



Spiritual Warfare

Volume 2

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Jesus' Blood is the Key

Ephesians 6:10, *“Finally, my brethren, be strong [endunamoo, be strengthened] in the Lord, and in the power [the force, kratos] of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles [methodeia in the Greek and ‘methods’ in English] of the devil.”*

As part of this Spiritual Warfare series, I have been preaching on the *methodeia* of the devil. To review, they come in three different categories: he first attacks the church institution, the true church of Jesus Christ. Next, he attacks the church leadership putting false teachers and false prophets in places of leadership within the church to destroy the church from the inside. Then, he comes after you, the individual. The devil attacks the individual in many different ways and we have been exploring in the last several chapters how he carries out these attacks. For instance, the devil brings you to a comfortable, satisfied place in your walk with Christ where you believe a lie and are damned. In addition, the devil will misuse and misapply scripture through not only pastors, but through church members. I am not against people sharing scripture as long as it is done correctly. Too often people misuse and misapply scripture for their own purposes to justify their own opinion, rather than what is actually in God's Word. Unfortunately, most of the opinions circulating now come from ill-taught Christians. Finally, in the last chapter, I focused on another method the devil uses, one seen too frequently in the church world today, even though Christ died on the cross to redeem us from sin. I took us to Romans 8:1 where it says, *“Therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”* There is **no** condemnation, not a little, not less, but **no** condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. There are no exceptions to this. However, the church world, whether knowingly or unknowingly, are constantly bringing ones who are under **no condemnation** back into the condemned state of being with their checklists of what you should be like and what you should not be like as a Christian. I am telling you what Paul said, what Christ said, and the opportunity Christ gave us to live under that particular circumstance of no condemnation.

In this chapter, I will concentrate on another of the devil's methods, the under-valuing of Christ's blood. Sure, most Christians know what Christ's blood means. Without it, we have no redemption. Christ was our sin offering, but He was also much more than that. Too many Christian ministries would rather tell you how to get rich and prosper for Jesus, never concentrating on the value of Christ's blood, and how truly important it is for us to remind ourselves of that daily. This is not to put Christ back on the cross, but to understand what His blood truly means to us, the ones who have gone before us, and also those already in the heavenlies. In the end, if Satan can have us forget on a daily basis what Christ did for us, then he is successful because we have turned our focus off Christ. Satan wants to put us in a position to undervalue the value of Christ's blood. He wants to put us in a state of mind where we do not recognize the value of Jesus Christ's blood. As long as I am able, I will periodically remind us how important it is to understand the value of Christ's blood. This is not just for us, but also for the ones who have gone on before, the ones still to come, and those in the heavenlies. Yes, the heavenlies need to be purified, as this chapter will show. By the way, the Christian world does not even realize they undervalue Christ's blood continuously when they condemn others. I am not talking about parents raising children. Raising your children correctly in the eyes of the Lord

is your responsibility. I am talking about those who sit in the church passing judgment to make sure others are doing what in their eyes is correct; making sure they are acting like a Christian according to what they think a Christian should act like. But they do not realize doing this is bringing condemnation on you and undervaluing Christ's blood. They truly do not believe what Romans 8:1 says.

Romans 8:1 begins with *"There is"* in italics, which means these words are not in the original. The verse begins at *"Therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."* Remember that every time these Christians condemn you because you do not live up to their checklist, which is not even in the Bible. I have been a Christian many decades now and I can never find anything they think a Christian should be like in this book. To repeat, when Christians condemn you, they undervalue Christ's blood and put it in a position of worthlessness and Satan has succeeded at taking the focus off of what Christ did for us. Furthermore, this entire verse one should read, *"Therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"* period. The words at the end, *"who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"* is not even in any original version. Some think a copyist added this when the King James Version was compiled, because it is correctly part of verse 4. You may wonder how you walk in the Spirit and not walk in the flesh. Verse 4 tells us, *"That the righteousness [through faith] of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."* Believers, fathers are in Christ by faith and if you are in Christ by faith, then Christ is in the believer or the father by His Spirit. It is not complicated, but Christians have confused this chapter completely. Read your commentaries. Some leave you with guilt thinking you have failed, but that is wrong since Romans 8:1 tells us there is no condemnation. To truly put your eyes on Jesus, and recognize how important and how valuable His blood is, is to also accept there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus. God cannot condemn us if we are in Christ Jesus because to condemn us is also to condemn His Son and He will not do that. God's Word is true. My purpose in this chapter is to explore and incorporate in the Spiritual Warfare series why Jesus Christ's blood is so important in our everyday lives. Without it, we are nothing. Without it, we should not even call ourselves Christians because we have no hope and our faith would become void with no meaning or purpose.

With that, we will begin in Revelation 1:17 where John records, *"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he [Jesus] laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, [We serve a living Christ.] and was dead; [He did die in the flesh.] and, behold, I am alive for evermore, [He resurrected three days later, without which our faith is void.] Amen; and have the keys of hell [Hades in Greek, which is a location] and of death [that is, spiritual death in Greek]."* So to be clear, Revelation 1:18 says, *"I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hades and of spiritual death."* Christ has keys of hell, or *Hades*, and of spiritual death.

In comparison, go to the Book of Matthew, which also talks about keys, but not the keys of *Hades*, of death and hell, but the keys of the Kingdom. Matthew 16:19 says, *"And I [Christ] will give unto thee [Peter] the keys of the kingdom of heaven,"* speaking of a total opposite location and description of what Christ refers to in Revelation 1:18. Looking back, verse 15 gives more context. It states, *"He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but*

my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, [Petros, in Greek] and upon this rock [petra, the feminine form of Petros] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Now because of this verse an entire religious institution and its leadership grew based on Peter being the rock. I am talking about the Catholics, Peter being the first pope. The Protestant religions have also preached throughout the centuries that Peter is this rock, but I am telling you he is not this rock. *Petros* literally means *a little rock*, although some have translated it as *stone*. *Petra* means a *solid rock, mass, or foundation*. Christ does not promise to build His church upon Peter, but upon Himself, Jesus Christ. And in I Peter 2:6, Peter was very careful to tell us that the foundation of the church is Christ when he wrote, **“Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone....”** That chief cornerstone is not Peter. Peter was never the rock that the church was to be built upon.

Christ told Peter in Matthew 16:18, **“thou art Peter, [Petros] and upon this rock I will built my church....”** To paraphrase Kenneth Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament, he translates, **“You are a rock, Petros** [masculine in gender, describing it as a detached fragment of a rock] **and upon this massive rock, petra,** [feminine pronoun that cannot go back to the masculine form, *Petros*] **I will build my church.”** Wuest is saying the same thing, as do many other commentaries and any true scholar in the Greek language will tell you the same thing; Peter is not the rock that the church was to be built upon. Peter was to be a fragment attached to the rock that would lay the foundation, that being Christ, and the massive structure that this institution in the spirit would be built upon. Furthermore, when Christ said, **“I will build my church,”** in the Greek, the church is *ekklesia*, a gathering of called out Christians. As my mentor would say ‘called out ones,’ not to a physical location or a church building, but people called out to gather with the purpose to serve, praise, and worship Him.

This verse ends, **“and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,”** but I found that phrase a little strange. The phrase, **“the gates of hell”** does not sound like a very formidable foe. If I were writing this, I would have put ‘and the demons of hell’ or ‘Satan that belongs in hell shall not prevail against it.’ How could gates do any harm to anyone? Once again, you must go to the original language to better understand this. The phrase **“the gates”** in Greek is the word *pule*, and literally means *‘the access or any entrance in any state no matter where that state is.’* It is the access or the entrance to Hell, or *Hades* in Greek. Also, the phrase **“shall not prevail”** should say *‘be superior in strength.’* So this verse should read, **“and the entrance of Hades will not be superior in strength against it,”** speaking of the church, these ‘out called ones’ gathered together to worship, praise, honor and serve God. Along with that, remember Peter is not the rock, Christ is; not *Petros*, Peter, a small fragment of rock, but *petra*. So, **“the gates of hell, the pule, the access or dominion of Hades, shall not be superior in strength against it.”** That is how this verse should read.

To continue, Vincent’s New Testament Word Studies also adds to our understanding of the phrase **“the gates of hell”** and the Greek word *Hades*.

He writes, **“It is the place to which all who depart this life descend, without reference to their moral character.”** Before Christ’s resurrection, this was true, but since Christ’s resurrection, if you are in Christ, you do not descend into *Hades* any longer. Most believe *Hades* is translated ‘hell,’ but that is not an accurate translation. *Hades* is a vast location wherever it exists, whether

it is underground, above ground, or in a different dimension. Probably most of us do not even think about this, however most of us can relate to a three dimensional world as up, down, front, back, left, and right. We can also add a fourth dimension, time, which is where we live our everyday lives, but never think about other dimensions. Some scientists have said if they only had ten or eleven dimensions, maybe they could explain the universe or cosmos, but who says there is not that many dimensions. Currently, scientists are trying to figure out a fifth dimension using hyper-cubes to explain it and there are other scientists going beyond that. However, for now most only relate four dimensions in our everyday lives, front, back, left, right, up, down, and the fourth dimension according to Einstein, time. Returning to Vincent's Word Study, though, **Hades** is a place, it still exists today, and all who departed prior to the resurrection and all who are in Christ, no longer go there.

Vincent continues to say, ***“By this word, the Septuagint translated the Hebrew Sheol, which has a similar general meaning. [Hades in Greek is Sheol in Hebrew] The classical Hades embraced both good and bad men ... both the godly and the wicked being represented as gathered into the latter. Hades and Sheol were alike conceived as a definite place, lower than the world. The passage of both good and bad into it was regarded as a descent. There was, indeed, this difference between the Hebrew and the Pagan conceptions; that to the Pagan, Hades was the final home of its tenants, while Sheol [in the Hebrew] was a temporary condition... Prophecy declared that the dead should arise and sing, when Sheol itself should be destroyed and its inmates brought forth, some to everlasting life, and others to shame and contempt. Hades, then, in the New Testament, is a broad and general conception, with an idea of locality bound up with it. It is the condition following death, which is blessed or the contrary, according to the moral character of the dead, and is therefore divided into different realms, represented by Paradise or Abraham's bosom, and Gehenna [another Greek word].”***

This is where I differ with Vincent's opinions as well as the classical tradition of **Hades**. The Hebrew do not necessarily believe they are saved by grace and they are still waiting for the Messiah to live in this earthly realm, but if you are abiding in Christ, it is not a condition following death to be in **Hades**. You no longer go to Abraham's bosom as described in Luke, because the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ paid the price. Vincent's description of “the gates of hell” is referring to a location, but not the same location as Matthew 16:18 that says, ***“I will build my ekklesia; [church] and the gates [pule, the entrance, the access, or the dominion, which I prefer] of Hades shall not prevail against it.”*** The church no longer has a waiting period because of the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, but all the fathers who were living the life of faith prior to Christ's death went to that location. You must understand **Hades** is not what you think it is. Now that you have this understanding, read this verse appreciating its riches. ***“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Petros, [masculine in gender, meaning a small piece or a fragment of a rock or a pebble or a stone] and upon this rock [petra, the feminine nature of the Greek word, Petros. Christ is speaking of himself here.] I will build my church; and the gates [the access, entrance, or dominion.] of Hades shall not be superior in strength against it.”*** It cannot be superior after Christ's death and resurrection; there is no place for **Hades** any longer.

Verse 19 continues, ***“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt***

loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” I remember hearing a ‘name-it-and-claim-it’ preacher on TV once. He was quoting this verse saying that he was going to bind something here on earth because heaven is going to bind it for me there. To this preacher, it could be finances, health, or demon possession that he was binding and he made it sound like heaven is serving us instead of us serving heaven. This did confuse me until I did my own research on this verse. I remember looking in book after book trying to understand this verse and I finally came across something and copied it for my notes. This was written long ago and says,

“The Greek really reads, ‘Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall already be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall already be loosed in heaven.’ Quite the opposite meaning from the King James Version. With this King James Version reading, Christians control what heaven will do.”

That is what I had trouble understanding. Heaven, in reality, controls the Christian, but that is not what is preached today.

Luke 16:19 also addresses this subject. It begins, ***“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: [so he could survive another day] moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. [Dogs that came and licked his sores had more compassion for Lazarus than the rich man and probably his servants.] And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell [Hades in Greek, a location] he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom.”*** So wherever this *Hades* is located, this beggar went to Abraham’s bosom. That means Abraham was in *Hades*, and even though he had faith imputed to him for righteousness by God Himself, Lazarus was still lacking something.

Verse 24 continues, ***“And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. [A better translation is I am in eternal pain] But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.”*** This verse tells us there was an area where Abraham, and now Lazarus, and all the heroes of faith, and all the faithing ones prior to Christ, were located in *Hades*. But, obviously the rich man could communicate to Abraham across this distance although he was far off.

Unfortunately, I have heard many preachers speak about this particular verse saying *Hades* is somewhere down in hell and the heavens are visible through all of it. That is not so. Verse 26 says, ***“And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf...”*** If *Hades* is somewhere down in the low places, and Abraham and Lazarus are in the heavenlies, what was that great gulf between them? I would think that would be earth, the moon, or whatever dimension they were in and something in the way would hinder them from seeing what this rich man could see. God’s Word is not mystical, but man has made it mystical. The ***“great gulf”*** is fixed and unmovable so

we cannot cross over it. Those in **Hades**, wherever that location is, were stuck, but if you were righteous by faith, you were in this paradise section, called the First Paradise. Make sure you understand that because I am going to show a different paradise. The First Paradise was for those imputed with righteousness by God because of your faith and your faithfulness, but there was a gulf in between that was fixed and it was a hindering point where travel could not take place back and forth. Those tormented had to be tormented, while the righteous waited, not tormented in a paradise, but not a complete paradise because Christ had not come yet.

Verse 27 continues, ***“Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, [or the location in Hades where he was] they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”*** In these verses, Abraham told him that if they did not believe Moses or the prophets, they would not believe anyone, including Jesus Christ who would someday rise from the dead. I want to point out that wherever this ‘afar off’ place was, I am telling you, it was in **Hades** and there was a gulf in between that hindered travel to and fro. Those who were not righteous through faith imputed to them because of their faithfulness were in the part of **Hades** designated to torment them because of their evil ways. However, the ones who were faithful, faithing in God, imputed by God with His righteousness, were in a paradise section and not tormented, but still waiting for a certain time period to take place so they could be set free to be present with the Lord, even though they were absent of their physical body.

By comparison, Paul describes the Third Heaven, but we will begin, in Acts 2:25 with a section of Peter’s sermon about David’s prophesy. Whether David knew it or not at the time, he was also speaking about what Jesus would say in the future when His time came. It records, ***“For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: [Because Christ is on the right hand of God representing us now and we have this same hope.] Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, [same Greek word, Hades] neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One [Christ] to see corruption.”***

In these verses, Peter was referring to the prophetic psalm, Psalms 16:7, ***“I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; [This is not the Greek word Hades, but a Hebrew word, sheol.] neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One [Christ] to see corruption.”*** Even though David was speaking of himself in this psalm, he was also speaking of a time to come when Jesus Christ would suffer on our behalf. Neither David nor Christ would go to the section of **Hades** meant for the torment of the evil ones. Christ was not evil; he was just the opposite. He was the complete perfect one, the perfect sacrifice. David, even with his good and bad times, was a man after God’s own heart. He pursued God and because he demonstrated faith, God imputed His righteousness so David went to the section of **Hades** what was the paradise before Christ.

In Ephesians 4, Paul writes about the relationship between Christ's blood, the keys of the kingdom, and the keys of death and hell and the grave. In Ephesians 4:8, Paul is speaking of Jesus. ***"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."*** Christ took certain individuals with Him into the heavenlies, but He also left gifts listed in verse 11, ***"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."*** This is *didache* in Greek, meaning pastoring teachers. But, I want to concentrate on verses 8, 9 and 10, ***"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)"*** Notice verse 9 says, ***"Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended..."*** Christ went somewhere when He died, first to the lower parts of the earth.

On this subject J. Vernon McGee says,

"'When he ascended up on high' refers to the ascension of Christ. At that time He did two things: (1) He led captivity captive, which refers...to the redeemed of the Old Testament who went to paradise when they died. Christ took these believers with Him out of paradise [located in Hades] into the very presence of God when He ascended. Today when a believer dies, we are not told that he goes to paradise, but rather he is absent from the body and present with the Lord.

The logical explanation of these verses is that since Christ ascended, He must have of necessity descended at some previous period. Some see only the Incarnation of this. The early church fathers saw in it the work of Christ in bringing the Old Testament saints out of paradise up to the throne of God. [All the Apostles' Creed states] that He descended to hell [meaning Hades, the place where the dead were]. It is not necessary, however, to assume that He entered into some form of suffering after His death. His incarnation and death were His humiliation and descent, and they were adequate to bring the redeemed of the Old Testament into the presence of God. I recognize, however, that there are other interpretations."

Yes, there are other interpretations, but they are wrong. Christ descended and He went to gather the fathers prior to His death and resurrection to take them out of that present state they were in, that paradise section of *Hades*. I also want to read to you what Larkin says about the Underworld so you will have a clearer understanding. He says:

"To have a correct view of the other world, and of 'Hell,' it is necessary that we have a scriptural understanding of the underworld. The Hebrew word 'SHEOL' is found 65 times in the Old Testament...It is translated 3 times, 'THE PIT.' The corresponding word in the Greek in the New Testament is 'HADES.' It is translated 10 times 'HELL.' 'Sheol' and 'Hades' mean 'The Unseen State,' or the place to which the 'Soul' and 'Spirit' of the dead go between the death and resurrection of the body."

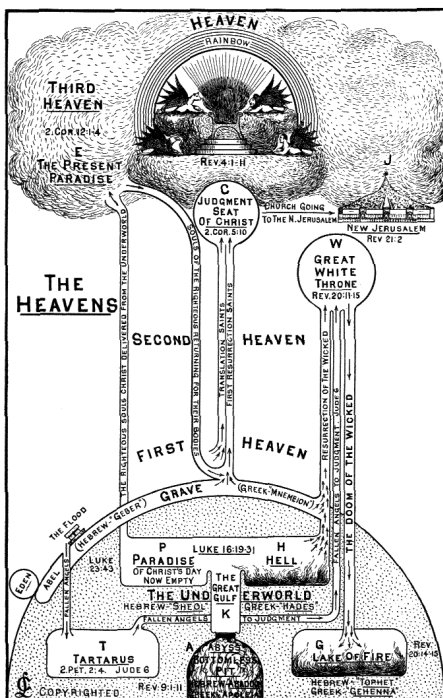
What this means is our soul and spirit cannot go to hell any longer since the death and resurrection of the body of Jesus Christ. That was a place prior. Now the grave, where our body is, is an entirely different state. That is our flesh. Often many people are worried whether they should be cremated or buried, but this same author believes all Christ needs is a seed so

microscopic you cannot possibly even understand how small of a portion of a seed that is even needed for Christ to reassemble us into our new bodies. That is this author's opinion. I am not saying it is mine, but it is this author's opinion. I do not have an explanation how He is going to do it. All I know is some day we will get a new body and I cannot wait. But let us continue with Larkin:

“The ‘bodies’ of the dead go to the ‘Grave,’ the word for which the Hebrew is ‘GEBER,’ and in the Greek ‘MNEMEION.’ Neither ‘Sheol’ nor ‘Hades’ denote the ‘Hell’ of final punishment of the wicked. That is called in Hebrew of the Old Testament ‘TOPHET,’ and the Greek of the New Testament ‘GEHENNA.’ Neither do they denote ‘THE BOTTOMLESS PIT’ (Rev. 20:1-3), that is ‘ABUSSOS,’ nor the ‘prison house’ of the ‘Fallen Angels’ (2 Pet. 2:4, Jude 6), that is ‘TARTARUS’ [in the Greek]. Their general meaning is- ‘THE UNDERWORLD.’

The word ‘Sheol’ means a ‘hollow subterranean place,’ therefore ‘Hades’ must mean the same. It has ‘gates,’ for Jesus said that the ‘Gates of Hell’ (Hades), should not prevail against the Church. And Jesus after His return from ‘The Underworld,’ said- ‘I am He that liveth, and was dead; and... I have the ‘KEYS’ (of the Gates) of hell (Hades) and of death (the Grave).’ To get these ‘Keys’ Jesus had to descend into the ‘lower parts of the earth.’ [I differ with the author here because I believe Jesus already had the keys as He was descending.] The Apostolic Creed says that Jesus descended into ‘Hell’ (Hades). Therefore, Hades, or ‘The Underworld,’ must be in the ‘heart of the earth,’ and is so pictured on the Chart. Jesus said to the penitent Thief, ‘TODAY thou shalt be with me in ‘Paradise.’... ‘The Underworld’ or ‘Hades,’ ‘Paradise’ must have been in Christ’s day in ‘Hades.’”

As I said, this is this author's opinion. What he says could be. Science is trying to understand what the core of our earth consists of. Although they have some idea, they are not quite sure what exactly the center of our particular world, earth, consists of even in the 21st century. The point is I do not know where *Hades* is. It could be somewhere in the earth, below the earth, or in a different dimension we cannot even imagine, but it is a real location and it does exist. I want you to understand what this author is saying, so the following picture is copied from Larkin's book. This illustration is how the author pictures the underworld and also includes a representation of the earth, the rounded section at the bottom of the diagram.



In this diagram, you will notice the word '**GEBER,**' or **GRAVE**, near the bottom on the left side under the words **FIRST HEAVEN**. This is where your physical body goes at death. However, there is another location where your soul and spirit go depending if you were righteous in God or evil to the core in your nature. That is, you either go to the hell part of **Hades**, on the right side below the grave section, or paradise, directly to the left of hell. This paradise was for the righteous of Christ's day and for those prior to Christ, which now is empty. The Great Gulf, from Luke 16:19, is between the two areas. In addition, I agree with this author where he shows this Great Gulf connected to the abyss, the bottomless area below the Great Gulf. Be sure you understand that both hell and paradise are located in **Hades** in Greek, or **SHEOL** in Hebrew. Now below the Underworld there is another location called **TARTARUS** in the Greek and is for the fallen ones who brought wickedness to the world before Noah as described in II Peter 2:4. In that area, they are waiting for the judgment to come.

This author also pictures the Lake of Fire in this realm, called the **TOPHET** in Hebrew and **GEHENNA** in Greek. It is said, "A picture paints a thousand words," so I hope this illustration is giving you a more accurate picture of what Larkin wrote. Here he continues,

"... 'The Underworld' or 'Hades,' 'Paradise' must have been in Christ's day in 'Hades.' But as it had been prophesied of Jesus that His 'SOUL' (for His body was in Joseph's Tomb on the surface of the earth) should not remain in 'Hell' (Hades), therefore, before His body could see corruption, Jesus came back from 'Hades.' But He did not come back alone. He seized the 'Keys of Hades,' unlocked the Gates of the Paradise Section (P) in which He was confined, and emptied it of its captives, and when He ascended on high He took them to the Paradise section of the 'Third Heaven' (E), where they now are, and since then the Paradise Section of 'The Underworld' has been empty."

Here, Larkin is referring to Ephesians 4:8. Christ could not seize the keys; He had the keys with Him, and this is where I disagree with almost everyone who teaches on this subject. Christ had the keys. Keys lock and unlock doors. What else would you need a key for, but He had the key and that is why it is important to understand what that key was. The Paradise section is now empty. Christ came, led the captives free, and emptied Paradise. This has nothing to do with sin or being under the bondage of sin. Yes, Christ did that and there are plenty of other scriptures explaining why Christ came and spilled His blood for the atonement of our sins, but this is not what this scripture in Ephesians is saying. This scripture is telling us that Christ came and emptied out Paradise and Paradise no longer has occupants in it because Christ came. Now, Ephesians 4:9 and 10 tell us that Christ descended into the lower parts of the earth. However, according to this author, as He was ascending back up into the heavens, He came to "The Present Paradise," located at the top right of the picture under the words "Third Heaven." This section is reserved for the saints who are righteous by faith and for the saints who have died as fathers in Christ. Here they are all waiting for the time to come when we return with Christ to sit in front of the Judgment Seat of Christ, not to be condemned for eternity in the Lake of Fire, but to receive our rewards. This author continues,

“In the account of the experience of the ‘Rich Man’ and ‘Lazarus’ in the other world, Jesus gives us a description of ‘The Underworld’ as it was in His day. According to the narrative, it is not a parable, for parables do not give proper names like Abraham and Lazarus, both the ‘Rich Man’ and Lazarus had died and their bodies had been buried, and what happened to them in the ‘Underworld,’ was descriptive of what happened to them in their ‘disembodied state.’ In that state they were conscience, could see, hear, speak, and recognize each other. The difference was that Lazarus was in ‘Paradise’ section of the ‘Underworld’ (P), typified by Abraham’s ‘bosom,’ while the ‘Rich Man’ was in ‘Hell’ section (H), not the final Hell which is ‘Gehenna’ (Lake of Fire), but in the section of the ‘Underworld’ where the ‘souls’ of the ‘Wicked’ dead go, and remain until the resurrection of the ‘Wicked’ dead. Between the ‘Paradise’ (P) section, and the ‘Hell’ (H) section in the ‘Underworld’ there is an ‘Impassible Gulf’ (K), which reveals the fact that there is no possibility of the ‘Wicked’ dead ever getting out of ‘Hell’ into ‘Paradise.’ On the Chart this ‘Impassible Gulf’ is represented as the entrance to the ‘Bottomless Pit,’ or ‘ABYSS’ (A), [This you can see on the picture below the ‘Great Gulf’ at the bottom.] the ‘prison house’ of ‘Demons’ and where Satan is to be bound for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-3,7-8). The Old Testament speaks of the place in ‘The Underworld’ called in the Hebrew ‘ABADDON,’ and in the Greek ‘APOLEIA.’ The word is translated in the Old Testament ‘DESTRUCTION’.... In Prov. 27:20 it says- ‘Hell (Hades) and “Destruction” (Abaddon) are never full,’ thus connecting ‘Abaddon’ with ‘Hades’ (Sheol). The inference is that ‘Abaddon’ is a part of ‘The Underworld,’ and when we turn to Rev. 9:1-3, 11, this inference becomes a certainty, for there we read that the ‘King’ of the ‘Bottomless Pit’ is called in the Hebrew tongue ‘ABADDON,’ but in the Greek tongue his name is ‘APOLLYON,’ that is, the King of the ‘Bottomless Pit’ is named after the Hebrew and Greek words that are translated- ‘DESTRUCTION.’ Now the word translated ‘Bottomless Pit’ is ... ‘ABYSS.’ Nine times do we read of this ‘Abyss’ in the New Testament. It is the place into which the Demons besought Christ not to send them. Luke 8:31. The ‘Bottomless Pit’ or ‘Abyss’ (A) then is a deeper compartment in ‘The Underworld’ than ‘Paradise’ (P), or ‘Hell’ (H), and is the place where the ‘Demons’ and baser spirits are temporarily confined until they are finally consigned to the ‘Lake of Fire’ to spend eternity with their Master, Satan. To the left of the ‘Bottomless Pit’ is ‘TARTARUS’ (T), the ‘prison house’ of the ‘Fallen Angels.’ [prior to Noah] 2 Pet. 2:4. These ‘Angels’ are not Satan’s angels, for they are at liberty. [except the ones that are presently confined to the bottomless pit] These ‘Fallen Angels’ confined in ‘Tartarus’ are the ‘Sons of God’ who married the ‘Daughters of Men,’ and whose abnormal sin caused the Flood. They are to remain in their ‘prison house’ until the ‘Great White Throne’ Judgment, when they with the ‘Wicked Dead’ are to be judged. To the right of the ‘Bottomless Pit’ is ‘GEHENNA’ (G). This is the ‘Final Hell’ or ‘LAKE OF FIRE’ prepared for the Devil and his angels, into which the ‘Wicked,’ after the ‘Great White Throne’ Judgment, will be cast to spend eternity. It is called ‘TOPHET’ in the Old Testament Hebrew, and in the New Testament Greek it is twelve times called ‘GEHENNA’ and five times the ‘LAKE OF FIRE.’

There are those who claim that ‘Sheol’ (Hades) and the ‘Grave’ are identical, and as there is no ‘knowledge’ in the grave, therefore the soul ‘sleeps’ until the resurrection of the body. But as it is only the ‘body’ that goes into the ‘grave,’ it is only the ‘body’ that ‘sleeps’ or has no knowledge. The ‘Soul’ and ‘Spirit’ of a man goes to ‘Sheol,’ not to the ‘Grave.’”

Once again, this is where I differ from this author. To make it very clear, after the death of Christ, the soul and the spirit no longer go to *sheol*, *Hades*, or the Paradise section of *Hades*. They go to the Second Paradise that was created in the Third Heavens to be absent from the body but present with the Lord. We will not exist in the Underworld part of Paradise once we go home. We are just in Paradise, in the Third Heavens waiting for that day to come when the new heavens and the new earth will be created and we will rule and reign with Christ forevermore. And, of course, this leads to those who teach that the souls unfit for heaven upon death goes to the Underworld to a place called Purgatory. That is a whole other subject mostly taught by the Catholics. I wanted to show you this chart from Larkin to give you an idea of the possibility of another realm. There is a Paradise now empty because of Christ and there are the wicked ones still living in hell with their soul and spirit. They are in the bottomless pit separated by that great gulf. This is where the sons of God still exist, waiting for the great White Throne Judgment, and eventually they will all go to the Lake of Fire.

This chapter includes a lot of information, but I still want you to understand why the keys Christ held are important. Only Christ could have those keys, both the keys to the kingdom and the keys of death and the grave. But, before that there is another source I want to share with you and that is the Ethiopic version of the Book of Enoch, which is the purest version we have. It once was a part of the Bible; however, it is still a valuable source that verifies the picture from Larkin's book and God's Word. Before the Book of Enoch was taken out of the Bible, some great men of God expressed their feelings on this particular book. Tertullian, for instance said of this book that it is, ***"as sacred as the Psalms or Isaiah...."*** Origen, another early Church Father, ***"In quoting Hebrew literature, assigns the Book of Enoch the same authority as the Psalms."*** Clement of Alexandria, ***"...citing the book of Enoch without questioning its sacred character."*** I could continue quoting the opinions of many other early Church Fathers, but know, it once was in the Bible, but is not any longer in the Bible for other reasons, and it is still a valuable source that verifies what is in the Bible. In my opinion, I believe it belongs in the Bible, and because it has been poorly edited over time, I prefer the Ethiopic version.

The Book of Enoch does speak of these heavenly locations and realms including *Hades*.

Beginning in the 21st chapter the Book of Enoch records,

"Then I made a circuit to a place in which nothing was completed. And there I beheld neither the tremendous workmanship of an exalted heaven, nor of an established earth, but a desolate spot, prepared, and terrific.

There, too, I beheld seven stars of heaven bound in it together, [Those stars could have been angels.] like great mountains, and like a blazing fire. I exclaimed, For what species of crime have they been bound, and why have they been removed to this place? Then Uriel, one of the holy angels who was with me, and who conducted me, answered: Enoch, wherefore dost thou ask; wherefore reason with thyself, and anxiously inquire? These are those of the stars which have transgressed the commandment of the most high God; and are here bound, until the infinite number of the days of their crimes be completed.

From thence I afterwards passed on to another terrific place;

Where I beheld the operation of a great fire blazing and glittering, in the midst of which there was a division. Columns of fire struggled together to the end of the abyss, and deep was their

descent. But neither its measurement nor magnitude was I able to discover; [Why; because it is the bottomless pit Enoch is describing.] neither could I perceive its origin. Then I exclaimed, How terrible is this place, and how difficult to explore! Uriel, one of the holy angels who was with me, answered and said: Enoch, why art thou alarmed and amazed at this terrific place, at the sight of this place of suffering? This, he said, is the prison of the angels; and here they are kept for ever.”

Continuing on to Chapter 22:

“From thence I proceeded to another spot, where I saw on the west a great and lofty mountain, a strong rock, and four delightful places.

Internally it was deep, capacious, and very smooth; as smooth as if it had been rolled over: it was both deep and dark to behold.

Then Raphael, one of the holy angels who were with me, answered and said, These are the delightful places where the spirits, the souls of the dead, will be collected; [Could he be describing the Paradise before Christ?] for them were they formed; and here will be collected all the souls of the sons of men.

These places, in which they dwell, shall they occupy until the day of judgment, and until their appointed period. [This is not the Great Judgment. Enoch is talking about the appointed time, the day Christ would die and bring those keys of life.]

Their appointed period will be long, even until the great judgment. And I saw the spirits of the sons of men who were dead; and their voices reached to heaven, while they were accusing.

Then I inquired of Raphael, an angel who was with me, and said, Whose spirit is that, the voice of which reaches to heaven, and accuses?

He answered, saying, This is the spirit of Abel, who was slain by Cain his brother; and who will accuse that brother, until his seed be destroyed from the face of the earth; Until his seed perish from the seed of the human race.

At that time therefore I inquired respecting him, and respecting the general judgment, saying, Why is one separated from another? He answered, Three separations have been made between the spirits of the dead, and thus have the spirit of the righteous been separated. [from the wicked ones as depicted in Larkin’s picture.] Namely, by a chasm, by water, and by light above it.

And in the same way likewise are sinners separated when they die, and are buried in the earth; judgment not overtaking them in their lifetime.

Here their souls are separated. Moreover, abundant is their suffering until the time of the great judgment, the castigation, and the torment of those who eternally execrate, whose souls are punished and bound there for ever.

And thus has it been from the beginning of the world. Thus has there existed a separation between the souls of those who utter complaints and of those who watch for their destruction, to slaughter them in the day of sinners.

A receptacle of this sort has been formed for the souls of unrighteous men, and of sinners; of those who have completed crime, and associated with the impious, whom they resemble. Their souls shall not be annihilated in the day of judgment, neither shall they arise from this place.

Then I blessed God,

And said, Blessed be my Lord, the Lord of glory and of righteousness, who reigns over all for ever and for ever.”

What Enoch was describing is **Hades** and the separation of souls of the dead; between the bodies left in the grave where the spirits and the souls either go to the hell part of **Hades** or the paradise part of **Hades** prior to Christ's death and resurrection. That was the judgment he was talking about. He was not talking about the judgment yet to come where all the wicked ones are judged and cast into the Lake of Fire. This is another source that verifies Luke 16 and other areas of God's Word and now brings us to the final point of this chapter, which began with the introduction of another terrible method the devil uses; convincing Christians to undervalue the blood of Jesus Christ, but that is what the keys are. The keys are nothing other than the blood of Jesus Christ. You can spend a lifetime collecting books and materials as I have of commentaries with theologians arguing about what these keys are. Unfortunately, most of them miss the point. Only one thing could purify heaven where the rebellion took place. Heaven still had to be purified and cleansed and there was only one thing, for not only us or the fathers who came before us, but for the heavens as well, and that was the blood of Jesus Christ.

Go to Hebrews 9:11-12, ***“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, [Just once!] having obtained eternal redemption.”*** The translators add the words “for us,” so it was eternal redemption no matter where He would take that blood.

This is what J. Vernon McGee has to say:

“‘Of good things to come’ really means good things that have come to pass. Oh, the good things that have come through Him!

‘A greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands.’ This tabernacle is nothing that man has built down here. The better tabernacle does not belong to this natural creation as to materials or builders.

Let me say this very kindly. All this business today of trying to sweeten up the worship service with pictures and stained glass windows and candles and crosses ministers to the flesh. It is fleshy- it ministers to the physical side of man. It doesn't minister to his spiritual needs at all. We need to recognize that there is a real tabernacle in heaven; there is a real High Priest there, [and that is why it was important that Jesus take his blood there] and there is spiritual worship. You can worship Him anywhere... I believe this verse [Heb. 9:12] proves that Christ took His literal blood to heaven. [Both J. Vernon McGee and Gene Scott had the same opinion about the blood of Christ.] If that is not what the writer is talking about here, I do not know what he is saying. ‘Neither by the blood of goats and calves’- that is literal blood. ‘But by his own blood,’ this is the literal blood which He shed on the cross. ‘He entered in.’ How? By His own blood. His was a superior sacrifice and the only one worthy of the genuine tabernacle. ‘Having obtained eternal redemption for us.’ Notice that in your Bible the words for us are in italics, indicating that they are not in the original manuscript. They were added to smooth out the translation, which is all right, but they are not the emphasis of the verse.

The emphasis is upon the contrast that Christ entered once into the Holy Place and obtained eternal redemption. The Israelite priests went in continually, and they got a temporary sort of thing. Only Christ went in once and obtained eternal redemption. This now puts the authority and the importance upon the sacrifice of Christ, and it reminds us that the life of Christ never

saved anyone. You can follow His teachings and think you are saved, but, my friend, His teaching never saved anyone. It is the death of Christ, it is His redemption that saves.” And I am adding -- in His blood. That is why it is important to faith in Christ, but it is also just as important to faith in His blood. You will never faith in His blood if you do not faith in Him first. You must do both.

To continue with McGee’s commentary, let us read on to Hebrews 9:18 to 23,

“Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. When Moses had spoken every precept to all people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people. Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God had enjoyed unto you. Moreover, he sprinkled the blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood there is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified [The Greek is more literal, saying, ‘that things should be purified of the pollution of guilt’] and with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but in heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”

Of this, McGee states,

“The word blood occurs in this section six times, revealing the place and the power of the blood in the Old Testament ritual. ‘Without shedding of blood there is no remission’ is the axiom in the Old Testament. Also the blood is very important in the New Testament. As the hymn writer put it, ‘there is power in the blood of the Lamb.’ In Revelation we find that the victory was won through the blood of the Lamb, not through some individual’s ingenuity, or physical strength, or even spiritual strength.” It was through Christ and Christ alone.

Hebrews 9: 28 in the King James Version says, *“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”*

And in Hebrews 10:10-18 it says, *“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once. [‘for all’ is added in by the translators.] And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins [Speaking of Christ] for ever, sat down on the right hand of God....For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. [Christ completed them and without the blood we have no completion.] Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.”*

McGee says, ***“The offerings could only cover the sin; they were an atonement, but they could never take away sins [in the Old Testament]. The offerings were just a reminder that men were sinners and that the sin question had not yet been settled.”***

That is what McGee had to say about Christ’s blood and I want to let you know those captives in the paradise section of ***Hades*** would still be captives today if Christ did not come with the keys, and those keys was His blood. In Revelation 1:18, Christ had keys. He said, ***“I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hades and of death.”*** What unlocked the door for those captives? Even though they were not tormented or suffering, they were not complete and the only key that could complete them was Christ. Only the key could unlock the door so they too could enter the Third Heaven with Christ. The blood was presented there in ***Hades*** as the key for the complete redemption of the ones who faithed in God prior to Christ’s death. He unlocked the door with His blood.

