Jn 3:16). Jesus is the revealed glory of the Father (Jn 14: 9-11). What is the secret of praying long hours? It is not babbling all that you know and repeating them in chanting that we please God. Rather it by opening our hearts before Him. The psalmist wrote,

“Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation. Harken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct *my prayer* unto thee, and will look up. Psalms 5:1-3

“Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping. The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer. Psalms 6:8-9

“As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.” Psalms 55:16-17

David’s Psalms are full of prayers, they are meant as a worship prayer to God. Many of those record stories and tell us how David prayed before God. This can guide us well. When he prays before God David simply opens up all that is in his heart before the Lord. He tells the Lord how his enemies accused him unjustly and how he feels about these. Like David, we must be personal before the Lord and learn to abide by this. We must make time for prayer if we want to shine the light of the Kingdom of God to our officemates and friends, the first thing we do is to be equipped with His Word and learn to pray.

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made

known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Phil 4:6-7

4. Forgetting fellowship with the Brethren

“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, *even so* minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” 1 Peter 4:7-10

In Charles Dicken’s Christmas Carols, Ebenezer Scrooge is the prototype of a man who is always sad, pathetic and continually depressed. He hates everyone. Most of the people fear and tolerate him. But once the three different spirits of Christmas visited and warned him, he finally repented. The first act of kindness we saw him doing was to give a boy some monies to buy a turkey. Giving, in any form from services to providing the things we can probably removes depression faster than anything else. It is by giving praise and worship that we remove the veil of depression and sadness in our lives. We become stronger because we bring joy to God (Neh 8:10). His presence energizes every bones and sinews in our body. Fellowship provides the same avenue for us to give to others whether encouragement, Bible reading or simply chatting over a cup of coffee. When we have fellowship, we unconsciously refocus from ourselves to others. This can be the reason why

people have never stopped to form organizations and societies. But it is only the Church which can provide spiritual encouragement, training and equipping to the people. When we fellowship together, the Lord is in our midst ministering grace, strength, wisdom, knowledge, miracles and healing, “for where two or three are gathered in His name, He is in the midst of them” (Matt 18:20). The Church provides a refuge, a sanctuary not only to the sick and downcast but even to everyone who has struggles. This works as long as the people of God learn to love each other and minister to one another by the strength and grace God has given them. When we forget to proclaim the everlasting gospel, set free the captives, heal the sick, visit those in prisons, provide clothing and shelter to the homeless our religion has fade in significance.

“Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it! Remember those in prison, as if you were there yourself. Remember also those being mistreated, as if you felt their pain in your own bodies.” Heb 13:1-3 (NLT)

“Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. And don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. These are the sacrifices that please God. Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy

and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.” Heb 13:15-17 (NLT)

5. Delusion and shutdown

People who altogether have lost hope will not only try to kill others but even themselves. When Paul and the prisoners were being carried on an Egyptian ship bound for Rome, a strong typhoon caused them to be stranded on the sea for days. Then when finally the ship was about to be broken because it ran aground in rocky reefs, the soldiers plotted to kill the prisoners. They have not eaten for weeks, worried and depressed for their lives because not even the stars would be seen at night.

“The terrible storm raged for many days, blotting out the sun and the stars, until at last all hope was gone. No one had eaten for a long time. Finally, Paul called the crew together and said, “Men, you should have listened to me in the first place and not left Crete. You would have avoided all this damage and loss. But take courage! None of you will lose your lives, even though the ship will go down...

Just as day was dawning, Paul urged everyone to eat. “You have been so worried that you haven't touched food for two weeks,” he said. “Please eat something now for your own good. For not a hair of your heads will perish.” Then he took some bread, gave thanks to God before them all, and broke off a piece and ate it. Then everyone was encouraged and began to eat— all 276 of us who were on board.

After eating, the crew lightened the ship further by throwing the cargo of wheat overboard.

