

What Satan Cannot Touch

The Armor of God

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Bible Verse: Ephesians 6:17
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Well, our text for today's message comes from the book of Ephesians again, chapter 6, and I invite you to turn there as I want to open the message this morning by just reading the text in its full context to set it in our minds and in our hearts for what the Lord would have for us here this morning. Our text for the message will actually come from verse 17 but we're going to read the whole context that leads up to that that we've been teaching on for the past few weeks.

Ephesians 6:10,

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For 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. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Now as we've seen so plainly from the word of God over the past several weeks, to be a Christian is to be involved in a serious life and death struggle with evil forces that are far stronger than we are, and in this passage Paul is telling us to recognize that we must adopt a position as one who is dependent upon Christ for help to survive that battle. We need supernatural help to overcome and to have victory in the midst of a battle against a supernatural foe.

So notice at the start that he says to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might, that we're told to stand firm in verse 11; in verse 13, having done everything to stand firm; verse 14, to stand firm, what we see as we observe this passage from a satellite

view, you might say, is that there is need for courage, there is to be an expectation of battle as we go through the Christian life. It is very helpful for us to understand this. If we expect the Christian life to be easy, we will soon be disabused of the notion; unless we come to grips with this, we will find ourselves discouraged, defeated and very doubtful about the reality of Christ and about the reality of our salvation. We are to expect it to be difficult. Through a variety of circumstances, as we will see, both inside our hearts and external to our lives, we understand that there is a foe working against us as we seek to bring glory to God in the life that we live for him as believers.

Now the whole point of this passage is that God has given us the spiritual resources that we need to live that kind of courageous Christian life, but before we go into that again and look at the specific things from verse 17, I just want to remind you from Scripture the kinds of things and the ways that this battle can manifest itself against us, the things that can come and be so very painful, and the loss is so severe, and the challenge is so dramatic so that we understand when the Scriptures describe us as being in a battle against an evil foe who seeks our destruction, we would understand just exactly how vulnerable we are in the realms that God allows Satan to touch us so that we might prove ourselves in the subsequent battle.

Think with me about the patriarch Job. What was it that he suffered when God gave Satan permission to attack him in order to prove a greater point? Satan touched, as it were, all of his property and he lost it. He lost all of his prosperity as a result of the battle with Satan that God allowed to be engaged. He literally lost his family as his seven sons and three daughters were killed in a sudden calamity. Death actually came and came violently to his life, those that he loved, and as the story progresses God allowed Satan to touch his health so that he was in a miserable condition with loathsome boils all over his body and from the description that follows in the book of Job, it seems that this went on for many months and there was a prolonged agony that was involved with that. And not only was Job dealing with those physical issues, he had the struggles of his own heart, "God, where are You? Why am I suffering like this?" And then on top of that, he had three so-called friends that came, completely misdiagnosed the situation and made false accusations against him that he was hiding sin in his life and this was the reason for his suffering. Inside, around him, everything was arrayed against him, all of this in a secondary sense instigated by Satan himself, designed to try to break the faith of Job, designed to provoke him to curse God to his face and thereby renounce the claim to know him that he had previously made.

That's pretty serious and, beloved, what I want you to see is that when we talk about the nature of the battle, that is how severe it can be. This is illustrative. Very few of us experience all of these things even in the course of a lifetime, and even if we do experience it over the course of a lifetime, we don't get it in that concentrated dose that it came to Job all at once. You read chapter 1 and these calamities came, one servant came and said, "I announce a calamity to you," while he was still speaking, another came. And while he was still speaking, another came. And while he was still speaking, another came. Wave upon wave upon wave of calamity, breaking Job of every earthly benefit that he

had and in such a colossal comprehensive way that he was utterly crushed under the weight of it.

Now what I want you to see here for us this morning is that we're using that for an illustration to just give us a sense of a taste of where the battle might be engaged and to understand that it can come at the things that we treasure and hold the most dear here on earth. We must understand that and realize and to interpret life in a way that helps us understand that there is always a spiritual dimension to the earthly circumstances that we find ourselves in. And to understand this, that when we feel that weight and pressure coming upon us, when we feel the awful sense of estrangement and isolation that comes, to realize that that is designed to bring us to a recognition of our weakness so that in dependence we would cast ourselves upon the Christ who has saved us and has given us the resources to be able to go through such times as those.

