

The Greatest Threat to the Church
Selected Scriptures
Steve Hereford, Pastor-Teacher
8/13/23 © 2023

Transcript provided by <https://riverside.fm/transcription>

00:03

There is a threat that is going on behind the scenes at this church.

00:13

That threat is not with flesh and blood.

00:18

That threat, according to Ephesians 6-12, is with the rulers, the powers, the world forces of this darkness, the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. And this threat is dangerous because the enemy uses people to carry out his wicked schemes.

00:44

In the New Testament, we see him using people like Deutrophes in 3 John 9. Deutrophes loved to be first among the church. And he didn't accept what the apostles had to say. And then you had people like Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5, who lied to the Holy Spirit.

01:10

Or you had people like in Acts chapter 6 that were the Hellenistic Jews who complained because they were being neglected by the church. In Philippians 4, you had people like Iodia and Syntyche that were not living in harmony in the Lord.

01:30

Every church had its share of people who were used by Satan and not by the Lord. And it occurred in the church, not just outside the church. That's actually why Paul wrote in Acts chapter 20 to the elders of the church in Ephesus.

01:50

to be aware that after his departure he said savage wolves would come in among you not sparing the flock and men would arise from within the church speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after themselves. Now there are various titles given in the New Testament to identify who I'm talking about. For example,

02:15

In John 12, 31, he's called the Prince of this World. And as the Prince of this World, that means he rules a world that includes men and angels who are separated from God and who are enemies by nature. Charles Spurgeon said, Satan knows right well that one devil in the church can do far more than a thousand devils outside her bounds. That's why all churches deal with many adversaries, not just one.

02:46

because Satan has cunning servants about him that hunt for the precious life with double diligence," says Spurgeon.

02:57

This enemy is also called the Prince of the Power of the Air in Ephesians 2.2. That means he's the ruler of the empire of this atmosphere. Second Corinthians 4.4 calls him the God of this world, and as the God of this world, he blinds the minds of those who do not believe so that they cannot be saved.

03:19

J.I. Packer says that this is so because he exercises over people and because of the servile obedience that they render to him, they are taken captive by him to do his will.

03:33

By this point, you should know who I'm talking about. I'm talking about Satan. I'm talking about the devil.

03:43

Scripture says he's the ruler of the demons, he's Lucifer, he's identified as Satan, which means adversary or opposer, he is identified as the devil, which means slanderer, he's identified as the serpent of old, the great dragon, the evil one, the destroyer, the tempter, the accuser of the brethren. He is a liar.

04:09

and deceiver. He's the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience. That's just a few of the names and titles that identify our enemy. Satan is real. Demons are real. And we can expect their evil influence to increase in the world and in the church. And we've been certainly seeing it

04:39

where the church has adopted much of the culture.

04:46

That's why our battle was real.

04:50

So my question this morning is how are we to deal with him?

04:55

How are we to deal with demons?

05:00

Does the scripture give us any defense? Well, I believe it does. And I want to talk about three ways that you can deal with the greatest threat to the church. Three ways. The first one is to recall. Recall. There are certain facts that must govern how we think about Him, and first we need to understand His power.

05:29

Because he is all the things mentioned by his names and titles, we need to be cautious of him. The scripture says that Satan is like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. And when you're not faithful

to the Lord or in those one moment, that one little moment when you slip, and when you fall and you stop following the Lord, in that single moment, you are now in the hands to be used by the enemy.

06:00

And it may express itself in complaining, as we heard in Acts 6 of the Hellenistic Jews. No, it may show itself up in pride and trying to be a first and above everybody else, and your opinion means more than anybody else, even many times more than the Word of God.

06:22

Or it can show itself up in things we say. Instead of grace coming through our lips, we spew venom. And we've all been in some of those meetings in years past where we've seen some people used in that way, and it was very grieving.

06:42

But we have to understand his power.

06:48

And that means we should never think lightly of him.

06:53

He has great power and puny man is no match for him.

06:58

There are people that run around trying to rebuke him, they run around trying to bind him, or they run around trying to command him to do something, and they don't have that kind of power.

07:11

If you study the New Testament, the only people that had that kind of power was Jesus, the Apostles, and those who were closely associated with the Apostles. That's it.

07:29

So we have to recall and think in our mind that this enemy is very powerful. And we can't go at him in our own strength, right?

07:47

But we also have to keep in mind that he is sovereignly restricted.

07:55

He's a creature like you and I. He was created by God like you and I. And His power is limited.