When morning dawned, they didn't recognize the coastline, but they saw a bay with a beach and wondered if they could get to shore by running the ship aground. So they cut off the anchors and left them in the sea. Then they lowered the rudders, raised the foresail, and headed toward shore.

But they hit a shoal and ran the ship aground too soon. The bow of the ship stuck fast, while the stern was repeatedly smashed by the force of the waves and began to break apart.

The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners to make sure they didn't swim ashore and escape.” Acts 27:20-22, 33-42 (NLT)

Hope is the anchor of the soul (Heb 6:19). When people lose hope, they are more driven to do nasty things that they do not intend to do. But in the midst of this darkness, the Apostle stood as an exemplary example, encouraging the people to eat, and to be strong. When the crew thought that they finally found a bay to dock, they ran towards it only to be shipwreck. In our lives, problems and struggles can sometimes be confounded by things we thought to be solutions. Instead of running to the Lord to deliver us, we run away from Him. When Jonah was called to preach repentance to the Ninevites, he ran away only to be swallowed by a big fish. Our solutions to our own problems can be scientifically valid, but are they scripturally sound? When King Saul saw all the people running away from him, he thought he could actually sacrifice before

God and stay the people together. What he did cost him his kingship, whereas King David would often be found inquiring before the Lord, Saul acted on his own presumption which was both pride and insecurity. Mental anguish could be a terrible suffering and the Lord did not put any exemptions on the list of diseases He can heal. When I asked the Lord what was the basis of His healing the mental anguish of man, He pointed to me that the thorns that pierced His head and the sufferings He had in the garden testify of His authority to heal in this area, for where He was bruised, there He has the authority to heal. It is by having hope that we pierce the veil of darkness in our lives and continue to fellowship with the Lord (Heb 6:19). We must therefore continue to encourage and never give up on people who have lost their hopes. Like King David, when we put our hope in God, we shall find deliverance for our souls even when it was cast into the pit of delusion and depression already.

“Behold, the eye of the LORD *is* upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.”
Psalms 33:18-19

“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and *why* art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him *for* the help of his countenance.” Psalms 42:5

“For thou *art* my hope, O Lord GOD: *thou art* my trust from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the

womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise *shall be* continually of thee.” Psalms 71:5-6

“I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul *waiteth* for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: *I say, more than* they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD *there is* mercy, and with him *is* plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” Psalms 130:5-8

“Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou *art* my praise.” Jer 17:14

“Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil” Heb 6:19

“... that your faith and hope might be in God.” 1 Peter 1:21

Chapter 4

The support frame

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” Isaiah 53:4-5

“For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” Heb 12:3-4

Healing people with mental diseases and struggles may take time but this is part of the ministry which the Lord has even devoted Himself such as to the two Gadarenes. His mission on crossing the lake was to look for and set the captives free. Though a tempestuous sea arose to thwart His mission, He remains determined like a stone. He calmed the raging wind and waves. Then on disembarking, He was immediately met by the two demoniacs running for mercy towards Him. With

love in His eyes and compassion that are not often seen on the eyes and neighbors of the demon possessed and mentally ill, He cast out the demons and healed them. Casting out demons and spiritual deliverance is part and parcel of the ministry of the Shepherd. It is not only for certain gifted people. Jesus has all authority in Heaven and on earth because by His sufferings He became the Son of Man and by His Lordship over all, He was the Son of God, so that through His Body today, He can exercise them once more just like when He was walking on this earth.