Now another brief example as we think about these things with a little bit more of a perhaps present-day application. Think about the Apostle Paul who suffered under the messenger of Satan that we've looked at in times past from 2 Corinthians 12, "A messenger of Satan was sent to buffet me." Well, what did Paul experience in part during his lifetime? Earlier in that book, Paul had spoken about how he was beaten for the Gospel, how he suffered overnight in a shipwreck, and for our purposes looking back further in the book of Acts, to remember that he was unjustly beaten and his rights were taken away from him all in the course of serving Christ faithfully in the proclamation of the Gospel. His rights as a Roman citizen were violated to the point that he was beaten with lashes, he was unjustly imprisoned, all of this against the course of law which was designed to protect him.

Now beloved, I'm not going to belabor the possibilities of present-day or near future application for us as things unfold, simply to point out that we should understand and expect that sometimes, perhaps in the course of our lifetime, perhaps soon enough, there will be occasions where Christians will be treated very unjustly, very unfairly, contrary to the laws and constitutions that were designed to protect them from that very thing. That's part of the battle, my friends. It's part of what God allows to be touched and we get a sense of the areas in which Satan can harass us and harm us and we experience very real loss in earthly time and in earthly perspective as a result of it. You know, the things that in an earthly sense we hold dear are vulnerable in the midst of this battle. You must understand that. You must understand that, and yet as we read Scripture in its totality and as we read and consider our passage this morning, we find that there are things that Satan cannot touch. There are things where he is not permitted to go and, beloved, it is in that realm that we are to focus our affections and our attention. We are to understand the things that we have been given by God in Christ that cannot be taken away, and we learn to cherish those things and draw our courage and strength from that while these other matters that Satan can touch in the permission and providence of God, while those things fall away from us, our hearts are enriched and encouraged and strengthened and find courage in the fact that we have things that cannot be taken away.

In Job, what we found is this and what we see is this. I nearly did a short series on Job in preparation for this but decided to save that for another time. What you see in Job is that God had given to Job as a gift a faith that was indestructible, that even through all of the loss and the wildest, most vicious attacks of Satan, could not destroy that faith that God had given to Job and you see that vindicated in the end, and after the testing had passed, God restored it all to Job in double portion. His faith Satan could not destroy. What God, speaking in New Testament terms, had given to Job in Christ could not be snatched away. For Paul, we see that in the midst of all of the affliction both inner and outer and spiritual that was put upon him, Satan could harass him in a merciless way but he could not bring ultimate harm to him because God said to him specifically, "My grace is sufficient for you." And why did God allow Job to be so afflicted and Paul to be so afflicted? Why would he allow his servants to undergo such great and wrenching heartache in the course of life if he's a God of love toward us? Why would he do that? Well, he said it to Paul and he did it to Job, he manifests his power through our weakness. It is only when we see how weak and vulnerable and dependent we are that the power of God is more clearly displayed through us. Without being made weak, we have a sense of pride and self-sufficiency in our accomplishments. God has to crush us sometimes to grind away, as it were, that pride of self-sufficiency so that we look at him dependently; so that as the tax collector in Luke 18, we cry out, "God, be merciful to me the sinner"; sometimes to expose your sin; sometimes in a constructive way to show your weakness in a manner that will ultimately display the power of God in your life.

But to understand this, beloved, that while there is this vast realm of vulnerability and weakness, the things that really matter, the things that God has given to us in Christ, those are things that Satan ultimately cannot take away and that's what we're going to see as we look at verse 17 from chapter 6 of Ephesians. Look at it with me again where Paul says,

17 ... take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

He points to two further elements of armor, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, and beloved, what we're going to see as we go through this is that this helmet of salvation, which I will explain, is something that is an invincible defense against the flaming darts of the evil one. This sword of the Spirit, this word of God, is sufficient for us in the battle. And so what we have to see, is we have to recognize the distinction between that which is eternal and given to us by God in Christ and distinguish it and recognize that this is unassailable, this has a perfect sense of protection, this cannot be taken away even though property and possessions and relations and health and Constitutional rights, those things may be taken away from us as part of the battle, we find our refuge in that which cannot be taken away. And we've been saying all along that what Paul is teaching us is that God has given us revelation in Christ, the written word and the Incarnate Word. We have God revealed in Scripture and God revealed in Christ and Satan cannot successfully attack that.