In Matthew 16:19, Christ speaks of the keys of the kingdom, which is about the blood and the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus who spilled His blood for mankind’s redemption, and also to purify the heavenlies of sin once and once only. Continual sacrifice like in the Old Testament with goats, calves, bullocks, and meal offerings was no longer necessary when Christ fulfilled all those offerings once. You must recognize the importance of the blood of Jesus Christ. You must value it as the most precious thing in your life because without it there is no eternal life, only eternal death. That is why in Ephesians 2:13 Paul tells us, ***“But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were far off are made nigh.”*** We are to press close through the blood of Christ.

I know a lot of this chapter is probably new to you, especially about ***Hades***, the underworld, the different realms where Christ took this precious blood of His to set the captives free of the First Paradise and allow them to enter into His presence in the Second Paradise, which is in the Third Heaven. From there you know the rest of the story; we will be ruling and reigning with Him in the new heavens and the new earth, but without that blood, faith alone in the Old Testament was not the completion of the saints. Faith alone would have kept them in that First Paradise, but in the New Testament, faith in Christ, His Word, and His blood is what is required to have eternal life. In the Old Testament, they were still waiting for the death and resurrection of Christ. They were still waiting for that key that was the blood of Jesus Christ to unlock that door to be in His presence forever. Although, they were in paradise, they were not in Christ’s presence. He went there to set the captives free as it declares in Ephesians 4; to be with Him forevermore.

These are important things to understand. There have been a lot of descriptions, and illustrations describing these keys, but these keys are nothing other than the blood of Jesus Christ. Do not forget it. Do not let anyone bring another gospel, except the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the precious blood He spilled on the cross for us and for others -- past, present, and future. Remember Romans; there is no condemnation if you abide in Christ. If anyone wants to put us under that guilt and that bondage, remember I am a sinner saved by grace. I sin every day, but it does not change one iota what Christ did on that cross and because of it, there is no condemnation. When you condemn me, you are condemning Christ. Knowing this does not give you a license to go out and sin. To have the mind of Christ is to keep faithing, then, He will take your being and change you.

Finally, go to Romans 10, beginning with verse 9. ***“That if thou shalt confess [actually, the Greek says: ‘If thou shalt acknowledge and profess’] with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe [pisteuo- faith] in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*** [Salvation begins with the resurrection. It is one thing to believe that He died, but a complete act of faith to believe that was resurrected.] ***For with the heart man believeth [or faith, pisteuo] unto righteousness; [through faith in Christ’s blood and His Word] and with the mouth confession [acknowledgment and profession] is made unto salvation.*** [Go to verse 13] ***For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.***” This means, wherever you are, it is not too late. It does not matter how good you were in the past, because you do not get in by good deeds or abiding in Christ by good deeds. You abide in Christ by recognizing, professing, and acknowledging what He did for you. Then His Spirit comes into you because of that faithing action and you believe this Word is true; that He died and He resurrected and He is coming back again for us. When you acknowledge and profess Him, salvation is available. Verse 14 continues, ***“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?”*** This is why I preach. The devil does not want the message to be preached. The devil does not want his realm to be exposed. The devil wants you to keep believing some false explanation of the scripture. In verse 15 it says, ***“And how shall they preach, except they are sent?”*** This ministry was based upon verse 17 that says, ***“...faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*** In the Greek this verse is very clear. It says, ***“the hearing and hearing and hearing.”*** Well, I plan to keep professing and acknowledging what Christ did for me through His valuable, precious blood. You need to recognize how valuable is for you. Do not forget verse 13, ***“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”***

Return to verse 10, ***“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made....”*** I told you before a better translation would be to ***acknowledge and profess with the mouth*** the Lord Jesus, but there is also a third part to that Greek word; that is, ***celebrating***. We could read verse 10, ***“For with the heart man faitheth unto righteousness; and with the mouth acknowledges, professes, and celebrates the salvation that was given to him.”***

I do not know about you, but I am going to keep professing, I surely acknowledge, and I will celebrate. Even though Christ’s death was a gruesome act, only He could pay for our salvation, and I am joyous that I can celebrate what He did for me. Yes, there are hard times. Yes, there are times I think I cannot make it. Yes, there are times it sounds like ‘gloom and doom.’ But, one of the ways that you can recognize you have the joy of the Lord in your heart, is if you can celebrate, because you have acknowledged and professed what His blood did for you. That is the true value of His blood for the past, present, and future saints who are going to abide with Him forever. Whatever state we are in, wherever that new heaven and new earth are, I do not care, as long as Christ is there beside me and I can be in His presence. That is where your hope should lie through all we face today and tomorrow if we keep faithing in His Word and in His blood, recognizing that without it we have no hope. If we remain faithful, we have the promise that we will have eternal salvation and eternal presence with Him forevermore.

My hope is that this chapter has helped you to take a second look at how important Christ’s blood is to your everyday existence, and how you should acknowledge, profess, and celebrate

what He has done for you. Until He comes for us, that is what I plan to do and I hope you will too.

Depression and Despair

This chapter will begin in the book of Ephesians chapter 6, verse 10, but specifically we will be focusing on verse 11. Verse 10 begins, ***“Finally, my brethren, be strong [endunamoo in Greek, be strengthened, a continuing daily process, not just a one time event] in the Lord, and in the power [the Greek is kratos, the force, God’s force] of his might [ischus].”*** Understand this verse has nothing to do with what we can do, but everything to do with what God gives and controls; our strength is directly from the Lord. Remember those important words. Verse 11 continues, ***“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles [methodia, or ‘methods’ in English] of the devil.”***

There are many ways, or methods, with which the devil attacks not only the church, but also the leadership of the church and the individual. This chapter will look at how the devil uses depression as an attack. Everybody faces depression at some point in life, which can bring you to the point of despair. When that happens, remember this message and apply it to your life to get through those depressing times that bring you to such despair you do not know how you are going to make it. I still go through those times on occasion, so as part of this chapter, I will read from great men of God, including Paul, to show that you are not less of a Christian if you are facing situations that bring you to a point of despair. Know that great men of God have gone before you and they were brought to that point on occasion.

To begin, what brings on depression can be broken down into four different areas with general descriptions, and there is one area of concentration. Most often, when we think of depression, especially for non-Christians, we think about bodily malfunction; something is wrong physically that is causing depression. This may be caused from either hormonal changes or chemical imbalances in the brain. I have seen people with chemical imbalances and I have prayed for people with chemical imbalances. Of course, doctors quickly offer medication. I am not against medication, but if you have to take medication because of a hormonal imbalance or a chemical imbalance, be careful. Do not think the medication is going to do all the work for you, especially if you are a Christian following God trying to live a life of faith. I have seen people with chemical imbalances use prescribed medications to fix their problem, but often it is over-prescribed. Some people having a bad day will pop a pill, when I think if you are having a bad day, go to the Word of God. There are plenty of promises for you to lean on and to faith in to see you through. However, as I said, I am not against the medical approach because some of these chemical imbalances are very serious. I have known people with a hormonal imbalance that has been devastating in everyday life to deal with. I am not against the medical approach to some of these problems, just do not leave God out of it. Do not put Him in the backseat. If anything, put Him in the front seat. Make seeking God your number one priority, but God does use the medical professions of our day and age to get you through. Sometimes He will need to guide those physicians and doctors to treat and heal although, unfortunately, I have never seen anyone taking prescription medication for depression become completely healed by the drug itself. I believe your perfect and complete healing comes from Christ. Prescription medications only assist the process; they do not give complete healing.

Another reason for depression may be circumstantial depression. These are everyday problems that overwhelm and keep you up at night. These would be problems where you cannot find a solution.

The third form of depression is related to sin. I believe that unfortunately Christians bring this on themselves because of false preachers and teachers teaching false doctrine. Yes, we will feel bad when we willingly sin, but as I explained in the last chapter, ***“Therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”*** Depression is related to sin, because of what is preached to congregations around the world with churches telling church members they have sinned because of what they did or did not do or because they are living an unrighteous life. My friend, you only get righteousness through faith in His blood and faith in knowing what He did for you.

Depression related to sin is so common in today’s Christian world. Guilt is forced onto us repeatedly bringing us to a low point, but the reason why depression is related to sin is that you do not have an understanding of what Christ and His blood did for you. If you truly understood what His blood means and what His blood has redeemed you from, you would not have depression related to sin. Yes, you might sin, and yes, you might feel that you have to repent. I repent every day. I am a sinner every day, but I am a sinner saved by grace. I cannot fulfill the law; I cannot fulfill a perfect moral life and I will be the first one to admit it. I sin every day when I drive my car. Of course, anyone driving a car on California’s highways always believes they are right and the other person is wrong. I definitely think that I am always right when I am behind the wheel. It is only on occasion I realize that I should not have done that particular illegal turn or I should not have cut that person off. I sin just by getting behind the wheel in a car and I do that several times a day. But I also thank God for His blood that covers my sin so I do not have to be put in the position of being depressed or feeling any condemnation when I know that I am a sinner saved by grace still faithing in His Word, His blood, and their redeeming power. Thank God, Christ covered it all once and only once. In the Old Testament, redemption occurred year after year continually, but Christ did it once for all and thank God for the redeeming power of His blood.

Last, there is the depression related to satanic activity, which is also in all the other areas of depression as well. As Peter said, the devil is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. He is looking for your weaknesses and the opportunity to enter in and wreak havoc on you and your life. I believe that Satan is involved in our lives whether it is physical or whether it is spiritual. He is involved in anything that he could put his dirty paws on to wreak havoc in our lives.

To review the causes of depression, if you have bodily malfunctions, seek medical intervention but do not leave God behind; put Him first. Go to communion, claim healing, live it, faith it until it happens. And do not just ask once, keep asking, keep faithing, and it is okay to have medical intervention. If you have circumstantial depression, go back to God’s Word and start trusting it because if depression is overtaking you, I guarantee you more times than not you have forgotten what God’s Word has said. I am not throwing stones and blaming you. It happens to me also. I am not sitting here on any righteous seat. I preach it to you second and to myself first. If sin is your problem and depressing you because of it, realize the blood of Jesus Christ has redeemed you. Remember, there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus. So go back to His Word and get back into the mind of Christ. Of course, if it is Satanic activity that is

making you depressed, then you need to keep reading this message as I go through Ephesians 6 from verse 10 to verse 18 because you are going to need spiritual weapons and prayer to get you through. At the end of this chapter, I am going to give you eight different verses that you need to remember the next time you feel despair and you are in such a depressed state of mind you do not see any solution. Apply these eight points to your life when you get to that certain dark area in your life where all hope is lost.

Now, I mentioned earlier that great men of God have faced depression, even Paul and some people in the Old Testament, so you are not alone and this is nothing new. Others have gone before and have faced the same problems. With that, I want to read to you who many have heard of. If you are a Christian, you may know who C.H. Spurgeon was. There are many written works on Spurgeon and there are many messages he preached that are in written form. I will be reading from “Joy and Peace in Believing”, Number 692 in Spurgeon’s messages that he delivered on a Sunday morning, May 20, 1866 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle Church in Newington. The subject is how to deal with depression and despair. Let that sink into you and do not think you are the only one who has had problems with depression, and feeling of deep despair. Here Spurgeon says:

“I am the subject of depressions of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever get to such extremes of wretchedness as I go through, but I always get back again by this- I know I trust Christ. I have no reliance but in Him, and if He falls, I shall fall with Him. But if He does not, I shall not. Because He lives, I shall live also- and I spring to my feet again and fight with my depressions of spirit, and my down castings, and get the victory through it [Because he knows he must trust in Christ.] and so may you, and so you will, for there is no other way of escaping from it. In your most depressed seasons you are to get joy and peace through believing. [through trusting and faithing in God’s Word to see you through.] ‘Ah!’ says one, ‘but suppose you have fallen into some great sin - what then?’ Why then the more reason that you should cast yourself upon Him.”

To this, I go further and say, stop letting the devil beat you over the head for your past sins, present sins, or the ones you know you will probably commit in the future whether willingly or unwillingly. The message that Paul was trying to get through was there is no condemnation. ***“Therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”*** Do not beat yourself over the head; do not bring yourself to a depressed state thinking you are a worthless sinner. We are all worthless, but through Christ, we are all worth something. God sees us as reconciled to Him through the blood of Jesus Christ thank God. Spurgeon continues,

“Do you think Jesus Christ is only for little sinners? Is He a doctor who only heals finger-aches? Beloved, it is not faith to trust Christ when I have no sin, but it is true faith when I am foul, and black, and filthy; when during the day I have tripped up and fallen, and done serious damage to my joy and peace- to go back again to that dear Fountain and say, ‘Lord, I never loved washing as much before as I do tonight, for today I have made a fool of myself; I have said and done what I ought not to have done and I am ashamed and full of confusion, but I believe Christ can save me, even me, and by His Grace, I will rest in Him still.’”

I agree with Spurgeon's conclusion. It is by His grace that we can rest in Him and we are cleansed; do not beat yourself over the head as Satan wants you to do. He wants you to be in this guilty stage, thinking that Christ will somehow never be attached to your life because you keep on sinning. Friend, you are going to keep on sinning whether you like it or not. No matter how hard you try or not, you are going to keep on sinning. If you try, you are going to sin, and if you try not to you are going to keep on sinning. The flesh cannot escape it. Yes, we are supposed to have the mind of Christ as we grow in Christ. The one great thing I thank God for is what I learned from Gene Scott. He pointed out repeatedly that it is through the faith that Paul described in Romans 4 that we get righteousness, not through any of our own efforts. Our efforts are meaningless to God. That is why I teach on the Fruit of the Spirit. You only obtain the Fruit of the Spirit if you abide in Christ, if you stay attached to the vine, the vine being Christ. If you are a branch, trying to do it on your own, it is all works of the flesh. I will keep repeating that message until it sinks in, probably until the day the Lord takes me home or we are raptured. I will not give in to what the rest of the world is trying to sell. Righteousness is nothing that you can attain on your own. It is all up to Him, He is the Potter and He is molding us. If some of the Christian world does not like the way I am turning out, too bad, talk to the Potter, He is the one doing the molding.

I just read to you from Spurgeon telling his congregation that he was the subject of depressions of spirits so fearful that he hoped no one ever experienced it, but he got through once he understood that he was to trust in Christ. This is just one example. Let us go to another example from about 100 years prior to Spurgeon. That is William Cowper. Some of you will recognize him when you read one of his hymns. William Cowper was born in 1731 and he died on April 25, 1800. William Cowper was an English poet and a hymnist. One small part of his biography says,

“One of the most popular poets of his time, Cowper changed direction of the 18th century nature poetry by writing of everyday life and scenes of the English countryside. He suffered from periods of severe depression, and although he found refuge in a fervent evangelical Christianity, the source of his much-loved hymns, he often experienced doubt and fear that he was doomed to eternal damnation.”

From reading this, it is obvious to me that he did not have a strong understanding of ***“Therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”*** Although he eventually wrote a hymn about depression, I also believe he came to an understanding of this verse. However, his depression was there and he always felt that he fell short and was doomed to eternal damnation because of his sin. In contrast, I am a sinner and I am going to have eternal life! Let that sink into you. Yes, I said I am a sinner but I am still going to enjoy eternal life, because I am a sinner saved by grace. I believe Cowper came to the understanding of grace eventually, but he suffered severely depending on which biographer you read. Based on Cowper's history, they all conclude that this man suffered severe depression because he worried about his eternal soul. This biography goes on to say,

“His religious sentiment and association with John Newton led to much of the poetry for which he is best remembered.”

Now everyone has heard of John Newton who wrote the hymn ‘*Amazing Grace*’ that led to the poetry for which he was especially remembered in the popular mind. Here is someone, William Cowper, who went on to write hymns that you might be familiar with such as, ‘*God Moves in a Mysterious Way*’ and ‘*Oh! For a Closer Walk with God.*’ Probably his most popular hymn is ‘*There is a Fountain Filled with Blood.*’ I have looked at Cowper’s life and asked God for guidance to understand why this man was in such despair, such depression. There were even times when he tried to commit suicide. Yes, a man of God tried to commit suicide because he was convinced at times that he was doomed to eternal damnation. As a result, I went to my library and found The History of Preaching, Volume 2 in order to look at the time Cowper was living in in Britain. I started doing some research on what religious teaching was like in the 18th century. It was a dark period in Britain. Now we all have heard of the 1800’s, especially the latter part of the 1800’s, where great preachers like Spurgeon and G. Campbell Morgan came out of that era. That was the era of knighting in the Christian world, but in the 1700’s we cannot say that.

The following is from chapter 10, British Preaching in the 18th Century,

“Religious and moral affairs in England during the eighteenth century were for the most part in a deplorable condition. The growth of ... skepticism in all classes was marked. In the preface to his famous Analogy, published in 1736, Bishop Butler wrote: ‘It has come to be taken for granted that Christianity is no longer a subject of inquiry; but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious.’ [In other words, if you wanted to read anything about Christianity, it would be in the fiction section of the library.] Butler emphasizes the complaint in the following terms: ‘It is impossible for me, my brethren, upon our first meeting of this kind, to forebear lamenting with you the general decay of religion in this nation; which is now observed by everyone, and has been for some time the complaint of all serious persons.’ Even among the professed Christians, there was great laxity of life and want of devotion to truth. Many of the clergy were utterly unworthy. One striking thing (as in Germany and France) in the British preaching of the century is the relatively large and prominent place given to morals.” [There is the problem right there.] ***This was a characteristic of all schools.... And while they did not go so far afield in minor morals as did some of their German contemporaries, their sermons often are little more than essays of conventional morality, based as much on reason and philosophy as on the law of God.”***

In other words, they wanted to bring the law of the Old Testament back into Christianity in the New Testament. However, any time you try to return anything under the bondage of law, as far as a Christian goes, the result is you become worthless because you are brought under the bondage that was before Christ, but we live after Christ. Christ fulfilled the law. We have to live a life of faith, and we also have to believe and faithe in Christ’s blood and His redemptive power reconciling us back to the Father. Moral law, the law of bondage in the Old Testament is not going to bring you back to the Father. It could not fulfill the law for 1,500 years before Christ, so do you think we are going to have any chance of fulfilling the law after Christ? We do not need to fulfill any laws. The only law we follow is to have faith in Christ, the redemptive power of His blood now trusting in His Word. Every time we trust and faithe in His Word we are imputed with righteousness. That is the message of Romans chapter 4, but these British preachers in the 1700’s

were trying to bring people back to conventionality and morality based on the reason for philosophy and the law of God. This history continues by quoting a source current to its time,

“The celebrated lawyer, Blackstone, had the curiosity, early in the reign of George III, to go from church to church and hear every clergyman of note in London. [Remember, this is during William Cowper’s period.] He says that he did not hear a single discourse which had more Christianity in it than the writings of Cicero, and that it would have been impossible for him to discover, from what he heard, whether the preacher were a follower of Confucius, Mahomet, [Mohammed] or of Christ.’ Christian morals, distinctly derived from the Bible as the authoritative Word of God, found frequent expression.”

What a sad state of affairs for the church in the 1700’s. That is why what the clergy taught throughout England’s churches brought William Cowper such a state of depression and despair until he had a better understanding of what Christ’s blood did for him. This writer said he could hardly separate the differences between the ones that followed Confucius, Mohammed, or Christ. Instead, the clergy would preach a list of what to do and what not to do to be a good Christian and unfortunately, that is still the majority of what is preached today. Today’s preaching is dominated with what you should do, and how you should live to be a good Christian. Just listen to Christian television. Not too long ago, I heard somebody say how we need to go back to the law of the Old Testament to have a full understanding of what the law of the New Testament is, and that we should start practicing the commandments and laws that were given to Moses. My friend, to go back to living the law of the Old Testament is to write your eternal death sentence because you erase everything Christ did on that cross. I will not insult my Jesus that way. He came to fulfill the law once because He knew that we could not. That is why it is important to listen to the Spiritual Warfare messages about Abraham, Hades, and Heaven. Even though Abraham had faith that was imputed to him for righteousness, he was still in paradise in **Hades**. That is why you need to understand the chapter. Abraham was held in **Hades**, waiting for someone to bring the keys, and that someone was Jesus Christ who would unlock and release him from the then paradise. Abraham would then follow Christ to the Third Heaven where the present paradise is waiting for us until we come back to rule and reign, and the new heavens and the new earth take place. These damnable preachers that want to keep you under the law have no understanding of what Christ’s blood did for us. We are no longer under the bondage of the law, and I thank Jesus daily for it. If you go through the entire 18th century in Britain, preacher after preacher is forcing morality on their churches saying good morals will lead to a good Christian. I am not interested in being a good Christian. I am interested in being a faithing Christian, a Christian that faithes in His Word, that recognizes the importance of His blood, and thanking Jesus Christ that He has reconciled us back to the Father. Because of Christ, I am connected back to the Father again through Christ Jesus and He is mediating for me every time I sin. Telling His Father to condemn them is to condemn Christ, and God is not going to condemn His Son twice.

Now William Cowper finally came to the realization of the redeeming power of Christ’s blood even through all that moral preaching and put it in hymn form for our benefit. Thank God he met John Newton. William Cowper wrote the hymn, *‘There is a fountain filled with blood,’* which says:

There is a fountain filled with blood

*drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
and sinners plunged beneath that flood [of Jesus' blood]
lose all their guilty stains.
Lose all their guilty stains,
Lose all their guilty stains;
and sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.*

*The dying thief rejoiced to see
that fountain in his day;
and there may I, though vile as he,
wash all my sins away.
Wash all my sins away,
wash all my sins away;
and there may I, though vile as he,
wash all my sins away.*

*Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
shall never lose its power
till all the ransomed church of God
be saved, to sin no more. [That is still yet to come.]
Be saved, to sin no more,
be saved, to sin no more;
till all the ransomed church of God
be saved, to sin no more.*

*E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream
thy flowing wounds supply,
redeeming love has been my theme,
and shall be till I die.
And shall be till I die,
and shall be till I die;
redeeming love has been my theme,
and shall be till I die.*

In the last verse, the redeeming love remains our theme because that fountain of blood poured from Jesus Christ, I can say today, loses all my guilty stains. Those preachers who preach the morals of the law from the Old Testament as a compass to direct Christians are wrong, and I will not stop speaking against that type of preaching. I will condemn it because it is not from the New Testament, it is not what Christ came to fulfill. He fulfilled the law for my sake and for your sake. My guilty stains are gone through the blood of Jesus Christ. William Cowper got through his depression and despair, the highs and lows of life and he got through his suicide attempts only when he put his focus and his eyes back on Christ and what Christ did for him.

Along with Spurgeon and Cowper, there are men of God in the Old and New Testament as well. Let us look at two of these saints. I could have gone to so many different areas but I will focus on

these two. First, go to Psalms 77, A Psalm of Asaph, which was written to the chief Musician. I want you to put yourself in Asaph's condition. I want you to identify with this psalm, even putting your name in this psalm. I am sure some of you have been in his place, are there now, or possibly will be there in the future. If that happens, go back to this psalm when you are feeling circumstances are squeezing in on you bringing you into such a depressive state that you do not know how you are going to make it.

Begin with verse one, ***“I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; [He says it twice, just in case, to get God's attention.] and he [God] gave ear unto me.”*** The Hebrew word for the phrase, *‘he gave me ear’* is ***azan***, and actually means, *‘and he paid attention to me.’* When you are living a life of faith know this, when you cry unto God, His ear is bent down to listen because He is paying attention to what you are saying. Therefore, this verse could also read, ***“I cried unto God with my voice, unto God with my voice; and he is paying attention to what I am saying.”***

Verse two goes on to say, ***“In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: [That is good, but we should seek the Lord always, not just in times of trouble.] my sore ran in the night, [This is a bad translation. It should really read, ‘my hand was stretched out through the night.’] and ceased not; my soul refused [‘was unwilling’ is a better translation] to be comforted.”*** In verse one and two, Asaph gives us the after event that took place as he is writing this to introduce us to the psalms of what he experienced day after day. He was crying to the Lord. He was stretching his hand out to the heavens trying to get God's attention, wondering if God was still there. This was a person in deep distress, this was a person in despair, this was a person that was very depressed night after night. Can you identify with this? I can and I am sure some of you can too.

Let us continue with verse three, ***“I remembered [actually this is ‘I reflected’] upon God, and was troubled: I complained, [meditated, complained is a bad translation] and my spirit was overwhelmed.”*** Asaph reflected upon God and he was troubled, probably because he wondered where God was. Whatever circumstance he was going through, the depression and despair this person was facing, not even reflecting on God gave him peace or hope at this point. So, he continued to reflect upon God and still was troubled wondering where God was during this circumstance. He meditated and his spirit became overwhelmed. The more he reflected and meditated upon God, the more his spirit could not handle it. There is a reason why, however, Asaph was not in faith at the time. Now he would eventually get to the point of faith, but at this point he was not. He only saw his circumstances and depressed state of affairs.

Verse 4 begins, ***“Thou holdest mine eyes waking...”*** Again, a better translation is *‘Thou watchest my eyes waking’* In other words, he is asking, “God, are you looking upon me? You are seeing me wide-awake, yet you still will not answer my pleadings. You still will not answer my prayers, you still will not listen to my voice, and you still will not comfort me.”

Verse four ends with, ***“I am so troubled that I cannot speak.”*** In the Hebrew it says, *“I was so troubled and perplexed and could not even speak,”* because of an inability to understand God's ways. He could not understand what God was doing. He could not understand why he was going through what he was going through. He could not understand the despair that he was feeling. He could not understand his depression or why God was allowing him to be in such a depressed

state of mind. However, when we take our eyes off God's ways and God's Word, and focus on the circumstances to figure out why God does not rescue us, know God has His timing. We may not like His timing, but He has His timing. We think God is always too late and He is hardly ever too early. God is always too late in my eyes, and probably your eyes as well. That is what this person was feeling and experiencing.

Verse 5 and 6 tell us, ***"I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.*** [He was remembering the past.] ***I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.***" This is a person seeking help.

It is clear in verse one to verse four, this was a depressed person, this was a person that was in despair, this was a person who was definitely thinking God had deserted him. Now eventually he changes his thoughts around, but before I explain that, I want to go to what Paul wrote in II Corinthians 1:8. Most preachers and scholars think this was written about when he was facing the mob and rioting in Ephesus and he was facing death, but I am not convinced of that. In any event, Paul wanted them to know what he was facing. He begins in verse 8, ***"For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, [meaning they could not go on] above strength, [weak] insomuch that we despaired even of life."*** In other words, Paul was telling them they did not have the strength to go on. They were pressed from every side, without measure. The pressure seemed endless and it made them weak. Whatever they faced in Asia, he wanted the Corinthians to know that yes, they too, could get to this point where all hope is lost. Yes, they too, could face the same depressions of spirit that Spurgeon faced that I read earlier.

Reading on to verse 9 Paul writes, ***"But we had the sentence of death in ourselves...."*** They thought they were going to die. Whatever was causing this pressure, making them lose strength and bringing them such despair where they thought they were going to die does not really matter. Let the scholars keep arguing what caused it. What I am trying to focus on is that they, at times, also faced the same problems we face today, maybe even more so. I imagine the demonic activity against Paul was tremendous, beyond measure. Satan knew the affect Paul would have in building the churches and establishing the churches across Asia and Greece. The devil knew that eventually Paul would get to Rome, so the devil put pressure on them and on Paul to bring him to a point of despair where he thought he was even going to die because of the circumstances he was facing.

So what did these men of God do as a result? First, go back to Psalms 77. In the first four verses, Asaph was brought to the point that he could not even understand God's ways. Verse four makes that very clear. He was so troubled he could not even speak. He was awake night after night thinking about his problems, depressed because of his problems, brought to the point of nothing but despair and affliction. It is obvious that he could not even speak, and it is obvious that he could not even understand God's ways. If he could understand God's ways, he would not ask the questions wondering why the affliction, how long would it last, and was he cast out forever? Those questions we read in verse seven, when Asaph asks, ***"Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more?"*** The Hebrew is 'will not take pleasure in me any longer, not take pleasure in His people any longer.' In verse eight Asaph asks, ***"Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore?"*** The Hebrew for fail is 'vanish or disappear for

evermore. ' He is asking questions about why he is afflicted and why he is in the state of affairs that he was facing and was it going to continue and was he cast out. Verse 7 and verse 8 make very clear this is a desperate man seeking for answers. So how did Asaph get his focus back on God? How did he put himself back on God's path? How did he and Paul get themselves out of their state of affairs? How did they conquer the depression and despair they were facing in their lives?

In answer to that, beginning with verse 11, I will give you eight actions to remember the next time you are facing a time of depression where circumstances bring you to the point of despair. Write them down and remember them. To begin, verse 11 states, ***"I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old."*** So what did this author of Psalms 77 do? As you read down the chapter, he is talking about when God delivered the children of Israel from Egypt. The starting point of getting out of your depressed state is to remember where you were when Christ rescued you; remember the pit that Christ dug us from. Just because you became a Christian does not mean it is going to get any easier. Actually, I guarantee it is going to get rougher. Yes, there will be times of relief and the devil might let up his attacks for a season, but I guarantee he is just getting ready to come back and attack you even harder. When you got into that depressed state of mind, Christ was not there, but when you became a Christian redeemed by His blood, He is now there with you and His promises do not change. He will never leave you or forsake you, even when you are at the point of despair. Even though it seems like there is no hope, even though it seems like there is no light at the end of the tunnel, remember the pit you were dug from. That is what Asaph did in verse 11, ***"I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old."*** He was remembering the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egypt, which is the pit they were dug from.

The second action is in verse 12, ***"I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings."*** In the Hebrew this is, *'and declare thy doings.'* If you do not want to declare these things in public, God is still listening. Go to your prayer closet or if you are home alone declare it there. Asaph says, ***"I will meditate also of all thy work."*** That means we meditate on His Word. We must become knowledgeable about His Word to get us through whatever we are facing. Meditate on God's Word and declare it. Get yourself alone somewhere and declare it, to not only God, but also to your enemy who is listening in on this conversation. If you want to make the devil angry and really agitate him, declare what you are remembering and meditating on. Even if all you do is read His Word and promises aloud, tell God what He did for those who needed comfort when they were in a state of depression. Remind God what He did for others who were in need and remind yourself of where you came from; meditate back to His Word and what it taught you. Let the devil know that no matter how hard he tries to bring you down and keep you in this sad state of affairs sooner or later you will be delivered because that is what God's Word promises.

The third action is in verse 13, ***"Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?"*** Remember that. It is not your way, but God's way and His way is in the sanctuary. In other words, God's way in the Hebrew is holy, but our way leads us down a path of destruction. Lean on and learn about God's ways, because the way of God is not our ways and our ways always lead us down the wrong path. So, point number three is to focus on God's ways. You might not like the path you are on, but God is in control, and if He is truly the potter, He is molding you. Sometimes you might groan and moan because you do not like the way you are

being molded, but remember He knows the final outcome for your life. He knows what is best for you. Learn to trust the potter again. You might not like what you are going through, but He knows where you are going, and He knows how to create the vessel to get you there. God's ways are not our ways.

To continue to the fourth action, verse 14 tells us, ***“Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people,”*** referring to God's strength. Ephesians 6:10 says, ***“Be strengthened in the Lord.”*** It does not say be strengthened in some person. It does not say be strengthened in some other principle to live by. It says, ***“be strengthened in the Lord.”*** Strength is *endunamoo* in Greek, be strengthened continually by the Lord. If circumstances get to be too much for you tell yourself that you may feel weak right now, but God's Word says I am supposed to *endunamoo*, be strengthened, not in my strength, but by His strength, His force, and His might.

Action number five is in verse 15. ***“Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph.”*** Meaning, do not forget the pit that you were dug from. We have more evidence than the people in the Old Testament had. Remember Cowper's hymn that tells us we are redeemed with the Lord's blood that is the fountain from Emmanuel's veins, which redeems us. Remember that the next time you are depressed, especially if you are in depression over sin. We do not face condemnation if we abide in Christ, if we walk in His Spirit, which all begins with having faith, and we cannot have the Spirit of God unless we have the righteousness of God. Through faith the Spirit is given unto us, then the Fruit of the Spirit starts the attributes God wants us to have, revealing itself to us His way with His doing. It is nothing that we can control or do ourselves. If we try to do it ourselves, it is all works of the flesh. Remember the redemptive power of Christ. His blood redeems us. We are now reconciled back to the Father. God cannot say no to us if we abide in Christ. God cannot deny us heaven, paradise or eternal life, because He will not condemn His Son again.

Read verse 20 for action number six, ***“Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.”*** This is telling you that God is in control. He has the reins; He is the driver and you are the passenger. He is the vine, we are the branch and He leads us. He is the potter and knows what is best for us. If you truly faith in Christ and His Word, you will understand that He is doing the leading. This is how Asaph, the author of this psalm, put himself back in faith and out of the depression he was in from verse 1 to 9. Then in verse 10 through to the end of the chapter, he changes his attitude by remembering God's ways, how God brought the children of Israel through one of the worst times of their history in slavery and bondage.

In II Corinthians 1:8, we saw Paul in a depressed state of mind. We read this before, where Paul says, ***“For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life...”*** However, in verse 9, Paul changes his state of mind when he says, ***“But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.”*** In other words, Paul was saying, “If I am going to die, then the same power that raised Christ from that tomb will also raise me.” And he continues in verse 10 to say, ***“Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver....”*** Paul was trusting that God would yet deliver them. That is action number seven,

faith in God and His Word. Paul believed it even through whatever he was facing that if he had died, still with that faith connection, he would be raised from the dead to eternal life, because he trusted God would deliver him from eternal damnation.

The last point, action eight, is back in verse three of II Corinthians. In verse three, Paul states He is the God who comforts us. The next time you are facing a time of depression; next time you are feeling that all hope is lost, remember this last important action; He is the God that comforts us. Verse three says, ***“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble....”*** Remember, God is going to get us through whatever we are going through so we can be a light to others. That does not happen by preaching that depression comes because of sin in our lives, the wrongs we have done, or because God is punishing us. Yes, there is a punishment yet to come, a great punishment, a great judgment. And, yes, there is eternal punishment, but God is not punishing us here for things that most preachers want to put guilt on us about. Paul goes on in verse four to say, ***“Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”*** In this verse, the Greek word used for trouble is *thlipsis*, which means ‘*being pressed down,*’ crushed, squeezed, afflicted, compressed. It is like being in a vice and squeezed tighter and tighter to the point where you cannot even take any more of the pressure. But we have a promise from God that He comforts us even through the *thlipsis*, the compressing, the crushing, the squeezing. ***“Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, [thlipsis] by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”***

There is no greater testimony as a comfort to someone else if you have already gone through a similar circumstance yourself. You can relate to what that trouble was. That is why I am preaching this message. I started this message by telling you I have had experience with people fighting all kinds of depression throughout my lifetime, including myself. I have read about all the heroes of faith and what they went through as they were facing life’s struggles that brought them to a depressed state of mind feeling despair. But we are promised that the God of all comfort will see us through.

Now I want you to remember these eight actions, both from Psalms 77 and II Corinthians the next time you are facing depression or affliction, or are at a point where there is nothing but despair all around you. Remember these:

1) Remember the pit you were dug from. No matter what you go through, if you have the hope of eternal life because of the salvation that given you because of Christ’s blood and the spilling of it, that should start bringing you out of the depressed state of mind you are in. Remember the pit you were dug from.

2) Meditate and declare God’s Word. Go back to God’s Word, meditate on it, become one with it and declare it out loud, especially to the enemy, Satan, saying, “God’s Word says this and you might call God a liar, but I am not. I am going to trust in His Word.”

3) Remember that God's ways are not our ways. We might not like His timing, we might not even like the path that He is leading us on, but His ways are still best for us.

4) Remember it is God's strength, not ours. Be strengthened in the Lord continually. Remember to lean on God's strength and not your strength. Your strength will fail, but God's strength will never fail.

5) Remember the redemption given to you no matter what. This goes along with the first point, remembering the pit that you were dug from no matter what. No matter what man says about us, no matter what kind of condemnation they put on us, remember the redemption that was given by the blood of Jesus Christ and claim, ***"Therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,"*** from Romans 8:1.

6) Remember He is leading you. He is leading you by the hand because He is the potter and we are the clay. He is creating a vessel, a vessel that He is molding, not just for this lifetime but the eons of lifetime, that everlasting life that is still yet to come.

7) Do what Paul did. Trust in Him because you will be delivered just as He delivered Paul from the experience he was facing that brought him to the point of despair.

8) He is the God that comforts. Whatever we are facing, whatever we is pressing us down, compressing, crushing, squeezing, or afflicting us, He is the God of all comfort. Be the shining light so others in need of comforted can be comforted by your own experience when they see how God got you through, and is still getting you through day by day by day.

Yes, depression is a method of the devil that brings us to a point of despair, but God's Word has answers for that. This chapter gave you eight answers, even though there are more. Whether depression and despair is happening to you now, or at some time in the future, go back, read this message, and remember these eight points to get you through whatever you are facing. Remember He is the God of all comfort. Whether it is a physical or a spiritual attack on your being, He is the God of all comfort. Do not forget it. Apply it in your life and thank God for His Word that He has given us to prepare us for battle with our enemy when he attacks using all of the methods available to him.

As for me, damn the devil; I am still here kicking and fighting because I am comforted by the God of all comfort. I will remember the pit that I was dug from; I will remember to meditate and declare His Word; I will remember that my ways are not God's ways; I will remember that it is not my strength but His, and I will be strengthened daily by His strength, and I will not forget what I was redeemed from and what the blood of Jesus means to me. No matter how bad my circumstances are, I still have this; I am redeemed and if I stay in faith, I will have everlasting life because He is leading me. He is holding my hand and He is taking me down the path that He wants me to go. Point number seven tells us to always faith in God and His Word, just as Paul did. Trust that He will deliver us because of number eight, He is the God of all comforts and He will comfort us and He will make, as Paul, a shining light for others who need to see what God can do for them if we will just faith and trust in His Word.