**“And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ ‘Heal *the* sick, raise *the* dead, cleanse *the* lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.’”
Matt 10:7-8 (NASB)**

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matt 28:18-20 (NASB)

**“We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak...”
Romans 15:1**

Your neighbor and family

I once read a story about a young man who was devastated to find his home and his village wipe out by a huge wave from the sea. He was young, he was strong but the waves were stronger than him and it took all their belongings into the sea. One week after the incident, he went out not knowing where to go but this time he just wanted to see the coastline, the waves of the sea. He was found rolled across the beach, unconscious when a big wave swamped their area. He was only one of the few who were found alive. Then he tried to remember the spot where their house stood before. He stood looking at the stumped of bamboo still standing on the way. He now remembered, he was playing with his neighboring children when suddenly a gush of water came upon them. They were wading on it then it left them, only to come back with a mighty and violent force. He looked once more to the sea, shall he be afraid of the sea? It was their source of livelihood. Many times he went with his elder brother and father to fish in the nearby islands and get some Lapu-Lapu. At other times they just go to the beach near the mangroves and pick shells from there as the tide recedes. This was life for him. Waves come to and from but he has never seen such a big wave before. He never saw his mother and father again. Not even his brother. He wondered if his other playmates were still alive. He looked into the other side, but he can only see a wide swath of open space with bamboos and nipas strewn all over. The Red Cross and the government workers

have been working all week to clean the town and the villages but there are still a lot of things to clean up. With face resolute though grieving inside, he again thought of his future. Shall the future be as bleak as the dark blue seas? Or shall it be as bright as the sun? He had heard a few of the children were brought to a catholic orphanage; others will be brought next week to an Evangelical orphanage while others more will be given adoption papers. He looked at the sky. Now it's sunny and hot, the wide barren village looks like a dense aggregation of shells scattered all over the beach. But now he has to go back to the hospital. His old uncle will be waiting for him.

Your neighbor can be your family. Or your family can be your relatives. When God instituted marriage, He also ordained with it the building of a family. Family is not just the foundation of the society but the revelation of the Father's glory. He sent Jesus Christ to assemble and bring all His children back at home to Heaven. His sacrificial death as payment for the sin of man marks the end of strife between good and evil. It settled forever the question of life and destiny for every person living on earth. The only thing everyone needs to answer is whether they are willing to obey the voice of God through His servants and through His Body on earth. When Pilate saw Jesus, he asked, what is truth? (Jn 18:38) Truth or principles can only be discerned and applied but it cannot be questioned once it is revealed. The Jews looked for a Messiah and the Greeks looked for wisdom but both stumbled not knowing who the Truth is and what is the

truth (1 Peter 2:6). Jesus asked the following questions that we need to answer ourselves, **“Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother (Matt 12:48-50).** Jesus emphasized the Fatherhood of God in every preaching He did to make it lucid to everyone that the Kingdom of God is like one big extended family. God is the father of all because everyone becomes His children. He has no grandchildren. Everyone must believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior to do so. This is why even the very Son of God taught the Lord’s Prayer and addressed it as “Our Father”.

He wanted everyone to know that God can be as near as anyone’s father. In fact He even said that we should, **“call no *man* your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven” (Matt 23:9).** Even Paul the Apostle realized that it was the Father’s idea that there should be families so that he wrote, **“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (Eph 3:14-15).** The phrase, **“Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,”** speaks that God is the source of all our names because He is our origin. Luke documents this fact by saying Adam was the son of God (Luke 3:38) making all mankind trace back their ancestry to Adam and ultimately to God, Our Father. Where does this leave us? As member of

the Body of Christ, and of the Father's Kingdom, we ought to be our brother's keeper. Those who are sick and struggling should not be always thought of us weak and therefore without use. We ought to take care of one another being brothers and sisters in Christ. But most often times, we hear of backbiting, unfounded accusations, divorce, abuse and lack of clear vision among many Christians. Paul wrote, **“do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another (Gal 5:13-15).** When the Lord walked the earth and gave a lecture how can one be a good neighbor, He gave a poignant example of caring for those who are in need regardless if you are preoccupied with a task at hand or it is your enemy. To be a good neighbor requires that we abandon our self seeking and give priority to helping others who are more in need than us. That includes helping those who are in mental anguish because of fear, trauma, torment, despair, delusion and depression. Let not your everyday task prevent you in being your brother's keeper because as you give water to the thirsty, revive, mend, bind and heal, the wounded and the broken hearted the Lord sees that too. It does not matter if it gets rewarded now or published. Like Abraham and Moses, we must be resolute to put our eyes on eternity, towards the City of God where our Great Reward awaits us.