08:08

His activity is also limited. He can only do what God permits him to do.

08:18

I want to show you this. Let me have you to turn into the Old Testament and go with me to Job chapter 1. Job chapter 1.

08:30

In Job chapter 1, we're getting an opportunity to have the veil pulled back and to hear a conversation that went on between Satan and God.

08:50

After it's listed about Job being a blameless man, an upright man, a man who feared God, a man who turned away from evil, then it lists how many children he had and how many possessions he had.

09:12

But when you get down to verse 6, it says, now there was a day. Now again, you gotta keep in mind, the whole point of starting this book the way it did was to prove that Job was a blameless, upright man fearing God and turning away from evil.

09:33

So again, verse 6, now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan also came among them. And the Lord said to Satan, from where do you come? Then Satan answered the Lord, or the Satan answered the Lord and said, from roaming about on the earth and walking about on it. And the Lord said to Satan, have you considered my servant Job? Notice here God says this.

10:00

For there's no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil. Then Satan answered the Lord, Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth your hand now and touch all that he has, he will surely curse you to your face.

10:30

Then the Lord said to Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him. So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord. And then what you read that follows is Satan attacks the possessions that Job had, and then he attacked his family. For example, verse 14 says he lost his oxen and donkeys.

10:58

Verse 15, He lost His servants. Verse 16, He lost His sheep. Verse 17, He lost His camels. And verses 18 and 19, He lost His sons and daughters.

11:09

He lost everything.

11:14

But did he do what Satan said he would do? Did he curse God?

11:22

No?

11:25

It says in verse 20, he tore his robe, shaved his head, fell to the ground and worshiped and he said, naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. And through all this Job did not sin, nor did he blame God. This could have been you or me. In fact, in some situations, it,

11:54

There are people that this has happened to. Not just Job.

12:00

But we could have had the same response Job had. You know, just because you're tempted to do evil doesn't mean you have to do it. I mean, as a child of God, you've been freed from the chains of sin. You're no longer in bondage to sin. You're now a slave of righteousness, according to Romans chapter 6. You don't have to live a life of sin any longer. You've been freed and you've been empowered by the Spirit of God who indwells you.

12:29

to live a holy life.

12:33

Well, if you go to chapter two, after Satan failed to entice Job to curse God, we hear it now in chapter two, verse one, again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said to Satan, Where have you come from? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.

13:01

The Lord said to Satan, Have you considered my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, again a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to ruin him without cause. Satan answered the Lord and said, Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh and he will curse you to your face.

13:30

And so the Lord said to Satan, behold, he is in your power. Only spare his life. And this second test set in motion a series of tests for Job that carry us all the way to the end of the book. But Job never gave in. He never did what Satan said that he would do.

13:54

In fact, it was actually his wife that did that. Look down at verse 9. His wife said to him, Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!

14:07

Boy, that was helpful, wasn't it?

14:11

But he said to her, You speak as one of the foolish women speak. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity? In all this, Job did not sin with his lips. He didn't curse God. He didn't say anything bad about God.

14:28

In fact, even when his three friends came and tried to comfort him, Job still spoke more wisdom than his three friends did.

14:43

And when you look there at the response that Job's wife had...

14:50

That gives us another example how Satan can use people in your life to contribute to your fall.

14:58

Not everybody around you is helpful.

15:02

Not everybody around you is sensitive to what you're going through. And though you may share it with them, they may come back with religious pioucity and not help you at all.

15:18

That's what these three friends did.

15:24

You know, every time you go through a difficulty, does it mean you're being punished? Or being chastened? It certainly does mean that you're being tried and tested.

15:39

But I want you to notice two times we hear a statement that God makes. Two times. First was found in verse 12 of chapter 1. And what did he say? Do not put forth your hand on him.

15:58

And the second one is in chapter 2 and verse 6. Spare his life.

16:06

You know what I get from that? Satan can't do a thing to us unless God allows him to do it. You ever thought of it like that?

16:18

There was a point in David's life when he was fleeing from Absalom, and there was a man that was cursing him and kicking up the dirt, the ground, and one of his men of valor, one of his soldiers, said, Do you want me to go over there and cut his head off? They were pretty vivid in the Old Testament, and he would have done it if David said go. There wasn't really anything they wouldn't do for him.

16:48

But David told him no.

16:52

Perhaps the Lord is doing this. Have you ever looked at your situations like that?

17:02

I mean, we tend to view trouble one-sided.

17:07

But I mean, even in this situation here, I mean, Joe didn't have the opportunity that we're having to pull the curtain back and see the conversation and hear it.

