Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Fighting the Noble War, Part 1
Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:18
Code: 54-7

Now, for this morning, let's open our Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 1. First Timothy chapter 1. We're going to be looking at an introduction, really, to verses 18 to 20. Chapter 1, as you know if you've been with us, introduces this great epistle, and in this particular section, verses 18 to 20, in which Paul sums up the introduction to the whole epistle, there is reference made to warfare, and Paul calls Timothy to fight a noble fight.

I want us to look at these verses, and then before we get into them in specific, I want to talk a little bit this morning about this warfare itself. Let's look to verse 18. "This command I entrust unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which pointed to thee that thou by them mightest fight a noble warfare, holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away have made shipwreck concerning the faith, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander whom I have delivered unto Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme."

Now, I want you to notice at the end of verse 18 just this statement: Paul calls Timothy to war a good warfare, to fight a noble fight. The word "to war," that thou mightest war, is a verb from the Greek verb strateu, which is the source of our word "strategy," and it means to fight as a soldier, and then to fight a noble – the word kalos means an excellent or noble warfare, and the word "warfare," strateia means a campaign. It is not a battle, it is not a skirmish, it is not a brief fight, it is a long-term continual campaign. So what Paul is saying to Timothy in writing this whole epistle is intended to gear him up to fight a noble warfare, to fight a noble or excellent campaign. He is calling Timothy to the realization that he is in a spiritual battle.

Now, in verses 18, 19, and 20, he gives him three understandings necessary to fight well, and I'm going to look at those three next time. But for today, I want just to introduce the concept of this noble warfare because I believe it to be so very important in our time. Not all wars are noble wars, and not all wars are nobly fought. But here is a noble warfare, a good and excellent warfare that is to be well fought. Now, what Paul has in mind is a cosmic warfare of massive spiritual proportions. He's not talking about a physical war or really even an earthly war. He's not talking even about a human war. He's talking about war on the spiritual level, and he is reminding Timothy that he needs to fight a noble war, and his reminder to Timothy is indeed a reminder to us as well.

Now remember, Paul left Timothy in Ephesus. He left him there to battle against the enemy. The enemy had encroached upon the Ephesian church, error was being taught, false leaders were in

positions of prominence and power and authority, godliness was under attack, and Timothy is to set those things right. So he is right at the forefront of a part of this great spiritual warfare, and what Paul says to him in these three verses is very instructive to all of us who, at one place or another, are engaged in the same battle, the same campaign.

Now, let me just say at the beginning that the warfare of which Paul speaks has at its highest level a tremendous conflict between God and Satan. That is the primary level of the warfare. Everything else, in a sense comes, under that. It is a war of the Lord God Jehovah and His truth against Satan and his lies. It is a war between God and His Will and Satan and his will, and such a war is not only fought between God and Satan but between demons and holy angels and between ungodly men and godly men so that this cosmic warfare at the level of God and the highest creature He ever made, Lucifer, filters all the way down to involve every human being – including us.

Now, for us to understand this warfare, we need to take a look at its elements. You remember in Luke chapter 14 and verse 31, Jesus laid down a very obvious principle, in another context, but the principle applies. He said, “What king going to make war against another king sits not down first and consults whether he’s able with ten thousand to meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand?” In other words, Jesus is saying no king goes to war unless he understands the terms of battle, unless he understands the power of his enemy, unless he understands that which is at stake in the warfare, and we are engaged in a spiritual warfare.

Now, I think this has escaped most contemporary American Christians who really don’t understand the warfare at all. There are many who, because they have been given a gospel of easy-believism or cheap grace, because they have been told that Jesus is where you get the goodies and that’s about it, believe that you come to Jesus to get a whole lot of stuff, and life from then on is supposed to be flowery beds of ease and happiness and prosperity, health, wealth, money, and all the rest. They have no concept of the spiritual warfare at all. Many Christians are involved in what I would call trivia.

I was told about the testimony of one lady who got up even in our own church some time ago to share her testimony. She said, “Satan is attacking me to the degree that I can’t deal with it anymore. Satan is giving me onslaughts that I can’t cope with. I’m at the end of my rope.” And when asked exactly what it was, she said that “Because of painting in our house, we’ve had to put sheets over all of our furniture, and I don’t think I can stand it any longer.” Now, if that isn’t living at the level of trivia, I’m not sure what is.

It’s mind-boggling that someone would think that is spiritual warfare and that Satan is attacking you because there’s so much dust in your house. But there is that trivial level at which so many people live. There is an ignorance about the reality of spiritual warfare, and if we are to understand what Paul says to Timothy about warring a noble war, then we’re going to have to understand some of the elements in that warfare, and to that end, I want to speak with you this morning.

Now, originally there was no war and there was no rebellion. Everything in God's world in God's universe was perfectly harmonious. There was no reaction to His sovereign rule. There was no animosity toward anything that He expressed as His holy purpose and Will. There was no conflict, no fight, no rebellion, just perfect peace and harmony. But then there came a disastrous event which set God and Satan against each other for all eternity.

In order to understand that, I want you to turn in the Old Testament to the 28th chapter of Ezekiel – Ezekiel's prophecy, chapter 28 – and I want to set your mind in the framework of understanding this warfare, and we begin to get a grip on it here in the 28th chapter of Ezekiel.