We have seen the righteousness of Christ. He has a perfect righteousness that Satan cannot diminish, that Satan cannot attack. He tried, as we'll see later, and he failed and we dwell in the realm of that righteousness. That righteousness has been credited to us as a gift. Satan cannot take away the righteousness of Christ which is the basis upon which we have our access to God. And further, we've seen the reconciliation that we have with God in Christ. Our sins have been pardoned. God accepts us as righteous for the sake of his Son. That is what it means to be justified, our sins are forgiven and a full righteousness has been credited to our account. We have a perfect status before a holy God. Our judge has now become our friend. Our judge has become our heavenly Father through his gift of adopting us into his family and Satan cannot take those things away.

So this is where we find our sense of invincibility and the courage to go forth and to conquer and when, figuratively speaking, the war rages around us and we see the fellow soldiers, I'm speaking in an extended metaphor here so stay with me, so as we're in the midst of the battle and we see our prosperity fall away, we see our health fall away from us, we see our friends turn against us and we see them start to accuse us without justification, when we see our rights threatened by the political and legal machinations of our day, we understand that that's all part of the battle and we find our refuge, we retreat, as it were, into the impregnable fortress of what God has given us and we find our courage and our delight and our joy in the strength of the Lord, Nehemiah 8:10; that we have this inerrant revelation from God, Christ has come for us, Christ has loved us, Christ has given himself for us at the cross, Christ is risen from the dead, Christ is ascended into heaven, Christ intercedes for us at the right hand of God. Well, that creates a sense of strong faith and unconquerable courage in the midst of the battle of lesser temporal things that we lose along the way. We realize that the world may oppose us, that Satan may attack us, but we are safe in Christ. We have a refuge in his righteousness that no one can touch and that is satisfactory to God. He said to Christ, "You are My beloved Son. In You I am well-pleased." And we as believers are in that beloved Son and God sees us with that same perspective. He is favorably disposed toward us and this reconciliation that we have, our sins are all forgiven, Satan may accuse us but he can't accuse us successfully. He cannot convict us of guilt because the guilt has already been paid. The penalty, the curse has been removed in Christ and these things, we cannot lose these things because they are a divine gift from God to his people.

Now I want to take just a moment to appeal to those of you that are not in Christ and for you to realize this, that you're not only vulnerable to lose everything earthly that I've described, but you're in eminent danger of losing your eternal soul beside, and that if you are outside of Christ, none of these riches, none of this privileges belong to you, and that ought to create in you a hunger, a desire, a concern, "O Christ, show me this love and mercy that You give to Your people that I do not have. Lord, Christ, show that mercy to me. Open my eyes. Help me to understand. Help me to hear. Let my heart be the good soil upon which the seed may fall." That there would be an earnest seeking of Christ that would mark you with a hope of success because Christ has said he who seeks finds, he who asks receives, he who knocks, he opens the door. Christ isn't hiding this grace from you. It's on visible display in his word. You're hearing about it now. The call goes out. If you walk out of the room without it, it's only a reflection of the hardness of your own

heart, not any lack of mercy or willingness on the part of Christ. And so I invite you, I encourage you, I beg you to come to Christ for these things, for these riches of mercy that he freely gives to those who repent and believe in him.

Now with that said, these things of which we speak, how is it that verse 17 adds to these wonderful things that we have already seen from this passage? Look at it again with me. I know I've read it two or three times, that's alright. Verse 17, "take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." What does this add to the wonderful things that Paul has already said? I'm going to give you two points for this morning, is to understand this: as you're going through the battle, first of all, you must remember your future glory. Your future glory. Satan cannot touch your future glory. He cannot take heaven away from you. He cannot interfere and disrupt the eternal plan of God which was to bring you into eternal blessedness in Christ throughout all of the eternal ages. If you are in Christ, that belongs to you and Satan cannot take that away. He might take away a lot of other things but the eternal things which really, truly, ultimately and only matter, he can't touch that. And so to win in this combat with Satan, you have to remember your position in Christ and your future glory is what Paul is referring to when he says, "take the helmet of salvation." When he says take it, he's having the idea of remember this and appropriate it. Think about it. Believe on it. Set your affections upon the things to come, not on the things of earth, in other words.