17:19

But isn't it true for us when we go through difficulty? Isn't it true for us as we go through difficulty even as a church?

17:30

Again, nothing can happen to us apart from God's permission.

17:37

God is sovereign. What does that mean? God is sovereign. God is in control of our lives and that means Satan is not the one in control of our lives. At least as believers.

17:53

So you need to recall this when you're tempted, when you're tried, when you're attacked, when you're going through difficult situations.

18:02

You need to keep in mind Satan is the one who accuses, he deceives, he plants doubt, he tempts you to pride and fleshly satisfaction, he divides the church, he discourages, he distracts. He does all of this to oppose the purposes of God.

18:29

Over in 1 Corinthians, if you remember when we studied 1 Corinthians, when he wrote, that is when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he addressed him as the Church of God to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus.

18:48

But he also had to say to them in verse 10, I exhort you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you but that you may complete in the same mind and the same judgment. You need to be of one mind, one heart. Not everybody is together, not everybody is unified. And Satan is really good at destroying unity because in destroying unity that

19:17

that causes conflict to arise.

19:22

And there is, beloved, in the Proverbs, in chapter 6, a passage that should haunt all of us of how dangerous some of this is. It's found in chapter 6, verse 16, and following it says, There are six things which the LORD hates. Yes, seven which are an abomination to him. Haughty eyes. What's that? That's pride. A lying tongue.

19:50

Hands that shed innocent blood, that's murder. A heart that devises wicked plans. Feet that run rapidly to evil. A false witness who utters lies and one who spreads strife.

20:07

among brothers.

20:11

God hates that.

20:14

So you look back to the past and you think maybe some church meetings you've been in and you've seen some people kind of erupt and start showing their flesh and being ugly and things like that. That was not of Jesus. That was not of the Lord. But that was something that He hates because that was sowing strife, discord, division among the saints.

20:43

The one thing he wants to do is distract, take you away from the main purpose, take you away from worshiping the one true God, and to just react off how you feel, what your flesh is telling you. That's why it's so dangerous to follow your heart. You know, you hear sometimes people say, you just need to do what your heart tells you. You know, that's one of the most dangerous things you could do.

21:13

Because the Bible says, and Jesus said it specifically, that what proceeds out of the heart is fornication, adultery.

21:23

wickedness. Now this is what comes out of the heart and this is what you're supposed to be trusting? No. Your trust is not subjective. Your trust is objective. You trust Christ. You trust God. And that's where you rest. But first and foremost, your mind's got to be right there. We don't follow emotions. We have them.

21:49

And you want your emotions to follow your mind, not the other way around. And some people live out of their emotions. And then they allow how they feel to dictate what they say. And how they go through the day and how they look at life.

22:06

But as I said, you and I need to recall. We need to understand how powerful Satan is so that we're aware of him and we understand he's like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. But we have to keep in mind, he's sovereignly restricted. He can only do what God allows him to do.

22:24

And beloved, also keep in mind that Jesus Christ purchased victory for us on the cross. Our victory is because of Jesus. Our ability to overcome Satan is because of Jesus. He defeated and he judged Satan by his redemptive death and by his resurrection. And they are subject to him. And they are subject to his final judgment. In fact, everyone and everything is subject to him.

22:53

Give you a few verses that talk about that. First Corinthians 15 28, when all things are subjected to him, then the son himself also will be subjected to the one who subjected all things to him, so that God may be all in all. So there he's saying all things, they're gonna be subjected to Christ. Ephesians 1 verse 20 says, when he brought about in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far.

23:20

above all rule and authority and power and dominion. He's been exalted far above demons and angels and any created thing. And that every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come and he's put all things in subjection under his feet and he gave him as head over all things to the church. Jesus Christ is the head of his church.

23:47

He's the Creator, He's the Savior, He's the Redeemer. We're subject to Him.

23:54

Colossians 2.15 says, When he disarmed the rulers and authorities, he made a public display of them, having triumphed over them. Again, our Lord is victorious. 1 Peter 3.20 or 21, corresponding to that, baptism now saves you not the removal of the dirt from the flesh. He says, But an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven after angels and authorities and powers have been subjected to him.

24:25

Jesus triumphed over Satan. He triumphed over demons. And what we hear is a fulfillment of Genesis 3.15 where God said, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed and he shall bruise you on the head and you shall bruise him on the heel.

24:45

He did this. He's victorious.