Doubt and Unbelief

Go to Ephesians 6:10. “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*” By now, you know the word ‘wiles’ is *methodeia* in Greek and where we get our English word ‘method.’ Paul is speaking about the methods and strategies of the devil. These are what he and his evil army uses against us as described further on in verse 12. If you have not done so already, circle the word ‘wiles’ and write *methodeia*, the method or methods in the margin of your Bible.

In the last several chapters, I have been describing some of the important methods you need to recognize that the devil uses against us in order to destroy our faith. In this chapter, I will show you another Greek word, *apistia*. Many of you may already know the Greek word *pistis* or *pisteuo*; the word *apistia* is the opposite of *pistis*. The best definition I can give for this word is *faithlessness, uncertainty, weakness of faith, distrusting God’s Word, or unbelief*. As I have said before, one of the most frequently used methods of the devil is to try and bring us to a point where we have doubts, specifically in God’s Word. That is how he attacked Eve, by convincing her to question God’s authority, His promise, and His Word. He brought Eve down that way and eventually Adam as well.

Although many of us have doubts, you are not sinning if you have doubts, as many preachers want you to believe. The problem is when doubts lead to unbelief. For example, everybody is tempted at one time or another. However, are you sinning if you do not fall for the temptation? Of course not. This is not a message about sin. I sin daily. I sin constantly. I sin when I do not even realize it, but thank God, the blood covers me. When I look back on events later and realize maybe I should not have done or said something, I thank God I am covered constantly by Christ’s blood, as long as I remain a faithful in His Word as someone who will trust and walk in faith with every fiber in my being. I must continually try to understand His Word through praying and faithing through the Holy Spirit that Christ will save me and provide to me the necessary tools to have more of Christ and less of myself. Nonetheless, I will be sinning the day I go home to my reward or am raptured, but either way, the blood of Jesus Christ covers me. Knowing this does not give me a license to sin, instead, know we will sin no matter what, and we run back to the Book, run back to the Word, run back to God and say, “Lord, thank God for your blood. Because of your death, because you died once, I am redeemed from the penalty of death.” However, back to the subject of this chapter, doubts are *apistia*. Write that definition in your Bibles.

With that introduction, the topic of this chapter is faithlessness, another method the devil uses to bring us to a point where we doubt God’s Word, which eventually develops into the state of unbelief. Along with that, there are three different ways the devil uses this doubt that leads to unbelief.

First, Satan plants these seeds of doubt to accomplish his main goal of bringing you to the point of rejecting Christ. Remember, the devil and his demonic army is working on you constantly, especially on new Christians who do not have a firm foundation in God’s Word. It is most

serious for these new Christians because they do not have all the experiences that deeply root them into the soil. Their soil at this point is stony and full of weeds and when something comes their way, they question why God allowed it to happen. This happens especially where Christianity is preached as everything is going to be fine and rosy with no problems. We need to know that when problems come our way, God will see us through His way. Even though, many want to get through problems in their own way, that is not the way God works, so Satan plants this seeds of doubt to bring you to a point of completely rejecting Christ. Next, Satan will create doubt to bring you to a point where you have no confidence in God's power. And last, Satan will create doubt in you so you have no confidence in God's Word.

We will begin by taking a closer look at each area, let us look at Satan's first goal of getting us to reject Christ, doubting whether he even exists. Some say he was just a myth, and He was not what He said He was. You have probably come across many individuals in your lifetime where you have had the opportunity to present why you follow Christ. I am sure, as you explained the reasons why you are a follower of Christ, they probably said or did something to mock you or completely reject what you are saying, implying you are a nut, or trying to make you understand that you are wasting your time following Christ. Perhaps they think you should be pursuing your own ways, living for what you can get here and now. In addition, I am also sure some of you have been hurt or felt rejected, wondering why they cannot see what you see. What you need to understand is not everyone is called and not everyone is chosen. That is in God's Word. I do not know why God chose me. I do not know why God chose you, but God does and that is what is important. If you are going to be joyous about something, be joyous about this when you face another hard day. Tell yourself, "God chose me. I can't figure out why He chose me, but there is something He sees in me. If everything seems to be depressed around me, I am going to remember this one thing - God chose me! I can't see it now, but once Jesus comes for His church, I can't wait to see what He has planned for me throughout eternity." The next time you are feeling down, the next time you are feeling rejected, the next time you are feeling like the pressure cooker of life is about ready to do you in, stop and think how lucky you are. I always have to remind myself how lucky I am that God chose me and not just for His purposes down here, which is just a short time in comparison to the eons of time still yet to come. That concept is hard to imagine, but God chose me for a grand purpose and I do not have any imagination what it is going to be like. I cannot even imagine what it is going to be like, and why He has chosen me, and for what purpose He has chosen me. Some Christians live in a tunnel and cannot see outside that tunnel. Expand your horizons and start understanding there is a bigger picture. We are just here training for eternity and the devil's goal is to do anything he can to stop you before you get to that state. It is unfortunate that I have known Christians for 10 to 15 years that all of a sudden out of nowhere decide to reject Christ. They turn to a different type of religion or no religion at all, because they never understood Christ for who He was.

With that, let us see how this rejection begins. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke will make the point about how Satan attacks us with doubts. First, go to Matthew 13:53, where Christ is rejected. ***"And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.***

And when he was come into his own country [or where He grew up] he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, [Although we do not know exactly what Christ

was saying, they could not believe what they were hearing] **and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? [“Isn't this Joseph's kid?”] is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him.”**

I want you to pay close attention to verse 57 because I am going to compare this story to the Gospel writers Mark and Luke and their interpretation of the same story. Verse 57 says **“And they were offended in him.”** The Greek is very clear. The phrase is saying *they were displeased, not acknowledging His authority*. Meaning they could not believe the authority of what He was saying. In this verse, the King James translation does not give a complete understanding of what was happening. Once we understand the Greek, the rejection Christ experience can also be understood. It is important to know where verse 57 reads, **“And they were offended in him,”** it should actually read, **“And they were displeased, not acknowledging his authority.”** In other words, they were rejecting everything about Jesus and everything Jesus was saying. This is the rejection of Christ. These men in the synagogue had no trust in what Christ was saying, but Christ continues in the same verse to respond, **“But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”** That word ‘unbelief’ is the Greek word *apistia*, the *‘faithlessness, weakness of faith, uncertainties, distrust of Jesus,’* not unbelief. Re-read these verses using the correct Greek translations, **“And they were displeased, not acknowledging His authority. . . .And he did not many mighty works there because of their apistia.”** As I said, this is total rejection. Satan was able to plant enough doubts so the effect was unbelief or *apistia*, the opposite of faith.

Mark 6:1 also records this particular story where Jesus faced rejection in His own hometown. **“And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him. And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished [they marveled at what He was saying] saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were [once again] offended at him.”** Here, in this verse, the Greek word is *‘distrusted.’* They would not acknowledge His authority in Matthew record and here they did not even trust Him. Anything Christ said would be rejected because they did not trust Jesus or believe what He was saying was true. Verse 6 records Christ’s response, **“But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief.”** Once again, this is the same Greek word *apistia*. **“He marveled because of their faithlessness, their distrust, their weakness of faith, their unbelief.”**

So, in Matthew we have it that they were displeased and did not trust His authority, but in Mark a different word is used which means they distrusted Him. Now to get the complete picture of Jesus' words, we need to go to Luke, which shows why it is important to understand the different versions of this story written by three different authors.

Luke 4:16 records the event in this way, ***“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.”***

In the following verses, Luke gives us a more complete picture of why they were displeased with Christ and not trusting what He was saying. Verse 17 continues, ***“And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias [Isaiah]. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,***

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor [meaning, preaching to people who were *spiritually helpless*]; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance [or remission of sins] to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down.”

Imagine that picture! I wish I could have seen that. Here Jesus is preaching, ***“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the spiritual helplessness,”*** including to the ones who were sitting there. They might be thinking at the time that they were full of God's Spirit, but Jesus says He was here to preach to them who were spiritually in need of help in order ***“to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind.”*** Here you should also know that the phrase, ***“to preach deliverance to the captives”*** means the *remission of sins*.

Imagine what those religious men were thinking in that synagogue at the time! Christ was telling them He was there for ***“recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister.”*** When Christ gave the book back He was saying, “There you go, I'm finished” then He went back and sat down. The rest of verse 20 tells us, ***“And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.”*** Just imagine all those people! Yes, we can read this story in Matthew and Mark, but only here in Luke do we get the full picture. Imagine all those people just staring at Jesus. I can only imagine what was going through their minds. Probably something like, “How dare this man, this carpenter's son walk in here and start reading scripture to us from the book of Isaiah saying ***“the Spirit of the Lord is upon me.”*** Put flesh and blood on this story. Jesus is talking about Himself. Read verse 18 again, ***“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the spiritual helplessness ones; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach the remission of sins to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”*** That is a tall order for anyone. They did not look at Him as a Messiah and they did not look at Him as an anointed one. They were probably looking at Him as some lunatic full of pride, ego, which came off the street and started reading from the book of Isaiah. ***“And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.”*** If I only could have been there while that was happening, the piercing eyes of all those religious

know-it-alls who were spiritual experts in the Word of God pierced right through Him. They were like lasers glaring down on Jesus. But verse 20 tells us, ***“And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down.”***

What Christ says in verse 21, was really what caused them to lose control. Verse 21 says, ***“And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.”*** In other words, Christ tells them, “I just told you, I am the one filled with the Spirit, I am the one anointed to do all these things I just read, that Isaiah mentioned centuries ago.. Now it is fulfilled in your ears and I am the one.” These religious individuals knew what He was referring to, but there was no way they were going to accept it. They thought Christ was a heretic or a lunatic. There is no way that they were going to understand or accept Christ’s words. They had the preconceived notion that Jesus was no more than just a carpenter’s son, a nobody in their eyes, and definitely not someone who could fulfill what the prophet Isaiah described as the Messiah in his book.

Verse 22 goes on with the story, ***“And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words (No, the Greek says, “and wondered at the words of grace.”) which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph’s son?***

And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.

And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of [Elijah], when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;

But unto none of them was [Elijah] sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

And many lepers were in Israel in the time of [Elisha] the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.” In other words, there were plenty of widows in Elijah’s day and plenty of lepers in Elisha’s day, but only a few had the faith to trust the Word of the Lord for their needs in their situation and circumstance, and so too here.

Verse 28 continues, ***“And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath.*** [The Greek word is more descriptive describing a *boiling up with the intent to kill someone.*] This verse could be read as, ***“And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath that was boiling up,*** [with the intent to kill Jesus]

And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. [to kill Him]

But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way.”

I find it amusing that in verse 30 somehow Jesus just slipped through their hands. ***“But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way.”*** When they arrived to the place where they intended to cast Jesus headlong down with the intention to kill Him they asked, “What happened to Him? Where did He go?” I get amused reading God’s Word at times because of how stupid, incompetent, and foolish they must have felt. There is no record of it, but I wonder if anyone stopped to ask, “Wow, where did He disappear to? Maybe we should listen to what He has to say. Maybe He is saying something that we should listen to. There is no record of any person saying, “I am going to go find Him because I don’t know how He disappeared. There are so many of us and only one of him, how could He possibly slip away?” What I want you to

understand is that while Christ was in the synagogue in verse 28, the devil was creating seeds of doubt that led to unbelief. Just the same, the devil will plant seeds of doubt in our minds so that we do not take a second look at God's Word, because of preconceived notions about Christianity and the mockery most religious leaders have made of God's Word. You cannot turn on Christian television today without seeing somebody giving out handkerchiefs or vials of water for a miracle healing or whatever need you may have. If these ministries really wanted to heal people, they would just go to any of the local hospitals full of sick people rather than renting a large stadium. I have been around long enough to know that the main purpose of that is to get a large offering from a large crowd. Do not tell me those are healing ministries. Christ does not need to have a healing ministry that rents out stadiums so people can gather to be healed when there are plenty of doctor's offices they could stand in front of. If a ministry truly has the calling and truly has the gift of healing, they do not need a stadium gathering of people needing healing. Within a 20-mile radius of this ministry, I could send them to a dozen convalescent hospitals full of sick elderly people. I could give you addresses of people that I know who are sick, including myself. Come and heal me right now if you have a healing ministry. Instead, they wait for particular times, with the right settings, the right kind of music in the background, the right kind of spiritual one-upmanship to convince the gullible congregations that somehow they are in the presence of the Lord. My Bible says in Matthew 18:20, "***For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.***" That is only one example, but I could give many other scriptures telling you that when you are alone with the Lord, He is there with you, otherwise, why communicate to Him at all? Do not be a gullible Christian. Show me a true healing ministry that spends its time at the doorsteps of the hospitals. If you truly have the gift of healing, I am sure the hospital chaplains would be more than glad to see you. I do not know how I got off on that sidebar, but it needed to be said.

To return to the subject of this chapter, verse 28 says, "***And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath*** [boiling up with the intent to kill]." The reason I read this story in all three books, Matthew, Mark, and Luke in the New Testament, is to point out the use of the word 'offended.' It is really two different words in the Greek. In Matthew 13:57, the phrase "offended in" should really be read as "displeased and not wanting to believe" anything that Jesus was saying. In Mark 6:3, the Greek word for "offended" is "they distrusted everything that Jesus was saying." Finally, in Luke 4:28, not only could they not believe what was coming out of Jesus' mouth, they went a step further. They so disbelieved and doubted, and were so full of uncertainties and the devil that they planned to kill Jesus. Their wrath was boiling up with the intention to kill. Whether you knowingly or unknowingly reject Christ, you are doing all three of these things yourself. You are displeasing, you are destroying, and you are killing all of the possibilities of Christ ever being in your life. You are killing off the possibility of Christ taking you over and telling you, "No, you had your way long enough. Now it is my way and I will make you a new creature. I will mold you and shape you into the vessel I want you to become."

Through the story in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we see that when Satan plants his seeds of doubt, the result is the rejection of Christ. I am sure as a Christian many of you have had the occasion to talk about Christ, and if you were rejected completely you probably wondered why that happened, but this is nothing new. People in Jesus' own hometown rejected and disregarded Him because He was just a poor carpenter's son. They doubted what He would know about God

and God's ways. They could not believe He called himself anointed and appointed as the Son of God to bring us deliverance, healing, and the remission of sins. So do not be surprised that they also believed He deserved to be dead.

I remember as a college student at U.C.L.A. studying geology a certain professor, worked hard trying to convince everyone that the Christian religion specifically, and any religion in general, was nothing more than a farce. That professor was convinced that there is no possibility of a God or that we are a creation of God. We all evolved from a fish out of water into the state that we are now. They have rejected Christ and teenagers going off to college are going to be faced with those same individuals who will try to convince you to reject what you have been taught and to reject Christ and His Word. The only thing I can tell you is remember this message and say, "Get behind me Satan. God, help me to remember your Word when the time comes when I need it the most. Bring my mind into remembrance of what your Word says would happen when this occasion arises that brings me to doubt your Word, to doubt your existence." It happened to Christ and it is going to happen to you.

The second area of doubt the devil works on us is doubt that leads to unbelief. Remember, what happened in Matthew and Mark, led to unbelief. You may have heard about the sin of unbelief, which is rejecting Christ, His power, and His Word. If you remember anything in this message, remember the definitions from the verses in Matthew and Mark. The devil wants to plant the seeds of doubt in you so you have no confidence in His power. To illustrate this, once again, I am going to go to these three authors of the gospel books, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who give the three different versions of the same story.

Matthew 17:14 is where Jesus heals a boy possessed with a demon. It begins, "***And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatic, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless [apistos, in the Greek, meaning unfaithful] and perverse generation, [Christ is talking to His disciples here who could not cure the boy.], how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?***" That was a good question. I would have asked the same thing, but Jesus already answered their question in verse 17 calling them, "***O faithless [or unfaithful, the opposite of faithful and being full of faith] and perverse generation.***"

But return to verse 19 where the disciples ask, "***Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief [the Greek word here is *apistia*]: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, [a very small thing] ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.***" In other words, Christ is telling them they have the strength, power, and ability. The Greek is very definite. Christ gave these apostles the strength, power, and ability, yet

they could not even deliver this demon. Verse 21 concludes, ***“Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”***

Now this is where a whole doctrine of exorcism has been created. Interestingly, the last verse, verse 21, that says, ***“Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting”*** is not even in the original. The King James translators added this verse in. Check the original manuscripts, check some sources, or go to the public commentary. This verse is not even in the original scripture, and was added in at a much later time. Jesus did not say, ***“Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”*** Christ is saying, “Faith and the strength, the power, and the ability that I gave you alone should have cast out that demon,” but He did not add, “Oh, by the way, I forgot to tell you this kind only goes out by prayer and fasting.” It does not make any sense. To prove this, I will show you several different verses in the Gospels.

First, go to Matthew 10:1, where Jesus chooses His twelve apostles. It states, ***“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power [Here the Greek is very clear. It not only describes power, but it describes power and authority.] against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.”*** Christ gave them power and authority.

Next, go to Mark 3:13, where again Christ chooses the twelve apostles. ***“And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained [No, appointed is a more accurate translation] twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth [Here, the Greek says to an appointed place] to preach.”*** No. Not to preach, but to proclaim that Jesus is here and He has come to redeem us. Verse 15 continues, ***“And to have power [The same Greek word used again as in Matthew.] This verse should read, “And to have power and authority to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils.”***

Finally, go to Luke 9:1. I want you to understand what the Gospels are saying in regards to Matthew 17. That is why I am going through these different authors so you know where in God’s Word this is said. Luke 9:1 begins, ***“Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils and to cure diseases. And he sent them to proclaim the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.”*** Luke has it right. In Matthew and Mark, the King James translators just wrote ‘power,’ even though the Greek word means *power and authority*.

With that, return to Matthew 17. Jesus gave them the power and the authority, which is why He could say in Matthew 17:17, ***“O faithless [apistos] and perverse generation....”*** Christ was talking to His disciples because He knew He gave to those disciples the power and the authority over these demons and devils. ***“You perverse generation, you faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.”*** You know what happened here. I just read it, but scratch out verse 21 in your Bible, because it was not in the original texts; the translators added it later.

Just as with the previous story, let us compare this story in Matthew to Mark’s Gospel. The same story about the boy who is demon possessed is in Mark 9:14. ***“And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.”***

And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.

And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?

And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb [or deaf] spirit;

And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.” The Greek for “could not” is *ischuo*. The King James translates this to say ‘they could not,’ but the Greek actually says, *and they did not have the strength to prevail*. The disciples did not have the strength to prevail. Even though they had the authority and the power, they did not have the strength to prevail. You have to remember the disciples went around healing sick people, but for some reason they did not have the strength to prevail against these evil forces, even though Christ gave them the strength, authority, and power.

The story continues in verse 19 with Christ speaking to His disciples, *“He answered him, and saith, O faithless [apistos] generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him unto me.*

And they brought him unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. [This boy suffered from this demon possession since he was a child.]

And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe [The Greek word there is *pisteuo*, *faith*, meaning have faith in Christ] *all things are possible to him that believeth.* [The Greek text says *“If thou canst faith, that I have the power to do it to the ones that faith in me.”*]

And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe [faithe]; help thou mine unbelief [or apistia].

When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb [speechless is a better translation] and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.

And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.

But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose. And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out?

And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.”

In this Gospel, one thing is added to the original. This verse should actually read, *“And he said unto them, This kind of demon possession or evil spirit that is in this boy, come forth by nothing, but by prayer.”* Now this is not just any prayer. In the Greek, this is the prayer addressed to God. In other words, you must be in constant communication, faithing in Christ and communicating with Christ. It might take a little more effort, but you still have the same power and authority, and your connection with Christ must be even stronger. Christ is telling them to turn on the faith muscles in their being that He had given them. These disciples had the power and authority given to them by Christ to exorcise this type of demon. Christ told them in verse 29, *“This kind can come forth by nothing, but constant communication with me while*

delivering this particular type of demon.” Do not break the faith connection, but *fasting* is not in the original Greek manuscripts. Why would Christ give them power and authority, but not want them to eat anything first? Otherwise, He would have told them that, but it is not what He said. Yet doctrines have been developed around this, especially in the Catholic religion, to bring yourself to a state of, “I am praying and fasting. I am making myself holy because I am dealing with unholy beings.” My friend, you can pray and fast all you want, but fasting is not included as a way to deliver people from demons. It is through communication with God and being faithful to His Word, understanding that you do not come in by your power or your own authority. You come in His authority and His power. That is why it is so important that I preach the blood of Jesus Christ is what the keys of Hades and Heaven are. It is unfortunate that these deliverance ministries do not know what they are doing, and the devil is having great success because of it. If the devil cannot deceive you with the prosperity doctrine, he will deceive you with deliverance ministries. Men of God have made people gullible and ill taught by not teaching what the Word of God actually says on these subjects. These men are deceiving and lying because they do not understand what God’s Word says. However, I will give them the benefit of the doubt that they believe this is what God’s Word says. Nevertheless, the devil is still making the most of this. I am talking about the demonic forces that possess individuals. The devil will even subside and back off just to give the illusion that the demon is being cast out. I have read stories like this where it seemed like the demon-possessed person was cured, but after being delivered, a few months later they are attacked again even more ferociously than the first time.

Returning to this story in Mark, verse 26 states, ***“And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.”*** Notice that prior to this in verse 25, Jesus commanded, ***“Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.”*** This makes me believe that people can be delivered from demon possession, if it is done correctly. But whoever is doing it, better remember to include ***“and enter no more into him.”***

The devil and his evil army are always seeking to put doubt in your mind. They want you to believe that there is no power in the blood of Jesus Christ, there is not any power in the words from this Book, and there is no power in Christ Jesus. The reason why Christ was so frustrated with His disciples is because He gave them the power and authority to heal people and see the results of it. It is joyous and something to praise God about! To watch it happen in front of your eyes is a faith builder and something wonderful that demonstrates Christ’s power!

In Matthew 10, Christ gives the disciples their commission for that particular time. Many people think the disciples spent three-and-a-half years completely and constantly surrounded by Jesus. No, they did not. Christ gave them assignments at different times. Verse 1 tells us, ***“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, [remember, this is power and authority in the Greek.] to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.”*** However, in Mark 3:13 it says, ***“And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach. And to have power [and authority] to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils.”*** And to cast out devils!

As I said, it is something to see Christ's power used through you to heal people, and this is why I want you to learn about the spiritual warfare we are in. Be ready for it, be prepared for it and expect it. It is said so many times, "I am expecting a miracle today. Hallelujah!" How many preachers and how many people who are professing Christians are saying to themselves, "I am expecting a demonic attack today." If you are expecting it and preparing for it, then when it happens, you will not be surprised and you will be ready to defeat what the enemy throws at you. These disciples went around healing people and I am sure they healed plenty of people, but when they came to a situation that questioned and put the seed of doubt in their minds, the disciples could not meet the challenge. They became faithless, as Jesus said, or *apistos* in the Greek, *a faithless and a perverse individual*. Yes, they could trust God and be full of faith in healing someone through the power of Christ's name because the one asking for the healing was not necessarily the enemy. But, when the disciples came against a demon possessed individual, they came against the enemy; a vicious, ferocious, evil enemy who does not want deliverance and healing to take place. It is one thing having the healing process in common through need and the ability to heal, but it is another thing altogether to deliver someone from possession when the enemy does not want to leave. Because of that, the disciples' faith became faithless when confronted by Christ's enemy, which is also our enemy. They could not stand the test, and I am sure Jesus was surprised; although He still hoped they would not lose faith, but trust what He said.

Christ said He would give them spiritual power and spiritual authority over everything, whether it was sickness or devils, and that they could accomplish what He commissioned them to do. In this situation, however, they did not because the devil took the opportunity to try to destroy those disciples' faith by planting the seeds of doubt in their minds. The result was that they had no confidence in Christ's power over the enemy. If you lack the confidence that Christ's spirit in you provides, then you do not stand a chance in your faith walk against the enemy. If you live in a faithless perverse state of mind, you will be destroyed in a moment's time just as the disciples were. As my mentor used to say, either you are going to be a Christian or not. We all need to have our complete confidence in His power without any doubts whatsoever! However, do not think I am at that state myself. I am a human being just like you. Sometimes I slip, but it does not change one iota what we should strive for or what His Word tells us to strive for.

For the third example of doubt, we will concentrate on is how the devil plants seeds of doubt leading to a lack of confidence in His Word. In Hebrews 3, Paul is writing about Moses and the unfaithfulness of the children of Israel as they were coming out of Egypt. Even though God showed them many signs and miracles, they did not trust in Him at all, and they truly proved themselves a perverse generation. Hebrews 3:12 says, ***"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."*** The word 'unbelief' here is again the same Greek word, *apistia*, *faithlessness, uncertainty in God's Word, weakness of faith, and distrust*, or as the King James says, *unbelief*. The last part of verse 12 says, ***"in departing from the living God,"*** but a better translation of that phrase is *'withdrawing because of your unbelief, your distrust, your uncertainties, your doubts.'* This means that if your doubts lead to unbelief, then you are guilty of the sin of unbelief, and Paul uses the rest of this chapter to describe how the children of Israel demonstrated their sin of unbelief to God, even though they had witnessed and experienced all those signs, wonders, and miracles. As soon as any trial or

circumstance arose, they fell instantly into the sin of unbelief. Just like you, of course, I am tempted with doubts, but it only leads to rebellion against God when I take those doubts and convert them into faithlessness and distrust in His Word. I pray every day that the Lord will help my unbelief if ever led to that point. I want God to do what is necessary to get me back to faith, rather than remain in the state of *apistia*. I want to be put back on the path of faith, no matter how hard or how tough it might be because I know in the long run in that is what pleases God and what is better for me spiritually.

Paul continues in Hebrews 3:14 by writing, ***“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold [or retain] the beginning of our confidence [or ‘firm foundation’ in Greek] steadfast unto the end.”*** That is the criteria. No matter what we face along the way, we must have our firm foundation on Christ who is our foundation, our solid rock on which we stand until the end.

Reading on to verse 15, ***“While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.***

For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?”

Here in Hebrews, Paul is referring to a story from Numbers 13 in the Old Testament. Beginning in Numbers 13:1 it reads, ***“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan [the promise land], which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them.***

And Moses by the commandment of the LORD sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men were heads of the children of Israel.” In these verses, God is saying to Moses, “I have given this land to you. Send men to search it out.” But, God is not just sending anyone; He is sending leaders of the tribes out to search this land.

Moving down to verse 17 we read, ***“And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain:***

And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many;

And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strongholds;

And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not.

And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the firstripe grapes.” Moses knew what they saw might discourage them, so they were forewarned, and told *‘to be of good courage’* no matter what they saw or experienced.

I bet there was a group of people excited to hear the leaders’ report. We know now that they could not wait to get to the Promised Land and were expecting a good report, but they wanted to get there without any obstacles, trials, or tribulation. That is why Paul warns us with Hebrews 3:14 to keep the firm foundation of Christ, to have confidence in Him and His Word until the end. We are to take the good reports along with the bad reports, knowing we are partakers with Christ and that our confidence is in the firm foundation, which are Christ and His Word, until the

end. Just the same, that means He is going to be with us also for the good reports and the bad reports. Verse 25 tells what happened upon their return.

“And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.

And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land.

And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.

Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.

The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses* [Or calmed them down, because obviously they were very upset when they heard about the walled cities, the strong people, and the children of Anak, and whatever faith they had instantly turned into faithlessness.], ***and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it [“do not stop here and harden our hearts or become faithless because of the obstacles”]; ***for we are well able to overcome it.”*****

Caleb made this statement because he knew God was on their side. No matter how great the wall was, no matter how many enemies there were, they saw the sea parted, they saw the Egyptian army destroyed, they saw the miracle of the quail. Caleb reminds them, “You have seen God’s power and authority over the seas that swallowed up the Egyptian army. You have seen God’s power and authority over the quail He sent us. Not to mention everything you saw before we left Egypt, all the signs, wonders, and plagues, and how your first-born males were saved, but not the Egyptians’. Do you think this group, these cities, and the children of Anak can stand up against our God? How can you not have confidence in His Word? How can you not have confidence in God?” Caleb saw it and he tried to convince the people of this when he said, ***“for we are well able to overcome it.”*** Never forget the devil and his demonic army wants to plant every seed of doubt in you so you will fail in the flesh. He wants to bring the flesh forefront and put God in the back seat. The devil wants to be the driver of the vehicle with God in the trunk, hidden and forgotten. He wants to drive you over the cliff to your own destruction. I cannot make it any simpler than that and God’s Word makes it quite easy to understand.

Reading on to verse 31, they respond, ***“But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.”*** I doubt it very seriously that what they were facing was any stronger than the Egyptian army was. In fact, I am willing to bet on it. It is my opinion, but I am willing to bet on it. If you believe the history books, the Egyptian army was much stronger than anything they were about ready to face, yet God destroyed the Egyptian army. This verse shows when you dwell in a faithless frame of mind instead of a faithful frame of mind trusting in God and His Word, black becomes white and white becomes black. After everything they experienced, all it took the devil was forty days to change the minds of these ten leaders, but not Joshua and Caleb. Ten of these leaders changed their minds enough to create doubt not only in themselves, but they planted the seed of doubt in the whole congregation. The Children of Israel totaled in the millions, and they were standing by to hear the report.

They go on in verse 32 to say, ***“And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.***

And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.”

Exaggeration is often used when making a point. Believe me, I am a champion of excuse making. If I feel that God is telling me to do something, I will come up with a dozen excuses why I do not think He can make it happen. But, thank God, as I grow older, I am starting to understand that I better not dwell in that state of mind very long, because with God all things are possible. He strengthens us and gives us the ability to accomplish what we would not otherwise do. These people had decided that there were giants they could not face. Furthermore they were just grasshoppers waiting to be squashed by these ‘men of great stature.’ Talk about an insult to God. I am surprised God did not wipe them out at that moment. In spite of what He had brought them out of, the miracles He showed them, what He provided for them, to now reduce themselves down to a bunch of bugs to be squashed. Talk about over-exaggeration, talk about excuse making to justify a position about why they could not do something. They had no confidence in His Word. The children of Israel rejected God, rejected His power, and rejected His Word, because the seeds of doubt were planted in the minds of these leaders and they brought back an over-exaggerated report. The devil must have been laughing at that. What an insult to God.

In chapter 14 the congregation responds. ***“And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.***

And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!

And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?”

In Egypt, they were slaves with hard taskmasters beating them, and the only future for their children was to become slaves as well without any deliverance in sight. I do not know about you, but I would rather take my chances against the children of Anak and the giants, all the Amalekites, and all the other ‘ites’ than remain a slave. If there was no hope for my children, than I am going to go out fighting, but that was not what their frame of mind was.

In Numbers 14:4 it says, ***“And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.***

Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel.

And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes:

And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.

If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.” Joshua and Caleb were trying to convince them not to go against God or God’s leaders. They told them, “Get your eyes off the circumstances. Get your mind off the bad report. We are telling you we can do it. God is on our side.”

Verse 8 illustrates where the sin of unbelief takes you into rebellion against God, His Word, and His Son. It says, ***“Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not.*** [Fear them not!]

But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.” In this mindset, see how much easier it was to go back to Egypt and stone these followers of Moses and God’s way, and probably stone Moses and Aaron, too. They would probably take back their bodies as trophies thinking that the Egyptian pharaoh would be pleased by the murder of God’s anointed. Finally, at the end of verse 10, God had had enough and He intervened. He tells them because of their rebellion, because of their sin of unbelief, their faithlessness, and their distrust in God’s Word, none of them would see the promise land, only their children. Eventually, they would die in the desert after roaming around for 40 years.

It is this event that Paul was writing about in Hebrews 3:17. ***“But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed [or disobeyed and faithed in the Greek] not?***

So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief [apistia].” And that ‘rest’ was a type of Canaan, or Promised Land. Likewise, we will not enter into our rest, which is eternal life, if we allow ourselves to enter into the sin of unbelief, the sin of faithlessness, the sin of uncertainty, the sin of weakness of faith, and distrust in His Word leading to unbelief - ***apistia***.

There is one more example in Romans 4. You know the story of Abraham and Sarah. They were elderly, and had no children, yet God promised so many children to Abraham that their children would be as countless as the stars. Romans 4:3 says, ***“For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed [It says believed, but the word is *pisteuo*, faithed.] God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”***

To understand why this was so, you must first understand the story. Romans 4:19 explains, ***“And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness [or in the Greek, *the dead state*] of Sarah’s womb.”*** They were old and did not have any children. It should be impossible for them at this point to have any children. But, Abraham believed, he faithed, what God’s Word said would be true and it was counted to Abraham for righteousness; he faithed that God would perform what He said.

Verse 20 says tells us, ***“He staggered [or wavered] not at the promise of God through unbelief...”*** This is the same Greek word, ***apistia***. Even though in the natural flesh it seemed impossible, even though Sarah was too old to have children, God said she would become fertile and be able to have children, even though her natural womb was in a dead state as the Greek puts

it. ***“He [Abraham] wavered not at the promise of God through apistia; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.***

And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.” Abraham was not weak in faith, he was not faithless, he was trusting of God, and he was certain what God said was going to happen. Know that because He is still the same God who will perform the promise also for us, we have promises today that we can claim.

Do not dwell in the land of doubt. I am sure very few Christians reading this think they rejected Christ, but there are different ways to reject Him. Be aware that one way, is if you begin having doubts that lead to a rejection of His power with a lack of confidence in it. Turn yourself around by asking God to intervene. Just as the man did about his son who was demon possessed. He asked Christ to, ***“Help my unbelief.”*** It is not too late. Do what Abraham did. Do not waver at the promises of God through ***apistia***. Even though something may seem impossible, God was not finished with Abraham or Sarah and He is not finished with you either; we have more promises to quench our doubts than Abraham did. Be in a state where you have become fully persuaded that what He promised will come to pass. Christ promised He would never leave us nor forsake us no matter what the circumstance, no matter what the trial, no matter what the situation. He promised never to leave us nor forsake us because He is not finished with us.

I know that because of Philippians 1:6, which states, ***“Being confident of this very thing, that he [Christ] which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ....”*** You are a good work because of what the Holy Spirit produces in you. Through the Fruit of the Spirit, there is nothing that you can produce but a good work. The last words of this verse state ***“will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ,”*** but that is not entirely correct. The Greek says, ***“a good work in you he will finish and complete until the day of Jesus Christ or his return.”*** I am a work in progress. I might have doubts, but I pray God will do what He has to do to take my doubts where they do not lead to unbelief, ***apistia***, but keep me on track with His Word, His promises, and what He has said in His Word so I can have a firm foundation on Him. Even though I might slip, He will pick me up if I keep my focus and understand that I am not a finished work yet, but He is doing the finishing and the completing, and I must be confident of that very thing. ***“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun....”***

When Christ called you, when He chose you that was just the beginning. Know what Christ starts He will finish. The criteria is to not dwell in the ***apistia***, but dwell in the ***pisteuo*** and the ***pistis***. Our part is to accomplish the faithing, which we do by trusting in Him and His Word. Do not let the devil fill your mind with doubts that leads to unbelief. Trust in Christ. Do not reject Him. Trust the power of Christ and His Word and have confidence in it and faith through it on a daily basis. I am claiming, and you can claim too, that you will be a completed and finished work by the Potter. I pray you understand to not let your doubts lead to the sin of unbelief. Have confidence in Christ, have confidence in His power, have confidence in His Word, and keep on faithing.

Being a Soldier in God's Army

Ephesians 6:10, where I have been focusing, begins, “**Finally, my brethren, be strong** [or be strengthened, *endunamoo*] **in the Lord, and in the power** [force, *kratos* in the Greek] **of his might.**

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand [as a soldier would stand, ready to do battle] **against the wiles** [the methods, *methodeia*] **of the devil.”**

I want to quickly review these methods before moving onto verse 12. This chapter will then cover one more method, which is how the devil blinds Christians and the Christian world into believing the lie that God does not need soldiers in His army. I could probably preach an entire year on the devil's methods alone, but I have taught on the most important ones. Through this series, you need to understand what those methods are and how the devil will attack you as an individual, the church, and the leadership of the church.

To begin, this series categorized three different areas where the devil uses his methods to attack individuals in the church. Through leadership in the church, the devil places false prophets and false teachers who preach another gospel and another Jesus with seducing spirits more concerned with signs and wonders. Next, I taught on the wheat and tares. If you remember, false prophets and false teachers are nothing but leaven, as Jesus described, there to corrupt the message and preach a false doctrine, which is how the devil uses the church and the leadership of the church for his purposes. It is a very effective method, because if he can influence the church world, then he knows getting to the individual will be easy. I also taught about how the devil brings us to the point in our faith walk where we become satisfied, comfortable, and content. Then, I moved onto the devil's method of misusing and misapplying scriptures. You see that in any Christian who quotes scripture out of context to prove their point or show their spiritual superiority over you. Misusing and misapplying scriptures happens behind the pulpit by the pastors and preachers, and it happens within congregations. Even the devil uses scriptures to teach error and lies. Yes, you heard me right, even the devil. I even showed places in the Bible where the devil used scriptures to teach lies by taking scripture out of context. The next method, condemnation, was seen in Romans 8:1, “**therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.**” Do not allow judgmental individuals to bring condemnation back into your life after Christ spilled His blood for your sake. I said, and I still say, the Father does not condemn Jesus, and if the Father cannot condemn Jesus then those that are in Him cannot be condemned. It is as simple as that. Believers are in Christ by faith; fathers are in Christ by faith; and Christ is in fathers by His Spirit. Therefore, let no one put you under condemnation. Then we moved onto the method of undervaluing Christ's blood. In that message, I took you all the way down to Hades and upward to the heavens showing in scripture that the keys to both places were His blood. After that, I taught about depression and despair and read some stories illustrating how great men of God overcame that method and laid out eight principles for you to remember and apply in your life when you are going through depression. Finally, I taught about the devil's method of doubt. If you remember, the Greek word for doubt is *apistia*, which is distrust, unbelief, and faithlessness. It is the complete opposite of faith. Through all these methods, the main purpose the devil wants to accomplish is for us to reject Christ, have no confidence in Christ's power, and have no confidence in His Word.