Now, the prophet Ezekiel is giving prophecies against Tyre. Tyre, that godless city back in chapter 26, was promised judgment. God was going to bring a judgment on that city. Chapter 27, then, is sort of a dirge, sort of a funeral song about what's going to happen to Tyre, and chapter 28, then, is an indictment of the prince or the king of that city. But in speaking against the king of Tyre, the prophet goes beyond the king himself to speak of the one who is the source of his antagonism to God. The king of Tyre was simply a pawn in the activity of Satan. Satan was using this man as Satan will do, and we are well aware in studying the Old Testament, most specifically the prophecy of Daniel, that behind the godless nations of the world, Satan and his demon hosts are energizing their anti-God activity.

We know that, and it was no different in Tyre, though the man himself, called in verse 2 the prince of Tyre, referring to the one who was king as he is called in verse 12, though this man was an evil man and a godless man and one who was working against God, he was merely a tool in the hand of the one behind the scenes at the level of this supernatural cosmic warfare between God and Satan. We see that as we begin at verse 11. "Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me saying, 'Son of man'" – and that is a reference to Ezekiel, he is called that in the Old Testament – "'take up a lamentation on the king of Tyre and say unto him....'" Now, then, what is said in the middle of verse 12 and following could not even refer to this human being, and we'll see that as we go. "'Say to the king of Tyre, "Thus saith the Lord God, thou sealest up the sum."'"

Now, what does that mean? Simply this: When a thing is sealed, it is sealed because it is completed. It is sealed because it is finished. It is sealed because it is consummated, just as when you write a letter, fold it up, put it in an envelope, and seal it. When you complete a work and you seal that work, it is done. So here is one who seals up the sum; that is, a perfectly created being, someone who is so complete that the work is over, that the sum of it is done and the seal is placed. Verse 12 also says this individual who seals up the sum is full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. Full of wisdom, lacking no wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Now, obviously that cannot refer to a human being. No human being is so perfected as to be sealed off, signed, and finished. No human being is full of wisdom and no human being is perfect in beauty.

Furthermore, verse 13 says, “Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God.” Now, that could not refer to the king of Tyre who was not in the Garden of Eden. “Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God.” That is to say we’re looking here at the serpent, the devil, the enemy, the adversary who was there in the glory of the Garden of Eden.

We also would note, please, that if in his beauty and in his wisdom and in his perfection he was in the garden of God, the fall of Satan and the fall of angels must have occurred sometime after the creation and occupation of the Garden of Eden. There are people who would tell us that the fall occurs before the creation; that doesn’t seem to square with this text. If this glorious, fully perfected individual was indeed in the garden of God in his perfection, then he fell after that creation, sometime before he was turned into a serpent in manifestation and brought about the fall of man through temptation.

So – also it says in verse 13, “Every precious stone was thy covering,” and then it lists nine precious stones, all nine of which are included also in the breastplate of the high priest, which is described in Exodus 39 verses 10 to 13. They then indicate to us because they are in the breastplate of the high priest and they also here are used in the covering of this incredibly beautiful and perfect created being that they are the sum of the beauty and the glory of God’s creation for God put in the breastplate of the high priest that which manifests the beauty and the magnificence of His own glory reflected in those jewels, and so this being carries the same stones, nine of the same twelve. It’s simply telling us this is a perfect, glorious, magnificent creature.

Verse 14 calls him the anointed cherub that covers. The Jews saw the most sacred of all angels as the covering cherub. What that means is that when the mercy seat and the top of the Ark of the Covenant was designed by God, it was designed that there would be two angels, one on each side, spreading their wings over the mercy seat, called the covering cherub. They were representative of those angels which concerned themselves with the holiness of God, and they cover that mercy seat where the atonement was made between God and men by the sprinkling of blood on the day of atonement. Those sacred angels, then, which were the cherub that covered, those to the minds of the Jew which were the most sacred would then be related to this one that was created who is called the anointed cherub that covers, the highest angelic creature, caring for the glory and the holiness of God.

And it says in verse 14, “I have set thee so.” God not only created angels – listen carefully – not only created angels but He created them to fit into a ranking. They are a hierarchy of angels. There are angels and archangels. There are cherubim and seraphim. There are rulers and principalities and powers, and all of those terms have to do with the different strata of angels in God’s design for the functioning of the angelic network to carry out His bidding, and here, then, was one who supremely was set as the anointed cherub.

Further it says in verse 14: “Thou wast upon the holy mountain of God, thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.” The holy mountain of God and the stones of fire would be the glory of the very dwelling place of God. This is not an angel commissioned to be out somewhere apart from the immediate presence of God, dispatched to some other duty. Angels, by the way, are not omnipresent. They can only be in one place at one time, though they can move very fast, as Daniel shows us in his prophecy. But angels can be away from the presence of God; that is, His immediate glorious dwelling in heaven. But not this angel. This angel dwelt in the holy mountain and walked in the area of the stones of fire, speaking of the holy ground on which the throne of God would be placed in that heavenly environment.

Verse 15 says: “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created,” again emphasizing the absolute perfection of this creature. And then – you might want to underline this – comes the disastrous statement, “Till iniquity was found in thee” – “till iniquity was found in thee,” and there is the beginning of spiritual warfare at the cosmic level as Satan then pits himself against God. This anointed cherub takes sides against God – iniquity is found in him.

