

**PEDRO OKORO**

# **CRUSHING THE DEVIL**

Your Guide to Spiritual Warfare and **Victory in Christ**

*Deep River*  
B O O K S

CRUSHING THE DEVIL

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“And being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.”

2 CORINTHIANS 10:6



To:  
the memory of my late older brother  
Kingsley Sienakereho Okoro  
(September 10, 1962 to June 23, 2002)  
Gone  
But never forgotten

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## **A POEM-SATAN, YOU'RE UNDER ARREST**

Satan, You're Under Arrest!

This is a citizen's arrest  
For I bear on my body the Lord's crest  
Heaven is my final destination  
And a citizen I am of God's holy nation

*Devil, you are fired  
You will never ever be required  
For all the calamities you inspire  
I pour on you the Lord's unquenchable fire  
I don't want you around me, devil  
'Cause you are Machiavellian and so full of evil*

I am arresting you, devil  
You're so jam-packed with evil  
I arrest you on reasonable suspicion  
Of various counts of gross insubordination

*Devil, you are fired  
No more are you hired  
For all the misfortunes you inspire  
I pour on you the Lord's unquenchable fire  
I don't like you one bit, devil  
'Cause you are conniving and brimming with evil*

I arrest you in the name of Jesus  
God's Son who came to save us  
And deliver us from your oppression  
Following Adam's initial transgression

*Devil, you are fired  
You were never ever required  
For all the devastation you inspire  
I pour on you the Lord's unquenchable fire*

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*I don't want you near me, devil  
'Cause you are deceitful and busting with evil*

To remain silent when questioned is your right  
But of this important fact you must not lose sight  
It would harm your defense if later you rely  
On something you could have said today in reply  
For the avoidance of doubt whatever you say  
Will stand against you at your trial on judgment day

*Devil, you are fired  
No more will you ever be hired  
For all the catastrophes you inspire  
I pour on you the Lord's unquenchable fire  
I don't like you at all, devil  
'Cause you are sly and so satiated with evil*

Your failure to carry out my instructions as a child of God  
Appears from others to be a familiar pattern you have trod  
Your willful disobedience amounts to a declaration of war  
Enough is enough, I cannot continue with you as before

*Devil, you are fired  
You were never ever required  
For all the disasters you inspire  
I pour on you the Lord's unquenchable fire  
I can't stand you, devil  
'Cause you are devious and overflowing with evil*

I now break your yoke, destroy your burdens and bind you  
In the name of the exalted Lord Jesus who was born a Jew  
Who on the cross of Calvary became sin and was of evil men slain  
But rose from the dead and sat at the right hand of God to reign

*Devil, you are fired  
No more are you hired  
For all the tragedies you inspire  
I pour on you the Lord's unquenchable fire*

## POEM

*I don't like you, devil  
'Cause you are a very bad devil*

I scatter your assignments, your mission  
I frustrate and thwart your goals, your vision  
I deny you reinforcement of any provision  
I bind you and refuse you any sort of permission  
I forbid you my sphere of influence to permeate  
I decree today, "Thou shall not within my space operate!"

*Devil, you are fired  
You could never ever have been hired  
For all the adversities you inspire  
I pour on you the Lord's unquenchable fire  
I don't want you around me anymore, devil  
'Cause you are devious and so full of evil*

Satan, in the name of Jesus I put an end to your repression  
I declare that henceforth I am free from every demonic oppression  
By the power in the name of Jesus I undo every satanic subjugation  
With the authority in the Word of God I put a stop to every devilish  
domination

*Devil, you are fired  
You were not even ever hired  
For all the debacles you inspire  
I pour on you the Lord's unquenchable fire  
In the name of Jesus I bind you, devil  
You who epitomize all that is evil*

From now on I say no to your suppression  
From this time forth I exercise my power of expression  
I destroy, demolish, and dismantle the power of concealed sin  
I proclaim, profess, and confess that I am in Christ, yes "I am in"  
For whom the Son makes free is liberated, triumphant, and victorious  
Thank you, Jesus, for helping me in all things to become auspicious

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*Devil, you are fired  
You could never ever have been required  
For all the fiascos you inspire  
I pour on you the Lord's unquenchable fire  
Now get thee behind me, devil  
You scheming sneaky crafty cunning conniving embodiment of evil*

## FOREWORD

I love it when the cover of a book leaves you in no doubt as to its contents. This book is truly “your guide to spiritual warfare and victory in Christ.” Whichever way you want to emphasise the subtitle, it effectively describes the pages that follow.

Firstly, Pedro Okoro has succeeded in writing *your* guide. Every reader will have the sense of being taken on a personal journey. At each step, the writer’s disarming graciousness adds unexpected weight to his exhortations to rise and fight.

Secondly, this book is truly a *guide*. Pedro Okoro maps out the ground with care and precision. Whenever he moves onto controversial territory (and he is not afraid of treading in areas where I might be cautious to go), he never forces his opinions but shares frankly how he sees things and leaves us room to draw our own conclusions.

Thirdly, the *spiritual warfare* focus is never lost from view. This is not a book on spiritual diplomacy; it is about a fight, albeit a fight that utilizes the courtroom insights of a lawyer as well as the battlefield strategies of a warrior. Those of us who know the writer may admire his gentlemanly diplomacy in day-to-day pleasantries, but there is clearly another side that comes with his spiritual maturity—he is a warrior whose tactics extend beyond trench warfare.

