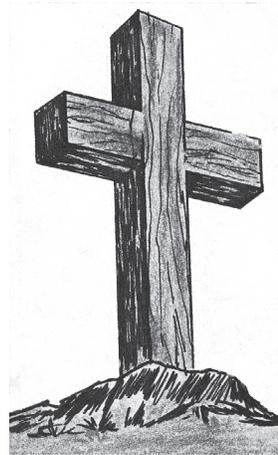




World Prayer Band Prayergram®

The WPB Ministries

- ◆ Intercession
- ◆ Prayer Conferences
- ◆ Revivals
- ◆ One to One Outreach
- ◆ Publications
- ◆ Overseas Crusades



**PRAYER
IS THE
MIGHTIEST
FORCE**

2 Chronicles 7:14



**Intercessors are like eagles,
they don't flock,
you find them one
at a time.**

Challenging Christians to Pray — October 2009

Audacious Deception *by Matthew Skariah*

Horace wrote, two thousand years ago: “*Mundus vult decipi; ergo, decipiatur,*” which roughly translated means, “*The world wishes to be deceived; therefore, let it be.*” Or, as T.S. Elliot said in a more contemporary context: “*Mankind cannot take very much reality.*”

Once upon a time, this phrase was the motto of jugglers, slick performers, mellifluous orators, roadside magicians, peripatetic philosophers and ostentatious practitioners of occult powers. Today, surprisingly it belongs more fittingly to a class of surreptitious religious/political leaders who prefer economic over ethics, and profit over principles and good life over godly life. When we encounter deceptive movements and tendencies that negate ideals and seek to destroy our cherished Christian principles, we cannot sit back and say it's none of my business. We must courageously defend the virtues of ‘faith and purity’ with unmistakable forthrightness, never minding the pillow-prophets and their materialistic overtures.

In religion, there was a time when men and women gave up all that they had in order to perform a service for God. For example, William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army. He was a successful Methodist minister, but when he saw the poor children of East London, his spirit

was disturbed and moved into action. During the annual meeting of the Methodist Church at Bethesda Chapel in Liverpool, England, Booth requested that he be released from his pastoral duties so that he could fully devote all of his time to work among the poor children of London. But the hierarchy refused to grant his request. So Booth along with his dedicated wife walked out of that conference with a burning desire to serve the needy and the poor. That was the beginning of the great work of the Salvation Army.

But today it's quite the contrary. Religion has become a multi-million dollar business with hallelujah hucksters peddling packaged piety and bargain blessings. Those who can generate thrills and excitement and arouse the crowd are put on a pedestal as illustrious examples of religious success. An accurate diagnosis of our current perception of ‘material wealth’ can lead to an ultimate cure of our spiritual melee. True spirituality is not measured by the amount of material wealth one accumulates. our lack of wealth doesn't make us any less dear to God. The sovereignty of God is not based on our ‘success’ or ‘failure’ in life. Prosperity gospel is the brain child of greed, concocted by covetous people

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whose excessive craving for wealth has cast a pall on the blessed gospel of Christ the world over.

The degradation of our carnal view begins in the mind first. Wrong ideas about true 'spiritual wealth' corrupt one's thinking. The person who has a voracious appetite for materialism cannot fathom a God who is bigger than the size of his bank account. Today some who propagate a 'theology of prosperity' as a springboard to parade their brand of theology by using dexterous mixture of flattery and diabolical exploitation? This brand of theology has placed many Christians under a spell through a long-drawn process of mesmemorization and indoctrination, and tragically, they're unable to see the confusion that is being brought upon Christendom as a whole.

It seems that the present-day prosperity pundits are surrogates who wrap their theology in a cloak of materialism. Okay, they've made their pitch for wealth. Now what do they offer a generation of discontented people who yearn for something better than suffocating materialism. Once that religious debonair on the mountain peak of exhilaration has given his best kept secret to success, what can he offer us the next time when we're faced with the thorn-infested valley of adversity. Let's make our selection: either the mount of exhilaration or the valley of adversity. Or take both. The irony is that many souls have succumbed to the oily charm of men whose hearts are filled with crass materialism. When the proposed 'religious pyramid scheme' runs into problems, the believers are told that it did not work for them because of their lack of faith or they did not give enough money to reap a wind-fall profit (blessing).