Now, we do not understand how that came about. Some people say, “Well, he was tempted from the outside.” He couldn’t have been – there was no evil on the outside, it was a perfect environment. Others say he was tempted from the inside. There was no evil on the inside. He was perfect. Where did it come from? It didn’t come from the outside, it couldn’t come from the inside – where did it come from? And the answer is we have no idea. In our finite little minds, we cannot conceive how this can happen rationally, so we accept it by faith in the category of things that we will only understand when we have full understanding in the presence of God. Until that time, we accept the fact that it happened, and if you have any doubt about it, then you’re not looking around you because sin is here, folks, and it came from somewhere. It’s futile and, frankly, pointless to debate how it could happen; all we need to do is realize that it did, which is not debatable.

And so this angel is iniquitous. Verse 16 further describes that and God says, “Because you have sinned, I’ll cast you as profane out of the mountain of God and I will destroy you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart – here it is – was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness.” In other words, “You were so glorious and so wonderful that you became corrupt.” Now, here’s the only indication we have as to the ontology of sin’s origination, it says: “Thy heart was lifted up.” It did come, then, from within. As to how it came from within, we do not know. We do not know. But this angel was so enamored with his own perfection and his own beauty and his own wisdom and his own glory, and so by that iniquitous response of pride did he – verse 18 – defile the sanctuaries that God threw him out of heaven to be destroyed.

Now, let's find out specifically what the sin is by looking at another Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, and chapter 14. Isaiah and chapter 14. And here we find again in a prophecy an indication of the behind-the-scenes power. This prophecy has to do with Babylon and the destruction of Babylon, but there was a greater power behind Babylon just as there was a greater power behind Tyre, and we find that power identified and spoken of in chapter 14 beginning at verse 12.

Notice carefully: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning." Lucifer means day star, son of the morning. To show you how elevated this creature was, you need only be reminded that in Revelation 22:16, it is said of Jesus Christ that He is the bright and morning star. When God wanted to speak of the brilliance and glory and magnificence of Christ, He calls Him the bright and morning star. Here, when the prophet refers to this created angel, he calls him also day star, son of the morning, and though he is not same as Christ, a similar expression is used to speak of the marvelous glory of this creature. So you understand this is a glorious creature. "How art thou fallen" is reminiscent of Luke 10:18 where Jesus said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." "How art thou" – verse 12 – "cut down to the ground, who did weaken the people."

And why did this happen? What was this sin that rose up in the heart? What was this sin that rose up in the bosom, as it were, of this anointed cherub? Verse 13 tells us very clearly. Notice in verse 13: "I will," "I will," "I will" – three times. Verse 14: "I will, "I will." Five times. "I will," "I will," "I will." The problem was pride. The problem was he was lifted up by his own beauty. He was so close to God that he became jealous of being God and sought to be equal to God. By the way, he was still offering that temptation to others in the garden, wasn't he? When he said to Eve, "If you do this, you'll be equal to God, and you'll know good from evil. That was the projection of his own pride and it is the same problem today. Romans chapter 1, men reject the true God and out of their own hearts they elevate themselves to be equal with God. They create gods of their own making, design God who was a God of their own design, they themselves become the ultimate supreme makers of God; therefore, they are God and in such a way defy the true God. So this matter of pride and seeking to be equal with God is the heritage that Lucifer has left for the whole of the fallen world.

He says – verse 13 – again, it comes out of his insides, out of his heart, it is not in the environment, it isn't really in him in his created perfection, and yet it comes from within his heart, it is invented by him. No inside or outside element of the created perfection of God stimulated it, he on his own invented this pride and he said, "I will ascend into heaven. It isn't enough for me to be where I am, I want to go higher, I want to be at the very dwelling place of God. I will ascend into whatever left of heaven is still occupied only by God and I will take my place with Him. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; that is, I will cease to be an angel among angels even though I am a leading angel, and I will go beyond angels" – "stars" here refer to angels – "I will go beyond that and I will be as God. I will sit on the mount of the congregation."

“I will take my place there where God alone sits, where God alone reigns, in the sides of the north.” Ancient peoples believed that the gods had their residence in the north, and so the indication here of Lucifer is that he will take, using sort of a colloquial expression, his place, the prophet says, in the throne of God.

Verse 14: “I will ascend above the heights of the cloud,” singular, it is not clouds, it is cloud and has reference not to some created cloud but to the Shekinah glory of God. “I will ascend above the height of God’s glory. I’ll be like the most high.” So out of this generated, invented sin of pride comes the warfare, and God then responds in verse 15, and here is the counterattack: “You will be brought down to Sheol, to the sides of the pit.” God says, “I’ll take you on and I’ll destroy you. I’ll take you on and I’ll devastate you.”

Now you understand from Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14 the nature of this supernatural conflict, and it’s going on all the time. To get an insight into that, look at Job chapter 1. In verse 6, “There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan came also among them.” Some angels come before God and here comes Satan, His enemy. By the way, the word “Satan” is used in the Old Testament. It means enemy or adversary. In fact, if it is used without a definite article, it is usually translated enemy or adversary. If it has a definite article – “the” enemy or “the” adversary – it is Satan. The same word is used in the New Testament 36 times. So Satan, here, comes.

