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

Fundamental Christian Attitudes: Strength, Part 3
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-128

As we continue in our very helpful series on the anatomy of the church, talking about the attitudes that must exist within the church if the church is to be the body of Christ in all its fullness. We've been having just a wonderful time for weeks and weeks now both on Sunday morning and Sunday night addressing these issues. They have been immensely helpful in many, many lives and we rejoice in the Lord for that.

In talking about the church, we have kind of gone inside. We're talking about the internal systems, as it were, in the body of Christ, those spiritual attitudes that really carry the life of the church, that make the church what it really is because it's what it is on the inside that matters.

We've talked about attitudes like faith and love and obedience, forgiveness, compassion, thanks, joy, all very important essential components in the life of the church, which, of course, means in the life of every believer who makes up the church. And last week we introduced another in these spiritual attitudes which is absolutely crucial and that is strength. We might call it courage or fortitude, but the best term would be strength. One of the essentials for everyone of us as believers, and certainly collectively as a church, is that we would be strong.

Now we addressed this issue of spiritual strength particularly last week from 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 1 where Paul said to Timothy, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." A direct command to Timothy to be strong. Now you remember that last week we noted that Timothy was in a time of personal weakness, struggling with being young and fighting youthful lusts, fighting the tendency to be argumentative as young men sometimes do, striving against others. He was also having a difficult time with sophisticated philosophical error that was encroaching on the life of the church and he didn't feel that he was really able to deal with it. He was battling the ideas of persecution because persecution was escalating and he was somewhat fearful for his own safety. The identification with the Apostle Paul made life more difficult. Being identified with Christ made it difficult enough because of the persecution. Timothy was letting his gift fall into disuse. It was tough because he was in a church that he was really not a part of. He had come as an outsider and he had to straighten up the church and replace the leadership...a very difficult task. And the church was coming against him. And all of that meant that he was becoming weakened.

And so, Paul's instruction, "Be strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ," has to do with being able to deal with fleshly weakness, being able to deal with the difficulties of life in your own person. Timothy

was needing strength to deal with the weakness of his own human flesh.

Now this morning I want to go beyond that and I want to deal with the issue of strength but in another category, a somewhat more sophisticated category, one that we don't know as well as we know ourselves, and it is this...we need strength not only to deal with our weakness humanly, but we need strength to deal with the sophisticated cunning schemes of a satanic system that is all around us.

Turn in your Bible to Ephesians chapter 6. We're going to look at verse 10 to start with and this verse will sound a lot like 2 Timothy 2:1. In fact, it will sound like an echo of that verse, but it has again to do with spiritual strength. Listen to what verse 10 says in Ephesians 6, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might."

Here again is a call for strength. The Lord wants His church mature, full-grown, strong, courageous so that it can stand against the weaknesses of the flesh and against the stratagems of a very powerful supernatural enemy, namely Satan. We have a formidable battle in regard to the domain of darkness.

Verse 10 then, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God." In other words, don't engage yourself in this battle with anything less than complete armor. The foe is formidable, more formidable than any other foe and it requires the greatest amount of spiritual strength to come out victorious. "Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."

You'll notice that he doesn't put us on the attack, he puts us on the defense. We're not called to assault Satan, we are called to stand against him. He will show up with his formidable, powerful, invading force and we need to be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. The devil is none other than the slanderer, diabolos, the adversary, Satan, the one who structures the world system and he it is that comes against us with his subtle schemes.

He doesn't come alone, he comes with a sophisticated and powerful spiritual network. Look at verse 12, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood." We're really not fighting against a human system. Obviously we're battling in our own lives with our flesh but when we get outside of ourselves we're not really battling a flesh and blood system, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenlies, above the earth in the spiritual domain, the spiritual dimension. There are sophisticated spiritual beings and we're engaged in a war with them.

Now notice that there are a number of terms that are used to describe these beings. They are called rulers, powers, and world forces and then summarily all of them, spiritual forces of wickedness. These are terms used to define the various responsibilities and levels of the order of demons under

Satan. The prince of this world the Bible calls Satan, the god of this world the Bible calls him, has under him a highly structured order of demons who carry out his plans. They are given assignments and responsibilities under his leadership.

Now when God created angels he didn't create them all the same as He is true in His creation of humans, we're not all the same, we vary greatly in many, many ways, and so it is with spiritual beings that God created in the angelic realm. They have varying capabilities and capacities. And when God created them He created one of them supreme. One of them had more capability and talent and giftedness than the rest and his name was Lucifer and he was the son of the morning, the anointed cherub, the one who really was the supreme angel who was higher than all the rest, I guess, in terms of rank and responsible for the carrying out of duties on the widest angelic scale. God gave him great intelligence. God gave him great capability in all the realms of angelic spiritual capacities. He is that angel who fell and we know him as Satan. And while he has been stained eternally with sin, he still bears some of the immense capabilities that God gave him in creation. And so it is that he sits on top of the pile of all these demon hosts who carry out his very clever wicked devices, called in verse 11 the schemes of Satan. He pushes those schemes through his demon hosts to accomplish his purposes.

