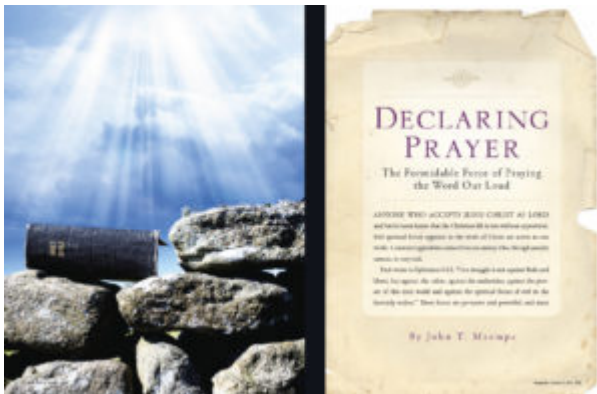


Declaring Prayer

The Formidable Force of Praying the Word Out Loud

By John Maempa



Anyone who accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior soon learns that the Christian life is not without opposition. Evil spiritual forces opposed to the work of Christ are active in our world. Constant opposition comes from an enemy who, though usually unseen, is very real.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:12, "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." These forces are pervasive and powerful, and must be taken seriously. We can be thankful, however, that God equips us with the ability to both protect ourselves from, and do battle against, the enemy of our soul.

Our principal weapon in the battle is the Word of God. Immediately following his alert to believers in Ephesians 6, Paul instructed his readers to "put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand" (v. 13). Paul then described the pieces of armor to be worn—the

belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the footgear representing readiness for battle, the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation.

Notably, each piece of armor is for defense or protection from the “flaming arrows of the evil one” (v. 16). Then Paul instructs his readers to take the “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (v. 17)—the only weapon for offense in the Christian soldier’s armament.

Without breaking stride, Paul adds in verse 18, “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.” Clearly, there is a vital relationship in spiritual warfare between wielding the Word and praying Spirit-led prayers. Prayer, coupled with the Word, is a formidable force.

Declare Scripture with Power

Because God’s Word is alive, dynamic, and powerful, as Hebrews 4:12 describes, we can wield it boldly in warfare prayer. While our enemies, Satan and his forces, cannot read our thoughts, they can hear our declarations in prayer. And while we do not pray to our enemies, we certainly can direct prayer at them, declaring the truths and promises of Scripture.

I am intrigued by war documentaries, particularly those that focus on the various kinds of weaponry used, especially during World War II. Among the most amazing displays of military power were the naval bombardments used to “soften” enemy beachheads. Positioned miles from shore, the great guns on the naval warships would hurl round after round of explosive projectiles, breaking down enemy fortifications and allowing foot soldiers to move onto the beachheads, press inland, and take territory for freedom.

In much the same way, strategic intercessory prayer, enhanced by praying Scripture, can be directed at the strongholds of

the enemy in spiritual warfare. Just as David cried out, “May God arise, may his enemies be scattered; may his foes flee before him” (Ps. 68:1), we can openly and boldly declare God’s Word when confronting the enemy. As we do so, the strongholds are broken.

But why declare Scripture audibly?

Declare Scripture by Voice

Declaring Scripture aloud sharpens our focus. For example, when I pray for my own healing or for the healing of others, I often declare the familiar words of 1 Peter 2:24: “By his wounds [stripes] you have been healed.” When praying for provision, I declare Matthew 6:33: “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Praying Scripture aligns our prayers with God’s Word. As we pray God’s promises and truths back to Him, He is pleased to respond with His grace and favor. Of course, we must be careful that we pray Scripture to God and not at Him, expecting Him to answer simply because we have used His Word in our prayer. God will not be manipulated. However, when we declare His Word in sincerity, He is pleased to answer.

Declaring Scripture audibly in prayer also helps to confirm God’s Word in our hearts and minds and strengthens our trust in His promises. Beth Moore, in her book, *Praying Scripture: Breaking Free from Spiritual Strongholds*, relates this personal perspective: “In praying Scripture, I not only find myself in intimate communication with God, but my mind is being retrained, or renewed (Rom. 12:2), to think His thoughts about my situation rather than mine” (p. 8).

Indeed, as we pray God’s thoughts, we are greatly strengthened and encouraged despite the circumstances we face.