And the Lord said, “Satan, where did you come from?” And Satan answered the Lord, “From going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it.” Here is the restlessness of Satan as he moves about the earth, endeavoring to thwart the plan and purpose of God. And the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect man, an upright man who fears God and shuns evil?” And Satan answered the Lord and said, “Doesn’t Job fear God for nothing? You’ve given him so much, of course he fears You. He’s rich and he’s protected and he’s blessed and he’s got abundance. But I’ll tell you what, You make it tough on him and he’ll turn his back on You.” And you remember the test, God did and Job didn’t turn his back and Satan lost the battle.

But that gives us an insight into Satan and God in conflict, and Satan is always trying to play one-ups on God. “You say You have a man, let me at him, I’ll show you he’s not Your man.” He is endeavoring to diminish the power of God, the glory of God, the work of God, the purpose of God, and the Will of God.

Now, in the New Testament he is given many names. He is called the accuser of the brethren, he is called the adversary, which is a different word than his name. He is called Beelzebub, Belial. He is called the deceiver of the whole world, the great dragon, the enemy, the evil one, the father of lies, the god of this world, a liar, a murderer, the prince of the power of the air, the ruler of this world, the

ancient serpent, and the tempter. And he is set against God.

Now, he is not alone in this. Let's go to the last book of Scripture, Revelation and chapter 12. Revelation and chapter 12. And I want you to understand that we're honing in on where we are in the midst of this cosmic warfare. So far, we know it's God against Satan and God bringing about His holy purpose all the way along, being attacked by Satan. But notice Revelation chapter 12 verse 3: "There appeared another wonder in heaven" – in the vision that John has here – "and behold a great red dragon." And in the symbolism typical of Revelation, this dragon has seven heads, which probably refer to the sequential imperial governments of the world, and you can compare that with Revelation 17:9-11.

We won't get into detail, but it pictures this dragon as one who is the summation of all forms of anti-God world government. He has ten horns because he is the supreme ruler of the final confederacy of human nations against God, which we know from Daniel 7 is the ten-nation confederacy of the revived Roman Empire that pits itself against Christ. So here is the dragon. He embodies all the evil of the systems of man, he embodies the final form of human world government set against Christ. This is none other than Satan himself. And it says in verse 4 that his tail, the tail on the dragon in this imagery, drew the third part of the stars – and there's that word "stars" again which refers to angels – drew the third part of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth.

Now, we learned from this that when Satan fell, he drew with him one-third of the angelic host. Now, keep this in mind. Angels do not procreate. Jesus said in Matthew that they're neither marrying or giving in marriage, right? Angels do not procreate and angels do not die. They were created to live forever, either in the domain of God or in the domain of Satan. Hell itself was created, Jesus said, for the devil and his angels, and hell is eternal because they are eternal. So angels, then, are created beings. They were all created at one point in time and they live forever. They do not procreate. There are as many demons today – or, rather, there are as many angels today, fallen and unfallen, as there were in the day God created them. There's no diminishing and there's no adding to their ranks. We know nothing of sequential creation and we know nothing of the obliviating of any angel hosts or forces. So God creates a whole angelic host and that's the end of His creation of them and they do not procreate.

Now, of that group, one-third of them went with Satan in his fall. That's what the text is saying. Two-thirds remain with God, one-third with Satan. Satan, then, in his cosmic warfare is not alone. He, though he's a tremendously powerful creature, though he has great influence in the world, though he can move on the souls of men, though he can become the force behind governments and nations and anti-God activities worldwide, he is not omnipresent – he's fast but he's not omnipresent. But his work is enhanced because a third of the whole angelic host is with him.

Now you say, “How many are there?” I don’t know but I do know there are angels and there are angels and there are angels because the Bible talks about them in terms of ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands which uses the word in the Greek language which is the largest Greek word to express numeration. They have no word larger than ten thousand. So it’s as if he is saying more and more and more and more. We might say zillions and zillions and zillions, using our typical hyperbole. We do not know how many there are. But a third of them are actively involved with Satan.

Now, some of that third aren’t any good to him. The reason is they’re bound in everlasting chains. We read in Jude that there were some angels who sinned at the time of the flood in Genesis 6, and they were put into everlasting chains. We don’t know how many there were but they came down, cohabitated with men, produced a half-breed race which God drowned in the flood. That segment of demons is bound in the pit, and they are in everlasting chains. There are others, I believe, that are temporarily chained. You remember that the demons and the demoniac of Gadara said, “Don’t send us to the pit”? Perhaps through redemptive history, God has been putting more and more in the pit, and some of them will be released, Revelation 9 says, in the Tribulation. They’re going to come out of the pit, but not the ones in everlasting chains. So he started with a third of them, some of them are in everlasting chains, some of them are in temporary chains. Whatever’s left, he’s working with in the world, and he’s working against God and the holy angels.

Now, to give you a little more insight into the passage and the conflict, we have to ask the question: What is the specific target of these angelic beings that have fallen and are now known as demons? What is their target? Go back to verse 1. John says there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars. Again, typical of the imagery of Revelation, the woman is none other than Israel. The woman is Israel. The sun and the moon, no doubt, are references to Jacob and Rachel, and the twelve stars would be references to the twelve sons. You can compare Genesis 37:9.