When Christianity becomes a financial corporation, we play with Wall Street jargons; when life becomes a profitable enterprise we grope for a 'green religion.' We're surrounded by comfort seekers and spiritual dropouts — people who quit at the slightest setback and always shouting at the world about the wealth that God has promised to His followers. We do not labor for the meat that perishes; we labor for those things that last all eternity. God is our eternal reward. Isn't it true that many of us quit when we reach the bitter cup? Jesus said, "*Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink of?*" "*From that day*" — Calvary in sight — "*many of His disciples turned back, and walked no more with Him.*"

He who does not seek the 'way of Golgotha' does not seek the glory of God. The rich young ruler went away sorrowful because he was not prepared for the sacrifice he was asked to make.

The way of the cross is self-denial and Jesus carried with Him no luggage to Calvary and He did not ask one of His disciples to keep an eye on his earthly possessions while he made His sacrifice. Jesus did the will of the Father (John 4:34), the disciples left all to follow Jesus (Matthew 7). The apostle Paul suffered the loss of all things (Philippians 3:8). Self-denial is a word that is not very popular among many Christians today. It has dealt with a deadly blow. The present-day prosperity preaching has a cult mentality.

Have we forgotten the Word of God? "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*" (1 John 2:15). Beware of all those lips that are sealed with covetousness! As one critic said, "We believers have gold for our God and greed for our creed." History reminds us that material wealth has brought 'spiritual leanness' in many lives. When we place emphasis on the tangible rather than the intangible, then we've perverted the very essence of the gospel.

The Bible says, "*The prosperity of fools shall destroy them*" (Proverbs 1:32). Has any nation of the world ever withstood prosperity? The more affluence we enjoy, the less need for God in our lives. We've failed to give thanks unto the Almighty who puts bread on our table. It is like taking a Turkish bath and balmily relaxing all over and forgetting God altogether. Let us never forget that riches are perishable and popularity is fickle.

God has made all things for us to enjoy; He is not saying that we should not enjoy these blessings, but rather use them prayerfully and wisely for His glory. Man has perverted the blessings of God to further his own godless agenda.

In the *Screw Tape Letters*, C.S. Lewis presents a powerful argument that states, "*A time of prosperity is an excellent campaigning weather for the devil. Prosperity knits a man to the world. He feels that he is finding his place in it, while really it is finding its place in him.*" King Agur was aware of this great danger when he prayed, ". . . *give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, who is the LORD?*" (Proverbs 3:8, 9.) One should never approach Christianity on the basis of earthly wealth, easy emotionalism, fuzzy feeling or cheap sentimentality. Always remember, when we live by God's standard, we're mocked, insulted, maligned and often judged as non-goal oriented and old-fashioned. But do we care what the world thinks of us? *Of course not.* Jesus said, "*Ye must deny yourself and take up my cross and follow me.*" The requirement is

always the same. Let us keep in mind that the living God is everything. Who among us has not known adversity and financial setback? We go up to Jerusalem to fulfill God's purpose, not our own. Naturally, our desires for wealth are our own; in the Christian life we've one goal and that's to glorify God. Never count spiritual success by money raised or buildings constructed. That is not how God operates His kingdom. Our success is the measure of God's will that He has revealed to us through His love.

Why don't we claim the following Scripture as a relevant Bible promise? *"Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out"* (1 Timothy 6:6,7). We can be very choosy when it comes to Scriptures! Long ago, the apostle Paul knew that many would creep into the ministry with their perverted teaching on crass materialism, and he warned us to withdraw from such schemers. The prosperity (wealth) teaching is nothing new; it has a long history, and here is a refresher course:

In the first few centuries, it was the heretics, not the church, who taught prosperity theology. For example, one of the most infamous heretics of the third century Paul of Samosata, both taught and practiced a message of wealth. A group of elders living in his day described him this way:

"Formerly, he was destitute and poor. He inherited no wealth from his father. He did not acquire anything by trade or business. But now he possesses abundant wealth through his wrongdoing and sacrilegious acts. He has made [his followers]

rich. Because of this he is loved and admired by those who desire such things." (David W. Bercot, *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up*, page 88, "Prosperity: A Blessing or a Snare?")