24:51

So keep it in mind. Recall this. Satan, yes, is powerful, but he can't do anything unless God allows it. But Jesus has subjected him to himself. All things are subjected to him.

25:10

You know, this is why the Reformers would say that we needed to preach the gospel to ourselves every day. You know why we need to do that? Is because we forget.

25:25

And I believe that Scripture even addresses that. Let me just read this to you. In fact, I think I read it to you already this morning when I was reading the wrong chapter in 2 Peter 1. But let me remind you again. When Peter talks about adding faith, you remember? And moral excellence and knowledge and self-control and perseverance and godliness and brotherly kindness and love to your life, he says, in 2 Peter 1, 8 and 9.

25:51

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. You see, beloved, if you're not every day

26:17

adding faith and moral excellence and knowledge and self-control and perseverance and godliness and brotherly kindness and love to your life. You're going to forget.

26:33

Your walk with Christ is active, not passive. It's you actively, every day, as much as possible, talking to Him.

26:46

reading His Word, studying His Word, and sharing His Word. And of course, living it.

26:58

If you're praying, reading, and sharing,

27:03

You'd be a fool not to live it.

27:07

and you'd be a hypocrite and people would see that.

27:12

And he says there in verse 10, you've got to be all the more diligent to make certain about his calling and his choosing you. For as long as you practice these things, he says you'll never stumble.

27:24

You know, one of the most disturbing things in the church is when you run into people that don't know what they believe.

27:33

And some have been sitting in church for most of their life, and they can't communicate what they believe. That's tragic.

27:45

Do you know that Jesus prays for our victory?

27:50

I mean, he did that for Peter.

27:54

Over in Luke 22, 31, he said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.

28:07

And you when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." And most likely what he was talking about there was when Peter would deny him three times. And you remember after the third time he went out and wept bitterly. And the next time you see Peter is at the resurrection of Christ. And then the next time you really hear Peter, I mean other than John 21 where Jesus is pretty much commissioning him.

28:37

He's told like the rest to wait in the upper room for the promise of the Father. That is the sending of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit came, what happened? Peter and the eleven, they preached Jesus. And that's what you see in the book of Acts. Peter and the apostles dominate the first twelve chapters of Acts. The last half of the book of Acts dominated by Paul.

29:05

But the running theme going through the book of Acts is preaching Jesus. He's alive. He's not dead. He resurrected just like he said.

29:21

We also know in John 17, 15 that he prayed that we might be kept from the evil one. And he said this, I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. So let me ask you a question. If Jesus is praying for you, do you think his prayer will be answered?

29:42

Yes sir, that's right. It's not like me praying for you, or you praying for me, or us praying for each other. I mean, we can have great faith and pray for each other, but we really don't know if the Lord's gonna answer that, do we? We have to wait. And I tell you, and you probably have same stories that I have, I mean, there are times that you pray about something, and immediately you see the Lord answer it. And then there are some times when you pray about something.

30:11

and he doesn't immediately answer it. Or maybe the answer is the opposite of what you're asking for.

30:19

And you have to be prepared too for that because sometimes the Lord says no. That's not for you. That's not my will for you. That's not my plan for you.

30:34

But scripture does teach that he prays for us to keep us from the evil one. He prayed for Peter that his faith wouldn't fail. And Peter's faith didn't fail, did it? I mean, he messed up. But one thing about the righteous, they may fall seven times. And guess what? Seven times to get back up. It's not like a false believer. False believer falls and can't get back up. But Hebrews 7.25 tells us that

31:02

Jesus always lives to make intercession for them. He prays for us. He's always interceding for us. 1 John 2, when we sin, where do we go? We go to Jesus. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 1 John 2, 2, and he himself is the propitiation for our sins and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. So we need to recall these truths

31:31

from the Word of God if we're going to be victorious over Satan. We need to keep in mind. We need to recall. We need to go back and be reminded over and over. Yes, Satan's powerful. God didn't give me these little gimmicks and these little words to deal with him, to run around and bind him and rebuke him. I mean, I've heard some weird stuff over the years.

31:56

But keep in mind, even though He's powerful, He is sovereignly restricted. He can't do anything to you unless God gives Him permission.

32:08

And Jesus already conquered Satan, already victorious over Satan. Guess what? You and I can be victorious over him too. We do not have to give into him. We do not have to give into the flesh. We do not have to give into sin.

32:30

So the first way we respond to the greatest threat of the church is to recall. The second way we respond is to resist. Resist.