And here we are in this world fighting against this very formidable foe. That is why in verse 10 it says, "We need to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." And what that translates into is putting on the full armor of God. Again we find that where there is a command to be strong there is immediate explanation as to what that involves. You remember last time when dealing with Timothy's weakness Paul said, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," and then got very specific and said, "In order to be strong you must see yourself as a soldier and a teacher and an athlete and a farmer," and gave him a pattern for developing that strength. You have the same thing here. To stand against the subtle schemes of Satan that are being pushed through a vast demonic host against us we need to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. And how do we do that? "By putting on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."

Now keep in mind that this very, very sophisticated, supernatural, powerful system of evil from Satan flowing through these demons basically operates in the world system around us. First John 5:19, "The whole world lies in the lap of the evil one." He is the god of this age, he is the prince of this world. He is in control of the world system. And I want you to understand this because I think people misunderstand it so often. Satan comes to you through the world system that engulfs you. According to 1 John, "We are tempted through the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life." Temptation comes through those avenues. What we see, what we lust for or desire and personal pride and the way Satan gets at you is not by sending some individual demon to mess you up, but by creating a world system around you that appeals to those three temptation avenues. It's not that you as a believer need to fear that somehow the demon of lust is going to get in you, or the demon of

deceit is going to get in you, or the demon of lying, or the demon of discontent, or as one guy even included, the demon of post nasal drip. It's not that we have to live in some fear that some...some demon with a certain kind of wicked bent is going to take over our lives and catapult us into some category of iniquity over which we have no control. That is not how it works.

What Satan does is develop very sophisticated schemes, cunning craftiness, Ephesians 4 calls them. And those schemes are carried out by this vast host of demons who develop the world system into a massive source of temptation which is designed to assault you and me. It's designed to assault, listen carefully, God's people. There is nothing in the Scripture to indicate anywhere that a believer can have demons living in him or her. Being possessed of demons is not characteristic of believers, either in the Old or New Testament. We don't find a believer who had demons in him or her. We never find in the New Testament any occasion of anyone ever casting demons out of a believer. When Christ and the Apostles cast out demons, they were casting them out of non-believers. This was Messianic supernatural power and apostolic power, the power that could also heal the sick and raise the dead which was given to the Apostles and the Apostles alone.

So the objective of this spiritual war is not to attack demons, but to defend ourselves against the world wicked system which Satan has designed to attack us. And I say that because so many Christians are so confused about this, running around thinking that the way to deal with the issues of their life is to somehow chase the demons away. If the demons all packed up and went away, the system they've created would still be here. And it is that system which is the point of temptation. It is loving the world that is so deadly, and all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. That's what's so devastating. It is that loving of the world that is enmity with God. Our flesh is vulnerable to Satan as he comes through the world system which he controls.

And so the issue in spiritual life, right here in Ephesians 6 you can see it, is that we have this tremendous war going on with spiritual beings, fallen angels called demons, and the solution has nothing to do with the demons and everything to do with putting on the armor of God and arming ourselves against the schemes which comes to us through the wicked system developed in which we live. That's why it's so foolish as you hear today all this talk about fighting the culture war, fighting the culture war, trying to bring back morality, trying to bring back the old kind of style of life and bring back virtues and honor and integrity and honesty to the society, and so we're all going to fight the culture war politically by voting and legislating and lobbying and petitioning and what we've failed to realized is that the culture war isn't really being developed on that level, it is being developed on a far more powerful supernatural sophisticated level than that. And it cannot be won politically, nor can sanctification come to the people of God, nor can spiritual victory come to the people of God by chasing demons as if you could chase them and find them anyway. That's not how it is.

Now I would assume that Satan would want to attack me. I would assume that his demons would want to attack me and destroy my life and my ministry. I can assume...that's a fair assumption, I