Now Roman soldiers, as he's making this extended metaphor about the armor of God, Roman soldiers had a hard helmet that they wore. It was made of bronze or iron for protection of their head during battle. It had an inner lining of some kind for comfort. Think about a bicycle or a motorcycle helmet today, you know, there's padding in there to give it a sense of comfort while there is a hardness outside it that protects you from injury. Well, what does Paul mean by the helmet of salvation in the context of the book of Ephesians? Well, my friends, what has Paul said earlier in Ephesians about the nature of salvation? What has God done for us in Christ?

And just to pause for just a second, just to call a very brief time out for the sake of giving your principles to help you understand Scripture better in your own private Bible reading. When you come to a verse, especially in the New Testament letters, and you say, "I'm not sure what this means here." Well, rather than starting to speculate, just go back and read the broader context of the letter. The context of the letter itself in which the verse appears is your best guide to understanding what any particular individual verse means. Don't pick and choose verses. Don't close your eyes and point to one verse and say, "This is my verse for a day." Read the letter, read it in its context and let that inform how you understand the rest of what you are reading. In this case, in this case when we see the reference to the helmet of salvation, what has Paul said earlier about the nature of salvation?

Go to chapter 2 with me where he had said in the first three verses, "You're dead in sin. You're doomed to suffer the wrath of God," verse 3, and in verse 2 he specifically said – watch this – he specifically invokes the demonic realm as that from which you were delivered. This is so important for you to understand. Paul is speaking about the spiritual

battle that we have, this wrestling struggle with evil forces. He says in your former life, chapter 2, verse 2, "you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." This is the former manner of life that Christians had. This is the ruler that you served. You walked according to Satan, the father of lies, the one who blinded you from the Gospel. And so we see in this opening section of chapter 2, he's addressing the spiritual lostness in specific terms that invoke the hostile spiritual realm.

Now with that in mind, what happened when you were saved, then? What did God do to you and for you in that condition? Chapter 2, verse 4, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." And so he made you alive together with Christ, that's the theological principle of regeneration. Verse 6, he raised us up with Him, he seated us with Christ in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. He has made us alive. He's given us a spiritual resurrection and he has secured that for us in heaven in a way that can never be taken away from us.

Now just remember and I'm trying to pace things here. It's hard when I've got so much energy that's just dying to get out of my heart and into your ears. Just remember that God did all of this in that hopelessly lost condition. You were hopelessly dead in sin. You were hopelessly subject to the demonic realm. You were hopelessly under the wrath of God. You were dead and you could not do anything about it on your own. You needed outside assistance to rescue you or you would have died a miserable death and faced a miserable eternity. It was when you could contribute nothing to your own benefit that God acted to save you like this. God has done this and given you this great salvation where he has raised you up from spiritual death and secured your eternal well-being in heaven. If Satan couldn't keep God from doing that in the beginning of your conversion, then obviously he can't take it away now that God has already done it, and so you are protected in your mind and in your heart by this salvation that God has given to you.

Now not only that, beloved, not only that, it's not just the position that I want you to see from Ephesians 2, but what it reveals to you about the nature of the God who saved you and we need to remember this and go back to it again and again and again. You have this great position in Christ but we should not think about that simply in abstract terms. We shouldn't simply think about it that my soul is safe and going to heaven, although that's certainly gloriously very true. What you need to see and what gives you strength and courage for the battle is to understand what motivated God to do that for you in the first place. Why did God do that for us when we used to be like that, dead, rebellious, traitorous rebels against him? Why did God do that? Well, we understand it wasn't by any works that we did. It certainly wasn't because we deserved it. We've already forfeited all of that. We've settled that. We were dead, dominated and doomed. We had no hope and nothing to offer to commend ourselves to God.