With that review, we will now move onto another method of the devil, which is how he convinces us that God does not need soldiers in His army. Most of the Christian world would have you believe we should just live loving one another doing good things. Our lives are all about works for Christians and non-Christians. That is the impression they give. Just listen to some of them. We should just keep on living and loving one another, doing God's will, doing good things for Christians and non-Christians alike. Live in peace and joy even though the more popular message is to prosper so in a subtle way you can follow your own way. Recently, while in a grocery store, I could not believe what I saw. A very popular pastor called "America's Pastor" wrote the book Become a Better You, but I am not looking to become better. There is nothing good in me, except when His Spirit enters in and then, only through faith. God will not dwell in anything that is not righteous. That is why Abraham was imputed with righteousness because of his faith. Only then, could God dwell in Abraham and use him. You know the story. There is nothing good in me that should become better and that book is nothing more than a positive principle message. That author is the "Tony Robbins for Jesus" trying to make you a better more successful person. It is false doctrine and it is heresy. There is also a silly woman claiming to be a life coach for Christians. Most Christians need a thump on the head from the Word of God to get them back on the path of doing it God's way and it starts by faith. The point is, there is nothing good in me, and nothing that could be better in me. Only Christ knows what He wants me to be and it happens only through His Spirit. That is why I taught on the attributes of the Fruit of the Spirit. He knows what He wants me to become, but He does not want me to get there by anything that I do. He wants me to get there by His own work through the Spirit, and I get His Spirit through faith because God will not dwell in anything that is not a righteous being. If you think then that you should be righteous and holy, that only takes you back again to doing it in your own power, thinking you can somehow develop a holy system that God would like. Yes, God developed that system in the Old Testament. It was called The Law and because all of mankind fell short and not one person could even come close to fulfilling it, He sent His Son. Be a better me? No, thank you! Let Christ make me into the individual that He wants me to be through His Spirit. He knows best what I can do or become and He has the control. It is heresy to say we can do this on our own.

Some of you may think I am attacking another brother in the Christian fellowship, but Jesus did the same thing. The Pharisees, the Sadducees and all the other religious institutions of that time were also His brothers and sisters in the faith, but He did not hold back, and If He did not hold back, why should we hold back if we know what the truth is? That being said, I do think you should help people and do good to others, but I do not think it has anything to do with being a good Christian. Those things are the outflow of the Spirit of God in your life, but it does not make you a better Christian. God was compassionate. Christ was compassionate. Christ was a giver, and Christ helped. If you have the mind of Christ, those things will come out in naturally. These actions are not anything you create; they come from God. What we create is nothing but fleshly works, ugly in God's eyes. Christ was compassionate, Christ was helpful, Christ healed, Christ prayed, Christ built faith, and Christ looked for faith. If we are going to have the mind of Christ, some of those same attributes are going to come out in us, but once again, it is not by our works or any of our doing. It is by His alone. I want you to clearly understand that. Stop looking to do good works to be a good Christian. That is not the criteria. What Christ did command in the New Testament was for us to love one another, but loving one another comes with a costly price.

This is not the *'agape'* of the prosperity doctrine of our current Christian world. This doctrine has you holding scripture over God that He had better bless you because you have taken these scriptures out of context and shoved them in God's face. This is what He said, so He had better perform. Most of those scriptures are taken out of context and what those people really need is a whack on the head from the Word of God. The devil has blinded you with all the methods available to him making you believe a lie and be damned. God needs soldiers and He is looking for soldiers.

Recently, I received a message from a very faithful Hearer of Faith who probably listens to me more than anyone in the Hearer of Faith family. I know this by how he responds to every message. Many people have never listened to this kind of message before, so they are going to have questions and going to have an adjustment period because they have been brainwashed with so much theological junk that this is all new to them. In part of his message, the listener wrote:

"I have a question. Don't you think it is better to know more about Jesus and His salvation, rather than about the devil and his plan to destroy the church? Certainly there are false prophets, teachers, churches and so on, but let's edify one another with the truth that is in Jesus Christ our Lord and King of Kings. Best regards in Christ."

I have preached many faith messages and other messages that edify the body of Christ and build faith. They are available free to anyone in the archives to download or print. But what this listener asked is what the church world teaches, and that is why I believe this is a sincere question. This is what the Christian world has been taught; love, peace, joy, and prosperity, "edify[ing] one another about Jesus Christ our King of Kings," as this person puts it. This is what the devil is hoping that you will do because he knows you will be easy to influence and you will not know how to resist the devil. In the Epistle of James it says, "*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*" (James 4:7) And to resist him, Paul says, you have to be a soldier, as he states in II Timothy 2:3, "***as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.***" I thank you for the message because it inspired me to preach about the method the devil uses to disguise what your calling is, what you have been chosen to be, and that is a good soldier of Jesus Christ. God does need soldiers, but he needs ones that are faithing and trusting in His Word.

Recently, I was in probably the best Christian bookstore in this area searching for books about Spiritual Warfare. So little has been written for instruction about it and I lamented about that. What a shame, so I went back to the author James Montgomery Boice and read what he has to say in his commentary about Ephesians 6:10 and 12. It is not that many pages but I will just read a couple of paragraphs. He says,

"It has been almost 35 years since I preached that sermon [on spiritual warfare] and in all those years I have preached on these great verses only one other time in a special series of Sunday evening messages. That strikes me as unfortunate because this suggests the warfare in which we are engaged as Christians is relatively unimportant when actually the opposite is the case. [In other words, he is lamenting on how little time he spent on this subject.] The opposite was obviously the case for Paul. These verses and the point on which they end, is that each Christian is engaged in a great spiritual battle and must equip himself for it. Many Christians

today would judge the teaching of these verses unimportant. They would encourage us to think positively and peacefully as if there were no spiritual battles at all.”

When I read this I said, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” Even though he is lamenting about not spending more time on this subject, Boice recognized how it is important for Christians to realize the spiritual battle we are in, and that we must be equipped for that battle. He only spends a few paragraphs on the subject, but I said, “Thank God he understands that we are in a spiritual fight.” Boice goes on to say,

“They see Christianity not as an entrance into warfare, but as an exit from it. They see it as the solution to our problems. If you are sick, Jesus will make you well. If you are discouraged, Jesus will make you happy. You get the impression from those who talk like this that to believe in Jesus is to enter upon a smooth path and to enjoy smooth sailing.

Another approach to the Christian life is not so much to deny the reality of spiritual warfare as insist that although it exists, it is all over and done with, in a certain sense. Watchman Nee’s studies in Ephesians entitled Sit, Walk, Stand is an example of this. The title of that work is both an outline of Ephesians as Nee sees it, as an expression of Nee’s theology of the Christian life.

Christianity begins by sitting with Christ in heavenly places. That is, resting in Christ’s achievements. It continues by walking out the Christian life. That is, living Christianity practically. Finally, it involves standing on the ground Christ has already won for us. Nee emphasizes that because of Christ’s victories, our warfare is always a defensive rather than an offensive struggle. There may be some truth in that, but what bothers me is that this thinking has been carried over into expressions of what it means to live the Christian life which suggests that there is nothing, or at least very little, for us to do as Christians.

‘Let go and let God,’ some say. That is, the battle is not ours, it is God’s, so just let go; let God do the fighting. At the most, you need to only stand your ground. It is true, of course, that Paul does use the word ‘stand.’ He uses it four times, but when he speaks of armor, he speaks not only of defensive armor such as our helmet, breastplate and shield, but also of our offensive weapons, our sword. And whether or not he is thinking of fighting offensively or defensively, he is thinking of fighting against the most powerful and cunning foes.”

Jesus has won the battle over sin, death, and the grave, but He is still looking for soldiers in our day and age, in these end times, to be soldiers of faith. Just because He won the battle over sin, death, and the grave does not mean we sit and do nothing. Yes, the battle is the Lord’s, it is always going to be the Lord’s, but the Lord will not go to battle for us until we apply some of the things that I have been teaching in this Spiritual Warfare series. You just cannot sit back and do nothing. God does not enter into your life automatically. It takes faith in His Word. So the Christian phrase, ‘let go and let God’ is true to a certain extent, but God is never going to do anything unless He sees you making the first move. You heard it right. He is looking for people that will take action. My mentor used to say faith is action, based on belief, sustained by confidence. God is looking for people that will trust Him and once He finds those types of people, He will go to battle for you and He will give you spiritual weapons. These are spiritual

weapons only granted by God through Christ for the battle to fight against as Boice says ***“the most powerful and cunning foe.”*** You can sit back and do all you want thinking you are edifying each other, but you are going to lead each other into hell because the devil has you where he wants you. In that state you are not expecting anything coming from the devil because God has already gone before you and taken care of it, but it does not work that way.

It was refreshing to read Boice and find someone else thinking like this because there is so little written about this subject. My hope is that when this Spiritual Warfare series is finished there will be volumes to give you the ammunition you need to understand who you are fighting against, and through God and His resources, how you can have victory and triumph. So get out of the state you are in and realize you are a soldier of Christ. If you do not like to be a soldier, or fighting, or war, well, I do not like war either but Jesus dealt with it.

To show you this, go to Matthew 3:16, where John baptized Jesus. Three of the Gospels mention this, but we will begin in the Book of Matthew. It says, ***“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him. And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*** All you ever hear about is the dove and that is a wonderful thing. I am not mocking it, God forbid, but the dove is all that is usually spoken of in the Christian world. There was lightning behind Him as well. I have read stories about people hit by lightning and it is an experience to say the least. It will get your attention, but a majority of the Christian world only seems to emphasize the dove-like figure. But God was showing them, that just in case they had missed the dove, He wanted to really get their attention so the world could know who was sent and in whom He was well pleased.

In Matthew 4:1, Jesus is lead into the wilderness. It says, ***“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.”*** This chapter then goes on to list the several different ways Christ was tempted by the devil and it gives the illusion that Jesus was only tempted after the forty days and forty nights of fasting and prayer.

However, Mark 1: 9 gives another account of this story. It states, ***“And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:*** [Here the lightning is not included, so you need to read all related gospel stories to get the full picture of what did happen.] ***And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.*** [The Spirit takes Him to do battle with Satan.] ***And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.”*** In Mark’s account, Christ went straight forward into the wilderness, tempted of Satan as soon as the Spirit of God fell upon Jesus like a dove and with lightning. This was Christ’s first assignment, and for the rest of His ministry Christ was to battle

Satan and his evil army to claim victory over death, hell, and the grave through His death and resurrection.

So now, we see the account in Matthew gives the idea that Jesus fought the devil only after the forty days and forty nights when He was weak, but the Gospel's only give a glimpse of what God thought was important for us to know. They tell us that Jesus fought against the devil and resisted all the temptations of the devil one after another after another, including misusing and misquoting scriptures in those temptations. You could preach a lifetime of messages in just those three temptations alone. I am a believer, and my opinion is that Christ faced the temptations the entire forty days and nights not only from Satan, but by his demonic army and every evil spirit that the devil had control of. They attacked Jesus because they knew if they were not victorious, they were facing eternal damnation in the lake of fire.

Let us take a last look at this story in Luke 4:1, ***“And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.”*** Here Luke, the historian, makes it very clear. Again, remember, there were other temptations; we only know about a few of them, but Jesus was fighting the most evil beings ever created. These beings were not created evil; they had the will to become evil and by their own choice became evil. God did not create evil. Just as He created us with the ability to choose, He also created His angelic beings with the same ability. They could either do it His way or follow their own way, and they chose to follow their own way, rebel against God, and follow an evil leader, Satan.

In regards to Christ's temptations in the wilderness, all three Gospels have the same phrase, ***“and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.”*** Jesus spent forty days and forty nights led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to do battle for the next three-and-a-half years against everything that Satan would throw at Him for our sake. For our sake, Jesus was tempted.

I love the message of grace and salvation, and what faith can do in a person's life. Yes, you need to understand it and apply it daily, but part of being a Christian is understanding who your enemy is and what his purpose is. There is that battle going on. That is why Paul kept saying over and over in the letters he wrote to the churches and individuals, our old nature is fighting against our new nature trying to overcome it. Even on the inside of our being there is a battle going on between our old nature and the new nature that God keeps implanting in us if, through faith, we allow God to keep working in our new nature to mold us into the creature that He wants us to be. That is why I have been teaching and will continue to teach about spiritual warfare. This series may never be finished and although I am teaching from Ephesians now, there are many other places in the Bible to teach on this subject matter. In addition, there are many titles and names of the devil in God's Word. Below is a partial list.

Revelation 12:10, he is called *the accuser of our brethren*.

I Peter 5:8, he is *an adversary*.

II Corinthians 11:14, he is *an angel of light*.

Matthew 12:24, he is *Beelzebub*, but a better translation is *the prince of devils*.

Matthew 4:1, he is *a devil*.

Isaiah 27:1, Revelation 12:3, and Revelation 20:2, he is *a dragon*.

Matthew 13:39, he is *an enemy*.

John 8:44, he is *the father of lies*.

II Corinthians 4:4, he is *the god of this world*.

Isaiah 14:12, he is *Lucifer*.

He is *a murderer*. His ultimate goal is to murder you, not only in this life now, but also for everlasting life, to put you in the situation of eternal damnation forevermore.

Colossians, he is *the power of darkness*.

Ephesians, he is *the prince of the power of the air*.

I Peter, he is *a roaring lion*.

John chapters 12 and 16, he is *the ruler of this world*.

Chronicles, Job, John, Acts, and Romans, he is *Satan*.

Ephesians 2:2, he is *a spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience*.

Matthew 7, he is *a swine*.

Matthew 4, he is *a tempter*.

Matthew 12, he is *an unclean spirit*.

And, this is just a partial list. You are to be aware of all of his titles and names because they reveal his nature! By understanding his nature, you can become aware of his strategies and methods. The devil is out there trying every angle to distract and attack. I have pity for the ones who do not fall under the covering of Christ's blood. They do not stand a chance if they do not understand how important spiritual warfare is fought. God is looking for soldiers even though the Christian world would have you believe otherwise.

To understand this further, go to II Timothy 2:1. ***“Thou therefore, my son, be strong [the word is *endunamoo*, be strengthened] in grace that is in Christ Jesus.”***

Verse 3 continues, ***“Thou therefore endure hardness [kakopatheo in the Greek, meaning suffering hardships, troubles, afflictions.] as a good soldier of Jesus Christ;”*** not as a bad soldier, or a half-hearted soldier. This is not a very comforting message, is it? You may think it is too hard to be a soldier.

Read on to verse 4, ***“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of life; [‘this’ is in italics and was added by the translators] that he may please him [Christ, God, the Father] who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”*** In other words, we do not have a choice. Once the Spirit of God falls upon us like it fell upon Jesus, we are in a battle just as Jesus was for forty days and forty nights, and every other day of His life until the day of His crucifixion. We do not have the choice; we are chosen and like it or not, we do not have a choice. There is no special position in the Christian world that makes you an “edifier” of the Body of Christ, just as there is no position in the Christian world that makes you the best choir singer in the world. We are chosen to be soldiers and are told in verse 4, ***“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of life.”*** Do not make the things of this world your priority before God. Verse 4 concludes, ***“that he may please him who hath chosen you to be a soldier.”*** Never forget, He has chosen you to endure hardships, endure sufferings, endure troubles, and endure afflictions.

Paul tells us why in verse 10, ***“Therefore I endure [the Greek is *hupomeno*, endure bravely] all things for the elect’s sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with***

eternal glory.” Paul is telling us that we are to go through this because the devil wants us to fail, fall back, and return to living our lives our own way again, rather than God’s way. The devil wants to convince us that we do not have to endure hardships and that the life of a Christian should be easy and problem free to an extent. He wants to convince us there will be no troubles or afflictions, and he definitely wants to convince us there is no need for soldiers. However, know that we are chosen to be soldiers and remember Paul is writing this in a day where he is influenced by the army he saw in the physical realm, which was the Roman army.

There are eight keys to being a good soldier of Jesus Christ. They were the same in Paul’s day as they are today and are as follows:

1. He is chosen and a follower.

My mentor used to say there are two positions in the Christian world; either you are leading as a shepherd or following as sheep. It is one or the other even though there are different ranks in the sheep. The sheep are chosen and are followers. Very few are forced or drafted into service. Yes, there have been some, but very few have the option and we were chosen before the worlds were formed.

2. You know your rank.

There are positions and an order among the sheep. If you look at any group of animals there is an order, so know your rank. Some are called to do certain things here by the earthly shepherd, not the Chief Shepherd, but the earthly shepherd who is in charge of the ministry or church they have been assigned to. Some are called do certain things others will not do, so you must know your rank.

3. He follows orders.

This is probably one of the more important points. It is important to follow someone who is teaching God’s Word rightly divided. Just because you follow someone it does not mean that you are to be taken advantage of. There are too many in today’s Christian world that uses their place, position, and authority to take advantage the flock they been assign to. I strongly suggest that you find an earthly shepherd who is correctly teaching God’s Word and follow and assist them in any way you can.

4. He has endurance.

I am telling you; in the Christian army, you must physically endure the battle, and also spiritually endure the battle, because the devil will attack you any way he can. He will attack you physically and spiritually, sometimes combining both at the same time. So you have to understand that to be a good soldier, you must be able to endure both physically and spiritually. If you are sick, then pray for God’s healing because you know what you are faithing for now. You now know where the battle line is drawn. Pray for healing and keep praying and faithing for that healing. Even if the healing does not happen here on earth, go out fighting.

5. Have the proper priorities.

Pleasing your heavenly commander, Jesus Christ, should be the number one priority in your life and that is done through faith. Faith pleases God, so stay faithful to the ministry or church that you are a part of.

6. You are familiar with the commander's voice.

You are not a good soldier if you are not familiar with the voice teaching you the Word of God. This happens through the connection and the witness in your Spirit that whomever you are following and listening to comes from God's Word.

7. You are familiar with his weapons.

Recruits do not go through boot camp without learning how to shoot a rifle. Boot camp prepares them for the battlefield so they know how to respond in a battle. Likewise, prepare yourself in boot camp to use your weapons. Become familiar with them so you know how to use them in your battles. That is the purpose of this Spiritual Warfare series. I want to make you aware of who the devil is, what his methods are, how you are going to be strengthened, and how God's force is going to get you through. Eventually we will get to the weapons so you become familiar with them and understand how important they are when in battle with your enemy.

8. You are familiar with the strategy of the enemy.

Making you aware of his strategies and methods is what I have been concentrating on for many chapters now.

It is important to remember these eight key points in order to be a good soldier for Christ. To review quickly, they are:

1. Realize you are chosen and you are either leading or following.
2. You need to know your rank, whether you are an under-shepherd or part of supporting a ministry.
3. You are to follow orders, to be in unison with the church or ministry.
4. You have endurance, both physically and more importantly spiritually, because spiritual endurance will give you the strength to get through physically.
5. Your priorities are in their proper place, understanding that the main purpose is to please the commander, the Chief Shepherd Jesus Christ. How you do that is by faith.
6. You become familiar with the commander's voice, the one Jesus Christ is using as an instrument to preach the gospel of Good News of Jesus Christ.
7. You are familiar with your enemies' weapons.
8. You are familiar with the strategies of the enemy.

You may think this sounds tough, but these are the points you need to get you through life's spiritual warfare. They are not complicated and there is promise in them.

Go to II Corinthians 2:14, which proclaims the victory in Christ that you can claim for yourself. It states, ***“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph [this is the Greek word *thriambeuo*] in Christ, and maketh manifest [visible is a better translation] the savor of his knowledge by us in every place.”*** Therefore, we will triumph in Christ and it shall be visible because of the knowledge of God’s Word in the Bible. The word triumph is *thriambeuo*. Most lexicons or dictionaries say victorious, but celebration is also a part of the definition. This tells us that although what we are going through now may seem tough, there is a purpose and we will be a part of a victory march someday. We will celebrate, which is the good news of it all. Our battles have purpose and meaning so we must hang on long enough trusting God and His Word and relying on His resources, His weapons, His strength, His force, and His might.

Additionally, this word ‘triumph’ is actually a Roman military term for victory. Remember, in his day Paul was influenced by the Roman army that was all around him. Rome was the empire that controlled the areas of Paul’s ministry. After battles, the Roman commander and his troops would march through the city in a grand display. We can compare that victory march to what we are facing in life and what our hopes are based upon. I like to go back and see through Paul’s eyes and compare what he saw to what we experience and hope for today. Imagine the Roman armies victoriously marching in with their heads held high, following their commander, celebrating, while everyone around them celebrated the victory as well. How does this compare not only to the victory Christ has achieved, but also to how He will celebrate with His army that is still yet forming in these last days. Imagine when we return on our horses following Christ on His white horse. They could be compared in this way:

1. The Roman army as they entered rode in chariots.

As Paul saw this, the Roman army rode in on their chariots. This was their victory march so to speak. Concerning Christ’s victorious entrance, Revelation 19:11 say, ***“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.”*** We are talking about Christ here. Christ will ride on His white horse, while the Romans rode in on their chariots.

2. The Romans wore royal robes in the celebration.

Revelation 19:13 says, ***“And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.”*** Christ’s royal robe was vesture dipped in blood.

3. The Roman conquerors wore crowns of victory as they came in celebrating their victory.

Of Christ, Revelation 19:12 tells us, ***“His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.”*** Just as those Roman conquerors came in wearing their crowns of victory, Christ will come wearing His many crowns of victory. Also, the Roman conquerors came in painted in red, but Christ will come in a flaming fire. That is written in II Thessalonians 1:8 and in Revelation 19:12, ***“His eyes were as a flame of fire,”*** with fire symbolizing the color red.

4. The Roman army held scepters as they entered in as conquerors. In comparison, Revelation 19:15 says, ***“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”*** Christ will rule with the rod of iron. The Romans held

scepters symbolizing their rule, and Christ will symbolize his rule with the rod of iron as described here in Revelation 19:15.

5. Soldiers surrounded the Roman leader as they marched in.

Paul, in Timothy, was describing what it was like to be a good soldier, comparing it to what a good soldier in the Roman army must have been like. Here, in Revelation, John is taking it one-step further, giving us the insight of what a good soldier is going to be part of as we follow Christ. In His army, because of our faithfulness and trust in Him, He has chosen us to be a good soldier, and if we are faithful to that commission, we have all the benefits listed in Revelation 19. Soldiers in the Roman army surrounded the leader, in comparison, Revelation 19:14 says, ***“And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.”*** I do not know about you, but I am going to have a white horse, and I am sure if you are faithful, you are also going to have a white horse. This verse speaks of ‘armies.’ To be in the army, you have to be a soldier and that is the point of this message. This verse also tells us that they were, ***“clothed in fine linen, white and clean.”*** The linen was clean because of His blood. Just as the soldiers surrounded the leader, Christ will be surrounded by His army, which includes you and me, if you understand that you are chosen to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

6. The enemy, bound in chains, was paraded in public.

They were dragged in humiliated by this conquering army and so is our enemy.

7. We read about in Revelation 20:1, ***“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.”*** And the world will see, by the way, that Satan will be humiliated by his conqueror, Jesus Christ. As part of Christ’s army, we will be part of the celebration.

8. The victorious Romans got the spoils.

Just as the victor got the spoils in the Roman army, Revelation 21:7 tells us, ***“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”*** Christ will conquer all and everything will be a part of His inheritance, which includes us. Knowing this is still yet to come gives me joy and peace. Our road here may seem hard, but there are wonderful things coming that will make it all worth it.

9. The parade ended at the temple with the Roman celebration.

Of our celebration, Revelation 5:9 says, ***“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by the blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us [meaning you and me] unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”***

Throughout this chapter in Revelation, the point is we will rule and reign in the eons to come because we are following the victor, Christ. If we remain connected and faithful, we can have victory over our enemy and we will be part of what is coming. I believe it is all going to happen, and that is not wishful thinking or else why would I believe anything in this Book? I am confident we will follow Him on our white horses as part of Christ’s army. In the end, we will know it was worth it to be part of God’s army into everlasting eternal life confident we would do

it again in the blink of an eye. That is why it is important you understand how to fight the good fight of faith. It takes the knowledge of what spiritual warfare is all about and that we are commanded to be good soldiers chosen of Jesus Christ. Now you know what a good soldier in the Roman army was like and what a good soldier in God's army should be like. You also know all the wonderful things that will happen by comparing how the Roman army celebrated their victories and how Christ's triumph will be. Furthermore, some think because Christ died and rose, that was He was finished in regards to sin, death, and the grave. However, Christ's triumph is not complete until all His Word is fulfilled and those nine points have not been fulfilled yet, so His triumph is not yet complete.

The good news of all of it is we will be with Him, marching behind Him in His army along with all the saints who have come before and all the saints who are still yet to come. We will all be marching right behind on our white horses ready to do battle, and God will make us fit through Christ's army in those last days. Will be there to see the completion of Christ's triumph, so do not let uninformed preachers teach you that Christ's victory is complete. It is not complete until all scripture is fulfilled. Christ's part of death, hell, and the grave is completed; He has paid the price with His own life and blood, but not all of God's Word or Christ's triumph is completed until every jot and tittle is done in His Word. There is good news for us, though. If we remain true spiritual warriors recognizing the importance of being a good soldier of Jesus Christ and continue living this life of faith, we will be part of Christ's completion. We will see with our own eyes scripture's completion, as we know it and everlasting life beginning.

I am excited about it and I am trying to prepare and excite you about it because no matter what we face down here, it will all be worth it. So keep faithing and keep hanging onto everything in God's Word that will come to pass. Events are happening almost on a daily basis that fulfill God's Word as we close in on the end of days.

Keep looking up, your redemption draweth nigh. Now more than ever is the time to step up and be a part of God's army. No matter who you follow as your earthly shepherd down here, do it as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. That is what Christ is looking for. One day you will graduate from these earthly commanders to a heavenly Father and the Chief Commander, Christ Jesus. He will command you to follow Him to His completion and ultimate triumph, which we will be a part of. If that does not excite, you then you are dead and you need to come alive again.

Temptation

This chapter will begin in Matthew 6:13, which states, **“And lead us not into temptation....”** This phrase almost sounds like God is doing the leading into the temptation, but that is not what God’s Word is saying here. If anything, just like in Job’s life, God is allowing the temptation to happen in our lives. He does this to prove us, to see what we are made of, to see if we have grown in His Word, and to see if we will trust in His Word by applying faith and practicing that faith by trusting His Word. God is not a man to lie; His Word is true, so He allows these temptations to happen for our benefit. In order to completely understand verse 13, you need to understand two Greek words.

The first of these words is ***peirasmos***, which is Greek for *temptation* and most of the time is translated as *temptation or testing*. That is why I believe God allows these temptations to test what we are made of, if we have grown in His Word, trust in what His Word says, and to see if we know our deliverance comes from the Lord God and Jesus Christ our mediator fighting on our side. So when you read this phrase, **“And lead us not into temptation,”** remember the Greek word for temptation is ***peirasmos***, *temptation or testing*. Along with that definition, another important part of the definition for ***peirasmos*** depends on who is doing the testing. If God allows the temptation, then it is to prove us, not to see if we are going to fail, but to see if we will hang our bodies on His Word, and as my mentor used to say, trust in it to the end. He allows these temptations, ***peirasmos***, to prove to the world and the devil that we trust Him and to test our faith to see if it is “more precious than gold,” as I preached in Job’s message. In contrast to God’s testing, when the temptations come from the devil, it is to cause us to fail, but damn the devil. I know where troubles and trials come from. God might allow them to come into my life, but I know who is behind the scenes trying to squeeze the life out of me. Satan wants to destroy the connection between God and us, and more importantly put us in the position of dis-faithing instead of completely faithing on God’s Word. Remember, God’s testing allows us to see what we are made of; failure is not the goal. When Satan tempts us, however, he always tempts us with one goal; failure and to bring failure into our lives so he then can tell God, “Well they sure didn’t hang on your every word that is written in your book. They sure didn’t trust you.” That is why we should pray **“And lead us not into temptation”** or ***peirasmos***.

The second word you should understand in this verse is ‘deliver.’ Verse 13 continues, **“But deliver us from evil,”** or *the evil one*, who is Satan and his demons, out to destroy us and our connection with God. In any Lexicon, there are about thirteen or fourteen definitions for the word deliver, but the Greek word used here is ***ruomai***, which means to *drag with force out of the path of danger and calamity*. In other words, in verse 13 we are praying, “Lord, don’t allow me to follow the path of temptation.” Now temptation necessarily is not evil, but how you react to it is when it becomes evil, especially if it drives you away from God. So as you are praying, **“And lead us not into temptation...”** we are asking the Lord to direct our paths, to keep us from falling into the tempting ways of the devil. We want the Lord to drag us with force out of the path leading us into danger or calamity. The Greek is very, very clear. Think of it as if you see a friend falling over a cliff and you are grabbing on making sure he does not completely fall off. Just the same, we are asking the Lord to stop us and pull us back from the path that leads to separation from Him. That is the danger, the calamity, this Greek word means here in verse 13.

With that, I want to move into different areas of the Bible. Most of you know the story of Adam and Eve, where the serpent, the dragon, first tempted Eve. The story in Genesis follows the process of how this serpent seduced Eve into believing his lies. I believe Eve fell easier than Adam did because Adam got his directions directly from God, but Eve's directions came from Adam. I tend to believe that if Eve had heard straight from God, the probability of Eve falling for the tricks of the devil would have been minimal. Nevertheless, even if Eve fell for the tricks and temptations of the devil in Genesis 3, Adam still did not have to react the same way as Eve. Adam also fell, so there is no excuse for Adam or Eve. In fact, Adam had less of an excuse than Eve for the fall. Remember, Adam received instruction directly from God and Eve did not. Adam walked and talked with God, but there is no record of Eve doing this. So those who want to put the blame on Eve, ask yourself why Adam listen to her. He spoke to God; he knew what was right, what was wrong, and what God expected out of obedience. Maybe God would have replaced Eve with another helpmate. Adam did not have to fall or give into the temptation, but he did. At the same time, this is one preacher not so eager to blame Eve. Often people joke that if Eve had not done this we would not be in this condition. Well, I am telling you, there were two people in this situation and Adam, in my opinion, failed even more miserably than Eve. He had direct connection with God and fell into disobedience just as Eve did. However, I want you to know that we all fall into temptation as long as we have this old nature in us that we fight against daily. Hopefully, through God's Holy Spirit, we win the battle more times than not, but there are times and occasions where the old man creeps out and gets the better of us and we fall into sin because of the temptation. I am not condoning it, but that is just the way it is. That is why we could never live up to the Mosaic Law. Thank God, Jesus came to cover us with His blood for our redemption. Those self-righteous ones, who think they never sin, are sinning with just that thought through spiritual pride, which is a wicked sin in God's Word. Yet, I will not dwell on the first Adam, who failed so miserably. Instead, I will show you the second Adam who was victorious, and that second Adam was Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 26:36, I will make another point concerning how easy it is to fall into temptation, even if the temptation looks innocent. If it is not what God wants you to do, and not the path God is directing you to, and if it leads to disobedience that is a sin. I do not like to dwell on sin because we are all sinners saved by grace, but anything that is disobedient to God's Word is a sin. You fell into that situation because of temptation. It is as simple as that, but thank God for His blood, because we are sinners daily saved by grace. So what can we do in our daily lives to avoid the path of temptation? There are going to be times it will happen no matter what, because you allow the old man back into your life. It happens to me and I guarantee it happens to you, but I will tell you what Jesus said to do. In Matthew 26:36 it says, ***“Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.”*** Pay attention to Jesus' first words in this verse, ***“Sit ye here...”*** All He is asking the disciples who went that far with Him was to sit down, ***“while I [Jesus] go and pray yonder.”*** So sit down and wait for me here while I go and pray. ***“And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful [which is to grieve inwardly with sorrow and pain] and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.”***

Look what Christ is saying to do there. He told the first group of disciples, ***“Sit ye here”*** wherever ‘here’ was, and now he is telling Peter and two other individuals, ***“tarry ye here, and watch with me.”*** Why? Because Jesus was grieving. He was heavy and sorrowful in spirit. You cannot tell me these disciples could not see it. There is no way. They spent more than three years with Jesus. There is no way they could not see that their Master, their Lord, was going through a terrible time. He gave them enough information about what was soon to happen, but not even once realized that it was to happen for their salvation and mine. Nevertheless, Jesus told the first group “Sit and wait for me,” and He is telling this group, “Stay here and wait for me.” Those seem like simple commands and simple things to do.

Then in verse 39 we read, ***“And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.”***

And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” So after a while, Jesus comes back. He was not gone all night long or even hours upon hours. To give you a simple analogy, there are people who will stand in line for days to be first to see a movie. Even if you are not one of those people, I am a person who would stand in line for an hour to see a more popular movie, so how much more important it is to watch for your Lord. But these disciples could not even watch one hour. Satan and his demon army knew what was ahead. They knew Jesus would be the sacrificial lamb for salvation and take the keys of death and hell away from Satan. What Satan was able to accomplish with the first Adam, he now focused his army of demons on Jesus and these disciples. If Jesus did not go to the cross, we would all be lost and damned. That is true, but I guarantee there was a huge demonic army also focusing on His disciples to bring them to the point of discouragement with our Lord and Savior, who was already going through terrible inward grieving with pain and sorrow.

Because of my studies on Spiritual Warfare, I am a firm believer that there was not one single demonic spirit, including Satan, anywhere else in the world except that city of Jerusalem, specifically where Jesus was and also with the religious fanatics who would eventually put Him on that cross. Just imagine how many demons were in that army. There were millions, on top of millions, on top of millions; a far greater number than you can understand concentrated on this situation. Jesus knew His disciples at that time were no match against that demonic power or those evil spirits, and Jesus knew what was happening in the unseen world with the spirit beings battling each other. Their goal was not only to convince, but also to literally brainwash Jesus away from that cross. Because of that, Jesus gave the disciples a clue, maybe after He woke them up, that they must withstand the temptation laid on them, which was being sleepy and tired. Nothing could have kept them awake.

Hopefully, you now understand the demonic influence these disciples were fighting against. The disciples did not even realize it, but when Jesus came back and found them asleep, he told them how to fight the temptation of slumber in verse 41. Jesus told them, ***“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*** The same Greek word, ***peirasmos***, used here is also used in Matthew 6:13. I have been around the ministry many years now.

So Jesus told them, ***“Watch and pray.”*** He did not ask the first group of disciples in verse 36 or verse 38 to watch and pray because He knew they could not stop His crucifixion and resurrection, which was for their benefit and ours to give us hope and salvation for eternal life. The first group of disciples did not quite understand what His death and resurrection meant at this time. Even though they were with Jesus for over three years, they still did not comprehend what He had to do, what He had to accomplish as the second Adam because the first Adam failed. It is as simple as that. Commentaries here will just confuse you. They try to put some rationalization into why these disciples fell asleep, instead of going behind the scenes to understand spiritual warfare. We are in a fight with unseen beings much more powerful than we ever could fight here now on this earth without the Holy Spirit. It is too bad and very unfortunate that men behind pulpits do not realize who our true enemy is. As I taught before, you do not go to war unless you know who your enemy. Without knowing your enemy, you will lose.

In Matthew 26, these disciples could not even tarry and watch for Jesus for one hour, so Jesus tells them in verse 41, ***“Watch and pray,”*** and there is your answer. Know that God will not lead you into temptation, although He might allow it to happen. God looks out for our benefit and allows temptation to see our faith and trust in Him grow, but He does not lead us into it. However, the goal of the devil and his demons is to see us fail and break our connection of faith with God.

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” We fall into temptation because our flesh is weak. Just like the first Adam and just like Eve, the flesh was weak because they took their eyes off God and onto their desires. Not all desires are bad, but do not let them lead you away from God and take priority over your faith walk with Him. That is what Luke 14 says. So there is your answer, ***“Watch and pray.”***

“Watch and pray.” In other words, watch and live what this Lord’s Prayer is telling us to do. I have preached many messages on faith and if you would apply them the way God tells us to apply His Word, I guarantee that you will have an advantage over Satan and all his tricks or as Ephesians 6 says, his *methodeia*, meaning his methods, his tricks, and his schemes against us. But you must keep the connection with God through your lips and through your actions of faith. These are not works. Do not get confused with that, because your works cannot save you. When I say ‘actions of faith,’ it is how you apply God’s Word in your life and how you act upon it, believing His Word is true. Everything else is secondary to His Word.

Know that Jesus experienced temptations, as well. In Matthew 4:1 it says, ***“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.”*** There is nothing new with temptations and sufferings; Jesus went through it all. Anything we would go through, He went through, especially on that cross. Christ was tempted when He went into the desert to be tempted of the devil and in verse 2 it says, ***“And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.”*** In Mark, the Greek for Christ’s temptations has a better definition, and is described as a continuing action throughout those forty days. Every temptation that you could possibly think of was presented to Jesus to see if He would fall into sin as the first Adam did. This temptation was continual day and night in my belief. Satan and his demons constantly bombarded and weakened Christ day after day without nourishment, but Jesus put himself in the position. To help with your understanding of this, let me share with you some of Murphy’s work

on spiritual warfare. I do not think most of us realize what Jesus went through in that desert and the condition He was in as His body was weakening by the environment of that desert. Murphy states,

“Jesus, though divine as a person, will not function at all on the level of His divinity. [Christ could not say, “Well I am hungry, so I am going to perform a miracle and create some food to satisfy my need.” Even though He could have done that, He would not. Instead, Christ will function only on the level of His humanity and there was a reason for that.] That is what the wilderness temptation is all about. Satan is allowed again to resist God in man and to attempt to destroy God’s purposes for the man whom God made in His own image. Man, in the person of the God-man, is also given a second chance to face and resist that temptation. [Speaking of Jesus here.] This time the Second Man will obey God and win the war with sin and Satan. He will not fail as did the first man in his encounter with the Evil One.”

God could have at any time asserted His divinity and said, “I have had enough of this. I am not going through forty days and forty nights listening to Satan and all his army who are under his control. I could be restored to my throne with my Father. I do not have to go through this and to heck with mankind. They dug their ditch, let them lie in it.” He could have done that, but he did not. He did not revert to His divinity, but instead He remained as a man suffering and tempted as human kind. That is what Murphy is saying here. Now imagine what the conditions might have been like. I believe they were probably far worse than we could imagine. Every demon available including Satan was focused in on this desert wilderness; what a vicious place it must have been. Of that, Murphy writes,

“It was a lonely, dangerous place. He was alone, without the comfort of the presence of other human beings. Kenneth Wuest says:

‘The region abounded with bears, jackals, wolves, foxes, leopards and hyenas. Expositors suggest that this description is “not merely pictorial or intended to hint danger, rather to indicate the uninhabited nature of the place; no supplies obtainable there, [There was no McDonald’s down the desert road.] hunger therefore a part of the experience.” Alford commenting on this says, “Perhaps the being with the beasts may point to one form of temptation, that of terror, which was practiced on Him.”’