32:42

Let me have you to turn to James chapter 4 because James mentions this. He talks specifically about what to do when it comes to Satan. Look at what he says. Verse 7, submit therefore to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you. So what's the first thing he says? Submit to God.

33:12

That's how you resist Satan. You submit to God. By the way, that phrase is repeated in 1 Peter 5, 9. And to submit means to place yourself under. You're placing yourself under the Creator. You're placing yourself under God. And this is really a military term. And it could mean to rank under.

33:35

And if you want to resist the devil, then you have to put yourself in that place of submission. In fact, both James and Peter say, when you submit to God, you resist the devil. And the idea of resisting the devil is to oppose him. Here's how you oppose him. How you oppose him is to submit.

34:00

James is saying there's no middle ground. There is no neutrality. He's already made clear that friendship with the world, and the world is Satan's domain, is hostility toward God, and whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. So we don't really have anything to do with the world, right? We live in the world, but we're not of the world. We want to confront the world with the gospel. We want to call the world to repent. We don't want to be molded into the world's images.

34:31

and their philosophies.

34:35

The stand with the Lord is to stand against everything sinful, everything worldly that was formerly appealing and corrupting and enslaving. And so James says once you submit to God and you oppose the devil, what's the devil going to do? What's it say? He will do what? Flee. He will flee from you.

35:02

Just as the devil left Jesus after the temptations in the wilderness, Matthew 4:11, he will also flee from those who resist him. Jesus resisted him. Jesus didn't run around rebuking him, other than, I mean, he rebuked him with the word of God, and if you want to rebuke Satan with the word of God, do it. But quote scripture. Don't go around saying, I bind you. I have power over you. You have no power here. You don't know what's going on. You don't have the curtain pulled back.

35:33

As a child of God, you're subjected to this automatically. Because Satan's an enemy. Satan's not your friend.

35:45

And that idea that you may have that, oh, it sounds so good in my mind, but it may be very much of the devil, and not of Jesus.

35:57

So here's a pledge that the devil can be defeated, but it's not by words or phrases or gimmicks. It's by submitting to God and opposing the devil. Submitting to God and resisting the devil. That's how you and I are to deal with the devil. We don't need to go around talking to him, folks.

36:25

Sometimes people talk more to him than they talk to God. What's wrong with that?

36:33

The second way that you can stand against Satan, second way that you can resist is by putting on the armor of God. Now, scripture does talk about the armor of the believer and it's found over in Ephesians chapter six, so let me invite you to turn to Ephesians six. The last section of Ephesians six deals with the armor and it begins at verse 10 and goes all the way to the end of the book.

37:01

But notice what he says in verse 10.

37:08

He says, finally be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on, and by the way put on is a command, it's also an eros tense verb which means you put it on, you leave it on. You'll never take it off. Put on and leave on the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. That's a hint of purpose clause in Greek when it says so that. It means for the purpose of. So you put the armor of God on.

37:37

and you leave it on for the purpose of standing against the schemes of the devil.

37:48

And then Paul reminds them, our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, because of that, take up the full armor of God so that you'll be able to resist in the evil day and having done everything to stand firm. I mean, if our battle is spiritual and our battle is against...

38:14

Satan and demons then you've got to have the full armor of God on That's verse 13. That's the only way you're gonna be able to resist and that's the only way you're gonna be able to stand firm You know, I feel so much better If I'm trying to stand, you know, if I was out in the woods and a bear a bear approached me I'd feel so much better about if I had a gun in my hand You know what I mean? Rather than standing there without one because I'm certainly not gonna throw a stick at him

38:46

And so he says in verse 14, stand firm, and then he starts going into the pieces of the armor. And the whole reason why he's doing this is because Paul was under house arrest and he was chained to a Roman guard. And so he's looking at that Roman guard and he's identifying the very pieces of armor that that guard is wearing, and then he applies it to the spiritual life. Look at what he says. Stand firm, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and that's when they would take this little belt and they would tuck it between their legs, it would pull the robe up, and they'd cinch it right there in that big old belt that went around their waist.

39:16

And the point of that was, because if you were in hand-to-hand combat and you had that almost like a dress flapping around, you didn't want somebody to come up and pull that up and pull it over your head and then stick a dagger in your back. You pulled it up, you cinched it. When you were doing work, you would do the same way. You'd pull it up, cinch it. They didn't have jeans. Levi's wasn't around. Wrangler wasn't around during those times.

39:42

In fact, the only way you can about tell the difference between a man and a woman is a man had a beard and a woman didn't. Ha ha ha.