“By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign *land*, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.” Hebrews 11:8-10 (NASB)

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.” Hebrews 11:24-26 (NASB)

Finding your family

Man cannot be an island to himself alone. Like the boy who was thrown by the waves on the seashore and picked by a Good Samaritan, each of us needs to have a family. The afflicted will heal faster in an atmosphere of cheer, joy and love but not in isolation. There are many cases of retirees who die immediately after their retirement because of lack of work and people who often surrounded them. Isolation can only be good when one is seeking God for a season such as when Jesus sought the Father’s anointing and will in the wilderness and when Moses climbed Mount Sinai to receive the tablets of stone. Man’s life was created to be a fellowship first with God and with men. Our fellowship with God fulfills our spiritual

needs while our fellowship with others fulfills the social aspect of our being. When the Lord made Adam, He also saw that though he was surrounded with love and bounty in the Paradise, still he was lonely. The Lord saw first that it was not good for man to be alone, so He made him a family. He brought Eve. If you look around you, even the simple lichens growing on tree barks and stones have a need for other organisms. It is made of mutual union between a symbiotic alga and fungi. The alga makes the food while the fungi provide habitat and protection for the alga. All living things and including the non-living materials and processes that we see at work on earth are interconnected with one another and what keeps the balance of all these processes to happen precisely without much error is the Lord (Job 38:4).

“The earth *is* the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.”
Psalms 24:1-2

**“Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand,
And marked off the heavens by the span,
And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure,
And weighed the mountains in a balance
And the hills in a pair of scales?”** Isaiah 40:12 (NASB)

Man's worth and value loses its significance without others. It is by having fellowship with our families, friends, and societies that we learn to value what it really means to have a family, a

support frame. We cannot really live in relative isolation. With mobile phones, internet and netbooks, it is hard not to be connected these days wherever you are. True communication with others however does not only mean that we email each other once in a while and view their photos or videos in a social networking service. It still means the old fashioned face to face communication and chatting with each other because man was made a tactile and sensible being. Although many have fashioned robotic and virtual worlds as a way to communicate with others, true fellowship is still enjoyed best when we are with each other. Man's power and usefulness come, not in isolation, but through union and cooperation with others. Our lives can even be more significant when we become a member of the Lord's Family. No one can truly be a member of His family who does not receive Jesus Christ first as His Savior and Lord. We need Him, just as every member of our body needs to be attached to it, if it's going to be of any value. We also need fellowship with other believers who are attached to Christ. A soldier fighting a battle alone or a single man working with pick and shovel trying to dig a Panama Canal, would scarcely be more effectual than a Christian trying to establish God's Kingdom all by himself. Apart from these, one way of walking in God's protection is by having fellowship with our Brethren which in the process cleanses all from sin because God's covering on His local family and body is extended upon us.

“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” 1 John 1:6-7

Good foundation is necessary

We may already be part of a family but when we do not have the right foundation, it is altogether faulty. An architect is a master builder but when he builds a superstructure or any great house, he first considers the foundation. If it would last for a thousand years, then it must be a solid foundation. Without a proper foundation the superstructure will not last or even stand. To overcome attacks on our minds, we need to steel it. The very first way is to check is whether we are in the faith. One cannot be a Christian because he has been attending church. That is churchianity. Neither can we be a Christian because we have a mother or father who believes in Christ Jesus. We have to believe ourselves and this must be a personal experience. Like Pilate, how can we know truth if we do not believe in it? The Scriptures say,

“No one is righteous— not even one. No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God.