Beloved, the most important thing in the eyes of the Lord is not wealth but purity, not influence but surrender. A strong drive to acquire murky varnish of material wealth has prompted many gospel preachers to abandon holiness preaching for prosperity sermons for fear of losing reputable membership in the church. We cuddle materialism too much. Christians should be fixated on Christ, not on suffocating materialism. It is no exaggeration to say that 'materialism' cripples the church spiritually. I tend to agree with J.J. Turner as he pointed out very brilliantly, *"Some religionists in America have made church into a 'spiritual supermarket' where self-centered people, focusing on selfish goals, may come to get their fondest wishes met. Christianity has been turned into consumerism; piety has been traded for prosperity; the cross has been exchanged for comfort; and 'my will be done' instead of 'His will be done,' is the vogue."* Greed is a crime against the spirit and a rape against the soul. Some folks are trying to install a mantle of deity upon them on the basis of wealth and fame and church leaders are caught up in frenzy. When a preacher becomes a lover of wealth; he abandons his true prophetic mission by becoming a son of mammon. When Christians become too materialistic — they lose their moral and spiritual compass. Let's not get caught up in the current mildew of prosperity polarization of Christianity!

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Most Christians are not wealthy, but they have a God whose power, grace, mercy, strength, wisdom and providence are unsurpassed and unequalled. Doesn't that make us rich beyond comprehension? Of course it does. Let's never forget that "riches are not forever: and doth the crown endure to every generation!"

From My Heart to Yours...

As a ministry of intercessory prayer, we're committed to "world evangelization," and our purpose is not to build for time but for eternity. In obedience to the Great Commission, I plan to leave for Nigeria, West Africa on October 19, for various crusades and conferences. I truly covet your prayers for me and my family as we seek to be His faithful witnesses. Many miles, and even oceans may separate us physically, but let's keep UNITED in 'heart' and 'prayer.'

When God moves, it always begins with prayer. I believe the Lord is reversing the spiritual order, and some of the materially impoverished nations of the world are on fire for God. Once we travel to a foreign country, especially Africa, we have to reverse our entire missionary theology. We need our brothers and sisters more than they need us. The village Christians live from day to day and they trust in God with a pure heart. They are so

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serene, so simple, yet so powerful; so transparent in their child-likeness; so regal in their unpretentiousness, and so awesome in their humility.

Last year, the Lord allowed us to build a beautiful church in one of the villages under the competent leadership of Pastor Edwin Nwaoha. May I take this opportunity to express my sincerest thanks to all those who participated in this project, and may God bless you richly for caring in a lovely fashion. With God's continued help, we're moving forward with prayerful plans to build more churches in various villages as the Lord provides. Participation costs us time, efforts and money. Let's do everything we can to fulfill the "Great Commission" before Jesus returns! We're enriched while we evangelize. We're blessed when we give from the heart in loving obedience to His command. When God opens the door, no man can shut it, and believing prayers are truly making a difference in people's lives.

As Oswald J. Smith, missionary statesman of the world once said: "We talk about the Second Coming; half of the world has never heard of the first." When we get to feel what God feels for the world, we're more likely to understand the compassion of a loving Father. Let's see the world through the loving eyes of Jesus who rejects no one! Once

again, thank you from the bottom of my heart for your loving participation in world evangelization. "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." (Jim Elliot)

*Sharing Jesus is our priority,
Doing His will is our purpose,
We're serious when we say -
Jesus fills our cup and it runs over.*

Serving under the great Shepherd,
Matthew Skariah
World Prayer Band Ministries

CONFERENCE ON HOLINESS

with Matthew Skariah

October 5-11
First Baptist Church
of Wild Peach
Brazoria, Texas
John Brewer, Pastor

Conference Theme:

*"Holiness is not the way to Christ,
but Christ is the way to holiness."*

2009 Nigerian Crusades & Conferences

with Matthew Skariah

October 21-November 9

Prayer Summit – October 22-23

Redemption Baptist Church – Onisha, Anambra State – Host Pastor: Matthew A. Nnadi

City-wide Crusade – October 24-25

Victory Baptist Church – Asaba, Delta State – Host Pastor: McDonald Ejera

Prayer Service – October 26

Delta State Government House

Thanksgiving Service/Discipleship Training at the Newly Constructed Village Church

October 28-31

Restoration Church – Isuikwuato Village, Abia State – Host Pastor: Edwin C. Nwaoha

Pastor Conference – November 1-3

Aba, Abia State

God-Seekers Conference – November 5-8

Port Harcourt, Rivers State – Host Pastor: Jonathan Erondu