39:49

They all wore robes.

39:53

That's what's so comical when some churches adopt this idea that women can't wear pants. Folks, nobody wore pants in the Bible. There were no pants, you know?

40:08

So he says you've got to gird your loins with truth. And then he goes to the breastplate, and he calls it the breastplate of righteousness. You've got to have that on. And then you've got to have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. In addition to that, you've got to take your shield, and he calls it the shield of faith, which you're going to be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. As he's shooting his arrows at you, you've got your shield to hide behind.

40:37

And then he says you take your helmet. The helmet of salvation. You know where Satan fires his darts at? He wants to hit you in the head because he wants to plant doubts in your mind. Oh, you can't be saved. Look at how you live. There's no way you're saved. You really didn't trust Jesus on that particular date you wrote down in your Bible. You don't live for Jesus. Or when you sin or when you fall. You say you're a Christian, but look at how you're living. How could you fall? Christians don't fall. That's the doubts and the lies he plants.

41:06

Notice the offensive weapon at the end. All the others are defensive weapons. This is the offensive weapon and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

41:18

Beloved, this is your sword right here. And if you're gonna deal with the enemy, you need to know how to wield the sword. And that's why I said, when you go back to Matthew four, or the temptation of Jesus, what did Jesus do every time Satan tempted him? How did he respond? He quoted scripture, didn't he? He wielded the sword.

41:45

Can you quote scripture? Well, you can. You know why you and I should be memorizing it? Because we're not always gonna have a Bible available to us. Now, I know that we can put them on our phone, and I use it, and I use it too. But sometimes you might not have either with you, and you're going by memory.

42:11

And so it's good to put it in there and to lock it in there. Because that's encouragement to you too. I remember when I was in the hospital, one of the four times when I was doing that heart cath, and I was getting ready to go back. They got me ready. I was fixing to go back there where they do the procedure, and I was laying there on the table by myself waiting. And I was just laying there praying. I said, Lord, would you just give me one verse that I can just focus on?

42:38

answered my prayer immediately. Immediately a verse came to my mind. You know what verse it was? Let me read it to you. I was so encouraged and I hung on that verse that whole time. It's from Psalm 23 and it wasn't the one that says though I walked through the valley of the shadow of death, it was the last part of it.

43:02

where it says, you are with me.

43:08

And that's what I hung on. I wasn't by myself. My wife couldn't make it up there at the time.

43:15

I didn't have anybody else up there with me. And I just laid there and that verse was right there. And maybe I was, maybe it was the valley of the shadow of death. People do die when they do heart cath. You can have a heart attack. You actually signed paperwork saying you realized the risk. But I remember laying there, you are with me. God's with me. I'd be afraid.

43:43

And besides, if God was to take me, where would I be? Immediately in the presence of Jesus, right? No sorrow on this side. Not at all.

43:57

But you have to have this armor. And Paul is showing every believer what has been given as provision for the battle. And these pieces are defensive garments, useful garments. And then of course the offensive weapon, the word of God.

44:20

God's provided everything we need to successfully resist and defeat the devil. I don't have to run around shouting at him. I don't have to run around binding anything because I don't have that authority. I don't have to run around casting him out because again I don't have that authority.

44:45

But what I can do is I can submit to God, rank myself under him, humble myself to do that, and I can oppose Satan by doing that. And Satan will flee. You know, when you're not in the word, you're not submitting to God. When you're not praying, you're not submitting to God. When you're not witnessing, you're not submitting to God. When you're not living for Christ and being obedient, you're not submitting to God. So those are the moments when you're vulnerable.

45:15

Those are the moments when it's difficult to resist Satan, because you have thrown off the means by which you can resist him.

45:27

So he says, going back to what, verse 11, we have to put it on. And as I said, the heiness tense here indicates that we have to put it on and leave it on. I remember when I played little league ball right around the corner from here, and I don't know why the coach did this, but he had this genius idea to let me be a catcher. So I put all that stuff on.

45:52

You know, you had a piece that covered this part of your body. You had a helmet. You had a shield, more like a cage. And then you had stuff to cover your knees and your thighs. But when I got hit by the ball, guess where I got hit? Where there was no protection. I got hit in the throat. You know what they use now? They have a little piece that flaps down, a little hard piece that covers your throat. They didn't have it back then.