So how, then, do we find ourselves in this glorious position of having been made alive, raised up, seated with him at the heavenly throne in Christ? Look at it again in verse 4 and, beloved, I'm just really really afraid that we take all of this for granted. I'm really

afraid, I really worry that we take these things for granted and miss the glory of them. Why did God do that for you? What does it say about God? He's rich in mercy. Some of you think that God is a stingy, unwilling, you know, reluctant, distant God. Nothing could be further from the truth. You ought to repent of thinking that and having ever thought it for a moment if you're in Christ. God has been rich in mercy to you. He has loved you with a great love.

Look at it there in verse 4. Rich mercy. Great love. Verse 5, it's by grace you have been saved. Verse 7, surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. God, the fact that God has saved you if you are a Christian this morning, means that your eternal position is secure, you have that possession now waiting for the fullness to come to you upon death or the return of Christ, and all of that indicates a measure of something of the rich mercy, the great love, the unconquerable grace, the riches of his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. You who were guilty and a hater of God have received love, grace, mercy, kindness and patience like that. And because of those great attributes of God, you have been given this wonderful position in Christ that Satan cannot touch, and as a result of that, we understand that we've been transferred out of Satan's kingdom. If Christ has risen from the dead, and he has, and you are in Christ, then you too will be raised. If Christ has been glorified, you will certainly be glorified.

So beloved, here's what you need to see. How is it that you can go through life with a sense of joy and confidence even if earthly affliction brings tears of sorrows to your eyes? How can you have a perspective that allows you to be courageous, to be strong, to go forth into battle without fear, without preoccupation about what's happening in the world around us? How can you do that? You take up these truths about the attributes of God, the perfections of God and what he has done for you in your salvation in Christ, and you place it, as it were, like a helmet about your head and it governs everything about the way that you think about everything else and that's what guards your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus, is that you continually come back to the greatness of the salvation that God has given you. So while we may face seasons of deception within the church, discouragement in our personal lives, affliction in outward ways, in the midst of all of that activity behind which there is a spiritual realm using all of that to try to bring you to discouragement, to doubt, even to denial of God, the way that you stand strong in that and resist that and gloriously persevere through it is remembering these things and having the Spirit of God apply them to renew your heart again and again day by day.

Look over at 1 Thessalonians 5. If you're in Ephesians, you're not so familiar with your New Testament, turn toward the back of your Bible for that. 1 Thessalonians 5:6. We're not to be cold and indifferent to these things. We're not to forget them. Verse 6, "let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of the day," since we belong to Christ, "let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation." Hope not being a wish here but a confident expectation that what God has promised to us, he will fully deliver in the end in ways that go far beyond anything that we could ask or think. That's what hope is. "I am confident, I am certain that what God has promised to me in Christ He will fulfill, and He will fulfill

it in ways that go exceedingly, abundantly beyond all that I could ask or think." My highest and best thoughts about what it means to be a Christian and what it means to go to heaven when I die are going to be paltry ashes compared to what the reality is.

And he says, verse 8, I forget where I dropped off. I got excited there. "Since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation." I was talking about hope. You thought I'd forgotten, I didn't. Verse 9, "For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing." And so we gather together like we do this morning, we speak to each other not about the politics of the day, not about other aspects of daily life, we come preeminently to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ through the proclamation of his word and to remind ourselves and to remind each other from this pulpit and in our private conversations going back and forth afterwards the glories and the riches of Christ and the kindness and the mercy and the love and the patience that he has shown to us. And we remind each other and we remind ourselves and we draw great spiritual courage from this reality that if he has done this for us already in saving us in the first instance, then certainly he's going to keep us through whatever affliction we're facing in the present life. If he has done that for us in the past, how much more certainly will he do it in the future? How much more will he complete that which he has begun for us in Christ Jesus, Philippians 1:6?

And what we find, what you'll find, beloved, as you rehearse these things in your mind over and over again, rehearsing them in a believing way, you find that it gives you spiritual strength, spiritual courage, joy, peace, patience, kindness because you're filling yourself with that which the Spirit has revealed, that which the Spirit produces, that which the Spirit gives. And the point that Paul is making, the broader point that Paul's making here in Ephesians 6 is that as you remember your future glory, as you remember the wonders of your salvation, you understand that Satan cannot touch that, he can't take that away. You may lose all this other stuff but the thing that ultimately matters, Satan can't touch it and therefore you're protected from defeat in the battle as you call those things to mind.