In other words, ferocious animals were looking for food; bears, leopards, hyenas, and jackals. The dangers were obvious. Just imagine sitting in the desert for forty days and nights without any food, day by day becoming weaker and weaker, having the concern that you cannot drop your guard because there are other predators looking for the same thing you are not able to get, and that is food. Put flesh and blood into this story.

“The first Adam fell into sin in an environment that was perfect and harmonious. [That is right, Adam and Eve were in the garden with everything available to them. They did not have to worry about animals harming them.] The Last Adam maintained His sinlessness in an environment that was hostile.’

Adam, the representative man, was seduced into disobedience by the Devil. Jesus as the new representative man, the Last Adam, and the Second Man, is to face the same temptation from

the same source. Jesus was to undo the tragedy of Adam's fall, but it was to be more difficult for Him than it was for Adam.

Adam was tempted in the garden of God where all his needs were fully met. He had food, shelter, the companionship of his wife, and the presence of God. The animals there were all his friends. Here we see Jesus in a hostile context, however. There he is alone, without food, and probably without adequate shelter. His only companions are wild animals who did not live at peace with humanity.

The wilderness in Jesus' day was also considered as the abode of demons. (Matt. 12:43) John Broadus, commenting on Matthew 12:43 says, 'It was a prevailing Jewish idea that evil spirits especially frequenting desert or desolate places.'

*Since Jesus is to penetrate the very abode of evil supernaturalism, it is fitting that it should be symbolized by the wilderness. There Satan rules. All of the environment is conducive towards fear and danger from the spirit world. Especially is this true when one is without food and shelter for a long period of time. In these circumstances a human being is even more defenseless. He is exhausted. His mind does not function well and his emotions are out of control. His will and resolve are at their lowest. He is most susceptible to any offer of relief. [We would take relief in an instant. Adam fell having everything available to him. In contrast, Jesus had nothing available to him unless He acted on his divinity, but He would not do that for our sake because He had to go through this as a man, the second Adam, not as a God.] **This is the context which Jesus finds Himself in the wilderness as He braces for the Devil's attack.**"*

With that deeper understanding, go to Matthew 4:2 that says, **"And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward as hungred."** I can only imagine how hungry. Some cannot last one day fasting, and many would probably never fast more than one week. I am not throwing stones. I am tempted just like you when I fast. I think about everything that I am going to eat after the fast. You may be surprised by that or think that is not religious, but I am made of flesh and blood just like you and I am willing to admit my weaknesses in the flesh. The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. That does not mean you should not fast. Interestingly, after the Lord's Prayer, Jesus addresses fasting. Some of you, including myself, have a hard time fasting a single day, but Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights under constant bombardment of Satan and his demons with all types of temptations. Matthew 4 only listed the final three temptations that Satan tried Christ with. The record here in Matthew and other gospels is for our sake so we can understand that we are tempted as well. However, Jesus went before us and He made a way possible.

Matthew 4:3 goes on to tell us, **"And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread."** Satan immediately appeals to the flesh, challenging Christ to turn the stones into bread. The devil knows the physical need. He knows Jesus has been fasting for a long time without any particular nourishment necessary to keep the body from a weakened condition. I just cannot even imagine Jesus' condition at this time. I know we have seen people fast for long periods of time, but did they have legions on top of legions on top of legions of demons attacking them along with Satan's constant bombardment? I think probably not. I want to drive this point into your mind; Jesus was in a hostile environment, not only in the physical surroundings, but also in the unseen surroundings. Satan knew His physical need so he appeals to His mind to try to challenge Him to turn the stones into bread if He was truly the Son of God. If Jesus did that, though, He would be functioning as a God. Yes, Jesus was

a God, but He would be functioning as a God at that time and not as a man. He would not go through the temptations and fail as the first man did. Jesus had to go through the temptations as the Second Man, or the Second Adam, and not fail or else our redemption would have been lost.

Understand what it is saying here. Jesus could not turn to His divine nature that could turn stones into bread. He could have served himself up a banquet and have angels minister unto Him at that moment, but He did not for our sake. Satan knew if he could get Jesus to function as a God, He ceased to be the last Adam and identify with us in our temptations and in our sufferings. That is why Satan was so forceful trying to convince God to prove Himself. Satan did not care if Jesus had turned the stones into bread, but he was concerned about the ramifications of that act. Satan knew if Jesus fell, he would have mankind and all hope would be lost for us. We would belong to the devil. But Jesus did not fall for the devil's tricks. He identified with us through His temptations and His sufferings as a man.

In verse 4 Jesus responds to the devil and says, ***“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God [Once again questioning His divinity.] cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee....”*** First, he is questioning God's divinity and trying to get to God to prove it. Second, he is taking God's Word out of context and misapplying it.

“If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down.” The devil wants miracles on demand. Too many ministries cater to the human flesh as well with their miracles on demand, teaching you can receive a miracle on demand, and some of them do not even require faith. They use religious fanaticism to prove God's Word and the presence of God's Word in your life, but Jesus was too smart for that, unlike the first Adam. Jesus did not doubt God and knew He would be cared for. Jesus could have called angels down to minister to Him, but He did not, nor did He misuse God's Word. In His response to Satan, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:16 in verse 7. ***“Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”*** How many of us, myself included, have tempted the Lord God by telling God because you were faithful God said he would do something for you? By doing that you cast doubt on God's Word. Yes, I believe in miracles, but miracles based on God's Word not miracles to fulfill my needs. If miracles are based on God's Word, He releases them in our lives because He sees we are relying on what He says to be true and acting upon it. Do not use cheap words only professing faith, but live and act on faith.

By verse 8, Satan is running out of time and he knows it. God knew he tempted Jesus for forty days and forty nights, but the devil knew his time was going to end because Jesus was about ready to put an end to this by fulfilling what was designed for us from the beginning, but because of Adam and Eve, did not happen. Satan took over this world by influencing humanity and directing their paths throughout history, but he knew his time was limited.

Christ is again tempted in verse 8. ***“Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”*** Satan wants

Jesus to worship and serve him in return for power, kingdoms, and control of this world, but do not be fooled. If Jesus had failed here and believed Satan, do you think Satan would actually hand Him over the kingdoms, powers, and control of this world? Of course not! The devil would have been the victorious one in the end, not Jesus. After their fall, did Adam and Eve have control of this world? No and neither would Jesus. Satan knew it. Jesus knew it. Jesus would never have believed the devil here. Jesus knew that Satan was lying anyway. Satan might promise the world to you or me, but the condition is he wants to control your life. He will never truly give you the world, but he will convince you in subtle ways that you do not even recognize most of the time. Then he has you in his grasp controlling your path. You are serving him and not Jesus our Lord.

What did Jesus say to the devil in verse 10? Matthew 4:10 tells us Jesus' response, "***Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan....***" After watching and praying, as Jesus said in Matthew 26:41, "***Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,***" and just in case you feel like you are slipping into temptation Jesus said, "***Get thee hence, Satan...***" He is giving a command to Satan and He could do that because He was Jesus. Likewise, we can say the same thing, but just add three words; "Get thee hence, Satan, *in Jesus name.*" Remember that. "Get thee hence, Satan, *in Jesus name.*" After this command, Jesus goes on to quote Deuteronomy 6:13 by saying, "***for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.***" Here, Christ tells the devil we worship and serve only the Lord God and no one else, not for all the kingdoms or glory of this world.

Luke, in chapter 4, records an account of this event and in verse 13 we read that the devil departs, but only for a season. That is so the devil is able to regroup and look for another opening. The devil's attacks never stop. There may be a little rest period, but it never stops. The devil's goal is always to have you following him instead of following Jesus, so know these temptations and trials will never stop. If you find yourself falling for those *peirasmos*, those temptations, ask the Lord to stop you from going down that path to those temptations, but deliver you. Do not forget the Greek for 'deliver' means to drag you from that path of evil by force if necessary. I cannot make it any clearer than that, but it is difficult to do. We have promises we can hang on to, knowing that our Second Adam went through and was victorious over those temptations and sufferings for our sake. He shut the devil and his demons up forever throughout eternity for our sake and our behalf.

I Corinthians 10:13 is where we find our promise to take with us throughout our faith walk when we are tempted. It says, "***There hath no temptation [this is the same Greek word, *peirasmos*] taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.***" In other words, there is nothing new that we can be tempted with that Jesus did not go through already. In addition, God knows where our breaking point is and has an escape plan for us if we just remain faithful and trust in Him. Yes, that is God's promise that we can take with us throughout our life when faced with temptations. Know that He has made for us an escape so we are able to bear the temptation and not fall into the clutches of Satan that are so hard to break free of. It is possible, but it is hard, so we must remain faithful and true to His Word, trusting in Him because He has given us the way of escape. Remember this as you read

this prayer and review it over in your mind. Apply these principles, and when you communicate with God know what He wants from us and makes available for our sake.

The next element of this prayer in Matthew 6:13 is, ***“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.”*** How true that is.

To take a closer look at what this verse means, go to Colossians 1:15. In this chapter, Paul writes of the preeminence of Christ and says, ***“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:***

For by him [Jesus] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.” He is the Creator, which is why I preached about the kingdoms earlier so you understand the heavenlies and the kingdom still to come. He is the one that was there when all was created; the heavenlies and all things on the earth. To Him belongs all the glory because He has the power. However, not all things worshipped Him; some rebelled, but He created everything. That is why He deserves the power and the glory and everything is under His control in creation.

Verse 17 goes on to tell us, ***“And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*** [Without Him, there is nothing.]

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”

Looking back to Matthew 6 we read, ***“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.”*** Yes, and with that I know He is the one with all the preeminence.

Colossians 1:19 continues, ***“For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled*** [That is how important that blood was when He spilled it. All things were reconciled by the shedding of His blood and His resurrection.]

In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight...”

Through the eyes of Jesus, God sees me as holy. I am claiming it today and you should also. Be “unblamable,” no matter what the accuser of the brethren has to say. In God’s eyes, through Jesus, we are ***“holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight.”*** Although the devil might accuse us, tell the devil to shut his mouth *in Jesus name*.

Verse 23 tells of a condition, ***“If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.”*** The entire purpose of this ministry is to get this Word to every living creature on earth so God’s Word can be applied correctly. For that, I can easily understand now and apply in my life Matthew 6:13, ***“For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.”*** This is not Satan’s kingdom

or power, nor his temporary glory. In Jesus' divine kingdom, there is wonderful power and creator of all things for His glory. He presents me holy, blameless, to God my Father. It is only appropriate that this prayer ends with "**Amen.**" In the New Testament, properly applied in this verse, **Amen** means *the truth is God and He is faithful*.

Before concluding this chapter, I will review this entire prayer. It begins in Matthew 6:9 with, "**Our Father which art in heaven...**" The book of Isaiah says Our Father is the potter. This statement recognizes He is your Father, but He is also your potter. He has the control in His hands, of this lump of clay to be molded on that spinning wheel of life and circumstance creating a beautiful work of art in His eyes. What He is doing is for our benefit, constantly in His mind while He is creating this beautiful work of art. That is why He is our Father. He cares for us and we are to acknowledge that and understand He is our Father "**which art in heaven.**"

Verse 9 continues, "**Hallowed be thy name.**" The word hallowed in Greek is "**hagios,**" which is *to make holy or sanctified*. There are four different ways we apply this in our life. First, we trust in His Word because God does not lie. Next, we sanctify His name when we trust in His name and trust in His Word. Always seek God's approval, not mankind's and do not fear what man can do to you. That is how you sanctify His name, which leads back to trust again. Next, we hallow or sanctify His name through giving the proper way. Finally, we sanctify His name by recognizing the holy name of Jesus.

Verse 10 says, "**Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.**" Remember what you have been taught about the heavenlies and the kingdom that is still yet to come. He is preparing this for us, and what a glorious kingdom that is going to be; I cannot wait to get there. The phrase '**thy will**' in this verse speaks to what Jesus described. '**Thy will**' is denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Him. If you are doing these three things, you can guarantee you are following God's will.

Verse 11 tells us, "**Give us this day our daily bread.**" Our daily bread comes from God in two ways. It is for the physical needs and necessities of life, but also the bread of life for our spiritual necessity. Verse 12 states, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." This includes not only forgiving someone's sin against you, but also praying God does not hold it to their charge. That is the true meaning of forgiveness.

In verse 13 we read, "**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.**" Or, as the Greek defines this word "**Amen,**" *the truth is God and He is faithful*.

Take this prayer and apply it in your life. There are so many riches to explore and apply in God's Word. I hope that I have given you some insight to this prayer. The next time you hear somebody pray this, thank God that you now know exactly what it means, and how to apply it in your life, rather than just a prayer to recite because everybody else is doing it. Now you can live applying this prayer with God to help because *the truth is God and He is faithful*. God wants us to be faithful and I hope this has helped you better understand the Lord's Prayer, also known as the disciples' prayer.

Fear

Fear comes in many different ways. For example, it can attack through anxieties, conflicts, intense sufferings, and physical or mental pain, but here we will explore how God deals with our fears. Fear on a personal level is one of the methods, or *methodeia*, of the devil. The devil can attack us personally if he knows our weaknesses. Then he targets in on them to destroy our faith and destroy our walk with God. I am someone who has the same experiences, trials, and tribulations as you. I am made of flesh and blood just like you. As those trials and tribulations come, sometimes on a daily basis, all kinds of fears begin creeping in doing its damage, and I am sure it also happens to you. Know that God is not the author of fear and never was the author of fear. Fear is not from God. Fear is not something that God created in us. Isaiah 41:10 begins, ***“Fear thou not.”*** God is telling us not to have fear. Fear is not from God. However, fear is one of the devil’s methods to tear us down to see if we slip, stumble, and eventually fall away from God’s grace. In Paul’s letter in II Timothy 1:7, he writes to Timothy, ***“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear....”*** Remember that. Fear is not from God, but it is one of the methods the devil and his demonic army uses to attack us and to make us believe that we have done something wrong in our relationship with God. Even though God’s grace covered our sins, the devil wants us to doubt what Christ did for us on the cross. He wants us to doubt, not trust God or have faith in His Word, so he uses all the devices available to him, and fear is one of them, but it does not come from God.

Isaiah 41:10 says, ***“Fear thou not.”*** That phrase is not too difficult to remember, but I assure you that Satan and his demons will try to make us forget what God is telling us to do. It happens to me, but whatever we are facing today, remember this, ***“Fear thou not; for I am with thee.”*** Sometimes I question God and if you are honest with yourself, you probably find yourself in the same situation questioning God as I do. When that happens, I ask the Lord, “Where in the heck are you? I have been faithful. I have been doing what your word says. I have been applying faith in my life and trusting your word, so why are all these circumstances, trials, and tribulations happening? Don’t you hear me Lord? Where the heck are you?” Whatever circumstance I am in, and sometimes I have been in a valley so long I am sure that God does not want to be part of it, but that is what the devil wants us to believe. The devil wants us to think that God has deserted us and is not interested in us any longer. Then the devil begins working in our minds so we think we did something wrong with God, that He is no longer available to us. Know that is just a deceitful tactic the devil uses against us.

“Fear thou not; for I am with thee.” We might be inconsistent in our commitment to God, but He is not in His commitment to us. He is with us and that is the promise Jesus gave. He will neither leave us nor forsake us. We only feel like He is not there because we slip out of faith and into escalating fear. We begin looking at the events of time and what we are facing, not recognizing that He is there by our side. Our promise is that He will never leave us and He will never forsake us. God did not give us the spirit of fear, so ***“Fear thou not.”*** Christ spilled His blood on the cross and reconciled us back to the Father. Not only will He never leave us nor forsake us, neither will God; He cannot. Christ paid the price on the cross by spilling His blood to reconcile us back to the Father. That means we have Christ and God on our side, which is why God is telling us in Isaiah 41:10, ***“Fear thou not; for I am with thee.”*** The next thing God says

in Isaiah 41:10 is, ***“be not dismayed.”*** A better translation for this phrase is *‘be not bewildered.’* In other words, do not be surprised.

Even though this is in the Old Testament, it is still applicable in the New Testament as well. In I Peter 4:12, Peter is telling the New Testament Christians not to be surprised about the temptations, trials, and tribulations they faced. If anything, we are to expect them. I Peter 4:12 states, ***“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you.”*** The word ‘try’ in this verse is *peirasmos* in Greek, but Peter is not referring to any sort of trial here. He is writing about trials that test our faith, which eventually prove that we are more worthy than gold. These fiery trials test and prove us. So remember, whatever fiery trial we are going through will show Satan and the world, which is under the devil’s control, that God has someone who trusts in Him and His Word. Likewise, God allows us to go through these fiery trials to prove us to see if we will place our trust and faith in Him and His Word. The trials are to prove us, so do not think it is strange; they are opportunities to trust Him and His word.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try (prove or test) you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” In other words, Peter is saying, “Why are you surprised? Were you not expecting those fiery trials?” We must remind ourselves on a daily basis to faith through those trials; God will see us through. ***“Fear thou not.”*** Do not put yourself in a state of fear when trials happen and do not be bewildered. Peter even states this twice when he says, ***“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.”*** So do not think it strange that trials happen to you, because they happen. However, I must admit every time something happens to me I am guilty of being the champion complainer. I am sure some of you are just as guilty, so this message also applies to you. As soon as trials and tribulations happen, we complain about them happening to us. Compare this verse to Isaiah 41:10. It says, ***“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed”*** or *be not bewildered*. God is saying the same thing in Isaiah in the Old Testament and in I Peter 4:12 in the New Testament. Do not be bewildered do not be surprised. The message is the same whether Old or New Testament. Remember that our whole purpose of existence here upon the face of earth is to prepare for eternity.. Do not think it strange what is happening to us, but anticipate it and expect it. Through it all, we have that wonderful promise in Isaiah 41:10, ***“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not bewildered; for I am thy God.”***

There are many different names for God, but the particular name used for God in this verse is used over 2,500 times. It is second only to the covenant name of Jehovah. Isaiah 41:10 ends, ***“for I am thy Elohim.”*** It is important that you understand what God is saying when He says here, ***“for I am thy God”*** or ***“I am thy Elohim.”*** Almost every source has different definitions of this word ***“Elohim”*** and what the singular or plural name of ***Elohim*** means. But the one thing I want to make very clear, the one factor that rings again and again in the description of this name is the powerful name of God. ***“He is a powerful God”*** is what this name ***Elohim*** means. This definition declares God to be supreme, eternal, almighty, and the creator of the universe. If you cannot remember all the definitions and attributes of ***Elohim***, remember that ***Elohim*** means ***“He is a powerful God.”*** We can even personalize it and claim, ***“He is our powerful God.”***

Another definition of ***Elohim*** to remember is ***“one that puts forth power.”*** God is the being to whom all power belongs. He is the creator and controller of all things. This definition implies

limitless, unqualified energy, a powerful God. With a God like this why do we put ourselves in a state of fear or doubt, instead remain in faith, trusting in His Word. This particular definition of God excites me. We can know that we are not alone. Man will fail us, but we have a powerful God on our side. ***“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not bewildered; for I am thy Elohim,”*** the creator of the universe with supreme power over everything. If we seriously believed that, then we would have fewer fears. We would not be dismayed or bewildered. We would not ***“think it strange”*** as Peter wrote that these things are happening to us. ***“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not bewildered; for I am thy Elohim.”*** I am your powerful God. What an ally to have on our side! Remember this, ***“For I am thy Elohim.”*** This is my promise and you should make it your hope and your promise.

Isaiah 41:10 goes on to say, ***“I [Elohim] will strengthen thee.”*** The Hebrew says it more clearly not as ***“I will”***, but it already puts this phrase in the past tense as, ***“I have strengthened thee.”*** Here in this verse God, ***Elohim***, is questioning why we are bewildered, depressed, miserable, or in a state of fear. He asks us, “Have I not strengthened thee?” This statement is in the past already! This tells us that whatever we are facing, God will see us through. He is already there with the answer. We just need some ***hupomone***, which is the Greek word *patience or endurance*. You can read more about that in a message titled ***“Enduring Faith.”*** It is in the archives on the website. We must have enduring faith that He has already strengthened us through whatever we are facing. God has gone before us and if we live a life of faith and trust in His Word, we would not doubt what God has promised us. The Lord is our strength; the Lord is our powerful God. He is going to help us and not only has He strengthen us already, He is going to help us.

The next part of Isaiah 41:10 says, ***“I will help thee.”*** Here, God is telling us not to fear because He is with us, so do not to be bewildered or dismayed. He is our powerful God; He has already strengthened us, and He will help us with whatever we are facing now or in the future. What a wonderful and powerful message. If you remember only one detail, then remember the glorious promise that we have a powerful God who will strengthen us, who has strengthened us, and He is there to help us. If only we could remember that more often, then Satan would have no chance when he uses his methods, deceitfulness, schemes, or fears against us. Satan and his demonic army never let up. The evil forces under his control are constantly trying to bring us down to break the faith connection that we have with God. We must remember what Isaiah 41:10 tells us, ***“Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed [bewildered]; for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee....”***

The promises in this verse do not stop there. Isaiah 41:10 ends with, ***“yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”*** Verse 13 repeats this, ***“For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.”*** My mentor taught that when God repeats himself, pay attention, and God repeats himself in verse 13. ***“For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.”*** Through ***Elohim***, the powerful God, and now the Lord Savior Jesus Christ, we have even more wonderful promises. Jesus will never leave us nor forsake us, holding our right hand. Just imagine Him holding your right hand saying that He will help you. Picture it in your mind. Have faith that God’s Word is real and make it real in your life. He is holding your right hand and my right hand whenever we go through problems such as business failure, bankruptcy, a marriage falling apart, a physical illness, or any circumstance. He is holding our right hand and He will help us.

This same message is also found in the New Testament. In Matthew 14:25 is a story many may already be familiar with. It begins,

“And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer [A better translation is ‘be of good courage.’]; it is I; be not afraid.”

As they were facing this situation, what happened when fear crept into their lives? First, do not criticize the disciples too much. They had never seen anybody walk on water before. Even though they slipped out of faith and into fear, do not criticize them too much. God knows what I would have done, and God knows what your first reaction would have been. However, when they thought they saw a spirit, they cried out for fear. Notice how easily and quickly fear occurs. Fear creeps in shifting your focus away from the Lord. These disciples had seen miracles performed by Jesus, but at this point, they still had not risen to where they actually trusted Jesus as their Savior and God Almighty. They did not believe the miracle they were seeing; that Jesus could come to them by walking on water. They had seen Him heal vicious diseases, feed 5,000 with just a few loaves and fish, and other amazing miracles. Yet, when Jesus was walking on water approaching their boat, they never imagined that this could be Jesus walking to them. They had never seen anybody walk on water before! Why would they think it could be Jesus? As a result, they stepped out of faith and slipped into fear. They also did not trust Jesus enough to believe that He would keep them safe from attack by evil spirits. They were not ready for that yet.

In the Scriptures, there is no evidence Jesus put any of His disciples in any situation that He could not handle for them. Nonetheless, the disciples slipped into fear in spite of the many miracles they had already seen. The disciples were Jewish, brought up in the Jewish culture with Jewish stories and traditions. They were aware of the Old Testament stories about Moses parting the Red Sea, and all of David’s victories, just to name a few. Even though they knew all the stories, they still did not genuinely believe in any of them and they did not trust Jesus enough at this point to believe that Jesus would keep them safe from evil spirits. When fear creeps in, it is a fast downward road to fear, anxiety, and conflict. Everything that is not faith in God will enter into your life and utterly destroy you. It happened quickly here, but Jesus is kind and compassionate as we continue to read the story. Verse 28 continues the story,

“And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.”

Here Peter deserves credit because he put himself back in faith quickly with his focus directly on Jesus as he began to walk on water. We do not know how long or far Peter walked on water, but when his eyes were focused on Jesus, he walked on water. What a powerful moment of faith in Jesus that must have been. He slipped out of fear and stepped into the faith realm with his eyes focused in on Christ. Unfortunately, it did not take very long for Peter to slip out of faith and back into fear. As long as he kept his eyes on Jesus, though, he was not going to sink. Just the

same, we must keep our focus and faith also on Jesus. We must not doubt what His Word says to us.

Then in verse 30 we read, ***“But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.”*** The Greek is more precise. It says, ‘he was terrified.’ Peter was terrified when he saw the wind. And as soon as he saw that wind, he turned his eyes off Jesus and began looking at his surrounding circumstances. Fear crept back into his life. Most likely, Peter said “Lord, save me!” very quickly. He did not have much time because he was sinking fast. I am sure he did not slowly say this. Probably he shouted out ***“LORD, SAVE ME!”*** as fast as he could.

This is where I want to connect Isaiah 41:10 to this story in Matthew 14. Here, in verse 31 we read, ***“And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him....”*** In the Old Testament in Isaiah we read, ***“For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.”*** God is saying it in the Old Testament and He is saying it in the New Testament. He wants to take hold of our right hand and help us through whatever we are going through. He wants to take our hands to calm our fears. Remember, ***“Fear not; I will help thee.”*** He wants to take our hand so we are not bewildered, so we do not think it strange the fiery trials that we are going through. He wants to take our hand with the sole purpose to help us. In Isaiah 41:13 we are told, ***“For I the LORD thy God [The Elohim, The powerful God] will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee.”***

If only we could remember to put ourselves back into faith in His Word. Know the powerful God, the Lord Jesus Christ who spilled His blood to reconcile us back to the Father, is willing to take our right hand to hold us if we just release faith in His Word and we just trust Him. Along with that, act on that faith and carrying it through. Do not pretend to be a Christian, be one. Do not profess to have faith, have faith. Act upon His Word, trust it, live it. I want you to understand, we have a powerful God that goes before us. We have a Lord and Savior that is reaching out His hand to catch us when we fall. He knows our fears, He knows our temptations, He knows our anxieties, He knows our doubts, and He knows our conflicts. He knows everything about us and He is there to help because His promise declares in Isaiah 41:10, ***“Fear not; I will help thee.”*** Remember Isaiah when you feel like you are slipping, and feel like you have let fear back into your life and faith is slipping away. Fear does not come from God. As Paul wrote to Timothy, ***“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear.”*** Put yourself back in faith and have faith in His Word. Do not forget who your powerful God is. Do not forget when those fiery trials bring you down and you are overwhelmed that God is there with you. When you are feeling overwhelmed, God is there with you. Do not forget, when those fears overwhelm you, He is your Elohim. He will give you strength. He will help you. He will uphold you with His right hand of righteousness. Jesus reached out with His hand to catch Peter, so remember that He will also catch you.

We have these promises, which is something to hope for and to faith on when we get into these positions where fear overwhelms us and anxieties build. He is there to help us, to hold us up, to strengthen us. Call out to the God ***Elohim***. Call out to the Lord Savior Jesus Christ. They will catch us. Remember this message when you have those low moments in your life. Refresh yourself; build your faith back up with the understanding of the precise and correct knowledge of

God's Word on these subject matters. Slap the enemy in the face and say, "With a God like that, what chance does Satan and his demonic army have against me. Get behind me Satan." Say it over and over, "Get behind me Satan because that is where you belong, behind me. I have Jesus and God in my view and I am focusing on them. They are in the forefront going before me with whatever I am facing, not only now but in the future." As I said earlier, once you recognize God is all-powerful, you will understand that He is there to help you. He wants to catch you as He caught Peter. Some of you are in that sinking position, so call out to the Lord Jesus Christ; He will save you. He will catch you with His hand.

You have to understand that you gain confidence and faith by living in His Word on a daily basis. Not just occasionally when you feel like it or when you have nothing else to do, but daily focus in on His Word. It will build your faith and confidence. He is our all-powerful God working on our behalf. He always has our best interest in mind. Practice faith; do not just profess it. God is the creator. The one who is in charge regardless of whether or not we like the way He works or His timing. He is the one in charge and He will go before us, whether or not you like the road that He is taking you on, He is going there before us and He is holding our right hand as we march forward in faith on the road He has before us. He is in charge. That will never change. He is the creator. He is the powerful God, the **Elohim**.

As we place our trust in His Son, Jesus Christ, we know that He who created us can also sustain us. This wonderful truth when fully comprehended helps you overcome all fears and anxieties in everyday living. Remember these promises. Read Isaiah 41:10. Humbly come to your **Elohim** claiming these promises, "My Lord, you will help me, you will sustain me, you will uphold me with your right hand. Lord what I bring to you is my total faith and trust so I can have that imputed righteousness put into me." In Romans 4, we read that righteousness is imputed through faith in His Word. I know we will all have doubts and I am sure we will have moments where we think that we cannot make it. This happens to all of us, but we also have the promises of God and we trust with the expectancy that God's Word is true, so thank Him for His grace.

There is one more thing to add to Isaiah 41:10. Focus on the word 'I' in this verse as we read it again.

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not bewildered; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

It is not by accident that God speaks the word 'I' five times in this verse. In God's Word, the number five always symbolizes grace. This means that not only is God all that He describes to us in this verse, He is also letting us know "my grace is sufficient for you."

This chapter will conclude with II Corinthians 12:7. In the middle of the verse, Paul states, ***"there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me."*** Not once, not twice, but repeatedly Paul went to the Lord with his problem, trial, and tribulation that he was facing, that the messenger of Satan that was buffeting him. In II Corinthians 12:9, the Lord's reply is the same as in Isaiah 41:10. ***"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee."*** Not only do we

have the wonderful promises from Isaiah 41:10, but we also have the grace given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ because of what He did on that cross for us. Paul is also told here, **“for my strength is made perfect in weakness,”** but a better translation is *‘for my strength is made complete in me in weakness.’* Knowing that, read this verse again, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made complete in weakness.” Paul continues to write, **“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”** Not only do we have all the promises in this verse, but we also have grace in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. We are told, **“My grace is sufficient for thee”** in this verse and in Isaiah 41:10 when we see the five times God speaks the word ‘I.’ Remember, there are so many wonderful promises God has given to make us complete. He has strengthened us to completion for His glory even though we think we are still in weakness. Verse 10 tells us, **“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses [because we do this] for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”** He is there. **“Fear thou not; I will help thee.”** He is our powerful **Elohim**. In the Old Testament, all they had was the Elohim, but also have Christ Jesus to help us when we are weak so we can be strong. Remember that.

Whatever approaches you, remember Isaiah 41:10. **“Fear thou not; for I am with thee...”** God is with us. Jesus promised us He would never leave us nor forsake us. Do not be surprised, or **“be not bewildered...”** as Peter says in the New Testament **“for I am thy God...”** He is our all-powerful Creator of this universe and God on our side, doing battle for us against our spiritual enemy the devil and his army. God, in Isaiah goes on to say, **“I have strengthened thee....”** It is already done; it is in the past tense! **“I will help thee...”** He will help with whatever you are facing. **“I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.”** Just as Christ held Peter up by stretching forth His hand, the next time you have that sinking feeling, cry out to the Lord Jesus Christ and He will lift you up and He will complete you through His grace.

We have the promises in the Old Testament and we have the wonderful promise in the New that His grace will make us complete in weakness, **“for when I am weak, then I am strong.”** Personalize it to yourself and claim it, **“for when I am weak, then I am strong”** and **“Fear not.”** We have these wonderful promises that God is on our side whatever we face. So keep fighting the good fight of faith. Never let go of your grip on God’s Word, His promises, or the knowledge of what He has done for us through the spilling of that wonderful blood. He spilled His blood for our benefit to reconcile us back to the Father. We can not only claim what the Lord has done for us in the New Testament, but we can also claim what He promised in the Old because we now have both Jesus Christ and God the Father on our side because Jesus Christ reconciled us back to Him. Devil, watch out and his army should run from a God like that. With our God and with our Jesus Christ, we shall **‘fear not’** in the days ahead if we trust in Him.

War a Good Warfare

Before moving on to Ephesians 6:12 and the spirit world, I want to continue focusing on verse 11 and that we are to be good soldiers in God's army. Ephesians 6, verse 10 begins,

“Finally, my brethren, be strong [endunamoo, be strengthened] in the Lord, and in the power [kratos, force] of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

In these two verses, there are four important principles to remember. The first commandment in this verse is to ‘be strengthened in the Lord.’ This is not our strength because there is nothing our physical strength can provide for the spiritual fight, and although it may affect our physical being, we get our spiritual strength from God Himself. Second, verse 10 continues to tell us we are also strong in His **“power”** or force. Again, when compared to God, there is nothing we can do in our own power or force; it would be ridiculous to even try. Third, this verse tells us we are to be strong in God’s **“might.”** Once again, this is not our might, but His might. Finally, we are told in verse 11, **“Put on the whole armour of God.”** It is God’s strength, force, power, and might, and God’s armour.

An example of this is seen when Saul tried to put his armour on David, but the armour was untested. The armour might have worked for Saul, but not very well, because Saul’s army did not have the courage to face Goliath. Instead, David always relied on God’s strength, God’s force or power, and God’s might. David’s armour was a sling and a stone and with God directing and controlling his life, I am sure he was the most accurate with the sling in all of Israel in his day. David was uncomfortable with Saul’s armour and he took it off because it was not tested in David’s life. David did not know what to do with it and it just held him back. I firmly believe that if he had kept it on, Goliath probably would have defeated him. Instead, David totally relied on God’s strength, God’s force, and God’s might, because up to that point in his life, David knew that God had tested and refined him.

Remember these four important principles: it is His strength, it is His force, it is His might, and it is His armour. Up to this point, there is really nothing to do with you. Once I heard someone reference that it is God’s strength, but you also rely on some of your strength. That is a bunch of silly nonsense. I know I bring nothing to the battlefield except my willingness to be a member of His army. I turn my life over to Him so He can put His strength in me, so He can put His power and force in me, so He can make me rely on His might because He has given me the tools and the weapons. He wants me to wear His armour, not my own.

Verse 11 tells us to **“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand....”** This is not so we can sit back and relax. As part of this ministry, just listening to the broadcast is not enough. Be active and participate in the ways that I have asked. Ephesians 6:11 says, **“Stand...”** Not sit, but stand, ready to do combat **“against the wiles, [the *methodeia*, the *methods*] of the devil.”**

In II Timothy 2:1, Paul is writing to Timothy but his words apply to us today. Paul writes, **“Thou therefore, my son, be strong [this is the same Greek word meaning, *be strengthened* or**

empowered.] in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” Verse 3 continues, **“Thou therefore endure hardness.”** In Greek, this word is *kakopatheo*, *sufferings, hardships, troubles, afflictions*, or anything that takes comfort away from your life. You may think this does not sound very hopeful and that the Christian life is too tough. That is why many churches preach what makes their members feel good, like they are floating on a cloud. They are not preaching the Gospel, instead the pastors are preaching to ‘itching ears’ as Paul writes about in II Timothy 4:3. This is so these pastors can stay in the pulpit. Their church is filled with activities to keep members entertained, but Paul tells us in II Timothy 2:3, **“Thou therefore endure hardness [kakopatheo, sufferings, hardships, troubles, afflictions.] as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”** We are soldiers and part of an army!

In verse 4, Paul goes on to write, **“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”** I did not choose you and I did not even choose myself to be part of this army. God chose you and me. I am chosen to be a soldier, and so are you, so stop complaining and understand that we will have hardships and we will suffer through those troubles. We will have afflictions, because the devil does not want us participating in this ministry keeping it alive proclaiming God’s Word. The devil will discourage us so we feel it is too tough. If you become part of another ministry where the message is softer, I guarantee God will back away from you because you just went from being a soldier to being a coward. I am not holding back here. We are chosen to be a soldier, so start acting like the soldier described in the New Testament.

We are fighting against an unseen spiritual enemy who leads an entire army of evil forces. Some of that army is assigned to you for one purpose and one purpose only, to break your faith so you stop employing yourself in the Word of God for others. That is what *ergon* means in the Greek. It is **‘the employment of the Word of God,’** and in this army you are either leading through preaching or supporting someone who preaches, but every soldier in the army has a rank. I have been a Christian since I was 17 years old before becoming a Pastor. This ministry began when I was 46 years old, but prior to this, some of you know the ministry I was involved. I said, “Yes sir,” whether I liked it or not, whether it was justified or not. In 1976 when I first worked for Gene Scott, he had some real morons who were part of the church in Glendale, California when he came to pastor it, and unfortunately, he put them in positions of associate pastor. They could not find their way out of a paper bag with two openings, but it did not matter, they had a higher rank. If I was going to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ in that army, which I was part of at that time, I did what I was expected to do. Some Christians are too rebellious and too disobedient to do that, because they are looking for some soft cowardly preacher behind the pulpit to say how wonderful they are and how they can get their best life now. Yes, God blesses us now and there will be times not as tough as others will, but we are still soldiers. Just because we have some reprieve from sufferings or hardships, does not mean we are not ready to go to battle at an instant’s notice. We have been chosen for this battle and chosen for this war. With that, go to I Timothy 1:18, in which I will begin to show why it is important to know how to fight this good fight of faith and the importance of understanding what this Book has to tell us about spiritual warfare.

I Timothy 1:18 begins, **“This charge...”** [a better translation is **‘This message’**]. So to begin again, the verse actually says, **“This message** [being the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus

Christ] *I commit unto thee, son Timothy* [his spiritual son], *according to the prophecies* [really “*according to the gifts*”] *which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare.*” It does not say, “so you mightest float on a cloud for Jesus.” It says that you “*mightest war a good warfare.*” Another way to translate the word war in the Greek is ‘as soldiers led into a battle.’ When we became Christians, and when we were chosen by God, and through faith His righteousness was implanted in us along with the Holy Spirit, a warfare started. What Paul is saying to Timothy, and is still saying to you and me is, “*war a good warfare.*” We are going to go into battle and we are going into war, so war a good warfare.