46:20

But you know what? I felt a little bit more protected with that stuff on if I was going to stand there behind a batter. You know, there's two things going on. You got somebody throwing this fast ball at you, and then you got the guy in front of you swinging a bat within so many feet from your head. And, you know, when you first start doing something like this, you're like... It's like bat blindness, I think they call it. But after a while, you can look past it. And it doesn't bother you to have somebody swing it right there by your head.

46:49

But think about this with the armor. There was never a time that you ever wanted to go out on a field and not have that stuff on if you were playing that position. I mean, you take the other positions and you had a glove. You take football, what do they have? They have pads? Their pants have pads within them? They're also, you know, all these guys are real muscular because that helps them when they're getting hit. It keeps them from getting hurt to be muscular like that.

47:22

Think about that for us in the Christian life. How important is it for us that we make sure that we're wearing the armor of God, we're putting it on, we're leaving it on, we're using it.

47:35

So we have to recall, we have to resist, and third, we have to rely. I'll start with an R. Rely. Victory is found ultimately in relying upon God. Let me give you three ways you can do that real quick. First is the power of Christ. There's no higher authority than Christ.

48:03

Keep that in mind, rely on that. God's given him all authority in heaven and on earth. That's what he said in Matthew 28, 18. He said in Jude 25, to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority.

48:26

John said in Revelation 12 10 that I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come for the accused of our brethren have been thrown down. He who accuses them before our God day and night.

48:47

about Philippians 2 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow of those who are in heaven and those who are under the earth and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and that's authority.

49:03

He has power and he's more powerful than Satan. You know, in some of our studies, we've seen Jesus's authority over sin. You remember in Matthew 9 and 6, it's also in the study of Mark. He said, but so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. Then he said to the paralytic, get up, pick up your bed and go home. Remember that?

49:32

Remember they tore up the roof, they brought their friend down right in front of Jesus, and he tells him, get up, pick up your pallet, go home. He healed him.

49:44

We also saw when he was in the synagogue, you remember there was a man in there with an unclean spirit? He cast the unclean spirit out, so we see him having authority over unclean spirits, and it says in Mark 1.27, they were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, what is this, a new teaching with authority? He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.

50:08

Now what else beloved, he has authority over death and life. In John 10, 18, speaking about his death on the cross, he says, no one has taken it from me, but I lay it down on my own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I receive from my Father.

50:27

So when he gave his life on the cross, one side of the story is they took his life, the other side of the story is he gave his life. And you remember when he stood before Pilate, and Pilate said, if you knew that I have the authority to release you or to condemn you, what did Jesus say? You have no authority unless it had been given to you from above. That's the only reason why you're able to do this. This is what I came for.

50:55

And of course we see that he has authority to execute judgment. John 5 27, God gave him authority to execute judgment because he is the son of man. And here's another one that's really even more specific, Acts 17 30 and 31. Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent because he has fixed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom he has appointed,

51:25

by raising him from the dead. See, when Jesus came the first time, they adored him as a cute baby in a manger, but you know it when he comes a second time? He's coming as judge. It says in Revelation 1-7, behold, he comes with clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him.

51:48

Revelation 6, they're going to be crying out for the rocks to fall on them, to hide them from the face of the Lamb, the wrath of the Lamb. So we need to rely on the fact that our submission is to Christ. He has authority over everyone, over everything, including Satan. So the first thing is the power of Christ. Second thing is the providence of God.

52:09

God cares for the believer. He cares for you. He cares for me. Do you know that we are the apple of His eye? You know what happens to hear something like that? When someone's the apple of your eye, you know, your children, your grandchildren, your spouse, if they're still living, they're the apple of your eye. You know what irritates your eye? Take your finger right here and stick it in your eye and tell me if that doesn't irritate your eye. You know, I can do this much because I used to wear contacts. I could actually touch my eye.

52:37

I didn't used to be able to do that. But you touch your eye, that's something unnatural in your eye, that hurts. Think about it this way, God cares about you so much when things come against you. It's like sticking your finger in God's eye. You're the apple of His eye. Everything that you and I go through has a purpose, has a reason. And it's mainly to make us into the image of Christ.

53:07

Make us like Jesus. Trials have a purpose, and I know we don't like them, but they have a plan and a purpose. And that's why the sooner you understand that, that these things test our faith and strengthen our faith and reveal the validity of our faith, sooner you understand that, the sooner you can do what James says, and that is to count it all joy.

53:33

You know, the Bible teaches that we're not to be fearful of men, fearful of angels, not to be fearful of the vents in this life, not to be fearful of even death. Why? Because nothing's going to separate us from God.