Fourthly, and supremely, this book is about *victory in Christ*, and here I could let my enthusiasm run away with me. We all need books that remind us of the triumph that is ours in Christ, and here is a book that helps us root that triumph in reality and not in mere triumphalism. As the author leads us on a personal journey, we encounter a whole welter of information and practical counsel. When issues that he guides you to seem to be particularly relevant in your circumstances, do take the time to use the “Food for Reflection,” “Prayer Features,” and “Action Points” at the end of each chapter to ensure that what you have read is well applied. It is this practical approach that excites me.

Everyone will find something in this book that will cause them to stand firmer—feet shod, helmet set, belt tightened, breastplate secured, shield held high, sword at the ready—well-equipped to overcome all the onslaughts of the Enemy.

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Pedro, thank you for taking the time to write this book; there will be very many whose lives are changed through your clearly presented insights. Reader, I am confident that you will be among that number.

DR. HUGH OSGOOD, FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT  
CHURCHES IN COMMUNITIES INTERNATIONAL  
CO-CHAIR, UK CHARISMATIC AND PENTECOSTAL LEADERS' CONFERENCE  
LONDON, 2011

## Prologue

# THE GOOD IS THE ENEMY OF THE BEST



*You have stayed at this mountain long enough. It is time to break camp and move on.  
Go...Look, I am giving all this land to you!*

DEUTERONOMY 1:6–8, NLT

**I**t was a beautiful summer's evening in the year of our Lord 2000. I heard God so clearly it was surreal. I was at the solemn assembly, a monthly prayer meeting of the leaders and intercessors of the New Covenant Church, which is held on the last Wednesday of every month in Streatham, South London. "Son, it's time to move," I heard the Lord say to me. "Not yet, Lord," I protested. "I have a great job. I work for a fantastic law firm, and I have been invited to become a partner. I am happy where I am. The future couldn't be better and brighter!"

"Son," the Lord continued, "the good is the Enemy of the best. Until you depart from the good, you cannot enter my best for your life."

Prior to attending this meeting, I had been prayerfully thinking about my future. I was at a point where I wanted to start a new law practice with an associate. However, I had my trepidations, my fears, my worries, my apprehensions, and my anxieties...who wouldn't? I thought to myself: "Why should I leave certainty for uncertainty? Why should I give up the security of my job for the risk of the unknown? What if it doesn't work?" After all, I had a wife and a young daughter to look after! I was at a crossroads, and I had to decide one way or another. That night after my encounter with the Lord, I knew what to do. I had to step out in faith—and I did. I decided to launch out into the deep.

You see, ordinarily, *good* is, well, good! A *good thing* is always desirable, pleasing, attractive, and sought after. *Good* is suggestive of high quality, distinction, fineness, superiority.

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However, as I found out on that Wednesday evening back in 2000, in the global picture of God's plan for your life, the *good* can be the Enemy of the better. And the *better* is the foe of the best. Until the good is cleared out of the way, you cannot receive that which is better, and you cannot receive the best until you are willing to let go of the better. Put differently, until Miss Barbara Better is taken off the scene, Mr. Benjamin Best will not appear.

Whatever your station or position in life, there is always room for improvement, enhancement, and perfection. I say this with a great sense of humility. Regardless of what you are enjoying at the moment, the Lord says that he has something better for you! No matter what you have achieved, attained, or accomplished in this world, there are more challenges and blessings ahead. God says that you have stayed long enough on this mountain. It is time to press forward to take more territories and receive more trophies. There is more work to be done. There are yet more victories to be won, more successes to be achieved, more triumphs to be obtained, and more accomplishments to be made.

In Deuteronomy 1:6–8, we read that God spoke to Moses in Horeb, the mountain of the Lord. God told him that the nation of Israel had stayed long enough on that spot and that it was time to move on. That probably came as a surprise to them! Horeb was God's mountain. It represented the presence of the Lord. The Israelites had experienced divine encounters on this mountain. Why would they want to move from this place that had come to signify God's presence? Like Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration, they probably wanted to build tents in Horeb and make it their permanent home. However, God had better ideas, because as good as Horeb was, it was not their final destination. It was not the Promised Land. It was at best a bus stop. They were but pilgrims at Horeb. God had something better in store for them. The only way they could get into the Promised Land and obtain God's best was for them to move forward. There was no other way.

In like manner, where you are at today is the adversary and rival of where God wants to take you. The good that you enjoy today and to which you have become so accustomed is the Enemy of those better things which God has planned for you. The better things that you currently take pleasure in are standing in the way of God's best for you. They are the opponents of your progress!

God has the most incredible, unimaginable, inconceivable, and indescribable intention and design for your life. His plans for you—yes, you!—are amazing, mag-

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nificent, wonderful, glorious, awesome, breathtaking, and awe-inspiring. In Jeremiah 29:11, we read that his thoughts and plans are for your well-being, not for evil, in order to give you a future and a hope. He wants to give you an expected end.