Verse 19 continues, “*Holding faith, and a good conscience....*” However, because we are in a warfare, I prefer an alternate translation to this phrase which is, “**Arming yourselves with the faith**” or *pistis*. I also checked many different commentaries regarding this phrase. One commentary after another translated this part of the verse, “*Arming yourselves with faith and a good conscience*” as having good and right morals so you have a clear conscience so nobody could have an accusation against you. That is just more of the same ‘good works,’ pointing out if you can demonstrate your good works people will believe what you are saying is true, then you have the moral superiority to say, “See what I can do. Look how pure and clean I am.” There are so many commentaries and often they are all saying the same thing, but not inspired by the Holy Spirit. Instead, unfortunately, many commentaries are written with the agenda of making money in school bookstores. It really seems like they all copy the same ideas from one another. I know Paul writes about a ‘pure conscience’ but this verse has nothing to do with your good and right morals, and “*Arming yourselves with faith and a good conscience*” has nothing to do with your morality.

So, why is he arming his faith and why does he “*war a good warfare*”? Go back to verse 18; it is because “*This charge*” [or “*This message*”] is the Good News of Jesus Christ. That is why Paul writes in verse 19, “*Arm yourselves with faith and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith* [but not a good conscience] *have made* [or suffered] *shipwreck.*” In other words, Paul is saying, “Never separate yourself from the truth of The Faith which is The Message of the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” This verse has nothing to do with whether you are good or bad and has everything to do with arming yourself with faith in the warfare in which you are involved. So instead of, “*Arm yourselves with faith and a good conscience*” we should arm ourselves ‘*with the Word of God declaring the truth that you will hold fast onto which so many others did not.*’ In verse 20, Paul names a few who fell by the wayside and suffered shipwreck because they did not “*war a good warfare,*” and there are three reasons why. First, they did not arm themselves with faith. Second, their conscience was full of everything else except the Word of God and the message that Paul is committing here to Timothy. And third, they substituted their own thoughts rather than live up to the commitment. Perhaps it was too hard for them, but the result was they slipped away from faith and like a boat smashing against the rocks in a storm became shipwrecked.

Thinking on these verses, I prayed God would lead me to a demonstration of someone who did not do it God’s way, did not stay armed in the faith, and drifted away from the message. Although He did not speak to me, He led me to an individual I think was one of the worst shipwrecks in the Old Testament and that was King Saul. Some of you are very familiar with this story in I Samuel 13. It shows that we will never be able to “*war a good warfare*” if we are

disobedient, rebellious, and have no concern for the weapons God gave us. You must have respect for God's Word and know how to be strengthened by His armour, by His force, and by His might. The beauty of it is He gives us defensive and offensive weapons. Too many commentators and preachers just want you to believe that the weapons are all defensive. No, they are not. Too many preachers want you to believe and try to convince you that Jesus Christ has won the battle for us; therefore, we just sit and do nothing. He has won the battle that provided us salvation but what I am referring to is discipleship or being a good soldier of Jesus Christ, to **"war a good warfare"** to stand. The weapons given to us are defensive and offensive. You cannot be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, chosen by Christ to war a good warfare armed with faith and the message of the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ if you are disobedient, rebellious, and you have no concern for the weapons that God has given us to fight your enemy. But who is our enemy? That would be the devil, Satan, and all the other names associated with him. That also includes the evil forces that are part of the demonic army. You must know who you are fighting against and Saul provides the best illustration of someone who did not **"war a good warfare."**

We will begin in I Samuel 13:1-3 where it says, **"Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel; whereof two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and mount Beth-el, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of the people he sent every man to his tent. And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear. [Here Saul is blowing his own horn.] And all Israel heard say that Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel also was had in the abomination with the Philistines. And the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal."** If you notice, verse three tells us Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines, but Saul took the credit for it. I do not think Jonathan cared because any enemy of Saul or Jonathan really was an enemy of God. Jonathan proved later in the story that he was more concerned about the things of God than Saul, his father, was. So Saul blew his horn and Saul took the credit rather than his son. Some of Saul's characteristics are beginning to show here. Saul was king over Israel on the outside, but he did not have one ounce of God on the inside. In contrast to that, David may have made his mistakes along the way, but he still was more concerned about God in his life.

Verse five continues this story and we see that the Philistines had the ability to quickly regroup, even after losing battle after battle, and that is still happening today. Here we read, **"And the Philistines gathered themselves together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Bethaven. When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait, (for the people were distressed,) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits."** We see Israel scattered and hiding in caves, thickets, rocks, high places, and in pits. Obviously, they knew they were vastly outnumbered. They felt doom was just around the corner. They felt the end of their lives was approaching quickly.

Verse seven reads, ***“And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. [The Hebrew says ‘they were so afraid and terrified.’]***

In verse eight we see that the representative from God appointed during this period had told Saul, “Wait seven days. Stay put. Do not do anything.” Now this is not just a problem for Saul, we all face this same problem sometimes daily. I am not ashamed to admit that there are things I want to take into my own hands and accomplish for God when I should just stop and wait. Tarry myself. The way I perceive it in the flesh, God’s wristwatch is always late in most cases. However, when I stop and fix myself to God and His ways, He is always on time. I just did not see the purpose behind His timing because I was narrow-minded. I had tunnel vision, whereas God sees the whole picture.

So we read in verse eight God’s representative, Samuel, told Saul to wait ***“seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.***

And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering.”

Now Saul knew very well that only a priest from the tribe of Levi could present a burnt offering. Go back to earlier books in the Old Testament where Moses is giving the commandments of what to do, who should do it, and how it should be done. Saul knew that he had no right to proceed with this burnt offering, but he did anyway because he would not trust God and he would not trust God’s servant Samuel. Saul took matters into his own hands because once again, he had no faith. He saw the people were scattering and his first reaction was to do something to keep the people there. So he began the pre-battle proceedings and offered the burnt offering. Now no one knows how long Saul waited, but I tend to believe it was just a short time. Once again, he would not trust Samuel, God’s servant, to do what he said he would do. Wait was all Saul had to do.

Verse 10 continues, ***“And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute [really, bless] him.”***

In verse 11, as soon as Saul gets caught, he gives three excuses, beginning with the people! What a leader! Believe me, even if the people scattered, God would still have had the victory, which I know because of Gideon. If you remember, Gideon’s army was outnumbered tremendously. They started with 10,000 soldiers, but God kept sorting them out through one event after another until the army was reduced to 300 soldiers who would follow God’s instruction and follow their leader.

But let us return to verse 11 which states, ***“And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed [now he is blaming Samuel.], and the Philistines [excuse number three] gathered themselves together at Michmash; [First Saul blames the people, then Samuel, and last the Philistines.]***

Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD [Now he is lying and trying to cover his own blame. He only made the supplication to stop the people from scattering.] ***“The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering.”*** Saul is saying that he forced himself to make the wrong decision, go against God’s ways, and proceed with a burnt offering that should have only been done by a priest from the tribe of Levi. He found another excuse after blaming the people, Samuel, and the Philistines. It was just another lie.

In verse 13 Samuel responds. ***“And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart,*** [Saul does not know that Samuel is referring to David here.] ***and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou has not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.”*** Saul was a disobedient and rebellious individual, who would not follow the commandment of the Lord. He took matters into his own hands for the people’s sake and created more confusion. If Samuel did not step in at this time God knows what would have happened.

In addition, if you read further along to verses 19 to 23 in the same chapter, Israel even had a lack of weapons. What a great king this was. The Philistine armies outnumbered the Israeli army and were still in control of most of the areas that the nation of Israel lived in at that time. The Philistines did not even allow the Israelis to have weapons. All they could have were farming tools. Eventually, though, those farming tools, the axe: the mattock, and some other tools became weapons. Once again it was not important how, when, and what was going to be used in the battle with these Philistines. Once they had God on their side, even though they were outnumbered, even though they did not have weapons, God would intervene and defeat these Philistines. You should see that the first three excuses Saul gave does not equate with being a good soldier of Jesus Christ. You cannot war a good warfare if you are rebellious and disobedient. Yes, we are all disobedient and rebellious at times, but it cannot be something part of you day in day out.

Moving on in the story about Saul, we come to his second sin in I Samuel 15:1. It begins with Samuel reminding Saul of the time when the nation of Israel was coming out of Egypt and what Amalek did to them at that time. Then Samuel says the LORD wants Saul to destroy everything in the tribe of Amalek without exception. That may sound cruel, but God had his reasons. Go back and read the about Israel’s journey in Exodus to see why God was so upset with the Amalekites. I Samuel 15:1 begins,

“Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah.

And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley.”

To this point, Saul is actually following Samuel’s instructions given to Samuel by God Himself and related to Saul. It appears that Saul may have learned his lesson. Even though he knows his kingship will not last forever and his sons will not rule, maybe he has repented and maybe he is trying to get himself straightened out with God.

It continues in verse 6, ***“And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt.”***

This story gives the impression that Saul smote the Amalekites and destroyed everything associated with the Amalekites, but that is not what happened. Just when you think Saul was learning to be obedient to God, here he comes again doing it his own way, rather than God’s way. Saul was being led and directed by Satan’s demonic army to go against God over and over throughout the book of I Samuel. Saul’s instruction was that everything should be slain; men, women, infant, suckling, ox, sheep, camel and ass, but read what happened in verse eight.

“And he took Agag king of the Amalekites alive...” Nothing was to survive this slaughter, but look who they kept alive. Interestingly, this book only records that King Agag, king of the Amalekites, survived, but if you know history, more than just the king survived. Later in history during Esther’s time, these Amalekites tried to destroy all the Jews, all the chosen people of God, because they would not bow to Haman. Haman was an Amalekite. Go to the Book of Esther and find the history, specifically about Haman. He was an Amalekite. Some survived this battle, not all were slain.

As we continue to read I Samuel 15:9 we see, ***“But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and of the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.”*** Now we do not have any record of it, but if you read it straight through, if you try to read between the lines, Saul and his army of people decided who would live and who would die, and they definitely kept all the spoils and booty of the battle; the lambs, the fatlings, and the oxen.

Verse 10 continues, ***“Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.”*** Samuel loved Saul dearly, even more than David, which is obvious as you read the scriptures in the Old Testament concerning David’s life.

We continue in verse 12, ***“And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal.***

And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD.” Saul is lying once again. Nothing has changed about Saul. He does not follow commandments, he does not do it God’s way, he is rebellious and disobedient, and he is also a liar. He did not do all that God commanded.

In verse 14 it says, ***“And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?”***

Verse 15 begins with more excuses again and blaming of others, rather than taking the blame as David did, when he said, “Unto thee o God, I have sinned.” In verse nine we read that, ***“Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep,”*** but once again, Saul blames the people in verse 15, ***“And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God and the rest we have utterly destroyed.”*** I also find it interesting that there is no record of them even sacrificing one of these animals before Samuel got there. What really happened is they got greedy and Saul is blaming others.

Verse 16 continues, ***“Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on.***

And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel?

And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed.

Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?” Samuel called it for what it was. He did not believe the story that they were saving the best to sacrifice to the Lord. The people got greedy and probably celebrated their great victory against the Amalekites and the slaughter of the Amalekites, their enemies. I believe more than just a few were spared.

In verse 20, Saul just continues his lies, ***“And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek....”*** Saul continues lying to Samuel, and even produces the evidence of his lie to Samuel; he brought the king of Amalek to Samuel.

In verse 21 Saul continues to avoid responsibility saying, ***“But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed....”*** This makes me wonder who was really the king? The people supposed to be obedient and follow Saul. As the king is their commander, they were supposed to do what the commander said. Some king, some leader, some commander. He was a fool and a liar, rebellious, disobedient, and controlled by Satan and his demonic army to go against God and His ways.

The excuses continue in verse 22, ***“And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.***

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.” Idolatry is worshipping a false god other than The God. In other words, whether you realize it or not, when you are disobedient and rebellious you are worshipping Satan himself.

So finally in verse 24, Saul understands, ***“And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.***

Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD.” But, Samuel was not the one to pardon his sins. Saul really should have asked God to pardon his sins, instead looking for Samuel’s pardon. That act further shows Saul still did not believe in the unseen God.

In verse 26 we read, ***“And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel.”***

In verse 30, Saul continues, ***“Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God.”*** In other words, Saul says, “Samuel, you know I have sinned, but let’s convince the people that everything is okay with God and me so they do not turn against me.” Now Samuel makes a mistake and in verse 31 it reads, ***“So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD.”*** But it was a phony worship with no sincerity in it whatsoever.

Reading on to verse 32 we read, ***“Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites. And Agag came unto him delicately. [This king was afraid] And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past.***

And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal. And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.”

He was more concerned what the people thought than his relationship with God. He was afraid if the people knew he was not going to be their king much longer they might rebel and turn against him. And repeatedly Saul proved he was a bad choice as a king, but this was not a mistake that God made. Even though Saul might have begun doing what God wanted, once he became king, he began doing things his own way, instead of God’s way. Saul proved over and over that he was disobedient and rebellious to the Lord’s commandments.

Using Saul and this history as an example, the first two points are he did not war a good warfare and he was not a good soldier of God. Our commandment is that we are to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ concerned with God’s ways and God’s commandments. However, Saul was more concerned with his ways and you will never be a good soldier of Jesus Christ if you are

disobedient and rebellious to God's ways. Even when someone joins the military today, they have to do it their way or feel pain. Boot camp tries to break you of your will. Now God wants you to be a man or woman of the Lord, following Him, not necessarily breaking down your will to the point where you are no good for anything. He wants you to understand what His will is which is *denying yourself, taking up your cross, and follow Him*. *'Denying yourself'* means to do what God wants you to do. I have explained many times what *'Taking up your cross'* means. *'And follow Him'* means Jesus Christ. Our commandment is that He has chosen us to be good soldiers and to be a good soldier requires obedience to His commandments, not rebellion. These are not the Ten Commandments, but rather what Christ Jesus commanded which will include arming yourself with faith, the Word of God, and standing firm as a disciple of his.

There is a third example in the story about Saul beginning in I Samuel 31:3. Here, Saul goes into battle along with Jonathan and we read, *"And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him; and he was sore wounded of the archers.*

Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him.

So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armour-bearer, and all his men, that same day together."

Saul not a good soldier of God because he was disobedient and he was rebellious, but there is also a third reason in verse 3 of this chapter. Verse 3 tells us, *"And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him [with arrows] and he was sore wounded of the archers."*

In II Samuel, after the event written of above, David finally hears the news of Saul's death, and II Samuel 1:17 continues this story. It reads, *"And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son:*

(Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jasher.) [I think this was referencing more Jonathan, not Saul.]

Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. It is important here to know that *'as though he had'* and *'been'* is in italics and not in the original texts, so this last phrase should really read, *"the shield of Saul, not anointed with oil."* Soon in this series, I will be teaching from Ephesians 6 about the shield, our spiritual weapon, which is the shield of faith. I believe this is one of the most important spiritual weapons we have available to us.

Let me share something with you about how important the shield was in combat in those days:

"History bears out that the shield was of extreme importance. Ancient shields were made mostly of stout leather or of several layers of leather that were stretched over a frame or a rim of wood. It was necessary to rub them with oil so that the leather would

remain supple which prevented it from hardening and cracking. If a shield was allowed to become friable and weak, an arrow or spear could easily pierce through the leather. This could heighten the liabilities against the soldier. [and we know in this case it was an arrow that severely injured Saul] The treatment of oil was particularly important immediately prior to the soldier entering a battle.”

David was not super spiritual, but he did give us insight. Not only was Saul disobedient and rebellious as a soldier of God, he also did not have any concern about the weapon God gave him for not only his protection but also to do battle. Because Saul’s shield was not anointed with oil, it became pliable and weak, quickly becoming useless where it could not even stop an arrow from penetrating. It is important to include these verses with I Samuel 31 to understand why Saul did not survive that battle. Because of David’s insight in God’s Word, we know about anointing and preparing the physical weapon granted to him to be used in battle. Saul took that weapon for granted and had no concern for it. He was not a good soldier or a good king.

Verse 27 says, ***“How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!”*** However, we thank God our weapons of war do not perish. We have the shield of faith to protect us from the flaming arrows. We cannot afford to die on a spiritual battlefield because of a shield that was not anointed. Our weapons in Ephesians 6 are important to understand. They are spiritual weapons, and without them, we can never survive even one day in the spiritual battle. Saul was rebellious, Saul was disobedient, and had no respect or concern for his weapons on the battlefield.

To conclude this message, return to I Timothy 1:18, ***“This message I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the gift which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare:***

Arming yourself with faith and a good conscience through the message of the Good News of Jesus Christ; which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck.”

I guarantee, if you do not understand that you are to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, chosen by Him to war a good warfare, you will end like Saul. You might not like this message. You might not want to hear this message, but if you are going to be a good soldier in God’s army, you must understand this message or you will die on the spiritual battlefield if you are disobedient, rebellious, and your shield is not anointed. In other words, you must have concern for the weapons listed in Ephesians 6 that God has given us to be used against our vicious unseen enemy and his unseen army. Otherwise, you will end as those Paul names in verse 20; as a shipwrecked individual who has slipped back on the other side of the line joining forces with our enemy.

Do not become rebellious to God’s Word. Do not become disobedient to God’s Word. Follow someone that can lead you through the maze and keep your shield anointed by arming yourself with faith and the message of the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit and God’s word will mold you into the soldier He wants you to become. Keep fighting the good fight of faith, keep warring a good warfare.

Stand

Ephesians 6:10 begins, “**Finally, my brethren, be strong** [or be *strengthened, empowered*] **in the Lord, and in the power** [or *force*] **of his might.**”

It is important to begin this chapter with a review of previous teaching about Spiritual Warfare. Recently, we read from II Timothy, where Paul, writing to Timothy, told him he was chosen to be a soldier of Jesus Christ. Once chosen, you must understand there is no other option. If you stay in The Faith, you will be a soldier whether you like it or not. I have also taught from I Timothy where Paul instructs that we are to war a good warfare. In addition, you know also from previous chapters that we are to be strengthened by the Lord; there is nothing we can do in our own power to strengthen against the evil spiritual forces that we face in addition to the carnal instruments Satan uses in the flesh. Never forget that it is God’s strength, God’s dynamic force, and God’s dynamic power. It is “**the force of his might**” and, as you will see soon, God’s armour. Whatever armour we may be able to devise against the devil and his demonic army, would be insufficient against those kinds of evil forces. Again, we can only rely upon God’s strength, and God’s dynamic power and force using God’s armour, along with our understanding of how the devil attacks. This is why we spent so much time learning about the wiles, or methods, of the devil, and although I could have shown you even more, I covered enough to give you an idea. I also helped you identify the devil as mentioned in Ephesians 6:12 and is a topic we will be returning to repeatedly. However, before moving on to verse 12, which will be covered in depth, I feel compelled to go back to Ephesians 6:11 and teach on one more word in that verse; ‘stand.’

As we read further in this chapter in Ephesians, we see all the different weapons we have available to us to come against these evil forces. Once we are strengthened by God and understand it is not our strength, but His strength, once we understand it is His dynamic power and force behind us, once we understand the methods of the devil, and once we identify who our enemy is, we are “**to stand.**” We are not relaxing on a couch for Jesus; we are standing armed and ready for battle. By the end of this chapter, I want you to understand what it means to stand equipped ready for the battle according to Paul and other authors throughout the Bible, including the New Testament.

There are several points I want you to understand about this word. It is good to use all the different resources available, but as with any Greek definition, there are different opinions about how the word should be translated. For instance, the word ‘stand’ has about three different Greek words depending on how it should be used, when it should be used, the mood of the word, and where it is derived from. The Greek word that Paul used here for ‘stand’ is ‘**iesthemi**’ [also transliterated as ‘**histemi**’], which means, “**Having a firm stance against the evil forces coming against you with the mindset that you will not waver.**” I have studied this word for some time now and have gone to every resource available. From a scholastic point of view, sometimes you must go outside the box, or think differently, to understand what the Koine Greek, the common Greek language, might have meant from a scholastic point of view. The way I like to verify the words I have used and taught on, is to identify its use in all the different areas. In my own research, I examine every different area the word is used, and then present how it

relates to what I am teaching on a particular subject, which is what I have done with this word. Based on available translations, I have put together what I think is the best definition of *'iesthemi'* in relation to spiritual warfare. Add this word and definition to your notes and Bible, or do whatever you need to remember this definition, specifically in the areas in the New Testament this chapter covers to bring out the full meaning of how important it is to stand against the methods of the devil.

As you already know, you are strengthened by God, you have God's dynamic power and force assisting you, you understand the devil's methods, you are able to identify the devil, but now you are also *'to stand.'* You are to be ready to do battle against the unseen forces, to understand what these unseen forces are, and how to apply this word 'stand' in relation to spiritual warfare. Let us take a deeper look into the definition. **"Having a firm stance against the evil forces..."** means, to repeat myself, you are ready to do battle because you have been strengthened by the Lord, you have God's force and power behind you, you are wearing his armour, you know who your enemy is, and you can identify the strategies he uses against you. As a result, you have the confidence to have **"a firm stance against the evil forces coming against you with the mindset that you will not waver."**

To continue, we know that we also have other factors to stand on. For instance, we stand on faith, stand on peace, stand on the gospel, stand on joy, stand on healing, and stand on grace. Once we are done standing and fighting this good fight of faith, in the end, we will be either a goat or a sheep standing tall next to Christ. That will be the conclusion to this chapter, but now I will fill in the gaps by showing the different areas where this word is used and how we can claim those promises as we do battle against these forces.

With that, we will begin in Romans 5:1. This verse begins, ***"Therefore being justified by faith...."*** I will forever be thankful to my mentor, Gene Scott, for clarifying that 'justified' really means 'righteousified.' Of course, this is not a real word, but it is important to understand that we become righteous by faith. Just prior to this in Romans 4:3, Paul writes, ***"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed [actually, faithed] God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."*** That is why Romans 5:1 should really be read as, ***"Therefore being righteousified by faith..."*** meaning that Abraham became righteous through faith, just as we also obtain God's righteousness through faith. If you have been part of this ministry for some time, you have heard me say over and over that you cannot have the Holy Spirit in your life unless you have been *righteousified* by faith. It takes faith to believe in God's Word. It takes faith to believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins, that He cleansed your life to give you a new hope, that He resurrected from the dead, sailed off into the heavens, and He is going to come back again someday for His church in the end days, which I believe we are in. It takes faith to believe all of that, and it takes faith to claim any promise in God's Book that applies to your life. But when you faith, you are being *righteousified*, or put another way, God's righteousness enters into your being, which now allows the Holy Spirit to have a place it can dwell. Because the criteria is that the Holy Spirit will not dwell in anyone that does not have God's righteousness, we must have God's righteousness in our life to have the Holy Spirit in us. Once in us, it will mold us into what God wants us to be. It is that simple. Without faith, there is no righteousness; without righteousness, there is no Holy Spirit. God will not dwell in something

that is not righteous and only our faith in Christ's blood makes us righteous. It is as simple as that. Understand it.

Returning to the statement in Romans, ***“Therefore being righteous by faith...”*** we know through God's righteousness implanted in our life and being, we have peace. The Greek for peace is *‘eirene,’* the understanding of what Christ has done for us. We have peace because now we have been reconciled back to the Father so that righteousness can enter into our lives. Likewise, because righteousness enters our lives, we now have the Holy Spirit, which brings peace into our life, which is part of the Fruit of the Spirit. Knowing this, we can now read this verse to say, ***“Therefore being righteousified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”***

Verse two goes on to say, ***“By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”*** Looking at each part of this verse in more detail, we know that prior to being justified by our faith we did not have this access. However, we gained this access by our faith, which implants righteousness through faith, so the Holy Spirit can dwell in us to produce, again through faith, what He wants us to produce. ‘Grace’ in this verse is, as my mentor would say, ‘unmerited favor,’ something that we did not deserve, something that we cannot earn on our own merits, therefore, it is ‘unmerited favor.’ Also in this verse, the Greek word for ‘stand’ is *‘iesthemi,’* which is what we are standing on. Finally, we ***“rejoice in hope of the glory of God,”*** which produces our joy.

To summarize, when we have faith, we have God's righteousness. When we have God's righteousness, we have peace because the Holy Spirit is now in our lives and beings. Having this will certainly aggravate and irritate the devil and his evil forces. The last thing he wants to hear is that we are *righteousified* by God, we have peace which is given to us by the Holy Spirit, we have access by faith, and we have unmerited favor. In Ephesians 6:11, the Greek word for ‘devil’ is *diablos*. He is the accuser and the slanderer. Because we are covered by faith, grace, and peace, we are standing on that which is a part of our armour. It is what we have to stand upon, what we are to *iesthemi*. When standing upon that armour, we have a firm stance against the devil and his evil forces. But that is only if we have the mindset of what being *righteousified* by God through faith is all about, if we have the mindset of what grace has done for us, and what peace God has given to us through the Holy Spirit, because of what Christ did for us on the cross. This is the last thing Satan wants us to know, and why I hate Christian condemners who go around condemning everyone. My pastor and mentor for years would say, “Preach Christ and live your own convictions. Let the Holy Spirit work out your salvation.” Paul says work out your salvation with fear and trembling, but if you remain steadfast in the faith, God will do it for you. You are standing with the knowledge that it is faith, grace, and peace. This is the joy Paul writes of in Romans 5:2 when he writes, ***“rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”***

In Romans 10:3 Paul addresses the religious establishment. The verse begins,

“For they [the religious establishment] being ignorant of God's righteousness, [that is righteousness by faith.] and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

But with the proper translation, this verse should read,

“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish [The Greek word here is *iesthemi*, meaning they are *standing firm*] in their own righteousness, have not submitted [or *been obedient*] themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

The religious establishment has not been obedient to the faith which allowed us to become righteousified by God. Read again what Paul wrote, ***“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to stand on their own righteousness....”*** This is works. Those people who say, “Look at me. This is what I am doing for Christ. Look at my long list. See how good I am. See how much I have accomplished.” But Jesus said the day will come when I never knew you, which is because they stood on their own righteousness. They had a firm stance not against the evil forces, but a firm stance alongside the evil forces, and their hearts were hardened, not being obedient themselves unto the righteousness of God, having no obedience to the faith at all.

Verse 4 continues, ***“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”*** The Greek word there is *pisteuo*. This verse is telling us that once He died on that cross and spilled the first drop of blood, the law died. He fulfilled all of it for everyone who faithes. The law is dead and now the righteousness of God is supreme through faith. Through faith, we will stand either on God’s side or alongside the devil. If you stand alongside the devil, some of the attributes from that will be very noticeable. Your works will be pleasing for man saying, “Look how good I am! Doesn’t everyone see it? God must love me. I am blameless and spotless.” However, Jesus said the day is coming, I never knew you. You will either stand alongside Christ in faith, grace, and peace, obedient to the faith, or you will stand on the wrong side with the devil and his demonic army with the mindset that your good works take the place of God’s righteousness.

For another example, go to Romans 11:20. This verse begins, ***“Well; because of unbelief [that is ‘apistia’, unbelief, faithlessness, without faith.] they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, [A better translation is *be not prideful.*] but fear.”*** The word ‘fear’ in the Greek is *a fear out of obedience that you will stay in the faith the way God has described for you to do*. Nonetheless, we stand by faith once we have been strengthened, once we understand it is God’s dynamic power and force, and it is His armour. Without faith, you will never get to the point of being strengthened by God. You will never get to the point of understanding that it is His power and His force. You will never even wear the armour. Do not confuse this with the shield of faith. That is another of God’s weapons available to us, so do not mix the two. Too many preachers mix those two up. They are the same, but at the same time, they are different.

These examples are so you understand we stand by faith, peace, grace, and joy. We must understand that we have unmerited favor. We have this gift of grace and our reconciliation back to the Father gives us that grace. That peace is worked in our human vessels of life through the Holy Spirit. As Romans 11:20 tells us, be not prideful, but have an obedient type of fear to the faith.

Let us move on and see how faith and joy are combined as we stand as an unmovable force standing tall against these evil forces. In II Corinthians 1:24 Paul is talking to the Corinthians and says, **“Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.”** It is important to understand that in addition to the previous examples, here we have Paul’s letters telling us that without understanding how we are to stand, this world will mean nothing to us. We are to stand by faith, peace, and grace. Here again in II Corinthians 1:24, **“Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye iesthemi [stand].”** This is the same Greek word from the other verses. We are to go to battle against these evil forces understanding we are standing by faith. Faith helps us make that stand against the devil because it allows God’s righteousness to enter our life, then we can be strengthened and have access to all the things mentioned in Ephesians 6:10-11. Along with that, Paul is also saying in this verse we are to be helpers of your joy.

We are in God’s army. This does not mean we moan and groan, begging God for help, wondering how we got into this fight. Do not regret being a soldier fighting the good fight of faith. Instead, know we were chosen to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ and it is not going to be easy. As my mentor would say, “Cheer up saints, it is going to get worse,” but we will have joy in this fight because we understand that we are empowered. If faith, peace, grace, the gospel, joy and healing is not sufficient, we also have His strength, His power, and His force helping us through, and we are protected by His armour. We do not go into battle with insufficient body armour. Instead, we go into this fight as the most capably equipped soldier that ever existed since the beginning of time until the end of days. In other words, we are the ultimate soldier if you remain in faith, understanding that by faith and grace wherein we stand [*iesthemi*] against these evil forces with the mindset that because of our faith and understanding what grace has done for us, we know we will never waiver in the battle **“for by faith ye iesthemi.”**

Moving on to I Corinthians 15:1, we read, **“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel [The Good News of Jesus Christ] which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand.”** So, we have seen faith, peace, and grace and here, Paul tells us that we stand upon the gospel. As part of the weapons available to us, our loins go to battle with truth, having our feet shod with the gospel of peace. We will go into more detail about those things later, but for now, part of the armour given to us by God is the gospel and we are to stand on it, according to Paul, or else, he tells us in verse 2, our faith is in vain. Look at all the places where Paul repeats himself. I think he did this so future generations, not just the Corinthian church, would have a better understanding of what he said to the Ephesians. Inspired by God, these letters were written not only for the people Paul was writing to, but also for future generations, including us. We are to stand on faith, peace, grace, and the gospel, which is the Good News of Jesus Christ. This is also what the devil fights against. In our battle, we stand on faith to oppose him as well as grace, the unmerited favor, and the peace of the understanding that we have been reconciled back to the Father, which really irritates him. Along with that, the devil also knows that part of our armour is the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whose focus is that Christ died for everyone’s sins, for the ones that would faithe in Him, and for the knowledge of the importance His blood was for the world’s salvation.

In addition to standing on faith, peace, grace, and the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ, we also have joy. For that, we leave Paul’s letters and go to the book of Jude, where Jude is

writing about how we keep ourselves in the love of God. In verse 24, he writes, ***Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy....***” However, this verse has been badly translated, so let us read this verse again with the Greek words and meanings. It begins:

“Now unto him that is able to keep - here the Greek word is *phulasso*, meaning *guard*

you from falling - or not stumbling, but standing firm

and to present - *iesthemi* again, really, *causing you to stand*

faultless* - more accurately this word is *blameless without spot once covered by the blood of Jesus Christ

before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.”

With that understanding, we can more correctly read this verse as, ***“Now unto him that is able to guard [*phulasso*] you from not stumbling, but making you able to stand firm to cause you to stand faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.”*** In other words, without Jesus Christ and the shedding of His blood, I am as guilty as guilty comes and so are you. We are the most blemished individuals with many spots running loose. But, with the shedding of Christ’s blood, we are without spot and blameless. He will cause me to stand while others will accuse me, while others, as agents of the devil would slander me; Christ covers me without spot, blameless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

There is joy in this fight knowing that He will keep you from stumbling, He will keep you standing firm, and He will cause you to stand if you remain in the fight of the good fight of faith. It is faith, faith, faith that gets you through this fight and keeps you standing firm. But, there are other benefits as well. We can be joyous in this warfare, in this good fight of faith, knowing that we are presented blameless and without spot, knowing as He is presenting us in that condition, it is with exceeding joy. If that does not make you joyous, nothing will. And to get that joy, we must remain in a firm stance against the evil forces that come against us day in and day out. We must keep watch and on guard, which is what John the Baptist referred to about his joy.

We can read about that in the Gospel of John, chapter 3. This is where some are wondering if Jesus was greater than John was, or if John was greater than Jesus. This is also the same chapter where John says, ***“He must increase and I must decrease.”*** However, before that, John says in verse 28, ***“Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride [In other words, He that hath the church.] is the bridegroom [Jesus Christ]: but the friend of the bridegroom, [John] which standeth [same Greek word *iesthemi*] and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.”*** We know John the Baptist was experienced in standing against the forces of evil as he stood against the religious establishment of his day. They were always trying to trap him into some heresy to convict him and John finally paid for his stand against the evil forces with his life being beheaded by the king, who was influenced by the king’s evil wife.

No matter what, John the Baptist made his stand, calling people to repentance saying, “I baptize you now with water, but there is one who is coming that will baptize you in the spirit.” Some of you are worried about whether or not you should be baptized in water, but it is a tradition handed down throughout the centuries. Baptism of the Spirit is more important to understand than by water. Baptizing by water is something that was done when Jesus was baptized. He had to fulfill all things, but after He died and rose, He promised the Comforter, which was none other than the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit already baptized you, so quit worrying about water baptism; it is a tradition. My mentor went for decades without baptizing in water and he would say behind the scenes that it was not necessary. It is something that makes you feel good; the true expression of the Holy Spirit is baptism by the Spirit, which is what we should seek out by faithing in His Word, rather anything that we can do on our own.

John is the *“friend of the bridegroom, which standeth”* or *iesthemi*. He stood against the evil forces of his time and he paid for it with his life. As I said before, cheer up saints, it is going to get worse. Well it sure did for John the Baptist, but that did not matter because when he heard Jesus’ voice, he rejoiced and claimed, *“this my joy therefore is fulfilled.”* No matter what happened to him, no matter what was going to happen to him, he was a soldier of God but also of Jesus Christ, because he knew that he was a forerunner to announce Christ’s coming. Once that was fulfilled, John’s joy was fulfilled. No matter how hard it was to be a soldier and no matter where it took him, his joy was fulfilled. That is why I said the armour is about faith, peace, the gospel, and joy. Once you understand how you can fulfill that joy by recognizing the voice of the bridegroom, you too will greatly rejoice when you hear it.

Moving on, I want to examine one other factor and that is healing. Some of you, in this spiritual warfare, will be spiritually wounded and need spiritual healing. You will also need physical healing because you have been physically wounded through age, illness, or disease. It does not matter what the circumstance is, it does not matter what the situation is in your life, or why you may need the healing, the promise is there to claim if you are a good soldier of Jesus Christ. There is healing while you are making that stand against these evil forces. It is a promise from God.

To read about that, go to Luke 8:43. I am sure you have heard this story many times, but let me put it in perspective. Verse 43 begins, *“And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any....”* Every dime she made, every dime she received, and every dime she could get her hands on she spent on doctors because of her physical condition with the issue of blood for twelve years. I believe the issue of blood was constant bleeding. She spent her time and money looking for a physical healing and none could heal her. This woman was without hope. She had exhausted all her means trying to find a physical healing for an issue of blood, the physical ailment that was plaguing her.

Verse 44 is the key point I want to make about what this woman did. It tells us she *“Came behind him* [Jesus], *and touched the border of his garment”* The Greek word for touched is, *haptomai* or *aeptw*. This woman approached Jesus from behind *“and touched the border of his garment.”* Touched is not a good enough word to describe the scene that happened in this verse. The use of the word *haptomai* means she approached Jesus from behind *and fastened her grip on*

His garment or clung to His garment tightly. She was without any hope and fought her way through the crowd. At that time, a woman could not just approach a rabbi and it was unheard of for a woman to grab any part of a rabbi or a teacher, whether it was clothing or a physical part of His flesh. This woman took a risk. She approached Jesus from behind and she fastened her grip. That is what faith is all about. She fastened her grip on His garment. Now I am sure she did not hold onto it very long; she did not need to. In her mind, she only wanted to reach Jesus, hang onto Him, and claim the promises she had heard others talking about. I am sure she had heard the news of Jesus' compassion and healing ability. How He made the lame walk among all the other diseases that He healed, so this woman fastened onto Jesus' garment. I am sure she had to crawl and fight her way there, but her tenacity of faith is what healed her, because at the end of verse 44 we read, ***“and immediately her issue of blood stanchd.”*** The Greek word for ‘stanchd’ is actually *iesthemi*. “[I]***mmediately her issue of blood iesthemi;***” it *became firm, was made firm, or stood still*. She had a bleeding problem. I am almost as sure of this next statement as I can be sure. This bleeding problem created a weakness in her body because of the constant loss of blood. Because of understanding that she had this issue of blood and because of the understanding that it made her weak, makes this story even more captivating in my own studies and helps me understand why she fastened onto Jesus. She truly faithed that her issue would be healed and come to a standstill, because of the stance she took against the disease she dealt with for so long, spending all her money and all her time looking for a cure.

I could go to several other verses to demonstrate that while you are fighting the good fight of faith, while you are soldiering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, while you are warring a good warfare, along the way, you might need spiritual healing. Claim the promises of healing just as this woman did. She was willing to fasten onto Jesus and not let Him go. There were no diseases before Adam's sin. Diseases and death came into existence and were not something God originally created; they were not in the plan. However, for this woman, she did not have to hang on long because Jesus felt the healing force leave Him because of someone's faith in Him for that healing. If you are sick today, claim that same promise. There is healing to claim as a part of Spiritual warfare!

In our spiritual warfare, stand on faith. Stand on peace that we are reconciled back to the Father. Stand on the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Stand on the joy of being a soldier of Jesus Christ, instead of one of gloom and doom wishing you were not part of the army of God. Stand on grace, the unmerited favor, which really aggravates the devil as he is hoping to convince the world to obtain righteousness through our own merits. No, it is unmerited favor, given to us by God through Christ Jesus and His blood. As you are fighting the battle, when you come across physical or spiritual healing necessary in your life, claim the promises just like this woman did because her issue of blood was made firm.