53:50

God is for us and no one can prevail against us. Listen to Romans 8, 31 and 32. What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? That's really all that matters, isn't it? He who did not spare his own son but delivered him over for us all, how will he not also with him freely give us all things?

54:21

God provides everything that we need. You know, we have everything pertaining to life and godliness. We have everything to live this life right here on this earth. But this isn't our home. Our home is heaven. This is what we're waiting for. This is what we're living for. And so in the meantime, 1 Peter 5, 7, we cast all of our anxiety on him because he cares for us. And we're sober spirit. We're on the alert. We're understanding that our adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.

54:49

and we're resisting Him, firm in our faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by our brethren who are in the world. We're not the only ones going through this. That's one of the negative things about when you go through something bad. You think you're the only one on the whole planet going through something like that. And sometimes that's what you feel like. But God is our refuge. And He defeats our enemy.

55:14

says in Deuteronomy 33, 27, the eternal God is a dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms and he drove out the enemy from before you and said, destroy.

55:28

So we have to rely on the authority of Christ, rely on His providential care in our lives, and last, we must rely on His promises. The Bible is full of promises.

55:40

When we've done everything that we can do to stand, guess what, we're gonna stand. God's able to make us stand. He's able to keep us from falling. And His promise is clear. I'll take you back to James 4.7. Here's His promise. Submit therefore to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you. It doesn't say that sometimes he'll flee from you. It says he will flee from you. That's a promise.

56:08

But you have to obey the first part. Submit. Pose to the devil.

56:16

And of course, when we have resisted him in the faith, standing firm in Christ, he's got to go. He's got to go. So, are you recalling? Are you resisting? Are you relying on God?

56:37

Are you recalling that Christ is more powerful than Satan? Are you recalling that Satan is sovereignly restricted by God? Are you recalling that Jesus purchased victory for us on the cross? Then are you resisting Satan by submitting to God and having the armor of God on? And are you relying on the power of Christ because he has all authority? Satan has no authority except for that which God has given to him. Are you relying on God's providential care to take care of you, to strengthen you in the battle?

57:06

Are you relying on his promises?

57:12

Keep this in mind, Satan is defeated.

57:20

and he will soon be destroyed. So stop giving in to him, start resisting him, and understand that he is the greatest threat to the church. And if you're not walking in obedience to Jesus, then you're being used by him to do his will. You keep that in mind too. And one of the ways that you can resist him this morning.

57:45

is to turn your heart to Christ.

57:51

I realized that not everybody in church is saved.

57:56

even though we may walk around and proclaim that we are.

58:00

And so that invitation is always there.

58:05

giving your life to Christ for salvation.

58:10

And until you do that, you're still under Satan's domain. Over in Ephesians 2, it gives, when it talks to believers, it uses past tense verbs to talk about what they used to be like. But think about it in this way without those past tense verbs, because this is true of every unbeliever. They are dead in trespasses and sins. They walk according to the course of this world.

58:38

They walk according to the course or the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sense of disobedience. That's the first three verses. For a child of God, they used to do this. For an unbeliever, this is what they're doing. And they may not even realize it. Did you realize it before you came to Christ? That your life was being controlled by Satan?

59:04

And of course, they're walking in this manner and following after the spirit that works in the sons of disobedience. They live their lives according to the lust of their flesh. They indulge the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

59:19

And the only thing that we can do is repent.

59:24

That's what the Bible says to do, repent.

59:29

and follow Jesus.

59:33

This morning, I want to encourage you to evaluate your heart. I want to encourage you to survey your life. I want to encourage you to go back over maybe things you've said, maybe things you've done. Maybe there are recent things you've said, recent things you've done.

59:52

and see if the enemy has used you. See what way he has done this.

01:00:00

and then repent.

01:00:03

Turn to Christ.

01:00:07

Come back to Jesus.

01:00:12

realize that during that time you had been given yourself to Satan's schemes and devices. You've been deceived.

01:00:25

Father, we just come once again to you now in prayer. We ask that you would help us.

01:00:35

And I think you have this morning by what we heard from your word.

01:00:42

that help us to recall.

01:00:45

to understand how powerful Satan really is, to therefore be cautious about him, but to understand that you have restricted him. He can only do what you allow him to do. And ultimately, Jesus provided victory over him. Help us to resist, Lord, by submitting ourselves, by humbling ourselves to you and opposing Satan and putting the armor of God on.

01:01:13

and help us to rely on your authority and to rely on your providence and your promises. For they will never fail us.

01:01:25

And we pray all this in Jesus name.