Praying Scripture aloud is much more than just whistling in the dark when we're afraid or in difficult circumstances. As we boldly declare God's Word in sincerity and truth, God releases power that provides deliverance, victory, and freedom in the spiritual realms. There is tremendous power in God's Word; there is tremendous power in prayer. When combined, there is nothing Satan and his forces can do to destroy us.

Apply the Searchlight

As noted earlier, Hebrews 4:12 describes the Word of God as "alive and active," and "sharper than any double-edged sword." God's Holy Word is much more than words on paper; it is living and dynamic, and able to reveal what lurks at the core of our being. The writer adds that the Word "judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

In order for our prayers to be effective, we must regularly apply the searchlight of God's Word to our own lives. We must pray as did David, "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23). As we pray God's Word in our times of communion with Him, the Holy Spirit will direct His piercing light to reveal things that displease God and hinder our relationship with Him. Much of the time our thought life is where the greatest problem lies.

Our mind is a battleground on which the enemy easily prevails if we do not fill our thoughts with God's Word. While many thoughts we entertain originate with us, the enemy is also able to inject thoughts that are impure, untrue, and unholy. Paul instructed in 2 Corinthians 10:5 that victory in our spiritual battle is achieved when we "demolish arguments and

every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” Taking those thoughts captive requires intentional effort on our part as we counter Satan’s attacks. We can successfully resist and reject unwholesome thoughts as we focus upon Jesus Christ and His Word and fill our minds with things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8).

Fill the Arsenal

In view of this, it is important that we commit Scripture to memory. Then, in those times of testing which sometimes come when we do not have access to a printed copy of God’s Word, the Holy Spirit can help bring to our mind what we have stored in memory and do effective, victorious battle against the enemy. In so doing, we follow Jesus’ example when He encountered Satan in the Wilderness Temptation (Matt. 4:1-11). As each temptation was placed before Him, Jesus responded with Scripture. The end result was that “the devil left him, and angels came and attended him” (vs. 11).

Here are some Scriptures put to prayer that pertain to specific issues or circumstances we might face. Fill your spiritual arsenal with these and other passages. Experience the power of wielding both the sword of the Spirit and prayer.

Anxiety or Worry

Thank You, oh God, for inviting me to cast my cares and burdens upon You. Thank You for sustaining me by Your great power. Please help me to stand and not fall in this time of worry and care (Ps. 55:22).

Help me, oh God, to be anxious about nothing. In the face of this test and trial, I bring my request for help to You with a

thankful heart. Thank You for the awesome peace You give me even when it doesn't make sense to be at peace (Phil. 4:6-7).

Guidance and Wisdom

Father God, I thank You for ordering my steps and guiding me in the way I should take. I look to You again today for Your guidance and direction (Ps. 37:23).

Oh God, I really need wisdom today to make a right decision. You promise that if I lack wisdom, I can ask of You and You will give it generously—realizing I don't always know what to do. Please grant me Your wisdom today. Thank You for the marvelous help You provide (James 1:5).

Healing

I need Your healing touch today, oh God. Your Word declares that Your Son Jesus bore my sins on the cross so that I might receive Your salvation, and that Your wonderful gift of salvation includes the blessing of Your healing touch. Thank You for sending Your Son to die on the cross not only for my sins, but for my healing as well (1 Peter 2:24-25).

As I come to You in prayer for healing, oh God, I am so grateful that Your Word declares that the prayer offered in faith will make me well; that You will raise me up. I trust in that promise today (James 5:15).

Spiritual Warfare

Help me, oh God, to be self-controlled and on the alert for the enemy Satan who prowls around like a roaring lion seeking whom he can destroy. Help me resist him by standing firm in my faith just as many others have done (1 Peter 5:8-9).

In my walk with You, oh God, may I always be in submission to You and resist the devil. Help me to stay close to You and know the power and protection of Your presence day by day (James 4:7-8).

As you fill your spiritual arsenal with verses like these and many others, you will be well prepared to counter Satan's attack, demolish strongholds, receive help and healing, and live in victory. Remember, "The prayer of a righteous man [and woman] is powerful and effective" (James 5:16).

Note: A daily audio "prayervotional" is available at prayer.ag.org. Each day, a Scripture selection is shared followed by a prayer based upon that selection. This also can be heard by calling 1-800-4-PRAYER and selecting the Scripture and prayer for the day.

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