However, for you to get to where you belong, for you to *reach* where God is taking you, for you to arrive at God's destination for your life, you must first know who you are. To move into what God has in mind for you, it is necessary to discover your purpose, to know where you are going, and to understand the reason for your existence. Without an understanding of purpose, misuse is inevitable; abuse unavoidable. Purpose gives rise to discipline, restraint, and self-control, which are crucial, fundamental tools for success in the journey of life.

Have you ever wondered why you did not rapture and go to heaven the day you became a Christian? It is because God has work for you to do here on earth! Having gone to heaven, Jesus expects you to be his body on earth. You are *his* hands, *his* feet, *his* voice. The Bible says in Ephesians 2:8–10, “By faith are ye saved... We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”

The New Living Translation says in verse 10, “For we are God's masterpiece. He created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we *can do the good things he planned for us long ago*” (emphasis mine).

Before salvation, our good works do not count for anything before God. At best they are like filthy, grimy, grubby rags. However, having saved you, God now expects you to get busy working with him and for him. He expects good quality work which will bring glory and honor to his name. The use of the word *masterpiece* in Ephesians suggests that God has invested something very special in you. He therefore expects a return on his investment.

In the Gospel of Luke, chapter 19, Jesus tells a parable in verses 12 and 13. It more or less goes like this: A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. Before leaving, he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten mina (the New Living Translation says the servants received ten pounds of silver) and said to them, “Do business till I come.”

On his return, the man called his servants and asked them to give an account of their stewardship in his absence. In the same way, you are called to be about the Lord's business, to occupy yourself with matters of the Lord's kingdom, and to be engaged in the Lord's pursuits until the Lord returns in his second advent. Clearly, there is a lot of work to be done here on earth. And someday you will give an account of your labors.

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But it isn't going to be easy. In fact, the Bible teaches that we have an active, destructive, and intelligent enemy. That reality is the reason I'm writing this book. In the journey of life, the Enemy will do his utmost to derail you, to stop you from realizing your full potential and accomplishing your purpose. To make it easy for you to fail and fall, he adapts his temptations and tricks to suit your natural inclinations and desires. He will modify his lure to match your lifestyle. Look out for the longings of your eyes, the desires of your physical body, and the pride of life, which are referred to in 1 John 2:16. The truth is, you can fit most temptations into one of these three categories.

The devil doesn't really have any new schemes, ideas, or initiatives. He keeps on recycling and reusing the same old temptations, adorning them in different attires. He started his temptations with Adam and Eve when he deceived them in the garden of Eden. Eve clearly responded to the lust of the eyes, the yearnings of the flesh, and the pride of life:

*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.*

GENESIS 3:6, EMPHASIS SUPPLIED

Satan tried the same trick with Jesus when he tempted him in the desert after Jesus had fasted for forty days and forty nights. Having fasted for so long, the Lord must have been famished! Satan, *being aware of this*, adapted the temptation to suit Jesus's immediate circumstances in a bid to make him succumb. You can read the story in Matthew 4:1–10 (I'll quote parts of it from the International Standard Version). Satan tells him that *since* he is the Son of God, he should turn the stones into bread. We see the Enemy attempting to use the desires of the physical body when he tells Jesus to turn the stones into bread.

In the second temptation, Satan tells Jesus that *since* he is the Son of God, he should throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple in the holy city. Satan then shows off his knowledge of the Scriptures when he tells Jesus, "It is written, 'God will put his angels in charge of you,' and 'with their hands they will hold you up, so that you will never hit your foot against a rock.'" Here we see the devil's attempt to use the pride of life to derail Jesus.

In the third temptation, we are told that the devil took Jesus to the top of

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an exceedingly high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world with their glory, splendor, and magnificence. After Jesus had taken in the sights, Satan said to him, “All these things I will give you if you will fall down and worship me.” There is no doubt in my mind that this third temptation is a clear attempt by the devil to make Jesus fall through the lust of the eyes.

If the Enemy tried the same ruse with Jesus, he will try it with you; no doubt about that! And unless you watch and pray, you could be caught unawares. This book aims to help you stay aware and alert to the Enemy’s designs.

After the fall, man came under what I call the *Adamic curse*. By this I mean the curse which came upon the whole of humanity because of Adam’s transgression and which manifested primarily in eternal separation from God (i.e. spiritual death), which eventually led to physical death, sickness, and disease, as well as poverty. On the cross of Calvary, Jesus defeated the devil, destroyed his stronghold over man, and freed man from the effects of the Adamic curse. Paul puts it beautifully in his letter to the church in Colossae, as follows:

*When you were stuck in your old sin-dead life, you were incapable of responding to God. God brought you alive—right along with Christ! Think of it! All sins forgiven, the slate wiped clean, that old arrest warrant canceled and nailed to Christ’s cross. He stripped all the spiritual tyrants in the universe of their sham authority at the Cross and marched them naked through the streets.*

COLOSSIANS 2:14–15, MSG

Having triumphed over the Enemy, Jesus boldly declared in Matthew 28:18 that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto him. Paul later elucidated this profound statement of the Lord when he said in Philippians 2:9–11 that “therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (NLT).

For those who receive Jesus into their hearts and become born again, the Lord delegates his authority to them and empowers them to exercise authority over the devil. Jesus couldn’t be clearer when he told his followers after his resurrection in Mark 16:17 that “these are the miraculous signs that will

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accompany believers: they will use the power and authority of my name to force demons out of people. They will speak new languages” (GW).