So here is the woman Israel. And the woman Israel, verse 2, being with child, cries out travailing in birth pain to be delivered. Here is this woman about to bring forth a child. Now, what was the great child brought forth through the nation Israel? The Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we know that. Verse 5, let’s pick it up there: “And she brought forth a male child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron.” Well, that can’t be anybody but Christ. “And her child is caught up to God, His ascension after His perfect work, and He sits on the throne.”

So we have basically, then, Israel bringing forth a child. In the midst of that vision, while she desires to bring forth the child, as it were, verses 3 and 4, we have Satan gathering his force, and at the end of verse 4 it says he is ready to devour the child as soon as it was born. Is that not the case? What happened at the birth of Jesus Christ? Did not Satan do everything he could to destroy that child? He had tried everything even prior to that. He tried to destroy the whole godly line in Genesis 6 by

creating a demon-men race because of the demons who cohabitated with the women, and God had to drown that whole civilization. He tried to destroy the godly line by so corrupting the nation Israel that there wouldn't be any possibility of a godly seed. Even some of the kings who were in that line were cursed and God had to bypass those cursed kings, namely Jeconiah.

He tried to kill the babies in the New Testament time when Christ was born through Herod. He tried to kill Jesus Christ by having Him shoved off a cliff. He tried to get Christ to fall to temptation and forfeit His kingdom and do unrighteousness. He tried to kill Christ in the garden. He tried to kill Him on the cross. He tried to keep Him in the grave. I mean always the dragon fights against the Messiah. And that's the way the warfare goes, Satan against God, focusing on the destruction of Christ and His work, and now he continues to fight against the work of Christ in His church. He will fight against Christ when He comes in His return. He will go on and on until finally he is bound forever in the pit of hell, the Lake of Fire.

But I want you to notice that during the time of the Tribulation in the future, there's an interesting focal point of the battle. It says the woman Israel – verse 6 – is going to go into the wilderness during the Tribulation for three and a half years, the period after the Rapture before the second coming. There's going to be a holocaust on the earth, but Israel will be protected, and while all this is going on in earth, notice the description that comes in verse 7: "There was war in heaven." Now, you ought to underline that because that's really true. That is a consummating statement. There is war in heaven. There will be war in the future, there was war in the past, and there is war right now.

In this particular scene, Michael and his angels are fighting the dragon and the dragon fought and his angels. Now, there you have another element of the warfare. It is God against Satan but it is also Satan and his angels against God and His angels, the chief of which is now Michael. Michael. And they have fought, and they are fighting, and they will fight. We know in the Scripture that this battle is not just relegated to the future. We find Michael in contention with the devil about the body of Moses in Jude 9. So Michael and the devil were even at it back in the time of Moses, and they will still be at it in the future at the time of the Tribulation, and the war goes on all the time between holy angels and fallen demons. And folks, we don't see that but that's what's happening – that's what's happening, and as I said earlier, there are some people who go blissfully through their church experience as if there wasn't even a war, and I could wish that our eyes could be opened to see what's probably going on right in this room that we cannot now perceive. But it's here.

Now, the battle eventually filters down to us. Go over to verse 17. The dragon was angry with the woman, went to make war. Went to make war with the remnant of her seed who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. When that great battle of the Tribulation breaks out and Satan is, in effect, even wiping out the nation Israel – which he would love to do because that would thwart the plan of God. It's sad to me that the Amillennialists are trying to do exactly what Satan is trying to do. They're trying to wipe out Israel as a duly constituted nation who

can receive the kingdom promised to them. Satan would like to do that, too. He's trying to do it literally; they're trying to do it theologically. But God will preserve His people.

But Satan will attack the people of God in that time as he's always attacked the people of God. Just notice verse 17: "The people who keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." So now the war has filtered – it started with God and Satan, it went down through the holy angels and the fallen angels and now it's down and it's a warfare against those who are the ones who know Jesus Christ, who keep the commandments of God. So we're in the warfare, too. You have Satan, fallen angels, and ungodly men, God, holy angels, and the redeemed, and there are the armies. For someone to say, "I want to be sexual on Satan's side and godly" is absolutely ludicrous. It is treason. It is spiritual treason. It is unacceptable. So we must draw the lines very clearly.

Now, listen very carefully to what I say. Satan is not particularly interested in you as an individual. May I say that? He is not specifically interested in you as an individual because of you. He is – who he is after is God. Do we understand that? Satan hates God. You're incidental and so am I. Only as we somehow impact God for His own glory is he interested in us. We are not the issue. He would destroy us and defeat us, not because he hates us but because he hates God whom we serve and represent.

So what you have to understand, beloved, is that in your warfare, your victory and your defeat reflect on God. When we are defeated, it is a sense in which Satan has effectively attacked God. When we are victorious, it is a sense in which he has been defeated in his attack against God. Isn't it interesting that God Himself allows the battle against Him to be fought at our level so that He is victorious or He is in some way defeated, although not ultimately defeated, by whether we are victorious or defeated? Does that sound strange to you? Then think again of the words of the apostle Paul: "He that is joined to the harlot joins Christ to the harlot," 1 Corinthians 6.