All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one.” Romans 3:10-12 (NLT)

“For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 6:23

“When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.” Romans 5:6-8 (NLT)

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” John 14:6

Apart from the support of a cheerful family and friends, a personal foundation of peace is a sure way to overcome any struggles in life. By making peace with our Maker, we ensure a true lasting foundation for a sound mind and perspective.

When you make the Lord truly your personal Savior, He will grant you a spirit of power, love and sound mind (2 Tim 1:7).

“Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose mind is stayed on thee*: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH *is* everlasting strength...” Isaiah 26:3-4

“*There is* no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked.” Isaiah 48:22

Chapter 5

Combating Satan's cohorts

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *ye* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *ye* double minded.” James 4:7-8

From the previous chapters, we learned that attacks on the mind such as mental anguish and hearing voices may not necessarily be because of sin in one's life. It can be caused by depression, failure to look in the right perspective, or overwhelming problems we did not expect to come upon us. We also learned that we need others and that we cannot be lone rangers in the Kingdom of God. To be a strong and healthy member of the Body of Christ, we have to be connected to others believers such as on local assembly of worshippers. We do not need to be another superman to do all the things in the Scriptures alone, we are of one body together and the success of one is the success of all. When the Lord looks down, what do you think He sees? Many

disconnected body parts? No. He only sees one Body of all believers. Like the Gadarene demoniac who run to meet with Jesus, our very first way to overcome our struggles is to run to Jesus.

1. Run to Jesus

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.” Matt 26:41

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Heb 4:16

We can have so many tasks in a day from mending a broken fridge or taking care of a baby or looking for that iron we stuck somewhere. Sometimes these things are really important but what could be a better way to greet the new day than to run to Jesus and meet Him in prayer and devotions? It is only when Christians sleep that they will be found out by their own enemies. When Jesus went to pray, He told the disciples to stay and also pray. But when He came back, he found them all lying on the ground snoring and with heads neatly snug in their cloaks. What happened next? We found them next all running away from Him and one disciple went all the way with Him to the cross but two of them betrayed Him, one selling Him for thirty pieces of silver. It was of historic proportions that this parallels also the Middle Ages when the Church slept; all sorts of evil doctrines were inserted and justified by those in authority. But when the Church started to pray and

read the Word again, the Reformation was born and birthed liberty throughout all Christendom ushering ultimately the foundations of civil society in the modern world. Whenever the Christians slept and have lowered their guards because they thought all persecutions are gone the devil also crept in and sowed the tares that will ultimately serve to entangle the Christians. Jesus said, “the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak”. The Church needs to arise again just as in the days of the Reformers, it must still recover the true message of the Church...that the Kingdom of God has come, to all people who are willing to accept this message. In like manner, whenever we allow our guards down, we will be oppressed by the enemy. It is when we forget to think that God has called us as His soldiers that we imperil ourselves to our enemy. Let us therefore run to our Master to empower and give us the grace that we need to stand daily by giving Him part of our time. We must go to the throne of grace and ask for it every day. Our success depends on how closely we walk with the Lord. Draw near to Him and He will draw near to you. Your heart must become His dwelling place.

2. Stand by faith

Faith is the power of God that destroys fear. If fear is the missile that attacks us, faith is the smart bomb that seeks and destroys the missile of fear. Faith cannot be feelings because feelings can be subject to emotions and emotions can be subject to hormonal changes in the body depending on ambient temperature or effects of the environment. As a

young Christian I love the feelings of excitement during praise and worship and during cell group meetings. I love also the fellowship and the chatting together with my other Brethren, but I was also foolish when I thought that the source of my faith was the feelings of strength I get whenever I am with them. Then the Lord corrected me, faith is different from feelings. You can be sick and still have faith such as Elisha...or you can be flogged and spit upon by people like Jesus and still not lose your faith. Both of them felt worse at their conditions but they did not focused on them. Faith focuses on God. That is why Abraham was confident that though he did not yet see the land that God told him, he believed on the Word of God. He believed that there was indeed a plenty and fruitful land beyond the desert and sand dunes. No wonder Abraham became the pattern of all believers in Christ, he set the tone for our journey. He obeyed God though he had never seen the land before.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Heb 11:1