In other words, as a believer, you have the authority to tell the devil what to do *in the name of Jesus*, and he will obey! However, there are times when the Enemy will oppose and resist you. He may choose to stand in the way of the answer to your prayers. He may even resolve to ignore and disobey your lawful instructions. For those times, God has made adequate provision to enable you to punish the Enemy’s disobedience.

This book has been written to deal with those tricky situations when the Enemy is recalcitrant, obstinate, unruly, and disobedient. It seeks to unpack such crucial and critical theological issues as who you are in Christ Jesus, your authority over the Enemy, spiritual warfare, and strategy in spiritual warfare. Come along on this journey of discovery as we unmask the devil and uncover demonic schemes and methods. It is my prayer and hope that this book will open your eyes to discover why and how the Enemy disobeys and to understand how best to handle his disobedience.

It is my desire that you will fully understand the reality of spiritual warfare. As you read this book, may you discover God’s superabundant provision to enable you to emerge victorious at all times. May you also wholly appreciate and take hold of all the supplies and weapons and every grace that God has made available to you for your spiritual battles on this side of eternity.

## Chapter One

# RIGHT, CAPACITY, ABILITY



*But to all who believed him and accepted him, he  
gave the right to become children of God.*

JOHN 1:12, NLT

**P**eter John Anthony Jones was an enigma. His life was a sensational human-interest story: dynamic, interesting, and yet paradoxical. Peter lived in a sleepy village in the county of Shropshire in the United Kingdom. He was a poor, wretched old man who had the word POVERTY written all over him in bold, capital letters...or so it seemed during his lifetime.

At the age of seventy, Peter Jones lived alone in a modest two-bedroom, mid-terraced house. There was no mortgage on his property. He did not have a wife or children. In fact, Mr. Jones did not seem to have any relatives at all! He could barely pay his bills, and in the winter, he would hardly heat his home because he could not afford the gas bill. One year, he was dragged before the local magistrates for not paying his council tax bill. But for the generosity of an anonymous benefactor who came to Mr. Jones's rescue when he read about his case in the local newspaper, he would have served a custodial sentence in jail.

Jones depended on his neighbors for handouts. He would even beg for groceries. His only apparent income was his state pension. He shopped in the local charity shop on the high street for his clothes. At Christmas, the neighbors would take turns inviting him for Christmas dinner. Everybody thought he was poverty stricken and destitute. The neighbors felt that he could barely make ends meet. That was until he died one winter from exposure to cold.

Following Jones's death, his neighbors were shocked when they saw his will. They were so astonished that they must have thought they were dreaming! They had to look at his bank statements to be sure the will was authentic: somehow, this

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elderly beggar had left £4.9 million to a charity. “Peter, a multimillionaire?” they asked in utter disbelief. “How could he be so rich, yet so poor? How could he have £4.9 million sitting in his bank account but live a life of lack, deficiency, and penury like a penniless and poverty-stricken pauper? And to die in such awful circumstances; to pass away in such abject poverty; ostensibly because he could not even heat his home!”

In reality, Peter Jones was a mystery. He had been a public-school educated boy, the only child of middle-class parents. He studied classics at an Ivy League university and graduated with a second-class honors upper degree when he was just twenty-two years old. He had a bright future ahead of him. We do not know what he did between the ages of twenty-two, when he left university, and sixty-five, when he moved into his two-bedroom terrace in Shropshire. We *do* know that he came into his vast wealth following the tragic death of his parents in an airplane crash. Part of it was his inheritance; the rest came from insurance payouts following the accident.

Two years after his parents’ funeral, Peter Jones made a will giving all of his wealth to charity. He then moved to Shropshire and became a recluse. He obviously knew that he had this money, because his will was detailed and clear as to what to do with it. However, he decided not to spend a penny of it on himself. So he depended on his state pension and the generosity of his neighbors to eke out a living. He made a knowledgeable decision and stuck with it. He knew the score.

Peter Jones’s story is similar to those of a growing number of people around the world who have been nicknamed “Millionaires in Rags” by CNN/*Money* contributing writer Les Christie, a designation which I am keen to adopt and make use of in this book. In my view, a millionaire in rags is a person who has at least £1 million (or US\$1.4 million) of his own money but who, for whatever reason—including but not limited to ignorance, a personal choice, or mental incapacity—refuses, neglects, or fails to make use of the money for his own benefit and lives instead like a pauper. Let us take a look at some of their fascinating and sometimes bizarre life stories.

## MILLIONAIRES IN RAGS

JOSEPH LEEK

The first person in our roll call of modern-day millionaires in rags is Joseph Leek. Born in 1912, Joseph Leek willed nearly US\$1.8 million to a charity that

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provides guide dogs for the blind. Despite having millions in his bank account, the ninety-year-old British man lived like a pauper during his lifetime, using a twenty-year-old car, watching television at a neighbor's house to save on electricity, putting off essential home repairs, and buying secondhand clothes from charity shops. Nobody, not even his own family, had any idea that Leek had that kind of money! Not surprisingly, it is unclear how he made his money. When he died, his family and the neighbors got the shock of their lives when they discovered that he was in fact a millionaire!