So Satan attacks the church, and he attacks the church because he wants to attack the work of God because he hates God, and that is why when Jesus goes into the temple and makes a whip and cleans out the place, He says that "I am doing this because you have made My Father's house a den of thieves," and He is defending the glory of God, right? He is defending the glory of God. That's what we're called to do. And some of you are saying, "Well, I don't even see a battle." That's because you went AWOL, and the only thing we can hope is that you won't stay AWOL so long the Lord will take you to heaven, which in military terms would be a dishonorable discharge.

But it's appalling how many Christian people live in a trivia-oriented life who have no idea of a warfare because they haven't been in the battle. They're non-courageous soldiers. They do not war a noble warfare.

Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy, and he says in chapter 2 words that all of us should remember: “Thou therefore suffer hardship along with me as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that fights in a war entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.” We expect to suffer hardship. We expect to be cut off from the affairs of this world and this life. We expect to do what we do for the sake of the One who called us to be a soldier.

So beloved, we are in a spiritual war. I mean I see it. I trust you do. I can go back to the day in which I went into a room where a demon-possessed girl was, and the voices out of her screamed, “Get him out of here, get him out of here, not him, not him, get him out of here.” And I realized that they knew who I was and they knew whose side I was on, and then in an instant that became a terrorizing realization to me, which was in a few more moments replaced by a calm, settled feeling of confidence because it was wonderful to know that the demons knew whose side I was on and that they were afraid of that. Incredible. I’m aware of a warfare.

I spent six to eight months with a man who wanted me to disciple him at the end of which time he went away, went to a church that doesn’t teach the Scriptures, wound up in an apostate seminary and now is a rector in an Episcopalian church somewhere. I know this is a warfare, and the battle wasn’t with his intellectual mind, it was not a battle on a superficial level, it was a much deeper one. I spent a year praying with a man, 6:00 in the morning, at the end of which time he abandoned the faith. This is a warfare.

Recently there was a meeting in the Midwest in which some men criticized me, put me on trial, slandered me, slandered our ministry at the church, slandered the church. Said all manner of evil against us falsely, and I realized in my own heart when my first reaction was against them that they’re just pawns in a process that is much greater than we can see on the surface because we do not wrestle against flesh and blood; we wrestle against principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies, Ephesians 6:12 says.

Now, how does Satan attack the church? Let me give you some insight into this. How does he attack the advance of God’s kingdom? First of all, 2 Corinthians 4:4 – and I’m going to give you some examples of this, not necessarily an exhaustive list. In 2 Corinthians 4:3: “If our gospel is hidden, it is hidden to them that are lost.” If the gospel is hidden, if it is dishonestly presented, as verse 2 says, if the Word of God is handled deceitfully, if the truth is held back, the ones who suffer are the lost. Verse 4: “In whom the god of this age” – that’s Satan – “has blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ who is the image of God should shine unto them.”

You know what? He does not want the gospel to shine unto them because it is the gospel of Christ, who is the image of God. It is the glorious revelation of God, and he does not want God’s glory to be seen. So he blinds the minds of people, and the ungodly who are blinded are blinded by Satan. They are blinded by his hosts, and he draws those blinds over their eyes in many, many ways. He can blind

them through ignorance. He can blind them through unbelief. He can blind them through the bad testimony of those who call themselves Christians. He can blind them with lies and false religion. He can blind them with a love of sin. He can blind them with fleshly gratification which seems to satisfy.

But he blinds them not because he particularly hates them, but he hates that the glory of God would be made manifest in the face of Jesus Christ. That's what he hates because, you see, he is set to be more glorious than God, and so he seeks to blind the minds. In spite of that, God by His grace gives light and sight, but that doesn't mean Satan ceases. What does he do to those who believe? Let me share Luke 22 with you.

Luke 22 verse 31 – you remember this account. Jesus and Peter and Luke 22:31 – very important. The Lord said, "Simon, Simon" – now listen. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan has desired you." Why do you think Satan wanted him? Satan wanted to sift him as wheat. Satan wanted to destroy him, to shake him up and make that which was genuine about him blow away in the wind. "But I prayed for you that your faith fail not and when you're converted, strengthen your brethren." You see, Satan wants to take Christians and destroy them. But isn't it wonderful that when he comes with that destructive power, the Lord holds us up? The interceding high priestly work of Jesus Christ prays for us and our faith will not fail. But mark it, beloved, Satan wants to tear you up. He wants to send your life fragmented into the air and have your confidence in God blow away. He wants to destroy you.

Peter, probably reflecting on some of his own experience in 1 Peter 5:8, put it this way: "Be sober" – know your priorities, get your life ordered – "be vigilant" – have your eyes opened, be aware – "because your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may" – what? – "devour." He's after you. He wants to take bites out of you. He wants to devour you into sin.

So first of all, the strategy of Satan, then, is to blind the minds of people. Even when their eyes are open, they see and they believe and receive Christ, he comes back like a roaring lion and he wants to disintegrate those people, tear them to shreds, destroy their confidence, destroy their usefulness, destroy their trust in God. That's how he attacks. And remember, beloved, when things come to you that do that, remember the source of those things.