So beloved, you remember your salvation in Christ and the fact that it has an outcome in future glory and you lean on that. You stand on that. You base all of your hope on the salvation that is ready to be revealed to you in the final day, as Peter said. And then when affliction comes, you respond in saying, "I'm trusting Christ. Ultimate things have not been taken away from me. I stand even though the rest of this collapses around me. I stand firm knowing what Christ has done and who Christ is to me and that He loves me and nothing can separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord." We really need that protection of our mind as we remember that dark days here on earth yield over to brighter days in glory, and you shape every affection and perspective and response to life from that perspective. It informs everything else. That's what it means to take on the helmet of salvation.

Now secondly, going back to Ephesians 6:17, Paul said, "take the helmet of salvation and," there's something else, there's something in addition to it, "and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God." As we are remembering our future glory, secondly, we are relying on the word of God. We are relying on the word of God. The future glory is yet to come. As we progress toward that goal, we have the word of God to help us. Right now in the midst of the mental battles that take place, the spiritual conflict that takes place, we turn to the word of God and find in it what we need to continue going moment by moment.

Now the sword of the Spirit, let me say just a word about this. When you and I in the 21st century think about a sword, we usually think of the long, you know what I mean, it brings that long blade to mind. The picture here is a little different. The sword as Paul was referring to it was more like a dagger. It was a shorter smaller weapon, and it was the only offensive piece in the armor that allowed the soldier to stab his opponent and to take ground by conquering his foe through the use of that dagger, that sword against it. Well, God has given us a weapon like that in the Scripture.

It is the Scripture, beloved, remember this, all of our theology matters here. So much, you know, I mean, there's so much teaching and theology in the Bible and it all comes to bear on these things. We have in the word of God an inspired, inerrant, God-breathed book that is given to us that is absolutely true and absolutely reliable. If you don't believe that about the Bible, then you have greatly diminished, you've taken away the sword from your arsenal. If we're not confident in Scripture, then we're not able to continue on in the battle. Well, when you understand that the Bible is the God-breathed book, that God has given us this word, that it is the word of God, look at it there at the end of verse 17, it is the word of God of which we speak, then we understand that we have a divinely powerful weapon here. We have in Scripture and what Scripture teaches and what Scripture means, we have everything that is necessary to discern and to refute the false philosophies of our day. We have everything that is necessary to comfort and encourage our hearts in the midst of affliction. So in a cosmic sense as we see false philosophies in the world, as we see false teaching infiltrate the church, as we find discouragement and a lack of courage in our own heart, Scripture is sufficient for all of that and it could be no other way. This is God's sufficient word given to his people.

Now when we speak about the word of God here, the word "word" that's used here, the term "word" that's used in the verse is a word that perhaps emphasizes the individual parts of Scripture rather than Scripture as a whole. Think about individual verses as opposed to the entire collection of the 66 books of the English Bible, and what Paul is saying here is that discernment and your ability to, you know, as a particular battle comes and you have to respond and defend yourself and to make an attack against an assault that comes to your mind, the idea is that there are specific texts that you can use in that situation that will give you the ability to resolve the matter and to continue forward in the march, and so discernment grows as you apply individual verses to your life.

The apostle may have been thinking about the occasion from our Lord's life when Satan tempted him. Go to Matthew 4. Matthew 4. You remember this section of the temptation

of our Lord. Three times Satan came and tempted him while Jesus was in the wilderness, while he had been removed from, you could say, earthly support, found himself alone, entirely dependent upon the Holy Spirit, what was it that gave him strength in the battle? It was the word of God.

Chapter 4, verse 1, "Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'" You've been fasting for 40 days, I know that you're hungry so just exercise power, make the stones become bread and your physical hunger can be satisfied. He was tempting Christ toward self-reliance rather than reliance on the Spirit, reliance on the provision of his Father. Jesus answered that temptation with a quotation from the book of Deuteronomy in chapter 8. "He answered and said, 'It is written, "Man shall not live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."'"" Satan had no answer for that. Satan couldn't touch the word of God there.