### REVEREND VERTRUE SHARP

The Reverend Vertrue Sharp (his real name!) was another millionaire in rags. A minister of the gospel, he raised hay and cattle in addition to preaching and teaching. To Reverend Sharp, self-denial and making sacrifices in order to help others was not difficult at all. He worked very hard and saved every penny he made. Over the course of his lifetime he amassed an enormous amount of wealth. As the saying goes, he took care of the pennies, and so the millions took care of themselves.

By the time he died in 1999, Sharp had so much money that he was able to leave an estate worth about US\$2 million (yes, US\$2 million!) to the East Tennessee Children's Hospital, the University of Tennessee Medical Center, and various other charities in the United States.

### MARY GUTHRIE ESSAME

Even more intriguing is the story of Mary Guthrie Essame, a retired nurse who lived in an old Victorian house in East Sussex. Miss Essame was a spinster who lived modestly in very humble surroundings. She dressed herself in secondhand clothes and used shoes which she bought from charity shops. Her neighbors were shocked to learn that her estate amounted to a whopping US\$10 million when she died in January 2002. It is thought that she inherited her massive wealth, although no one is certain.

She willed her immense fortune to a host of local charities. Her friend and neighbor, Ms. Monica Unter, told the local newspaper that Miss Essame clad herself in such worn clothes and old shoes that no one knew how well off she was!

## CRUSHING THE DEVIL

ROBERTA LANGTRY

Roberta Langtry was an anonymous philanthropist, a modestly paid Toronto elementary school teacher, and a multimillionaire, all rolled into one! Upon her death she bequeathed more than CAD\$4.3 million (US\$3.8 million) of her estate to the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), a charity that buys environmentally sensitive land and turns it into nature reserves. She had been a modest supporter of NCC's work since 1999.

While she was alive, Ms. Langtry made a number of large, anonymous gifts to individuals she knew were in need. Recipients would receive envelopes from an unknown benefactor in the amounts of US\$25,000 or US\$30,000. Yet, her friends and coworkers were unaware of her wealth.

According to reports, Langtry was born in Manitoba. She began teaching around the age of sixteen. Most of her fifty-five years as a teacher and speech therapist were with the East York Board of Education. She never married and had no children. Langtry lived in her aunt's modest bungalow, sharing it until her aunt died in the early 1990s and then living alone until she herself died. The Alberta Teachers' Association stated in a news report that the executor of Langtry's estate speculated that her wealth flourished as a result of her having purchased shares of IBM in the 1940s and 1950s and holding the stock until her death.<sup>1</sup>

MR. JOE TEMECZKO

Another millionaire in rags worth looking at was Mr. Joe Temeczko, a Polish immigrant and former prisoner of war who did odd jobs and handyman work. He had no family and lived in a humble house which he filled with stuff he scavenged from the streets. We do not know how Temeczko acquired his immense wealth. What we do know is that he roamed his Minneapolis neighborhood looking for throwaways to fix up and sell or give away.

According to Les Christie,<sup>2</sup> attorney William Wangenstein described himself as "blown away" when Temeczko's bank called a few years ago, trying to enlist Wangenstein's support in persuading the little old man with the thick accent to convert his million-dollar bank account into more lucrative investments. Before that, Wangenstein had no idea that the handyman who rotated the attorney's screens and storm windows every spring and fall was so rich. Wangenstein says Temeczko would get free food from local charities and read news-

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papers in the store so he wouldn't have to buy them.

Temeczko took the news of the September 11, 2001 attacks hard; he had his will rewritten, leaving US\$1.4 million to the city of New York. He died a few weeks later in October 2001 at age eighty-six. Temeczko's bequest helped fund a park renovation as well as "The Daffodil Project," in which thousands of volunteers planted more than two million flower bulbs across New York City as a living memorial to the victims of the September 11 attacks.

### JACK WITHAM

This roll call of millionaires in rags would be incomplete without the fascinating story of Jack Witham. He was a reclusive pensioner who lived the life of a pauper in Southampton, United Kingdom. He left £6 million to a children's hospice in his will.

A retired surveyor, Mr. Jack Witham lived alone above a garage in a flat he stuffed with bargains found as he wandered around car boot sales. The self-effacing and modest-living millionaire had made his fortune by investing in property, and his biggest extravagance was a season ticket to see his beloved Southampton Football Club. Nicknamed "Saints," the Southampton Football Club were in the premiership, the top flight of English League Soccer, when Witham died in Southampton at the age of seventy-nine in November 2004.

A friend of Witham's, Susanne Fry, told *The Telegraph*: "Jack was a very private man. If you saw him you wouldn't think he had two ha'pennies to rub together. He just didn't spend the money on himself. I wouldn't describe him as an eccentric but he had a slightly odd way of living."<sup>3</sup>

His bequest helped the Naomi House Children's Hospice near Winchester, Hampshire, to build a new center for seriously ill teenagers. "It's a complete bolt out of the blue. We knew nothing about it until we received a letter from his executors," hospice manager Mr Ray Kipling told *The Telegraph*.