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.” Heb 11:8-10

When we confront fear in our lives, sometimes we do need to bind them out loud. We may do the same thing on other spirits of affliction such as fever, or unclean spirit. The Lord will guide His servants which and provide the necessary discernment when confronting an evil spirit even demon possession of a person. It is necessary that when we bind, we believe it happened and that the Lord's heavenly army has marched with us also though we may not have seen it happen with our own physical eyes. Our success of spiritual deliverance lies in our faith in God to do His job and that we do our own which is to bind the enemy and tear down his house. We do not need to do rituals such as what the occult does or what the animists do. What we need is to simply obey the Word of God as it says and believe it happens. Demons may manifest themselves and strike terror in many who are uninitiated but we do not need to fear them for, "greater is He who is in us than he who is in this world (1 John 4:4).

"But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house." Matt 12:28-29

"Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matt 18:18

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” 1 John 4:1-3

3. Meditate the word of God

“Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.” Matt 22:29

“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures”

Luke 24:45

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” John 5:39

The word of God is our daily food. We dare not forget to nourish our bodies and so we must do the same to our spiritual bodies. It would be like munching on the sidelines when we get back to heaven and communicate with the writers of the Word of God that we have no knowledge or understanding of their works. We honor them by studying how God used them as leaders of His children, nation and Church. More than this, the spiritual insight and understanding that we gain from reading His word cannot be

compared to any other. When I was a young Christian, I thought that the only Bible I should read is the King James Bible because it is the true Word of God. This can be a myth or a fact but I cannot confirm that it is an ultimate principle. Even if it does, reading other Bible versions have its own benefits such as clarity of translation, new meanings, new understanding and insights, convenience as well as vibrance that it brings. When I was so concerned about the version of the Bible I was reading, the Lord rebuked me and pointed to me that when He broke the bread to feed the five thousand how many bread remained? So out of the few, He multiplied them. The Lord does not only look on the faithfulness of translation but also on reaching out to others, the literate, the beginner, the expert and the professional. More than the bread, it is the Spirit of God behind which empowers, anoints, strengthens and encourages believers from all walks of life. As a father, the Lord would be more than happy to see little Joey studying a readable Bible than one which is full of deep words but he could not chew one bit. So if we think in accordance to the line of KJV only, how about the illiterate believer who can only read Ilocano, Cebuano and Waray? Does that mean God cannot touch them? Or that their Ilocano or Cebuano Bible has an anti-Christ in it? No way. There can be many translations just as there can be many gifts but it is the Spirit of the Lord that unifies them all and still makes them His untarnished Word. This line of thinking runs contrary to the natural man, because they limited the power of God to only one method or one translation. We all do not need to disagree

or fight on this matter for what matters most is the Lord overall and the best translation we would ever find is a transformed Christian. Paul counts the Bereans more noble than other churches he visited because they actually read and study His word. Sadly even today, the Sword of God lay rusting in many libraries because people have forgotten to read the very one that nurtured the freedom of their modern society.

“And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews. [They] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Acts 17:10-11

4. Focus on God

In our countryside, the motorized tiller has not yet completely erased scenes where a farmer rides his carabao and till the ground. During my childhood, I see farmers talking to their carabaos as if he was also a member of their family. In rural areas of the Philippines we still see the carabao as not just the beast of burden but the best friend of the farmer. Without the carabao, the farmer cannot plow his field nor bring his harvest to the market or even provide milk for his family. In the same manner of intimate friendship between the farmer and the carabao, we are called to fellowship with the Lord. He is the farmer and we are His vessels. Just as Jesus rode the donkey many times in His life to go to Jerusalem, we are God’s vessels