Now Satan tried again, this time tempting Christ to foolish presumption on God. Verse 5, "the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, "He will command His angels concerning You"; and "On their hands they will bear You up, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone."'"" Satan twisting Scripture trying to tempt Christ to sin. Jesus answered with an individual particular text coming from Deuteronomy 6, saying, "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Satan tried a third time, promising Jesus great possessions and great authority if he would simply bow down and worship him. Verse 8, "the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, 'All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.'" Jesus tempted again by Satan and once more he plunged the dagger from the book of Deuteronomy when he said, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'" I can't possibly do what you're tempting me to do. Scripture forbids it. This individual text from the word of God speaks to it.

So beloved, when in the book of James it says resist the devil and he will flee from you, it's not calling you to scrunch up your eyes and squeeze really hard and resist him that way. The idea is to understand the word of God and think through Scripture that applies in the realm of the temptation, in the realm of the trial, and to use that to give you strength and to find your proper response to it. Friends, Christian brothers and sisters, visitors and guests, lend me your ear. This is why you need the word of God. This is why you need to be reading the Bible on a consistent basis in your life. Without this kind of immersion in the word of God, you are defenseless against the attacks of Satan. If it is by – listen, follow me here, follow me here – if it is by Scripture that you resist the devil and picture a Christian, a professing Christian who does not read the word of God, does not know it for himself, on what possible basis are you going to respond rightly to life in the temptations that the devil brings? You need the word of God. You need to be reading the

word of God on a consistent basis if you claim to know Christ. This is where we find our path forward, reading the word of God, listening to messages from the word of God. I'm partial to our pulpit for obvious reasons for that, but somehow you need to be taking in the word of God if this sword of the Spirit is to have any meaning to you.

Jesus Christ – watch this – Jesus Christ submitted himself to precisely this kind of life that we are called to. Christ himself lived as a man on earth and responded to the temptations of Satan with the specific texts from Scripture. Well, then, if Christ has done this and he has secured our soul, then we see that he's achieved our salvation in what he has done and we're safe in him, but in the meantime while we're waiting the consummation of our salvation, don't you understand that if Christ walked through life responding to it biblically like we see in Matthew 4, that that's exactly what you and I are going to need to do as well? When did you last think of a Scripture that shaped your thinking in a particular problem that you were facing? I leave that for your consideration before the Lord. It's just incumbent upon you and me to follow Christ and how he did things as we battle Satan, understanding that as we go to his word, as we apply it in this way, that Christ is supremely with us to help us and to secure our success going forward. We don't fight the battle alone but there is a means given to us to fight it by the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.

So my friends, we'll wrap it up here. We've seen the revelation of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, our reconciliation with Christ. We've seen the need to remember our future glory, to rely on the word of God. On the authority of God's word, I tell you as a Christian, God has given you everything that you need to succeed in the battle that lays before you. Today, in the weeks, months, years to come, you already have all of the resources that you need to go through with courage, joy and valor. God's given it all to you. We have it all in Christ and Satan cannot take it away from us. He cannot touch God's revelation. He cannot touch the righteousness of Christ. He cannot touch our reconciliation with Christ. He cannot touch our future glory. He cannot touch Scripture rightly applied. All of those spiritual resources are yours in Christ, beloved, and so what you need to do as you walk out, is to walk out with this commitment that says, "I'm going to take them up and apply them by faith." And friends, that is the only way to win.

Let's pray together.

Well, Father, we just ask You to indeed seal these things to our heart. We thank You for Your love, grace, patience, mercy and goodness and kindness that are revealed in our salvation in Christ. Father, may the reality of Your kind disposition toward us strengthen our hearts for the battle. May You protect us as we seek refuge in You in the battle. And may You ever ever refresh our minds about our hope of future glory. May You ever by Your Spirit give us those Scriptures in the immediate moment when we need them the most, bring to mind those things that would be the appropriate text to guide our response to any given situation. And as we walk day by day with this armor on, Father, we will trust You that that will be sufficient for us to stand firm and we'll trust You to lead us safely home to glory. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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