### FATHER ANTHONY WOJTUS

Last but by no means least in this strange list is Father Anthony Wojtus, a diocesan priest in Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia, who died without a will while living in appalling conditions. According to the *National Catholic Reporter*, twelve brothers and sisters in Poland received about US\$150,000 each from the estate of this Kanawha County priest, who lived like a pauper despite having

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nearly US\$2 million stashed away in cash and investments.<sup>4</sup>

For nearly three years, Chief Tax Deputy Allen Bleigh and members of the tax department investigated the estate of Fr. Anthony Wojtus. Following his death in 2007, the millionaire priest was discovered to have been living in squalor. Wojtus left no will or known family members. The county was appointed as estate administrator shortly after the priest's death, leaving officials with the job of tracking down next of kin.

Wojtus was a retired member of the Wheeling-Charleston Diocese. It is not clear how Wojtus made his enormous riches. However, Father Anthony Cincinnati, the episcopal vicar for clergy in the diocese, said priests are not required to take a vow of poverty but are supposed to live simple lives.

These stories illustrate an important point: If you have millions of pounds sterling or United States dollars sitting in your personal bank account, you have the right to use the money as you please. However, if for whatever reason you do not *exercise* the right to use that money, you will live in poverty like our millionaires in rags—even though, to all intents and purposes, you are stupendously wealthy.

## WEALTHY—BUT REFUSING TO ACCEPT IT

There are also cases of people who become entitled to stupendous wealth but refuse to accept it, preferring instead to live in poverty. Dr. Grigory “Grisha” Perelman, a Russian scientist, is one such person. He is said to be a math genius, and he won fame in August 2006 for apparently spurning a one-million-dollar prize and then moving in with his mother in a humble flat in St. Petersburg, where he is unemployed and coexists on her £30-a-month pension.<sup>5</sup>

There is no doubt that this man is brilliant. The eccentric recluse stunned the math world when he solved a century-old puzzle known as the Poincaré Conjecture. Dr. Perelman has some small savings from his time as a lecturer, but is apparently reluctant to supplement them with the US\$1 million offered by the Clay Mathematics Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for solving one of the world's seven “Millennium Problems.”

Unlike the stories of many millionaires in rags, we do have some insight into the reason for Perelman's apparently inexplicable decision. Grigory Perelman's predicament stems from an acrimonious split with a leading Russian mathematical institute, the Steklov, in 2003. When the institute in St. Petersburg failed to reelect him as a member, Dr. Perelman, forty, was left feeling an “absolutely

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ungifted and untalented person,” said a friend. He had a crisis of confidence and cut himself off.

To my mind, there can be only three reasons why you would have so much and neglect to use it. *Ignorance* would be the main rationale, because you cannot spend what you do not know to be yours. The second reason would be *a conscious decision not to spend it on yourself*; or in the case of people like Dr. Perelman, *a deliberate decision not to accept the money in the first place*. The final reason is a *lack of mental capacity*, which would probably be another form of ignorance. If you were mentally incapable, you wouldn't know what belonged to you, would you?

## SPIRITUAL MILLIONAIRES IN RAGS

“But what is the allegory?” you may rightly ask. “How does this relate to me as a Christian?” Well, the truth of the matter is that in Christ Jesus we have the *right* or *ability* to become children of God—but like millionaires in rags, many of us do not use it.

*But to all who believed him and accepted him, he  
gave the right to become children of God.*

JOHN 1:12, NLT

When we are born into God's family through our faith in Jesus, God gives us the *capacity* or *capability* to live as his children. This is our *right* as believers, people who have accepted Jesus into our lives as our personal Savior and Lord. But this is merely a *right*, “*the capability to become*.” Nothing more. And dare I say, *nothing less!*

The word translated “right” in this passage is the Greek word *ἔξουσία* (pronounced ex-oo-see-ah). Depending on the context, it can be translated as *privilege*, *capacity*, *authority*, *jurisdiction*, *power*, *strength*, or *liberty*.<sup>6</sup> It is the ability or strength with which one is endowed, which he has the option to exercise. In other words, a right is simply an entitlement, a privilege, a prerogative. It is not necessarily the *acting upon* that right.

Capability is ability that has not yet been put to full use. As we have seen from Peter Jones's story, for a right to be worth anything, it has to be *exercised*, or put to use, by the person who is entitled to it. In Christ Jesus, we all start on a level playing field. What we make of ourselves in the Christian race depends entirely upon us.

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What we do with this right determines how far we go with God. How deep we get in our walk with God is determined by whether or not this capacity to live as his children remains dormant or is maximized. In other words, you could be a spiritual millionaire in rags if you do not take ownership of what is yours in Christ Jesus. To my mind, the majority of Christians fall into the category of spiritual millionaires in rags because they fail to be all they can be in Jesus.

### IGNORANCE IS NOT BLISS; IT IS REMISS

Four more stories further illustrate this line of reasoning, but from the point of view of ignorance. These four cases demonstrate the truth that *without an understanding of the things that are rightfully yours*, you will be unable to appropriate them for your personal use and benefit.

The first story is of a seventy-seven-year-old retired academic named Miss Jean Preston, who died in Oxford, in the United Kingdom, in 2006. She owned two small altar paintings of saints in medieval clothing. She had found them in a box of odds and ends in America in the 1960s when she was the curator of historic manuscripts at a museum. She thought them “quite nice” and told her father, an amateur collector, about them. He paid a modest sum for them and passed them down to his daughter when he died in 1974. The two paintings were found hanging behind a door in her spare room after her death.