Let me show you another way. First Corinthians chapter 7. First Corinthians chapter 7. What is the unit that God has designed to pass righteousness from one generation to the next? What is it? It's the family. So you know that Satan will attack the family, and we get an insight into that here. It says in verse 3: "Let the husband render unto the wife her due and likewise also the wife unto her husband." Now, what that means is what is due in a conjugal relationship. In other words, husband and wife are to render each other that physical satisfaction which is part of a marriage relationship.

To further emphasize that, in verse 4, he says, "The wife has not power of her own body." She does not control her own body for its own desires, rather her husband does, and likewise the husband does

not have power over his own body, but the wife. That is to say in the conjugal relationship, the one person's body belongs to the other person for the satisfaction of that person's needs, and that is by the design of God. There should be a fulfilling physical relationship as a part of the love commitment in a marriage.

Now, verse 5: "Don't hold this back from one another" – don't do that – "unless it is with agreement for a brief time so that you can give yourself to fasting and prayer." In other words, you're not supposed to use the withholding of sexual favors as leverage against your partner or as a way to express your anger or your indifference. "But rather only by common consent in fasting and prayer, then come together" – watch this – "that Satan tempt you not because of your drawing apart, your incontinency."

The point is this: Satan is right there doing everything he can to destroy Christian marriage, obviously, and he's having a very high rate of success, by the way, in contemporary society. And every time some pea-brained person comes up to me and says God led them out of their marriage to a new partner, I want to remind them that that wasn't God and maybe they ought to look at 1 Corinthians 7:5 and find out who it really was.

Apart from the teaching of Jesus for continued unrepentant adultery, there is no basis for any breaking up of a marriage, and so Satan will attack in a marriage, and this attacking because of the withholding of physical desires is only an emblem of his attacking the marriage of Christians, which is the source of passing righteousness on to the next generation.

So what is the warfare as it filters down to us? Satan wants to thwart the work of God. He wants to destroy the church, not because he hates the church, although he does hate the church, but primarily because he hates the God who is the author of the church. The issue is God. We're simply instruments by which he can get at God. Think of it. When you fail to be what God would have you to be, you become a tool by which Satan strikes a blow at God. When you and I live as we ought to be, we defend God against that attack. So we are in a warfare, and he seeks to blind, but those who come to sight, he will seek to devour and destroy and disintegrate and ruin their usefulness and shred their lives so that losing their confidence and trust, they become of little help in the battle, and then he will attack. Invariably he will attack the family.

Let me show you another one. First Timothy, right where we are, chapter 3. And again, we're talking about this warfare so we know what it is we're to fight. First Timothy 3, it's talking about spiritual leadership, a bishop, or an elder or pastor, describes a pastor here. A pastor is to be blameless, a one-woman man, and all of that in verse 2. Comes down to verse 6 and says he's not to be a novice; that is, a new convert, someone who is not skilled in the things of the Word of God, someone who is not mature, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. The devil was condemned with pride and so will someone who's lifted up too fast to a place of spiritual leadership and prominence. The point I want you to note is in verse 7: He must have a good report also of the

people outside the church lest he fall into the reproach and the snare of the devil.

Let me tell you something. There's nobody in the church the devil would rather catch in his trap than the pastors, right? And again, we notice that he is being very successful today in doing that. The church is absolutely without excuse because of its ignorance of these areas of spiritual warfare. He blinds minds, and we somehow don't see that, and even those who see feel they can play around with Satan's domain and they find that he devours them, he sifts them out, shredding their lives, as it were. They blow away in terms of any strength or usefulness, and then he comes at their marriages, and then he comes at the church in the devastation of spiritual leadership who fall into his traps by immorality, by pride, by dictatorial authoritarianism, whatever else.

And there's one other pervasive aspect that you need to note, and we could look at a lot of Scripture, but let me just take you to 2 Corinthians 11. Second Corinthians 11. And we draw this together. Notice what it says in verse 13. Paul mentions false apostles. He's been talking about true apostles and false ones since back in chapter 10, sort of defending himself against some attacks. Here he says, "These who attack me," in a sense, "are false apostles." They are "deceitful workers and they transform themselves into the apostles of Christ, and no marvel," no wonder, "for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it's no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness whose end shall be according to their works."

Now, what he says is this: Another way Satan attacks – and you know it as well as I do – is he designs false religious systems – is that not so? – and sucks people off into them and they're worldwide.

Every time you see a person in a liberal church who's hearing someone preach who denies the deity of Christ or denies the lostness of man – and I was just reading a series of articles recently about a man who believes – it says he's an evangelical and believes that everybody's automatically saved, that Christ dwells in the life of everyone. Anyone who teaches error like that, of course, just damns people to hell because they're not responsible for coming to Christ. Anyone who's in a Mormon church or Jehovah's Witnesses or follows the tenets of salvation by works in Romanism, anyone who is a part of Eastern mysticism or Hinduism or any of those kinds of religions is following what they believe to be the way of light, but Satan is transformed into an angel of light and it is a lie, it is deceit, it is dishonesty, and it is ultimately disaster. So Satan, then, comes against us with false teaching. This is rampant. This is absolutely rampant.

I shiver sometimes when I see the things that are being taught in the name of biblical truth, and I could go through illustration after illustration. I just read a little booklet somebody gave me this week, "I Went to Hell." "I Went to Hell," and this man talks about how he went to hell three times. It isn't true, it's lies – just lies – and yet the man is held up as an astute teacher and bearer of the truth.