I want you to understand all the benefits that come with wearing the armour of God. Wearing the armour is not easy. In Mark 13:9, the disciples, as well as future generations, are warned. Mark states, ***“But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils [being the religious establishment]; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: [cheer up saints, it is going to get worse] and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, [Not only before the religious establishment, but also the governmental establishments.] for a testimony against them.”*** That is not what the Greek says. It actually says, ***“...for a testimony unto them.”***

I want to point out something else very important in this verse. It states, “...**ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought...**” In this verse, the Greek word for ‘brought’ is *iesthemi*, or *stand firmly*. In that context, the verse should read, “...**ye shall be standing firmly against evil forces coming against you for a testimony unto them.**” This verse does describe who those evil forces are: the councils, synagogues, rulers, and kings. You will be “**a testimony unto them**” because they will see your unwavering faith. They will see your mindset about faith, peace, the gospel [the Good News] and joy. They will see that you are a joyous soldier of Jesus Christ; that you understand you are nothing without that unmerited favor; and they will see that your righteousness comes from God, instead of your own works. I am not here to make peace with my brethren. I am here to do the will of the Father. As Jesus said in Matthew 12:50, “Who is my father, who is my mother except those that do the will of the Father.” If that means we come against the brethren because of their false doctrines, then so be it. However, if they are teaching correctly, I will be the first one to tell you, thank God! Thank God, there are other voices proclaiming the Good News correctly. That is *epignosis*, *the precise and correct knowledge of the gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ*.

Returning to Marks Gospel, we can now read, “**But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be iesthemi** [standing firm] **before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony unto them.**” You shall be brought up to these institutions, whether governmental or religious, but do not forget the mindset of faith, peace, grace, the gospel, joy, and healing that you have the benefit of as you firmly come against these evil forces that come against you. God will have you standing firm until the end if you do not forget these concepts. It is my hope to make it clear enough and simple enough for you to understand.

There is one more area concerning future judgment to cover. Go to Matthew 25:31. It states,

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate [divide] *them* [the nations] one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

And he shall set the sheep [us] on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

The word “**set**” in verse 33 is the same Greek word, *iesthemi*. The verse is saying that He shall set us firmly, not against evil forces, but lift us up on high. In addition, I cannot wait for the day to hear the King say to me and to you also, “**Come, ye blessed of my Father.**” So this is the choice that we all must make. Are you going to *iesthemi* on the side of God, or are you going to *iesthemi* on the side of the devil? If you are on the side of God, you will have a firm stance against all the evil forces coming against you with the mindset that you will not waver until you too can hear those words, “**Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.**”

The decision is yours to make; to be a sheep hearing those blessed words, or to be a goat headed for eternal damnation. I want to be one of the sheep on the right-hand side of the Father, not a goat on the left. Choose the side you are going to be on and I pray you chose to be on the right-hand side of the Father so you too can hear, ***“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”***

Remember these benefits. You are to stand knowing that your armour has benefits if you remain faithful, if you understand that your armour also gives you the peace, and reconciliation back to the Father. The armour protects you from the devil’s slandering accusations saying you are not good enough to be reconciled back to the Father. Tell him, “Get behind me Satan because that is where you belong! I will stand on the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ. I know that gospel promised me salvation if I faith in Him and His blood. I will be joyous as a good soldier of Jesus Christ knowing I have unmerited favor from God, the gift of grace that covers me. In case I fall in the battle and need physical and spiritual healing, the physical healing is there for me to take if I just fasten onto His garment that is His Word. I have faith that I too can be healed, not in my own strength but in His, so I can be a stronger soldier of Jesus Christ and I too will hear those blessed words from my Father, ***“Come, ye blessed...inherit the kingdom prepared for you [and all of us] from the foundation of the world.”***

It is your decision. Be a goat on the left, or a part of the sheep blessed by our Father, understanding if you choose to be part of the sheep, you are chosen to be a good soldier in God’s army to war a good warfare. The choice is yours.

Put on the Whole Armour of God

Ephesians 6:11 states,

“Finally, my brethren, be strong [endunamoo, be strengthened or be empowered] in the Lord, and in the power [the force, kratos] of his might [ischus in the Greek]. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

The focus of this chapter will be the whole armour of God, and why it is as important today as it was in both the Old and New Testaments. You must have the whole armour of God especially today with all the attacks against the church. Even the government intrusions in this country, the United States of America, are nothing compared to some of the stories from pastors in churches that I receive from Pakistan. The torment they are going through on a daily basis is to the point where some will lose their lives. Because of what Christianity stands for and believes in, Jesus Christ, what this country is experiencing is just the beginning compared to what other countries are already experiencing. You must know it is important to have the whole armour of God in spiritual terms. We are to stand against the wiles, the *methodeia*, the methods, of the devil. That message has not changed from the very first book of the Bible until the end when the church is taken away.

This is a timely message, especially in light of what has been happening recently in this country causing churches to come under attack. When the church is under attack, the brethren, the professing ones, the doers of the Word of Jesus Christ, acting in faith in His Word, should rally and come together, but doctrinal differences prevent this from happening. Often denominations just see this as less competition, but they must look past those differences and see that they too will eventually come under attack. There is a day coming that to believe in Jesus Christ and to profess His name will put people in harm's way in danger for their own life. Luckily, we still have a Constitution in this country that protects us; it is eroding away quickly, but the message is still the same. It was the same in Nehemiah's day and it is still the same today. You do not put the armour on to sit on the couch and do nothing. God gave us spiritual armour because He knew we would be under attack, and the spiritual attack that we are under is much greater than any physical army. We fight against unseen forces listed in Ephesians 6:12 more powerful than you can ever imagine, so we are to put on this armour to be ready to fight.

I get amused as I study this subject, specifically on this chapter in Ephesians, about how so many Christians and theologians believe the weapons listed are for defensive purposes only. Armour is defensive and offensive and these weapons are for offensive and defensive purposes. Truly, God must be the one strengthening you because without God's strength, you would never be able to wear God's armour. He is the one to strengthen and empower us. It is His force and His might implanted into our being so we too can wear His armour to fight against these evil wicked beings and spirits.

With that, go to the book of Nehemiah in the Old Testament right after to book of Ezra. In the book of Ezra, the children of Israel return from captivity and built the temple of God, but the city of Jerusalem was still in ruins, which leads to the book of Nehemiah.

Here is a brief introduction to the Nehemiah:

“The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one volume, but Jerome, [approximately around the fourth century] split them into 1 and 2 Ezra in the Vulgate. (a Latin translation of the Bible). Not long afterward, the second portion was named ‘Nehemiah’ after its principal character. The name Nehemiah means ‘Jehovah comforts.’ Nehemiah was concerned that the Lord’s name was not being esteemed as it should have been and because His city, Jerusalem, was in ruins. The people who had returned had no way to defend themselves.”

You find that in Nehemiah 1:3. It reads, ***“And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.”*** They rebuilt the temple and there were some struggles in that, but the city was still under much affliction because the walls were broken down and the gates were burned with fire. There were no gates and no walls. They were all ruined. This introduction continues:

“As a result, Nehemiah desired to undertake the formidable task of reestablishing civil authority in Jerusalem. He let nothing distract him from his goal of making Jerusalem a strategic center of refuge for the remnant of the Israelites that lived in the region. Nehemiah was appointed governor of Judea by the Persian emperor and soon afterward came to Jerusalem (445 B.C.). In addition, he was given a military escort and government funding from Artaxerxes to aid him in repairing the city. With God’s help, he planned to supervise the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem. Letters written on papyri (ancient paper) have been discovered in Egypt on the Island of Elephantini in the Nile River which confirm that Sanballat, the man that led the opposition against Nehemiah, lived during Nehemiah’s time. The description that is recorded in them of the overall political situation also coincides with the account here in Nehemiah.”

Not only do we have the book of Nehemiah in the Old Testament as a record, there are also other records verifying this story found in Egypt on the Island of Elephantine in the Nile River.

In chapter 1, Nehemiah prays for Jerusalem. He still knows the city is under much despair and still lying in ruins. Yes, the temple was built, but that is as far as they had gotten up to that time. In the first and second chapter of this book, the king allows Nehemiah to go to Jerusalem. Nehemiah was the king’s cupbearer and God was using the king to allow Nehemiah to go back to survey the city and eventually rebuild the city walls and gates.

In Nehemiah 2:7, the account continues, ***“Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah.”*** Now Nehemiah knew there was going to be a struggle. It is a grand idea while you are sitting there in a lap of luxury to survey an area with the intention of rebuilding the city. Yes, it would take a lot of hard work; and yes, you would have to deal with people and organize them to get the job done. That is no easy task and Nehemiah knew he would run into opposition, with people questioning his purpose and intentions, so he asked for letters to be given

to the governors or the rulers, ***“beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah....”***

Verse 8 goes on to say, ***“And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.”*** Nehemiah knew to give the credit to God. He knew God was leading and directing the king, and the king gave Nehemiah permission in a letter to get what was needed for the job.

Verse 9 says, ***“Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king’s letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.”*** This verse shows how God was leading. No matter what assignment He gives us, He will provide the resources to carry it through as long as you remain faithful in that assignment. God inspired the king to give the letters and if anyone resisted against what the king wanted, death was not too far behind. So the people who received these letters had no choice. They had to fulfill the king’s wishes. Also, not only did Nehemiah get the king’s letters, he also had captains of the army and horsemen sent with him to confirm that he had the right to reestablish Jerusalem in its correct state beginning with the rebuilding the wall. In those days, you could not rebuild the city unless there was protection, and the wall was a way to fortify the city.

Verse 10 continues, ***“When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.”***

There is background information you need to understand to know why this verse is important. Sanballat was a Horonite, indicating he was either from Beth-Horon in Ephraim or from Horoninum. The Elephantine papyri, which I referred to earlier, referred to Sanballat as a governor of Samaria. He was a politician, so his opposition to Nehemiah was therefore politically motivated. The rebuilding of Jerusalem would eventually eliminate Samaria as the political center of Judea. Without understanding this, you can read verse 10 and never know why Sanballat and Tobiah were grieved in their spirits because of Nehemiah. They did not want Jerusalem rebuilt. They did not want the center of power in that area to be transferred to Jerusalem. They were the governors of Samaria and the rebuilding of Jerusalem would eliminate Samaria as the political center of Judea. In verse 10, Tobiah the Ammonite, probably governed the area east of Judea and most likely was a subordinate of Sanballat or in close cooperation with his political agenda. These were evil politicians, who did not care about the welfare of Judea or Jerusalem. They did not care that God’s city was still lying in shame even though the temple was rebuilt. They only cared about their political agenda and their seat of power.

Returning to this history, we read in Nehemiah 2:19, ***“But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, [Those wicked three; Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem.] heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us”*** And it is just the same today. Any time you do anything for God or proclaim the name of Jesus, I guarantee you will be laughed at. Any time you do anything for God that is in His plans with Him guiding you, there will be naysayers and evil people to scorn you, to laugh at you, and despise you. In this

case, they were politicians, but this is why we fight. Even today, there are investigations by the government into several ministries in this country. In the past, I have been part of government investigations. In the late 1970's, I battled with my mentor. At that time, there were no computers or internet. Sometimes we stayed up to two and three o'clock in the morning copying legal books and all kinds of legal matter the attorneys were asking us to copy. We had in-house attorneys at the time that represented my mentor in the early stages of that battle, and eventually went to other sources and representation outside the in-house counsel. But, at that time it was night after night after night, working until two and three o'clock in the morning, because the church was attacked on many fronts. And, just as with Nehemiah, politicians scorned and laughed at what we were doing. Politicians are always looking to make themselves look better, and they think Christian institutions are an easy target because they know most of them will not fight back or take the same approach Nehemiah did in his battle.

Let us return to Nehemiah. We see in verse 19, ***“But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?”*** They were so ill informed. They did not even realize that Nehemiah came with documents and with the king's own army to make sure what Nehemiah set out to accomplish would be done.

Verse 20 continues, ***“Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build....”*** I wish today's Christian ministries would declare that they will not bow down or be set back by government intrusion. Whether an organization is charitable or non-charitable, I understand there is certain documentation to be given to the government for evaluation when under these types of attacks. I do not have a problem with that, but when the government asks about the fine detail such as who is giving, who they gave to, what their names are, what their addresses are, why they gave, what was the intention of the giving, those things are none of their business. Giving is a spiritual matter and that needs spiritual discernment to understand why a person even gave in the first place, or why the person was receiving it at the other end. Politicians do not have that. Most of them are driven by money, greed, or power. They have very little concern about the people. Sure, they may begin concerned about the people, but how many people part of those churches being investigated did they go and interview? I would bet none, because if they did they probably would not see or hear many, if any, disgruntled supporters of those ministries. But politicians listen to so-called Christian watchdog organizations if they are not bowed down to, they will not favor you. Back to the attack on Nehemiah, his reply was, “You might attack this church, but we will still go forward” which is what the battle cry should be of churches to day. “We will still go forward and keep building upon the foundation that Christ set, that Christ established.”

In verse 20, Nehemiah continues to reply and say not only will they build, ***“but ye have no portion*** [in Hebrew this is *inheritance*], ***nor right*** [the Hebrew is clear, *no claim*], ***nor memorial, in Jerusalem.***” That word in the Hebrew is memorial, but it was a certain type of memorial referring to the celebration when the rebuilding was complete. Nehemiah was talking to these three politicians, Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem, saying straight to their faces, “Our God will prosper us and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no inheritance, and no claim.” In other words, he was telling them to leave; they had no inheritance, or rights, or claim in this. They had no part in this, so leave and go torment, scorn, and laugh at someone else. Nehemiah

and his men had God on their side. They would rise and build for His glory; this city would not lie in shame anymore.

Chapter 3 describes the rebuilding of the gates and the wall and we can see that Nehemiah was definitely led by God. Each section of the wall surrounding the city was built at the same time, at the same rate of speed, rather than building each section on its own. For instance, if someone laid down four blocks, the same amount was built on the other side. Whatever was done on the north side was done on the south side. However much was accomplished on the east side, the same amount was being accomplished on the west side.

Then we come to chapter four, which is where I want to concentrate. Remember, Sanballat knew his little political kingdom would come to an end, because of the progress of the walls being built around the City of Jerusalem. Verse one begins, “But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, [but not finished yet] he was wroth [the Hebrew is burning and glowing with anger] and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.” These politicians laughed, scorned, and now mocked, but it did not discourage Nehemiah as it did some others. He kept his focus on the goal of removing the shame from the city, God’s city, and it is no different today.

There will always be naysayers who will laugh at you and scorn and mock you because of the name of Jesus Christ. If Faith Cometh by Hearing loses its non-profit status, so be it! We went through all the legal procedures necessary to get that status, but if I lose it tomorrow, then so be it. That status does not make the church. If it becomes necessary to receive offerings in cash, then so be it, even if some get lost in the post office somewhere, then so be it. God knows what needs to be done to keep this ministry spreading the Word across this world. You may have heard me say before that I do not have that much to lean on when the attacks come. That is the humble state God brings us to, the place where there is no place else to go but to Him. Unfortunately, some ministries have become too large for their own good and forgotten that the Lord has led them. As a result, now they rely on their legal counsel, their political influence, and their money to try to get through their trials, tribulations, and the unjustified accusations from unreliable sources. As I said, they will laugh at you, they will mock you, and they will also scorn you, but it does not change one iota that God will be there if He has found someone faithful and more concerned about God and His honor than about mammon.

In chapter 4:2, we see what Sanballat says. **“And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews?”** They might seem feeble now, but wait until God gets hold of them. It has never been by many; it has always been by the few that God works His will. That is the message of Gideon. That is also the example from Sampson, who was literally an army of one most of the time. The majority usually brings only confusion, where the minority usually directs and gives focus because there are not so many outside sources to confuse the way or forget what God wants accomplished.

Returning to verse 1 in Chapter 4 we read, **“Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth [burning and glowing with anger], and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren [the big mouth Sanballat] and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? [he was fearful of that wall] will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the**

rubbish which are burned?” The Samaritans tolerated the Jews who returned from captivity, who just built the temple, even though they also resisted against that. After the temple was complete, they did not see much damage so they tolerated it, because it was the place where the Jews went to worship and offer sacrifices. The temple did not change the political center of the area, but it was never designed to do that.

Now in verse three, Tobiah the Ammonite, the second political character, is speaking. It records, ***“Now Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.”*** They mocked Nehemiah and those who took on the task of restoring honor to the City of God. Sanballat began by calling the Jews feeble, and Tobiah continues the mocking by declaring that even if a fox goes up on the wall, he shall even break it down. In the flesh, at this point I would like to take things into my own hands and deal with these political fools the way the world deals with them, even though I know better because of what Ephesians 6 says. These are human instruments driven by evil forces to stop God’s plan and keep God’s city in shame, but what does Nehemiah do? He did not run to his attorneys. He did not run to his legal counsel. He ran to God. I was especially privileged in my younger years to be part of a ministry with a man who did not take legal counsel as the final word. He was led by God to direct how the legal counsel should respond to government intrusions. Yes, it cost him dearly, both in the flesh by losing friends, losing acquaintances, and eventually even losing tens of millions of dollars. If a value was put on it today, hundreds of millions of valuable broadcasting licenses were eventually lost because of his declaration that he would not show the government what it wanted. If anything in this world comes between you and God, it is not worth keeping. I have lived through it. I saw as the ministry I was part of lose its license and lose any hope of proclaiming the message to the world.

It was a dark hour on May 23, 1983. I have told this story before, but it is worth repeating. For two entire days, it was most depressing and gloomy, even though his broadcast went out with a bang at midnight. Another gentleman and myself went home with my mentor and believe me, it was a long night that turned into a long day, and another long night. For two whole days, it was gloomy. He also asked two individuals who were part of the studio to see if he could get on some local airwaves or some local television station. In the Los Angeles area, channel 30 had been lost to our broadcast, not all the cable stations that we have now existed. Cable was just in its infancy and there were not all the satellites all over the sky like now. These individuals from the studio had great intentions. They were acting from their hearts, but they could not sell ice water to the devil in the lake of fire. In those days, you had to convince the established cable companies and television stations why it was important to carry the ministry on their network. I do not like the word ‘selling,’ but in a sense, that was what you were doing. I was just a dumb kid; I think I was 23 or 24 years old, and he asked my opinion about what we were doing wrong and did anybody want to hear this message any longer. We did not have a marketing department. In those days, most of the ministry was run by young men in their early to mid-twenties, so I told him to let me try, even though I did not know how God was going to do it.

In spite of that, the doors began opening up, even though I was not that much different from the other people who were trying. I knew something about those people. They were trying, but their hearts were not in it. They were still dealing with the loss of channel 30, then eventually channel 38, the FM radio station, and channel 13 in Hartford, Connecticut. Eventually all of the stations

would go off the air within a short amount of time. So their hearts were not in it and when your heart is not in something, whether you are doing God's work or not, the desire is not going to be there to accomplish the goal set before you. But when God sees the desire in your heart, He will empower you, He will strengthen you, and He will give you the provisions to make sure the job gets done. It is that simple. I kept knocking on doors and eventually we went on a station. I think the very first station was channel 34 in Kentucky that broadcasted to North Tennessee, Mid Tennessee, all the way up to Louisville. So many people were watching; then Dallas; then Reno; then North Carolina, and Manhattan Cable, and others.

I remember going to Disneyland to a cable convention just before Christmas. I think it was December 21. I did not go there for any reason other than just hoping to run into people to tell them who Gene Scott was and see if I could get another chance, another ear that would listen to what we had to offer and how we could change people's lives. When I returned, a meeting was set with Gene Scott, myself, and an individual. We met at a restaurant in Beverly Hills and signed the contract for the United Artists Cable, or at least a guarantee the contract would come. On December 24, that contract came which opened other doors and I remember Gene Scott being so thrilled over it. The devil thought God's program was coming to a halt and was defeated, but God saw the heart and advanced the ministry even further than before when all the licenses and television stations were in place. Those of you who were also a part of that ministry for the longest period of time, know what I am talking about.

The point is, when God sees the heart and sees the desire, He will provide what is needed to get the job done, no matter how they laugh at and mock you. Do you think when I went down to that cable convention at Disneyland that I did not have some people look at me strangely? There were not that many broadcasting networks at that time. During that convention, I am sure plenty of those people that I talked to thought I was silly. But I believed I was empowered by God on a mission to rebuild the walls. In this case, the walls were the network. No matter how many stories you hear about me, no one can take away how the rebuilding process started.

Some of you need that history lesson because you think I am inexperienced and coming out of nowhere after my mentor left to be with his Lord reaping the rewards for his proclamation of the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I just did not come out of the woodwork. God has directed my life. He gave me enough training when my mentor went on to be with the Lord so I could be here now. Yes, we are just a band of Hearers of Faith, including others who listen and are not yet Hearers of Faith, but this is just the beginning. There is an army developing for God to take the message of the Good News around the world in these last days. We will have people that laugh, we will have people that scorn, and we will have people that mock, but I am not concerned about them. I will keep resisting them, I will keep fighting them, and they will see the wall being built in this ministry is for God's glory.

Look at the example of Nehemiah. When these political enemies of Nehemiah came and laughed, mocked, and scorned, what did he do? He went to the Lord. In verse four, you see his prayer. Nehemiah prays, ***"Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head...."*** I do not have to agree with the doctrines of the ministries that are attacked now. I pray the same prayer, ***"Hear, O our God; for we are despised,"*** because I can identify them. Whether their doctrine is correct or not, they still declare the name of Jesus Christ. I will

let God sort it all out. To some of those ministries, God might even say as He says in the New Testament, in His gospels, “Get out of here, I never really knew you.” That is up to Him to sort out. That is not my job. My job is to keep declaring the message and keep it on course. Yes, I come against some of these ministries at times, mostly because of the prosperity doctrine, not because of their desire and their efforts to get the Word out.

Nehemiah’s prayer, **“Hear, O our God; for we are despised,”** I say tonight, not only for this ministry, but also for every ministry under demonic attack, through political intrusions by individuals governed by evil spirits in the unseen world. **“Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head** [“Let them have it, O God”], **and give them for a prey in the land of captivity:**
And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders.”

After his prayer, they went back to getting the job done, the job that was commissioned and directed by God with Nehemiah as their leader. Verse 6 continues, **“So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof:** [It was half way up around the city] **for the people had a mind to work.”** They were determined and did not let the laughing and the scolding and mocking get to them. They kept the progress moving forward.

Verse seven goes on to tell us, **“But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, And conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.”** The reality was setting in that the political center was going to change and they would have less influence, so these evil political mongers were thinking they had better take some action while they still could. They wanted this progress stopped immediately, so they conspired to come and fight against Jerusalem and its people to stop the progress.

In verse nine, we see Nehemiah’s response. **“Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.”** They are not saying, “Oh woe is me, what did God lead us into? Would He have us start something and not finish it? What kind of God do we serve?” No, they went back and **“made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them** [their enemies] **day and night, because of them.”** Like I said, most of these inexperienced Christian ministries get too big for their own good and do not realize they will come under the same attacks, but I will declare that even if God is not leading them, because they identify as a Christian ministry, they will be attacked. They will even be an easier target to get to the true ministries who are doing what God wills. They do not set their guard up to watch day and night. They take it for granted thinking they are invincible, thinking that because they preach such a likeable message that the world will not turn on them, but the world will.

In verse 10, we see the weakness and discouragement begin to take place and I can identify with this. It states, **“And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.”** A better Hebrew translation of the word *decayed* is ‘fainted and became weak.’ When you are under oppression and worrying, you start having concerns outside of what you are doing for God, which will make you weak and feel

like you are about ready to faint and fall over, but there is a reason for it. They were really making an excuse. They tried to find a circumstantial excuse that they could see with their eyes to get out from accomplishing God's will, but Nehemiah being this smart captain of this army of builders, being led and inspired by God, saw through all that.

In verse 11 we read the real reason for their state, ***“And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.”*** So why were these builders worried, why were they concerned, why did they become so weak to the point of a fainting condition? It was because of their adversaries who were declaring, ***“They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them.”*** It did not take long for these evil politicians and the army they were forming to tell the builders, “Keep on building, we are coming. We are going to be stealth-like. You will not even see us coming,” even though at this point, it was just a threat. In my experience, most politicians do not stand behind their convictions. As long as they have the government behind them, they will fight to a certain degree. Years ago in the State of California, residents could sue a politician if a law brought harm to the very structure of the church or an individual in the church, so the politicians would consider carefully before passing some laws. However, when they could pass laws as a big bully supported and backed by government with no liability, they did not mind. I had seen that for myself as part of the ministry in the 1970's. I cannot even tell you how many attorneys discouraged my mentor and pastor telling him that he needed to back down, that his institution could not win, but he did not stop. Fortunately, when the courts heard the case, he exposed these politicians for what they were. Thank God, there were still judges in the court system who understood this was really a political agenda against an individual. In the end, the court agreed that he could sue the politicians and they would be liable if they were found to be at fault. Guess what, the politicians backed down just like any big bully.

We see this with these adversaries in Nehemiah's day. They were trying to tell the children of Israel, the builders of the wall, “We will be stealth-like, we will come against you and you will not even know we are there. We will destroy you and the work will cease.” The builders of the wall began to wonder why they should go through all the work if the enemy would only come against them. They were worried about their families and children. But, Nehemiah, led by God, said in verse 12, ***“And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you. Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, and on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.”*** In case you do not understand this verse, Nehemiah brought everybody behind the walls and inside the city. Some in lower places and some in higher places so the individuals, mostly the men who were building the walls, could have the assurance their families would be safe. If the enemy were to attack, at least their families would be protected behind the parts of the wall already built. This was a brilliant plan that tells me God led Nehemiah!

In verse 14 Nehemiah continues, ***“And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember [reflect, recollect, remind yourselves of] the Lord, which is great and terrible, [this is a bad translation, in Hebrew terrible is yare, awesome, awe, reverence] and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.”*** Nehemiah was telling them to not bow down to these

evil political mongers. Fight against them. Be ready to fight. Stand and withstand as Ephesians puts it in chapter 6 because as Nehemiah tells them, “All you have to do is remember what God has led you through and realize what a great and awesome God He is.” I declare it, and fight for the Christian brethren. I do not have to agree with what you are doing, but I can fight for you, your sons, your daughters, your wives, your houses, and your very existence to practice religious freedom in this country, United States of America.

When Nehemiah rallied them, he got everybody inside the city walls. Even though the walls were only halfway built, at least now the builders of the walls could fight for their own protection and their families’ protection. Nehemiah got everybody back on the same path of progress so the rebuilding could continue. With the same frame of mind, the same oneness of spirit, with the same goal; they went back to work. Verse 15 records, **“And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah.”** Everybody was one in spirit. When their enemies attacked, accused, laughed, mocked, scorned, and bullied, the enemy backed down, because the children of Israel were ready to work and fight.

In today’s age, we should be ready and spiritually armed with God’s armour listed in Ephesians 6 to proclaim and to resist. We proclaim the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and resist all the spiritual enemies who control the human instruments that want to stop the Word. Whether you agree with it or not, eventually they will come for you if you allow their attack to get a foothold. Read verse 16 and 17 again, **“And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held the weapon.”** They had a trowel in one hand and a weapon in the other.

As my mentor would say, “You have the Constitution in one hand and God’s Word in the other. Let’s do battle.” To that, I add what we have available in Ephesians 6, which is the whole armour of God, the spiritual armour necessary to do battle in today’s day and age. Without it, we do not stand a chance against these wicked spirits. Nehemiah’s men had a weapon in one hand and a trowel in the other and they kept working. Remember, “If God be for us who can be against us.” I personally declare it for myself, and I want to declare it for all, “If God be for us, who can be against us.” I say it to what is presently attacking the church in this country, “We have the Constitution in one hand and the Bible in the other.”

In addition to what Nehemiah’s men had, by his right side, verse 18 tells of the trumpeter who would warn of any incoming danger. **“For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me. And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, [who was standing right next to Nehemiah] resort ye thither**

unto us: our God shall fight for us.” So when Nehemiah told the trumpeter to blow that trumpet, people could be warned of any incoming danger. The people would know to gather and form a resistance knowing what Nehemiah declared would be true, if they would just faith in His Word, declared by Nehemiah at this time, which I believe was directed by God. He was just the instrument moving his lips to proclaim it.

That is what the Christian brethren should do now; rally the troops, become one, and shut the mouth of the enemy, the naysayers, the mockers and the scorners, and put them in their place. Our country still allows that to happen. Unfortunately, I do not think it will happen because their eyes are more on the riches they accumulate instead of the principles that are not only laid out in God’s book, but also the Constitution of this land.

As for Nehemiah and his men, verse 21 records, ***“So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.”*** They kept working standing guard day and night ready for battle. This is their armour, but we have more than they had, because we have Christ Jesus who will never leave us nor forsake us. Nehemiah and his men had a long workday, but they continued on, that is uncommon to find today.

Verse 22 continues, ***“Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day.”***

So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, saving that everyone put them off for washing.” The only time they took their clothes off day or night was when they had to clean up and wash themselves. That symbolized that they kept their physical armour on continually ready to do battle at an instant’s notice. They were the true men of men of their day.

Of the armour listed in Ephesians 6, we do not wear it partially. We must wear the whole armour of God. It is not something we take off at night because it is not comfortable. No, it is worn day and night. Our spiritual enemy and his demons do not sleep; they do not need to. In the flesh, we become weak, but thank God we have spiritual armour and we have spiritual weapons that do not need to rest. They need to find a container full of faith, and we cannot wear God’s armour unless we are a container full of faith in His Word. God will not put His righteousness in us without faith and we will not have righteousness without faith. We need righteousness to wear that armour. Do not be fooled because the Holy Spirit will not dwell in any container that is not righteousness, which only comes through the blood of Jesus Christ and faithing in that blood. We have salvation by faith and grace. Only then, because we are a container filled with the Spirit, can we now wear that armour.

We need to wear God’s whole armour 24 hours a day, 365 days a year without exception. That may not sound appealing, but there is no choice if you want to be ready just as Nehemiah and his servants, brethren, and guards were, never taking off their clothes. Remember Gideon’s band. The final 300 were chosen because they lapped the water while keeping a lookout. They did not dive in the water face first because of their thirst. No, they were on the lookout, and it is the same here. Nehemiah’s band was on the lookout.

Today, we need those like Nehemiah's band on the lookout for the spirit of antichrist. We need those on guard for how this spirit is implemented and used by governmental institutions to bring the church under their control. Unfortunately, the message has not been that. Instead, they focus on loving one another only. However, I am assigned with both points of view. Satan and his demons carry on their work through human instruments. If I was not going to be attacked in the flesh by fleshly instruments, I would not need the armour and weapons described in Ephesians 6. The spiritual armour is used to fight against the resistance in the unseen world that really controls the seen world. Until you understand that, you will have no clue what Ephesians 6 is all about. We must stay ready day and night, because I never imagined in my wildest dreams that ministries would actually come under attack from the government and I find it very timely the way this Spiritual Warfare Series has been laid out.

In conclusion, go to II Timothy 2:1, ***"Thou therefore, my son, be strong [endunamoo, be strengthened] in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.***

Verse 3 continues, ***"Thou therefore endure hardness [kakopatheo is the Greek word, suffering hardships, troubles, afflictions] as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."*** You are chosen to be a soldier, a good soldier, of Jesus Christ.

In I Timothy 1:18, we are told, ***"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou [you and me as well] by them mightest war a good warfare."*** In the Greek, the word ***"warfare"*** means to lead soldiers into battle. We are to war a good warfare and Paul reminds Timothy he is to lead people into the battle for the age of eternity. Our battle is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ so some can hear and have everlasting eternal life with Christ forevermore. Satan is fighting hard against that war. He does not want to see anyone faithing and trusting in God. He does not want to see anyone loyal to Christ's Word because he wants to take you with him to the lake of fire. But know, that as long as I am around, I will keep declaring why we must keep our armour on constantly, 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

We are to war a good warfare against the unseen and the seen ones used by Satan to stop the Word of God from being preached to the rest of the world. If you are going to be alongside me helping me get the job done, declare it so we can keep moving forward. Start a Nehemiah band across this world that will go against tyranny aware that the world hates the true message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Do Not Flee or Yield

In this chapter I will share with you a portion of a book written in 1655 by an old fighter and declarer of faith. I like to read from the ‘Old-timers’ because they told it like it was and did not worry if their congregation would leave if they said anything they did not like or agree with. I have a growing collection of books written mostly 100 or more years ago, because I like the way they seriously approached Christianity.

Recently, I was in a supermarket and saw a new book from one of these popular Christian ministers, Joel Osteen, who has a church in Texas. This new book is titled, Your Best Life Now, which is just another positive thinking message. If anyone listens to that ministry long enough, you will see it is designed after Tony Robbins and his positive thinking seminars, but with a Christian name on it. However, as I have said before, I challenge anyone to go to a Christian bookstore and try to find a section on spiritual warfare. Half the books you can find are full of silly ways to deliver people from demons and it is usually the smallest section in the bookstore. Some bookstores do not carry any books about spiritual warfare! I have read everything available on the subject that I could find, and if you read some of these books, it is comical the way they communicate to people the process of deliverance from demons. It is unscriptural heresy.

The point is, I like to read the classics. These are people who fought the good fight of faith and who took their calling seriously. They knew they were chosen and knew how serious the spiritual fight really is as you face your everyday circumstances. I am inspired by reading what they have to say and how they said it. They do not try to sound cute or sweet, and they did not cater to your flesh; they just said it. That does not mean I necessarily agree with everything they said, but at least they had the spirit to say it, which is not found often in today’s authors.

The author of this book is William Gurnall and he writes,

“In verse 13 of Ephesians 6, the Apostle Paul clearly states the kind of armor you as a Christian must use, God’s armor. Next, so you will not be tempted to fashion counterfeit armor in your own private forge and call it the armor of God [for example the positive principle heresy that is dominating Christian thought today], Paul described the true armor piece by piece beginning in verse 14. Roman Catholics and Protestants alike have often been guilty of devising their own weapons to fight the devil, weapons God never appointed. Notice in verse 14 that Paul specifies the necessary posture for a Christian soldier, ‘Stand therefore.’ What good will it do to be properly armed if we do not stand in valiant opposition to the enemy? To stand is the opposite of to flee or surrender. A captain who sees his men retreating or on the verge of surrender gives the order, ‘Stand,’ and every soldier worthy of his calling responds at once to his captain’s voice. In like manner, every Christian is to respond to God’s command to ‘Stand,’ or in other words, steadfastly to resist and never yield to the attacks of Satan.”

There is presently an attack on churches that preach the prosperity doctrine. I do not agree with these ministries or what they preach, but the attack has been on six different ministries. I read an article about this where one of these ministries has already declared they are going to cooperate completely with this government Finance Committee’s request. They are not resisting, instead

they are yielding to the attacks of Satan. You may wonder that if I do not agree with the prosperity doctrine, how do I know it is Satan attacking them. I know because they are the easy targets. They are the most vulnerable. They expose themselves. In a sense, they are no worse than the get-rich-quick schemes of real estate or infomercials on late-night television.

What these ministries have said is to sow your seed, plant your seed, just as they have done, and you will be rich. Unfortunately, most of the people who gave for those reasons will not see an additional dime of income from planting that seed. First, they gave for the wrong reasons but they were also vulnerable. Someone once told me that is how God humbles them. No, it is not. God already has ways to humble us and government attack on these ministries has implications that go far beyond these ministries. This attack will eventually affect this ministry as well as many other churches and ministries, some of which do preach the rightly divided Word. This attack is really on our constitutional rights. Eventually, the day will come when individual governments will unify with a world type of government that they control, and they will decide what ministries preach and how much money ministries can receive including how much money a minister can receive.

At this time, however, we are fortunate to have a Constitution in this country. This is different than the verses in Romans 13 about bowing down to government. I do not bow down to government. I live by the Constitution of the United States of America. The point is, the foothold that Satan gains is because of the vulnerability government has created in ministries who allow them to inspect what they think is a charitable organization, but this is nothing new at all. If you study history, especially of the last ten years, the government wants to turn all non-profit corporations into charitable organizations. The documents to support what I am saying are there. Just go back and do your research. Government is trying to combine them.

I heard someone say that Gene Scott, my mentor and pastor for 30 years, fought the battle against government intrusion. Yes, he did, but the Petris bill was not that effective, although it was passed. Dr. Hayslip is the one who penned the bill, along with Petris. Dr. Hayslip is the one who collected the signatures. He worked closely with Gene Scott at that time and the bill did get passed, but the bill only applied to the State of California. It did nothing to stop the Federal Attorney General. I get amused listening to silliness over the airwaves trying to describe what really happened when they were not even there. Ultimately, Gene Scott had a judge here in Southern California take a look at what the Attorney General and the Deputy Attorney Generals were doing. Gene Scott and the attorneys working for him decided to go after the State Attorney Generals because they were not liable for any of their actions believing they were protected by the State of California and could not be sued. When the judge put down his glasses, he said right to the Attorney General, "If there are any wrong doings on your behalf, I am allowing the church to come after you. You will be liable for your actions. You will be liable for the way you pursued these ministries." In this case, he was referring to Faith Center. I cannot go through all the details, including the illegal way these documents were served, in some cases at gunpoint. A lot of you do not know the history. A lot of things have not been told. I was there! When a judge in Southern California told those sons of Belial they could be liable for their actions, they quickly reversed their decision, because they did not want to risk being sued and losing in court. Not just because they would lose the lawsuit, but they would be financially liable for any damages they might have cost the ministry and the church. That is what turned the corner. That is just one

example of resisting and pursuing every avenue. We legally exercised the rights that we have in this country, but the Petris bill was advantageous only in the State of California. That is why I get amused listening to people trying to use it to fight the present attack, which is a Federal attack. If the Petris bill had that much impact, the ministry would never have lost its television broadcast license, which at that time was worth about \$150 million. Because the FCC (Federal Communication Committee) is regulated by a federal jurisdiction, the Petris bill from the State of California was worthless on the federal level. There is no nice way of saying it. The bill was useless on a federal level, which is why the current attack on ministries happening today in this country has great ramifications if you do not resist. On the other hand, if we resist, we can hold the spirit of antichrist back a little longer.

I do not agree with any of these ministries teachings about giving and I am not that familiar with other subjects they teach about, but regarding giving, I am in total disagreement with what they have produced. It is false doctrine and it is not Biblical. As for the federal government, I find it amusing we can have all the state battles we want, but if the federal government gets a foothold into dictating different protections under the Constitution or changing how we exercise our religious freedom in this country, in the flesh I say, "Glory to God!" That tells me the rapture of the church is getting closer. Until then, however, we are to occupy until He comes and you occupy by resisting, not surrendering and not fleeing from the fight. If these ministries had any integrity at all, they would unite and fight. These are fairly large ministries that could make an impact, but instead, one by one they will do the cowardly thing and cooperate by exposing things that are sacred. This is what Gurnell writes about in his book, but we do not have men of God any longer willing to make that type of stand.