Subsequent to her death, her family decided to value the paintings. The art historian Mr. Michael Liversidge identified them as fifteenth-century masterpieces completed by Fra Angelico in 1439 which had been missing for two hundred years! Fra Angelico was a Dominican friar in the monastery at Fiesole in Italy. The portraits had been kept among similar paintings by the artist in the Church of San Marco in Florence until it was ransacked during the Napoleonic Wars in the 1800s. Six of the eight panels were recovered, but the location of the remaining two was regarded as one of the art world’s great mysteries—that is, until Miss Jean Preston died.

The two works of art were sold for £1.7 million at the Duke’s Auction in Dorchester, Dorset, on April 19, 2007.<sup>7</sup> Can you imagine hanging two portraits, worth so much money, behind the door of your spare room? Why did she not insure them or store them in a high-security vault like other people who own such treasured paintings do? The answer is obvious: she did not know the true worth or value of the paintings. In other words, she was *ignorant*.

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Although she owned these treasures, Jean Preston lived a modest life. In the words of *The Guardian*, “Miss Preston, an expert on medieval texts, carried on living an unassuming life, travelling everywhere by bus or on foot, buying her clothes from a catalogue and eating frozen meals, not realizing she had a fortune hanging behind the door of her spare bedroom. It was only after her death...that the panels came to light, to the shock of Miss Preston’s family and the art world.”<sup>7</sup>

In fairness to Miss Preston, we do not know what she would have done had she known the real worth of the two masterpieces. However, the fact remains that she lived a humble and self-effacing life even though she could have lived a millionaire lifestyle complete with all the trimmings: luxurious homes, designer clothes and jewelry, expensive cars, the finest food and drinks, and an array of domestic staff at her beck and call. She had a right which she failed to employ for her own benefit.

The story is also told of an illiterate woman who lived in the United States in the eighteenth century. She had an only son who was extremely wealthy and looked after her. She lived in a beautiful house with two maids, a butler, and a chauffeur, all paid for by her doting, loving, and caring son. Unfortunately, he died before she did. Following his death, the money stopped. She fell into really hard times and began to live in abject poverty. She lost her maids and could barely heat her home.

One day, her vicar was visiting when he noticed a peculiar item hanging on her wall. He asked her why she had framed it and if she knew what it was. The lady explained that on her son’s death, she had received a parcel from his attorney with a beautiful piece of paper. It was from her son, and as it was the only thing she possessed that reminded her of him, she had decided to frame it and hang it on her wall.

The vicar explained that it was a check for US\$500,000 and that all she had to do was pay it into her bank account and she would have so much money she would not know what to do with it. The check represented the net proceeds of her late son’s estate, which she was entitled to as the sole beneficiary. The lady was so overwhelmed that she started to weep tears of joy. Here she was, living on the poverty line, when in reality she had the *entitlement* to US\$500,000, an amount which today would be worth in excess of US\$10 million! Why did this lady not exercise her entitlement to the money? The answer is simple. *Ignorance*.

Our third story comes from London in the United Kingdom. On November

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11, 2010, a Chinese vase sold at auction for US\$69 million. The urn had been sitting in the loft in a house owned by a brother and sister in Pinner, a suburb of London, for years. It was only discovered during a routine house clearance. The brother and sister were stunned when it sold for a world-record-breaking US\$69 million. The eighteenth-century piece of Qianlong Era porcelain had been expected to fetch between £800,000 and £1.2 million when it went under the hammer. The vase was believed to have been acquired by an English family during the 1930s or earlier; the auctioneer, Bainbridges, said how it reached northwest London would never be known.

According to *The Harrow Times*, the owners, who had inherited the urn, had little or no idea of the fortune it would make them when they found it.<sup>8</sup> The vase is understood to have been carried off by a private buyer from China for what is believed to be the highest sum for any Chinese artwork ever sold at auction. Its eye-watering price shocked both the auctioneer and the owners. Helen Porter of Bainbridges said: “They had no idea what they had. They were hopeful but they didn’t dare believe until the hammer went down. When it did, the sister had to go out of the room and have a breath of fresh air.”

Can you imagine having a treasure worth a life-changing *US\$69 million* and leaving it to rot away in your attic? The simple reason why this vase sat in the loft all those years until it was discovered is *ignorance!* Nobody knew the vase’s true value until it went under the hammer. However, the truth is that the brother and sister did not become millionaires the day the Chinese vase was sold on that cold November morning at auction in Ruislip, West London. They became multimillionaires the very day *they inherited the property with all its contents*. The fact that they did not know that they owned such a treasure is irrelevant!

Our final story concerns a certain Mr. James O’Neil, a young Irishman who was said to have been born in November 1825. According to the story, in the spring of 1850, he boarded a ship to New York in the United States from Southampton in the United Kingdom. He was the oldest of nine children. He and his eight brothers and sisters were the children of Jack and Johanna O’Neil, potato farmers who lost everything in the Great Famine.