Recently I've been receiving phone calls and letters from people in Argentina who've asked for me to come down there because there is an encroaching doctrine of error coming against the church, and they have asked if I would come, and the last call said they would like to rent the largest place in Buenos Aires and they have 4,000 pastors who want to come and be taught the Word of God in reference to this error. Four thousand pastors who are in need of understanding the deceitfulness of Satan. I said, "You must have somebody there who can do that." They said, "We want you to come. God's laid you on our hearts." So it looks like one of these days, I'm off to Argentina, and that's a privilege for me to talk to 4,000 pastors about the truth of God if they're being attacked by the lies of Satan. It isn't that they don't know what to believe, it's that they want to know how to answer this and they want to know how to arm their people so their people are not sucked in.

This is a war. This is a battle. It's going on all over the place, and if you don't know it, as I said, you went AWOL sometime. You say, "Well, how do we effectively fight?" Let's look back at chapter 10 for a moment, 2 Corinthians 10, verse 4, and with this we'll draw it to a conclusion. "For the weapons of our warfare are not" – what? – "fleshy." You can't use your own intellect, you can't use your own wisdom, your own natural talents. The weapons of our warfare are not fleshy but "they are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." Man, we can topple the kingdoms of Satan. We can cast down his imaginations. Every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God can be torn down. "We can bring into captivity" – here's the key – "every thought to the" – what? To the what? – "obedience of Christ." Would you underline that in your Bible? To the obedience of Christ. And Paul says, "I have a readiness" – in verse 6 – "to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled."

Want to know something, people? You know what the weapons of our warfare are? I'm going to give it to you straight as Paul gave it. The weapons of our warfare can be reduced to one thing. What is it? Obedience. They're not mystical. The weapons of our warfare are not human intellect, human prowess, human ability, human skill, human ingenuity. The weapons of our warfare are reduced to obedience. Obedience. When you put on the armor of God, you start with the belt of truthfulness, a commitment to fight on the basis of God's revealed truth. You put on the breastplate of righteousness, which is His revealed righteousness. Your feet are shod with the gospel of the preparation of peace revealed in His Word. Your helmet is the helmet of the hope of eternal salvation, and your sword is the Word of what? Of God. The only weapon we have is the Word of God.

The Word of God is not a fleshy weapon. When I go out and try to attack the kingdom of darkness with my own opinion, I get no place. When I go out with the Word of God, things start falling. The Word of God has tremendous power, and that is the weapon of our warfare. Not just the Word of God but what Paul says in 2 Corinthians: obedience to the Word of God as we wield the sword of the Spirit in an obedient life, a life covered with righteousness as our breastplate, holding up the shield of confidence and faith in God, we're going to be victorious.

I don’t believe in any little formulas. I don’t believe you can go off to camp and get a zap that will last all your life. Spirituality is not related to zaps, it’s not related to formulas, it’s not related to little formula prayers, little ditties. Spirituality is nothing more and nothing less than learning the life of obedience to the Word of God so that you really wield the sword, and that’s how you carve a swath through the kingdom of darkness, and that’s how you win the spiritual warfare, and somewhere along the line you start by making a commitment to be obedient, and that’s how you start to fight a noble warfare. That’s why Jesus said, “Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” because life in victory is inextricably connected to obedience.

So what God wants in this noble warfare out of Timothy and what He wants out of us is that we should fight a noble war in a noble way, which means with obedient lives, and we get our lives down to obeying the Word of God. It’s that simple.

In all the years I’ve been at Grace Church, I’ve not been interested to give you formulas, but week after week and month after month through all these years, we have simply talked about what the Word teaches and called for people to obey it. And in that obedience God, has allowed us to have an army here by His grace that have indeed fought. Many of you have fought a noble war, and God has given us great victory to His glory, for which we praise Him. But if you’re not there and you’re not in the battle and you’re not a part of that nobility that fights as they ought to fight, may God help you this day to be where you should be.

Father, we thank you that You have spoken to us so directly through Your Word. We, like Timothy, are desirous of fighting a good fight, a noble warfare. We understand now the proportions of this cosmic war and, Lord, we want to know where we fit and what we are to do, and You cry out to us, “Take your weapons, and your weapons are not fleshly, but your weapons are the weapons of an obedient life that wields the Word of the living God.” O Lord, may we be those obedient soldiers who at any price will serve You, who willingly suffer hardship, cut ourselves off from the affairs of this life, and do what we do to please the One who called us to be a soldier, and in so fighting, Lord, with an obedient life, may we defend the glory that belongs to Your holy name. And instead of being a reproach to You, may we be a benediction and a blessing. Give us the victory, Lord, that You may be glorified and that Satan’s slanders and accusations and attacks against You might be defeated on this front by Your power in us, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

As we close the service this morning, I want you to listen as I read you the words of a hymn, and I want you just to listen prayerfully to the words of Isaac Watts. I think they bring to focus what we’ve said. “Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb? And shall I fear to own His cause or blush to speak His name? Must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas? Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood? Is this vile world a friend to grace to help me on to God? Sure I must fight if I would reign.

Increase my courage, Lord. I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, supported by Thy Word."

I trust that the prayer of that hymn, the prayer of Isaac Watts is our prayer as well.

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