"In like manner, every Christian is to respond to God's command to 'Stand,' or in other words, steadfastly to resist and never yield to the attacks of Satan. Among soldiers, cowardice and disobedience are among the most damning sins. How then can they be considered slight offences by those who have Christ for their captain and the devil as their enemy? To resist some temptations may cost us dearly. 'Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin,' the Apostle said in Hebrews 12:4. He implies that spiritual warfare may well come to that and if it should, it does not alter the case nor give us an excuse to choose to sin rather than to suffer. When is it ever permissible for a Christian to shirk his duty because it is accompanied by danger?"

Another book I saw recently from one of these ministries was titled, All That You Are. But we are all nothing if we do not resist the enemy clothed in God's armor, which is even more important for church leaders, pastors, or a ministry with millions of followers. What a responsibility they have to demonstrate that God gave them all they have in the first place, not through works, but by resisting even though they may be in danger or may lose all they have. In the Bible, Job lost it all; family, wealth, and servants, but he stood the test of time and put his focus back on God. When that happened, not only did God replace his family, but also God replenished all his wealth, more so than before Job's trials and tribulations. Talk is cheap. False doctrine is even cheaper.

“If we are to be successful soldiers, the preservation of God’s honor must always take precedence over our fears. Just as an earthly soldier represents his country’s honor in battle, the Christian represents God’s honor whenever he is called to contend with the devil.

David’s subjects valued him as worth 10,000 of their own lives. Every one of them would die rather than endanger their leader. Surely, God deserves as much from His subjects. How dishonorable to expose His blessed name to any reproach, rather than expose ourselves to a little scorn, temporal loss, or trouble.”

We see this in the example of Nehemiah. Even though they were laughing, scorning, and mocking, Nehemiah and his band accomplished what God wanted and His enemies did not last long.

“The Roman General Pompey boasted that a nod of his head would send his soldiers scrambling up the steepest rock on their hand and knees though they were knocked down as fast as they advanced. This is the kind of loyalty God wants from us and while He is never reckless with the blood of His servants, sometimes He tests our loyalty in hard service and sharp temptation so that through our faithfulness and bravery, He may triumph over Satan.”

‘Faithfulness’ is the key word there. Any time God triumphs over Satan because of our faithfulness and bravery; He is showing off, to not only Satan, but also his demonic army. Just as He did with Job, God was able to tell Satan, “They came through because they trusted me and were concerned about my honor. They were concerned about not leaving one promise undone. They were concerned about my word.” My mentor would say, “If you are going to be a Christian, be one,” and that is still true today. Be more concerned about God’s honor. Remember, we are in a war in which God supplies the armor sufficient for each battle. That is what Ephesians 6 is all about.

“To allow a well-armed fortress to fall into enemy hands would be a disgrace to the defending soldiers. Spiritually speaking, such defeat is even more dishonorable because God in Christ gives His soldiers all the power they need to resist the devil at every turn. God provides armor to defend the Christian while fighting, not to protect him while retreating. Stand, and the day is yours. Flee or yield, and all is lost.”

I have been starting each day by claiming that promise, but unfortunately, we do not have ministries that want to stand. We do not have ministries that understand if you do not stand all will be lost. As a result, eventually more of our Constitutional freedoms in this country will be diminished.

“I have read of great captains who purposely cut off all avenues of retreat so their soldiers would fight to the death. William the Conqueror, as soon as his army set foot on English soil, sent away his ships in full sight of his men. God makes no provisions for cowardice. In His armory, there is not a piece to be found for the back. Here is an awesome truth, ‘if any man draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.’ He who faces the battle with confidence comes off with his life, but he who defects wins only God’s displeasure. What a poor exchange; to turn from fighting against Satan and engage God as your enemy. There is comfort in fighting Satan, even when it draws blood.”

Imagine saying that to a church somewhere across this land or even in the world, ‘There is comfort in fighting Satan.’ However, I would change that to say, ‘There is comfort in fighting sin and Satan, even when it draws blood.’ Most Christians understand that Christ spilled His blood for us so we can be reconciled back to the Father, but God forbid if we must deny ourselves and take up our cross to follow Him. Even worse, God forbid if we draw an ounce of blood to follow Him. This is not a popular message or the message of today that preaches God will make you rich and happy.

I remember about a year after I first became a Christian. I had a cold and someone in the ministry saw that I was sick and asked what was wrong with me. I said that I had a cold and this person said that to admit that was to give in to the devil. This person was at least 50 years older than I was at the time, so I did not want to be rude or disrespectful, but in my thoughts I knew this was about the stupidest thing I had heard since I became a Christian. Why would I not want to tell God about the problem? First, He already knew about it, but how could I ask the Lord to heal me without telling Him I had a cold? At that time, this stupid tradition was common in that ministry. The reason I am telling this story is to illustrate how through traditions this person believed they were resisting the devil by not recognizing his existence. I am not sure if the devil gave me the cold or not, and now we have antibacterial gel and soap used so much that often we do not have any natural built-in immune system to fight off viruses, and that is what today’s Christians remind me of. They have ‘antibacterialized’ themselves so much that when the devil does attack, they have no fortitude to withstand the evil virus of Satan, and that is what this person did to resist and fight against an enemy attack. Their way was to not recognize the attack was from the enemy; therefore, you might be healed or might not feel as bad, but it was stupid. I prayed God would not let me ever become a super-spiritual unfit warrior. If I have a cold, I pray that He heals me, in Jesus’ name.

Read carefully what Gurnall writes next:

“There is comfort in fighting Satan, even when it draws blood, but there is no comfort at all in enduring the fiery indignation of an avenging God. What Satan lays on, God can take off. But who can give relief from what God lays on? Would you rather die in the heat of the battle fighting for your country or be executed for cowardice or treason?”

Gurnall goes on to write about the verses in Ephesians 6,

“[S]tanding is a waking, watching, posture. In the military ‘stand to your arms’ means stay alert and watch. In some cases, it is death to a soldier to be found asleep, when he is assigned to guard duty for instance. He is to watch so that the rest can sleep. Shirking his duties endangers the lives of the entire army so he deserves the sentence of death.”

We must also stay alert and watch, but even Christ could not get His disciples to watch even one hour. They fell asleep. They succumbed to the flesh. You cannot tell me they did not hear their Lord agonizing in the garden sweating blood because He knew what He was facing. In the end, He knew it was “not my will, but Thine will.” God’s will was for Him to go to the cross for our benefit.

“Watchfulness is more important for the Christian soldier than any other. In temporal battles, soldiers fight against men who need to sleep the same as themselves, but the saint’s enemy, Satan, is always awake and walking his rounds. Since the devil never sleeps, the Christian puts himself in grave danger by falling asleep spiritually; that is, by becoming secure and careless. [Remember, one of the methods of the devil is to bring you to a place of complacency.] Either the unregenerate part of his nature will portray him or grace will not be alert to discover the enemy and prepare for the assault. Satan will be upon him before he is awake enough to draw his sword.

You should be aware that the saint’s sleeping time is Satan’s prime tempting time. The weakest temptation is strong enough to foil a Christian who is napping in security. While Sampson slept, Delilah cut his locks. A drunken Noah slept as his graceless son took pleasure in seeing his father’s nakedness. Thus, the Christian sleeping in false security may be taken by surprise.

Sleep steals upon the soul as quietly as it does on the body. Take heed that you do not indulge yourself in laziness. Stir yourself into action as we tell someone who is drowsy to stand up and walk around. Yield to idleness as sloth and they will grow upon you. Busy yourself in your Christian duties and spiritual drowsiness will flee.”

I always say, “Busy yourself by employing the Word of God, studying the Word of God, and helping ministries employ the Word of God.”

“David first awakened his tongue to sing and his hand to play on the harp, then his heart awakened also in Psalms 57:8. I have heard that when the lion first wakes, he lashes himself with his tail to stir and rouse his courage, then away he goes after his prey. We have reason enough to excite and provoke us to all the care and diligence possible.

Why, the Christian must remain wakeful. The Christian work is too important and demanding to be done while half asleep or in halfhearted fashion. If you have ever walked along the edge of a raging river or hiked to the crest of a steep hill, I doubt that you grew sleepy. As a Christian, your path is so narrow and the danger is so great, it calls for both a nimble eye to discern and a steady eye to direct. A sleepy eye can do neither. Examine any duty and you will find it lies between two dangerous extremes. Faith, the great work of God, cuts its way between the mountain of presumption and the gulf of despair. Patience is the grace necessary to keep us from suffering a stroke of sleepy stupidity, which would deprive us of our senses or from flying into a rage of discontent that would deprive us of our reason. Keeping a proper balance is essential. Any duty we perform for the cause of Christ takes us very near the enemy’s quarters. Do not think you will pass by undetected. Your approach sounds an alarm and Satan comes out immediately to oppose you; thus, it is necessary that you remain constantly watchful.”

What we need today more than ever are watchful Christians who understand that as you get closer to enemy quarters, he is going to be coming after you and coming after you hard.

The entire section prior to Hebrews 10:35, is about the believer’s access to God. Verse 35 states, ***“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.”***

In other words, do not give up or lose courage. Have faith in God's Word, because the reward will be great. I cannot describe what type of rewards we will get in heaven with any kind of accuracy, but I will guarantee one thing, they will be greater than anything we can imagine, as long as we remain faithful.

Verse 36 goes on to say, "***For ye have need of patience [or endurance], that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.***" As I have said before, you must deny yourself and take up your cross before you understand the will, or *thelema*, of God. Many people think 'taking up your cross' is your trials and afflictions. No, it is not and Scripture is quite clear. It is taking up your cross in the employment of the Word of God the way God has called you, either by supporting someone, supporting some church, actively participating in whatever that church or ministry requires you to do, or becoming a teacher of the Word yourself. Once you do that, believe me, the enemy will send his attacks because of that employment, meaning that you have become involved. How many of you got up this morning with the attitude that no matter what happens during the day, if you must deny yourself, take up the cross, and following Christ, you will stay true to that calling? How many of you understand the promise of eternal life that is yet to come, and the rewards yet to come will also be great if you just keep hanging on to God's Word?

With that knowledge, read verse 36 again,

"For ye have need of endurance, that, after ye have done the thelema, [The will of God; denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus.] ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just [really the righteous or the righteous ones] shall live by faith [pistis]...." In other words, because of faith, we are imputed with righteousness and we get righteousness from God by faith. As I said before, we cannot have the Holy Spirit if we are not righteous and we cannot have righteousness unless we are faithing in God's Word and Christ's blood. Righteousness will only dwell in containers filled with faith, then the Holy Spirit comes and He will mold you into the person that He wants you to become. This does not happen by a set of rules and regulations and not by traditions of man. It comes by what He sees as best for you for His purposes rather than man's purposes.

Returning to verse 38 we read, "***Now the righteous shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.***" It is faith that pleases God. Without faith, it is impossible to please God! Once we have that faith, we are righteous because God gives that righteousness and we have a righteous container the Holy Spirit can now dwell in. If we draw back, all that righteousness removed from us and there is no pleasure that God can have in us. Do not draw back, retreat, or stop resisting. Instead, continue acting in faith in His Word, and we will have God's righteousness and the Holy Spirit indwelling in us.

Verse 39 tells us, "***But we are not of them [we are a chosen band] who draw back unto perdition [unto destruction]; but of them that believe [faith is a better word] to the saving of the soul.***" Drawing back prevents God from having a faithing container for His purposes. Drawing back leads to destruction; God's armor does not protect your back. All of His armor is

for the front so we can wrestle, not with flesh and blood, but these unseen wicked spirit beings in the unseen world.

What many ministries do not recognizing is that they are wrestling against unseen forces and they are giving up too much ground. God will do the humbling and God will do the course correcting when He sees fit; that is not up to the government, which is the Constitution of the United States.

It is most important that we do not draw back. We must keep fighting the good fight of faith. We must keep resisting the enemy to the saving of the soul, including our own souls, while we keep faithing and warring a good warfare. Be a good soldier of Jesus Christ because you have been chosen to be one.

Blood and Flesh

Ephesians 6:10 begins, ***“Finally, my brethren, be strong [endunamoo, be strengthened or empowered] in the Lord, and in the power [kratos, force] of his might [ischus]. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles [methodeia, the schemes, the strategies] of the devil.”***

Some of you may wonder how long I will be teaching on these two verses, but now that the foundation has been set, this chapter will be focusing on verse 12. The subject of Spiritual Warfare, like the subject of giving, is never-ending and is seen throughout this whole book from Genesis to Revelation, including the Apocrypha, which originally was part of the King James Version between the Old and New Testament. However, before moving on to verse 12, I want to share something that lifted my spirits and hopefully, it will do the same for you.

“ROBERT THE BRUCE was king of Scotland from 1306 to 1329. Early in his reign King Edward I of England invaded his nation, defeated his army, and forced him into hiding. While on the run, Robert the Bruce took refuge in a cave. Completely disheartened, the Scottish king lay by a fire in the cave, ready to resign himself to complete defeat in the loss of his kingdom.”

This should sound familiar to you. It reminds me of the story of David when he was running from Saul. In this case, Robert the Bruce was running from the king of England. I prayed when I read this, “God give me cave dwellers who understand what it means to be in the cave,” but the story does not end there. In the past, I have preached about David in the cave of Adullam, and told you the meanings of their names. Although God’s Word in the story of David described those who did not have much, the meanings of their birth names proved differently. As each one of them came to David, God’s message to David was “take courage, this day will pass, this time will pass and you will be sitting on the throne as my representative over the nation of Israel.” This author continues,

“Completely disheartened, the Scottish king lay by a fire in the cave, ready to resign himself to complete defeat in the loss of his kingdom. But then, in the flickering firelight, he noticed a spider on the cave wall, spinning a web.”

Personally, I do not like spiders and cannot even imagine myself sitting in an uncomfortable, cold, damp cave, in the firelight, discouraged and defeated, watching a spider spin a web. Nonetheless,

“The spider repeatedly attempted to secure the web, then failed, attempted again, then failed. Finally, the spider was able to anchor the web, making it strong and secure. In the persistence of the spider, the Scottish king saw a metaphor of his own struggle against the English invader. He decided he would not allow himself to be defeated by past failures he had to continue the fight for Scottish freedom. Robert the Bruce left his cave, led his troops across the field of battle, and defeated the English invaders at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. [He won that battle, but the fight was not over.] He continued to persevere the next fourteen years until he finally won Scottish independence in 1328.”

Robert the Bruce acted because of a spider spinning a web. The spider was not successful the first time, so he kept spinning; was not successful the second time and still kept spinning. Eventually this spider was able to secure a strong web and that influenced Robert the Bruce to keep on fighting. If a spider did not lose perseverance, what more man can do! That spider might be a little thing, but it affected destinies and history.

“No battle was ever won without courage, perseverance, and strength.”

“Courage, perseverance and strength.” I preached a message about perseverance called ‘Enduring Faith,’ which is *hupomone* in Greek. It is endurance and enduring faith in God’s Word and God’s strength as described in Ephesians 6.

“And that is the challenge before us, clearly sounded in Ephesians 6. Paul calls us to be strong in the Lord. He calls us to understand the nature of our enemy, those wicked spirits in high places who lie behind the problem of human evil. And he calls us to put on our armor and join the battle.”

This spider became a source of encouragement to Robert the Bruce to keep on persevering. It is my hope in this Spiritual Warfare series that you find something that applies to your life so you keep on fighting the good fight of faith. It took a spider for Robert the Bruce, but we have so much more in God’s Book. It tells us what God is seeking from us and how others have realized they must do things God’s way, get back in line with Him, and put their trust and total faith on Him. Remember, ***“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*** In the Greek, that verse says, ***“hearing and hearing the Word of God.”*** It repeats itself meaning we must continue hearing; that is why ***“Faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of God;”*** not just once, but continually. We are to war a good warfare and we are to become a good soldier of Jesus Christ because, as Paul said to Timothy, we are chosen to be one. This is an entire book about spiritual warfare and as we get closer to the end of time, the battle will become increasingly more vicious and wicked because these evil spirits know the end of their time on this earth is quickly approaching.

With that, we know that Ephesians 6:11 tells us, ***“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles [methods] of the devil, [diablos, the accuser, the slanderer.]***

Verse 12 goes on to read, ***“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood....”*** However, the Greek translation of verse 12 actually reads, ***“Because our wrestling is not against blood and flesh,”*** which is very important to understand. Some modern translations translate this word as ‘struggle,’ but the word is ‘wrestle.’ In addition, the phrase ‘flesh and blood’ is used three times in the New Testament, but only once is it translated correctly. So before going any further in this verse, I want to show you what other authors have written. The following is what Chip Ingram writes. Although he does not say much, it is worth reading. He writes,

“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood. [Notice he did not say, ‘our struggle is not against blood and flesh.’ He read what was translated, ‘our struggle is not against flesh and blood.’] The Ephesians were not living in a vacuum. There’s a reason why Paul gave them these instructions. They may have been having some relationship issues or negative circumstances-

they may have been undergoing intense persecution from government authorities or worshippers of pagan gods and goddesses, for all we know but that's not why Paul urges them to be strong and put on their armor. The real issue, he says, is behind the scenes. They are in an intense, to-the-death wrestling match with supernatural, evil beings.

That's what his word struggle [wrestle] really means. It's a hand-to-hand combat practiced in ancient Greece in which two people would fight until one could hold the other person down. It required constant ['constant' being the key word there] exertion and concentration."

Remember that the next time you get tired of the struggles you have. Also, know you are very well aware because of what you have been taught, that it is an unseen struggle that you wish would be over, but it never will be. Yes, there may be times when God allows you to have some rest in the fight, but it is just a temporary rest that God allows to get you ready for the next battle. Ingram goes on to write,

"When Paul uses the word in Ephesians, he makes it clear that he's not writing about their outward circumstances or about people. The battle may have been manifesting itself in circumstances, city policies, oppression, and evil behavior, but the source was not flesh and blood. The battle is 'against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, [and] against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places' (v. 12). It's an invisible war."

I agree with this author. This is about the unseen instead of the seen and about what is seen that is controlled by the unseen powerful spirit forces. When people or institutions attack the church, it is Satan's plan and it is his unseen army controlling these individuals. Moving on, the following is what another author has said, although his description is a little lengthy. This author states,

"Your state in this life is set out by the word wrestling. Though sometimes it is used to define a form of recreational sport, here it describes the sharpness of your encounter with the enemy. Paul uses it to convey the notion of a bloody and lasting war between the Christian and his opponent. Two things make wrestling a sharper combat than others. First, it is a single combat. Strictly speaking, wrestling is not a team sport, but primarily a 'one-on-one' contest where one opponent singles out another and enters the arena with him, as with David and Goliath. Each wrestler exerts his whole force and strength against the other. Such combat is much fiercer than fighting in an army where, though the battle is sharp and long, the soldier is not always fighting. He can stop occasionally to get his breath. In fact, he may escape without a scratch, because in war the enemy's aim is not at one man in particular but at the whole regiment. In wrestling, however, each contestant is the sole object of his challenger's fury, and must be shaken and tried until one or the other is proclaimed victorious.

Whether you like it or not, you must go into the ring with Satan. He has not only a general malice against the army of saints, but a particular spite against every single child of God. As our Lord delights to have private communion with His saint, so the devil delights to challenge the Christian when he gets him alone.

Second, wrestling is a close combat. Armies fight at some distance; wrestlers grapple hand-to-hand. You may be able to dodge an arrow shot from a distance, but when the enemy actually has hold of you, you must either resist manfully or fall shamefully at his feet. When Satan

comes after you, he moves in close, takes hold of your very flesh and corrupt nature, and by this shakes you.

‘We wrestle’ encompasses everyone. You may have noticed that the apostle changes the pronoun ‘ye’ in the former verse, into ‘we’ and this, that he may include himself. He wants you to know the quarrel is with every saint. Satan neither fears to assault the minister nor distains to wrestle the lowliest saint in the congregation. Great and small, minister and people, all must wrestle- not one part of Christ’s army is in the heat of battle and the other is at ease in their quarters.

The length of a man’s combat with Satan measures the same as the length of his life.”

There are no exceptions. If you are faithing in God’s Word, then you are pleasing God because faith pleases God; it is impossible to please God without faith. However, you have also just become an enemy of Satan, so prepare for the wrestling match and everything the devil plans to throw at you because it is coming. But do not forget, greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world. As soon as you become a true Christian, faithing in His Word, keeping faith in His Word, you have an enemy for life no matter how long you live. The demons assigned to you will be there; you do not have a choice.

“He is, as Jeremiah said of himself, born ‘a man of strife’ (Jeremiah 15:10). And once he becomes a saint, the struggle increases. From your spiritual birth to your natural death, from the hour you first set your face toward heaven until you set your foot inside the gate, you will have wars with Satan, sin, and self. Israel’s march out of Egypt is, in a figurative way, our open declaration of war against the forces of darkness. And when do they have peace? Not until they reach Canaan.”

I have said repeatedly, the rain falls on the just and the unjust alike, but when you become a Christian, you become a follower of Jesus Christ. When you deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him, the intensity of the struggle increases dramatically. Through these authors, the point is made that we are in a wrestling match and hand-to-hand combat with our archenemy.

As I continue, you must first understand that I read the New Testament through the blood of Jesus Christ. Everything has to agree with that premise. Otherwise, why be a Christian without understanding the importance of the blood of Jesus Christ. In chapter three of this volume titled, ‘Jesus’ Blood is the Key,’ we went from the cross, to Hades, to the heavenlies. If you remember, we read what Revelation describes as the key prior to the resurrection that released those in paradise so He could take them to the heavenlies. Once there, Christ cleansed the heavenlies with His blood because Satan was still in the heavenlies, traveling to and fro reporting to God. Satan brought sin, rebellion, deceitfulness, slandering, and everything evil not only to this earth, but also to the heavenlies. That is why as I read the New Testament through the blood of Jesus Christ. Likewise, when reading the Old Testament, I see the things to come prophesied about the spilling of Christ’s blood. That is the premise I always take.

As we have already read, Ephesians 6:12 states, *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood,”* but the original text reads, *“For we wrestle not against blood and flesh.”*

Genesis 32:22 tells of an Old Testament wrestler, Jacob, who wrestled with God. Prior to this, in chapter 31, Jacob runs away from Laban, his uncle, and takes his family with him. Laban pursues Jacob as these two scoundrels are literally trying to deceive each other. However, God intervenes and deals with Laban. Laban makes an agreement, or covenant, with Jacob that they would not cross over onto the other's land. Then Jacob prepares to meet Esau. So we see Laban on one side, Esau on the other, and Jacob in the middle. Jacob knew he could not go back into Laban's territory, so there was no escape in that direction. In the end, Jacob got what he deserved, but at this point, he was caught in the middle between Laban and Esau. Jacob did not know what his encounter with Esau would bring; danger or friendship and forgiveness. Remember Jacob cheated his brother out of the blessings.

So what does Jacob do? He finally latches onto God as described in verses 22 through 28. Here we read, ***“And he rose up that night...”*** Many people think that Jacob wrestled with an angel, but I believe it was with the pre-incarnated Christ. Many people also believe that he wrestled the entire night. No, he did not. I do not think it was that long because the phrase ***“he rose up that night,”*** tells me it was already evening when he rose up, possibly the middle of the night.

Returning to verse 22, we read, ***“And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.”*** Jacob sent away his possessions and his family leaving himself left alone.

Verse 24 continues, ***“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man [I believe the pre-incarnated Christ] with him until the breaking of the day.”*** Again, I do not think they wrestled that long, just long enough for God to see what was in his heart.

Verse 25 tells us, ***“And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.”*** God saw that Jacob, now having no one to turn to, was not going to let go. Jacob finally came to a turning point in his life no longer chasing his own way or trying to deceive and cheat his brethren. He has Laban on the left, he has Esau on the right, and he is struck in the middle brought to a point knowing, “I cannot do this any longer God. I have been running in circles, doing things my own way and look where it has gotten me. I surrender now to you.” And by not letting go of the pre-incarnated Christ, hanging on with dear life, with no one else to turn to, Jacob finally was a servant of God that God could do something with. I find it amazing that here, even though he was injured in this wrestling match, which probably left him with a limp for the rest of his life, he still would not let go.

Because of this, I pray to God daily, “Lord don't let me lose my focus. Let me not let go. Let me recognize that I need to be pressing closer to you, not thinking that I can do this in my own strength, but only in your strength can I accomplish anything that you want me to accomplish.” I pray daily that I have Jacob's strength to not let go. Not because I am in a difficult situation, but because I know that I need to press close. That is why Paul says in Philippians 3:14 that we ***“press toward the mark.”*** In the Greek, this is a stretching out to reach the finish line first, as in a sporting event such as a running race, stretching out, trying to reach the mark, trying to reach the tape, knowing that if I get there the victory is won and the devil did not have the last laugh.

Returning to Genesis, as the story continues, we see Jacob has now become determined. ***“And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.”*** Jacob was not looking for his own approval anymore; he was looking for God’s approval.

Verse 27 tells us, ***“And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.”*** In this verse, the pre-incarnated Christ is reminding Jacob who he was, the heel catcher. Someone who puts himself first, doing things their own way, not letting anyone, including God, get in their way. Even though Jacob did not recognize who He was, now he is saying to the pre-incarnated Christ, “I am not going to let you go.” I can just imagine this, somebody holding onto a person’s leg for dear life, while the person is trying to get him to release the grip, but he just will not let go. I can only imagine what Jacob was doing, “I am just going to hold on and not let you go until you bless me.”

It is then that the pre-incarnated Christ reminded him who he was and now, in verse 28, what he will become. ***“And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, [the heel catcher] but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.”*** There is another hidden message here in this verse. That is, when you have power with God, you also have power over God’s enemies. For us the key is to keep our focus on Christ, but in Jacob’s case, he was to keep his focus and trust on what God wanted. Jacob was to continue faithing for the strength and power with God and with men, and ultimately over God’s seen and unseen enemies. And, as we know, Jacob did prevail.

In the New Testament, we have that same promise in Ephesians 6 even though that is what the devil wants to constantly disguise. I am telling you, commentaries are more confusing than helpful in many cases. Yes, they can help in some areas, but not when it comes to this verse. What I am about ready to share with you, I challenge you to try to find in any commentary or any life’s work of any theologian; it is just not there. They do not recognize it. Remember there are no verses or chapters in the original; the verses flow right through.

Ephesians 6:11 begins, ***“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles [the methods] of the devil. For we wrestle not against blood and flesh.”*** It is only six words prior that Paul writes about the methods of the devil. If you recall, one of the methods is the undervaluing of the value of Christ’s blood. Satan wants to disguise the value of Christ’s blood in any way he can, including the way scripture is translated. That is why you must not twist scriptures. It does not serve God’s purposes.

Read that verse again as it should be written, ***“For we wrestle not against blood and flesh....”*** Just as Jacob wrestled with the Lord wanting His blessing, we have so much more than Jacob had. We have Christ who came, died, rose, and took His blood down to Hades, all the way to the heavenlies. Because of it, we are a new creature in Christ. This statement, ***“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers”*** gives the illusion, because of commentators and theologians, that our wrestling is only with man. Yes, we fight against the

unseen forces, but it is the human forms controlled by the unseen, and that is not what this verse really says.

To make this clearer, let us look at that phrase ‘flesh and blood’ in the New Testament found only in Galatians 1:16, Hebrews 2:14, and Ephesians 6:12. Below you will see the Greek for this phrase on the top line with the Greek transliterated words directly below.

Galatians 1:16

sarki kai aimati

sarx kai haima – flesh and blood

Hebrews 2:14

aimatov kai sarkov

haima kai sarx – blood and flesh

Ephesians 6:12

aima kai sarka

haima kai sarx – blood and flesh

Is that just by coincidence? Did Paul make a mistake? Understand, this transliterated word ‘*sarx*,’ flesh, is used 85 times in Paul’s letters. There are other Greek words for ‘flesh,’ but I am just speaking of *sarx*. Those other Greek words for ‘flesh’ is not used in the phrase ‘flesh and blood,’ but Paul did use *sarx* 85 times. In Galatians 1:16 it is translated correctly as ‘flesh and blood,’ but in Hebrews 2:14 it is ‘blood and flesh,’ and in Ephesians 6:12 it is also ‘blood and flesh,’ or *haima kai sarx*, in the Greek. These are the only three times this phrase is used out of the 85 times Paul used the word ‘flesh’ in his writings. Satan wants us to believe there is something else besides the blood that will get you in. Faith opens the door. It is the key that unlocks it and without faith, you will not even get close to opening that door. We need to keep faith in His Word throughout our life. We will never have salvation if we do not believe Jesus died and rose to remove our sins so we could have salvation and grace. It takes faith, and anything else that substitutes it is heresy and false doctrine. It takes faith.

Let us now look more closely at these verses. We already know what it says in Ephesians 6:12, ***“For we wrestle not against blood and flesh....”*** When Paul used this word 82 other times, he was always talking about the flesh, the *sarx*, and how it interferes, but that is not what Paul is saying in verse 12. In this verse, we are not wrestling with the notion that anything besides the blood gets you in. As I said, six words prior, Paul was still writing about the methods of the devil. Because there are no verses to break up the writing, there is no verse 11 and verse 12. The text is written straight through to read as, ***“...that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against blood and flesh....”*** The devil wants us to wrestle against the blood so we think it is not sufficient. That is why chapter three of this Spiritual Warfare volume focused on the value of Jesus Christ’s blood. The devil wants us to believe there is something else we need to do in our own power and strength. That is why Christian organizations and denominations create a list of things we must do and list of the things that we cannot do to earn merit in God’s eyes.

We are not wrestling against Christ's blood. That blood is our blessing, just as Jacob asked for the blessing of God, understanding he would do things God's way rather than his own way. Because of that, he then had power not only with God, but also with man. That word 'man' can be translated as both his enemies and the ones who were not his enemies. The same applies to us but even more. Paul writes so that we know that we do not wrestle with the blood of Jesus Christ, although that is what Satan wants us to believe. We only wrestle with the blood when we try to substitute something else in the place of that blood. How can I make it any clearer? Ephesians 6:12 should be read as, "***For we wrestle not against blood and flesh.***"

Next, go to Galatians 1:16. There the phrase is translated accurately as Paul is describing his call to the ministry. The verse begins, "***To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood....***" Here Paul goes out of his way to list *sarx* first. '*Sarx kai haima*' is the phrase in the Greek meaning, 'flesh and blood' in reference to mankind. Then Paul goes on to explain in verse 17, "***Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.***" In verse 16 Paul states he would, "***preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood...***" Paul knew what he was doing when he was writing these letters. Here he was explaining that he did not communicate with any other individual in the flesh. That is why he wrote the phrase as 'flesh and blood.'

Go to Hebrews 2:14. Here Paul writes, "***Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, [the original says 'blood and flesh.'] he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil....***" It was the spilling of the precious blood that destroyed the power of death. We have only three examples where Paul writes of the blood of Jesus Christ and what it can do for mankind. Likewise, when Paul wants the reader to know that he is referring to individuals in the flesh, he writes *sarx kai haima* - flesh and blood. The only other two times that phrase is used, he writes *haima kai sarx* – blood and flesh as in Ephesians 6:12, where the focus is the blood. In Hebrews 2:14, Paul writes about the precious blood spilling from His veins, His side, His feet, His head. All the blood was spilled on that cross would be the key for victory over death and Satan throughout eternity. It is unfortunate that commentaries miss this important point completely. Paul knew what he was saying. He used the word 'flesh' 85 times. He used the word 'blood' almost the same amount, but when he combined 'flesh and blood' or 'blood and flesh,' he used it only three times in Galatians 1:16, Hebrews 2:14, and Ephesians 6:12 when he was describing Christ's blood and how important His blood was. Paul did not write 'flesh' first, he wrote 'blood' first.

In Ephesians, Paul was saying that we do not wrestle or go into hand-to-hand combat with the devil against the blood. Remember, only six words prior Paul wrote of the wiles, or *methodeia*, the devil uses. One of his methods is to confuse what the benefit of that blood is for us. The devil has done a great job of penetrating churches and denominations, so they create lists of what they have to do to be a Christian all the while substituting the list for the blood. When that is done, they are wrestling with the blood, but I am telling you, be blessed like Jacob, be blessed in the blood.

In Genesis, Jacob wrestled with the pre-incarnated Christ, not with the angel, when he had no other choice. He wrestled the pre-incarnated Christ alone that evening, having his family cross over, and stuck between an enemy on one side of him, and a potential enemy on the other. At this point, Jacob did not know Esau would be happy to see him and they would commune with joy. He was expecting death or the possibility of it. The only thing Jacob had left was to cling to was the pre-incarnated Christ, and he was not going to let go. And Christ's response was to remind him of his name, heel catcher, someone who puts themselves first and does whatever benefits them no matter what the cost or who gets hurts. But Christ changed him into someone who had power with God over man and his enemies, because now Jacob finally demonstrated to God that He would be the source and His direction to finish out his life in faith.

Fortunately, we have more than that. We are not to wrestle against the blood. It is very clear what the benefits of Christ's blood are for us. The devil wants to cloud this so that there has never been a greater enemy against the blood of Christ than the church world. This may offend some, but that is just the way it is. When you try to substitute the blood with anything besides the blood, you are wrestling with the blood. Paul says not to wrestle or struggle against it. We are to understand that we are more blessed because of that blood than Jacob ever was. We are not to wrestle against the blood, what it does for us, or the flesh. Ephesians 6:12 clearly states, "***For we wrestle not against blood and flesh,***" meaning we do not wrestle against the blood of Christ and we do not wrestle against human kind, whether male or female, but against principalities and all the other descriptions given in verse 12.

What I want you to take from this chapter is that the devil has been trying to disguise scripture for far too long. The reason why I am so emphatic about it is that I have studied everything I can find about these three words. The true meaning has been missed because one person several hundred years ago wrote one commentary and everybody has been following that same commentary ever since using their own style of writing ultimately changing how the phrase is now read.

When you read, "***We wrestle not against blood and flesh,***" ask yourself, "What blood?" It is not referring to our blood or someone else's blood! Do not let institutions, denominations, or traditions confuse you or cloud what this precious blood did for us. That is what Paul is saying here. It was not by accident in Hebrews 2:14 that he writes about the precious blood that would gain victory over Satan and death. Christ willfully offered himself to be our substitute to have victory over death, the grave, the devil, and his demonic army. That is why the phrase in Hebrews 2:14 is '***haima kai sarx,***' and the same in Hebrews 6:12, '***haima kai sarx.***' When Paul writes about the flesh, he wants you to understand it. When Paul refers to an individual, he writes, '***sarx kai haima.***' It is not confusing, but man's traditions have made it confusing. Most of you have read over this scripture thinking all Paul is saying is that we are not wrestling against flesh and blood. You are not wrestling against someone you can see like your neighbor, your wife, your kids, or your boss if they are directed by Satan. That is how the scripture has been defined over the centuries. This verse means more than that.

What Paul is saying is we are not wrestling against blood because once the blood was spilled, and once only, there is no more offering for sin. Through God's eyes, I now look sin free. I am clean and pure even though I am still a sinner. I still sin daily, but that blood spilled for me is

viewed differently through Christ's eyes. Through God's eyes, I am viewed differently because of that blood and because Christ stands in the middle. He is our mediator and nothing can be presented about us any longer. Yes, Satan will always find something wrong with us even while we are faithing, but Christ says, "Shut up; get behind me. I have paid the price and my Father sees them as pure, clean, and sinless. They are my business. I am molding them and they will turn out the way I want them to turn out if they stay faithful to me and my word."

Finally, this chapter will finish with Hebrews 9:28. This chapter talks about the new covenant and the blood of Christ. Verse 28 states, "***So Christ was once offered [once only] to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him [the ones that keep on faithing in that blood and in His Word] shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.***" The devil wants to cloud the issue about what the blood has done for us, but there is nothing to be confused about. Christ was the offering and He paid the penalty for our sins. Because of that, I appear sinless whether He takes me home now or at the second time of His coming when He returns for the church. Either way, we appear sinless, which is why the devil hates what Christ did on that cross. Through continual faith, we appear sinless because by faithing we are imputed with righteousness from God. As I have said repeatedly, once we have that righteousness, we now become a container for the Holy Spirit to dwell in, to direct your life, and to make any necessary changes that He wants. This is not what we want or what somebody else wants. It is what He wants, standing in judgment of no one. Christ is the judge only because He paid the price. Understand and faith it on a daily basis. Do not lose your grip, and do not let these commentaries and theologians confuse you into thinking that God's Word is only trying to convince us that we are not wrestling against flesh and blood as individuals. Yes, we do wrestle, but we must not wrestle against the blood. It is the manmade traditions the church world imposes that causes us to wrestle with the blood. Do not let them! In Galatians, Paul calls them perverts, perverting the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ, which is exactly what they are.

God willing, I plan not to wrestle against the blood and it is my hope that you will not either. Do not wrestle against what the blood has done for us. No matter what these unseen powerful beings do, when Christ returns, I will appear sinless and so will you. Until then, keep on faithing and remember 'blood and flesh,' not just the flesh alone. I believe the reason Paul said that is because now more than ever we must understand this verse. There is too much confusion about what it takes to be a Christian. It takes faith in His Word, it takes leaning on Him, grabbing on as Jacob, who then became Israel, to become a powerhouse, which God can use in this world in the commission He has called you to fulfill. That is all it is. It is sad more commentaries have not described it that way. They are missing some hidden truths that are really right in front of them. They just do not want to recognize the precious value of the blood that Satan is working to destroy. Quit wrestling with what you think you have to do to be a Christian and start faithing and start trusting in God, and tell the traditionalists, "Get behind me Satan because that is where you belong."

This is not just about individuals. This is about how Satan tries to disguise how we fight against the blood because of manmade traditions. Do not become a participant in wrestling with that blood; instead become a recipient of all the benefits of the blood. Once that happens, with Jesus Christ's precious blood, facing individuals and facing the unseen will be done with God's strength, God's power, and God's might all the way to victory; blood and flesh.

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In 2 Corinthians 9:7 it reads, “God loveth a cheerful giver.” The Greek word for cheerful is Hilaros which means when someone is prompt to do something; they are ready in mind, with a joyful heart. In the Septuagint, it also means to cause to shine. Today I am looking for Hilaros Givers who are ready and full of joy for the opportunity to cause others to shine by hearing, learning, and growing in God’s Word. Join with us today and participate as a Hilaros Giver. If you wish to participate, use the following link <http://www.teachingfaith.com/giving>

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