to display the power and light of heaven on earth. Jesus taught that we must, **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt 5:16)**. How can we do this task more effectively is the question. Laser is a focused beam of light. It can be used to cut anything or measure minute details or very far objects. Light by itself alone can achieve much, but it becomes more useful when we also channel its strength so that it becomes laser. Our lives cannot reach its maximum potential outside the only one who knows how to do it. Apart from the Lord, we cannot do mighty good works on earth which has heaven’s seal on it. The Lord gave an illustration by showing the disciples that a broken branch is of no use to the tree. To be of good use, it has to be attached to the tree. Then He spoke, “apart from Me you can do nothing”. He was telling them that without Jesus, they cannot really be of good use to Heaven; neither can they bring fruit of the Kingdom. What then does it mean to be with Jesus?

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. “My Father is glorified by

this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. “These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full. John 15:4-11 (NASB)

There are ten repetitions of the word abide in these verses making it a keyword for understanding what the Lord wants to communicate. To abide means to stay, to dwell, to suffer, to cleave, to adhere, to cling and to stick. Jesus wants us to stay close with Him so that we can really bear much fruit. Bearing fruit is the consequence of staying closely with Jesus regardless of our class, status, ministry or creed or doctrines. A follower of God who loves Jesus and abides by Him cannot really stay in deception forever because the light of the Lord will guide him. When I took my Plant Physiology and Botany classes we studied about how nutrients are transported via the root system of trees and plants. No matter how big a tree is, God has designed that all plants have a way to transport the nourishment it needs via the roots towards all branches and leaves. Each of these transport vessels can be called pipes that bring in the needed nutrients to the Plants. In order to have a bigger and better probability to have more fruits, farmers apply fertilizers and pruning methods to plants. Fertilizers bring in the complete food a plant needs while pruning

removes unfruitful or useless branches sapping the plant nutrients that are better used for the fruitful branches. The plant will use captured light from the sun that is then used by the plant leaves to cook their food and energize the plant. Without the farmer or husbandman, a tree may not be properly taken care of from complete fertilizer needs to watering and pruning. Likewise, to be properly attached to the Lord and remain fruitful, we need to cleave or stay connected to the Tree of Life. It is by being close with the Lord that He nourishes us with words of understanding, wisdom, knowledge and proper direction. The Father knows how to take care of the tree, or the vine and the branches well, pruning and chastising us whenever needed. Matthew Henry writes, “It is the great concern of all Christ's disciples, constantly to keep up dependence upon Christ, and communion with him. True Christians find by experience, that any interruption in the exercise of their faith, causes holy affections to decline, their corruptions to revive, and their comforts to droop. Those who abide not in Christ, though they may flourish for awhile in outward profession, yet come to nothing. The fire is the fittest place for withered branches; they are good for nothing else.” Thus, we must always draw close to Jesus so that we can walk in the Spirit and fulfill not the desires of the flesh. It is really that simple and we will never outgrow the truth of this.

“Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” 1 John 1:3

“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...” James 4:8 (NASB)

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” 2 Cor 11:3

About the author

I hail from my beloved town of Tabuk, nestled in the mountains of Kalinga which is the rice granary of Northern Luzon in the Philippines. In Tabuk, I learned my abc and rudiments of drawings from my mother who taught me during my primary years. I have always been a regular church attendee at our local Protestant Church which was near our place so that as a small boy I knew more of Bible stories than legends taught in our schools. I finished my elementary and high school as a Salutatorian and went to study BS Biology at the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) through the help of NISGP Scholarship. There I met the Lord Jesus Christ and attended discipleship with the Destiny and Lakas-Angkan ministries. After graduation, I held jobs as instructor and research assistant at several government offices. I recently received my degree of Master of Science in International Studies in Aquatic Tropical Ecology (ISATEC) from the University of Bremen with the help of the German Academic Exchange Scholarship (DAAD). I am happily married to the love of my life, Erna and together with our adorable daughter, Germane Amber, we currently reside in Bonn, Germany.