In 1850, James O’Neil was emigrating from Shannon in Ireland to Springfield, Illinois. He was fleeing the Great Famine in search of a better life for himself, with the aim of eventually returning to help those of his siblings who survived the widespread starvation occasioned by the famine. He bought his ticket with all his life

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savings. It was his first ever journey abroad. After paying for his ticket, he had just enough money left for his onward journey from New York to Springfield. He packed some food to eat on the ship because he thought that his ticket covered only his travel and lodgings.

After about four days on the ship, O’Neil ran out of food. He thought he would do without food for a few days and see how things went. By the second day, he was so hungry that he would do anything to get a morsel of food into his mouth. When he could no longer cope with the hunger, he made his way to the dining room for dinner. He thought to himself that he would eat and offer to work as a cleaner in the kitchen in return. It was a Sunday evening. He had the most amazing roast dinner he had ever eaten in all his life; then waited for his bill.

When the bill was not forthcoming, he called one of the waitresses aside and explained his predicament to her. The stewardess explained to him that his ticket included free food because he had paid for full board and lodging. In other words, he didn’t need to have gone hungry for those two days! The day he bought his ticket and boarded the ship, he became entitled to three meals daily on the ship whether he knew it or not. Can you imagine the needless pain he suffered because of his ignorance?

“How does this apply to me as a born-again Christian?” you might ask. In every way! In case you didn’t know, the single most important reason why Christians do not exert or make use of their entitlement in Christ Jesus is *ignorance*, or as the Bible puts it beautifully, “lack of knowledge.”

*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.*

HOSEA 4:6

Notice that Hosea actually says, “*My people* are destroyed”! It is God’s people, God’s children—not unbelievers, not the dying world, but his own people whom he has redeemed unto himself by the precious blood of Jesus—who are being destroyed, wiped out, defeated, and crushed! Why would God’s chosen people be destroyed?

The simple answer is because they are either too busy to read and study the Scriptures or they are not interested in reading and studying the Scriptures, and as a result, they demonstrate an embarrassing lack of knowledge and understanding.

The word “destroyed” here connotes defeat with all its ramifications: shattered

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dreams and lives ruined. It also denotes bondage or slavery to sin, as well as an inability to achieve anything in life. The word “destroyed” signifies a life of poverty, a lack of fulfillment, and an inability to either discover or fulfill one’s purpose in life.

The tragedy—I would even say the *catastrophe*—of life in this day and age is that God’s people simply do not know who they are in Christ Jesus. They go through life trying to be somebody else and living a lie. One of the tricks of the Enemy is to keep them from the knowledge of this vital truth, to keep them from understanding the power and purpose of salvation. It is crucial to know who we are and what we have *in Christ*. This knowledge is freely available to us in the pages of Scripture. For the Christian, ignorance is not bliss; it is negligence and carelessness.

*“As hunger is cured by food, so ignorance is cured by study.”*

CHINESE PROVERB

The question that comes to mind is, of course, “How do we acquire this knowledge and this understanding?” Or in the words of the Chinese proverb, how does a person cure ignorance? The short answer is that knowledge comes by revelation through the study of the Scriptures. It is for those who are prepared to do that little bit extra which distinguishes them from ordinary folk and makes them *extraordinary*; those who want to draw close to God; those who long to know God, his ways, his principles; those who desire God more than their necessary food; those who thirst for righteousness; those who are really serious about finding God and want him more than anything else, as found in Jeremiah 29:13–14, MSG.

To put it differently, this essential knowledge is only available to those who call out to God...those who dig deep.

*Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterfalls; all  
Your waves and billows have gone over me.*

PSALM 42:7

Knowledge is available to those who ASK: i.e., those who *ask, seek, and knock*. The reason is uncomplicated. As we are told in Matthew 7:7, when you ask with anticipation you receive; when you seek wholeheartedly you find; when you knock persistently the door is opened. There must be faith, desire, and perseverance. The combination is unstoppable.

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However, it is not enough *merely* to ask, seek, and knock. You must also *retain*. You must receive with thanks and appropriate what you are given. You must hold on to what you find and exercise what you possess. When the door is opened, you must enter in expectantly. “But how?” I hear you ask. By verbalizing the truth. By acknowledging that it is yours. By speaking it into your situation and circumstances. By letting the Word of God become flesh to you and allowing it to be a part of your daily routine and everyday life.

The apostle Paul puts it superbly in his epistle to Philemon in the Bible book of the same name:

*That the sharing of your faith may become effective by  
the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.*

PHILEMON 1:6

The Word of God can be real to you. All the resources of heaven are at your disposal. God has given you all things to enjoy in Jesus Christ. However, you have a part to play. *Only you* can determine how far you go with God. God is willing and able to go with you all the way. Are you ready to walk with him? The ball is in your court.

### FOOD FOR REFLECTION

- Are you in Christ Jesus?
- Are you exercising your right to be a child of God?
- What other entitlements do you have in Christ Jesus?
- Are you a spiritual millionaire in rags?
- How do you retain what God has given you?
- What is the solution or cure for ignorance?
- Has it ever occurred to you that the difference between an ordinary person and an extraordinary person is the *extra* bit?
- How do you show faith, desire, and perseverance?

### PRAYER FEATURES

- Lord, create in me a hunger for you and a thirst for righteousness. Let it be a driving force that cannot be stopped, a fire that cannot be quenched.
- Lord, open my eyes to see myself the way you see me.