think, because if you have a measure of influence you become certainly a potentially greater discredit to God because of the breadth of your responsibility. And I can assume that Satan would certainly want to do that. I can also say this, this is purely anecdotal, that in my entire life I have never had any knowledge personally of Satan's presence and I'm not saying he hasn't been around, but I don't have any criteria by which to know it. I can look at circumstances and wonder if that's not being orchestrated by the forces of darkness, but I have no criteria to know that. I can't even tell you whether demons have been banging around me, I don't have any criteria. I can't see them. I can't feel them. At no time in my entire life have I ever felt catapulted into some iniquity by a controlling force over which I had no power. Satan doesn't move in with some demon and drag you off against everything that you believe and are committed to. That isn't the issue. I'm not saying Satan hasn't messed around trying to do things to me, or demons, and they probably have, they may be right now, I don't know. But I don't have any criteria by which to know that and I can't see them and I can't feel them and whatever they do, they do, but two things are true...I don't know they're doing it, and two, they haven't been successful. But their success has nothing to do with me trying to find them. You understand that? And say, "Hey, I bind you, guys, go around, I tie you up," as if I could do that. Jesus and the Apostles cast demons out of nonbelievers, nobody else could do that. You remember the sons of Sceva, they were Jewish exorcists trying to cast out demons and the demons in the book of Acts said, "Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are you guys?" The idea is not to chase Satan, the idea is to realize that he's coming at you not through some personal demons intended to come and live in you, you're a believer, you're indwelt by the Spirit of God, there is no incident in the New Testament where a believer has demons living in him or her. So that's not how Satan gets at you. He gets at you through tempting you through those three bridges...the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life...through a well crafted corrupt system in which you live.

And I say this because if you're going to be on the alert as it says, watching for Satan who goes around like a roaring lion, if you're going to be on the alert, you need to look for the right thing and looking for demons is fruitless cause you can't see them and you can't find them and you don't know when they're there. You say, "Well now wait a minute, how do you know they're there at all?" Well in unbelievers I have confronted demons. I've had conversations with demons, and that is a strange experience. They literally take over a human voice and change it. And I have...I have tried casting those demons out when I was young in my ministry, I didn't really didn't know what to do about it, but I tried for a long time casting some demons out of this lady one time and they didn't go. And I concluded that they were not subject to me. I even tried the name of Jesus and I said, "In the name of Jesus I send you away." And one of them came back and said, "My name is Jesus," just like that with a high-pitched voice, so that didn't work. So I...they...it was a very interesting conversation. I don't say much about it but it was a very interesting conversation.

In frustration I came to realize that I had absolutely no authority over demons. This was an unconverted woman with a life full of iniquity who had been filled up with demons. You have that occasion in the New Testament, don't you? You have that many times. And by the way, you have it

today as well among unbelievers. We don't know that. You say, "Well how come it's so clear in the New Testament?" Very simple, because the New Testament experiences are being interpreted through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and through the insights of Jesus. And He knew what was going on while the people around may not have known if He hadn't revealed it.

Now we still have that among unbelievers. And we don't have the apostolic authority to walk in and throw the demons out. This idea that you can tell Satan what to do...look, in the book of Daniel God sent an angel to earth to answer a prayer that Daniel prayed and a demon held him up in the heavenlies for weeks. I mean, even on that level, they have a tremendous conflict and we're not super angels, but even super angels engage in a very, very difficult battle with demons and you remember in Jude 9 that even Michael the archangel, the greatest angel of all wouldn't bring a railing accusation against Satan himself but said, "The Lord rebuke you." Even he didn't bind Satan. There's only one who can bind Satan, Revelation 20 says the Lord Jesus will do it in the Millennial Kingdom but it takes a great chain and only He has that chain. The issue is not chasing the demons, the issue is if you're going to win the battle it says very clearly, "Take up the full...what?...armor of God."

You're the issue that has to be dealt with. And what do you have to do? Well you've got this vulnerability in the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, these are the bridges to sin and the world is going to come right at you, the satanic system that is all around you and it's going to cross those bridges if it can, and that's where you have to arm yourself. And that's why he gives us the armor in this text.

Now before we look at the armor, in fact many hours before we look at the armor because we're going to look at it tonight, I want to take you to a chapter that explains this warfare in detail. Revelation 12...Revelation 12, what a great chapter in the Bible. And here we get an insight into spiritual warfare. Instead of all this political effort, instead of all this, you know, demon busters kind of mentality, what we really need to be involved in is personal holiness, personal righteousness, personal godliness, putting on the armor and that's how we can win the battle. We're going to see how the battle shapes up here in chapter 12.

All right, who are the participants? I want to talk about the participants, who is the enemy? First of all, look at verse 3. John has an amazing vision here and in verse 3 as a part of this vision he has a sign that appears to him in heaven, and behold a great red dragon. And this dragon is pictured in full authority and power, having seven heads and ten horns and on his heads were seven diadems, each of them crowned. Now what is this? What is this great red dragon?

Down to verse 7, mentions Michael His angels waging war with the dragon. And then it mentions the dragon and his angels. So now we're getting a little closer. Whoever the dragon is he is the commander of certain angels. Go down to verse 9. "And the great dragon was thrown down."

Here's the definition. "The serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan who deceives...what?...the whole world." Now that is the main strategy of Satan. He is liar, he is the father of lies, he is the deceiver. That's his name. And he has created a worldwide deception. His schemes are all about lies, lies about God, lies about life and death and morality, lies about relationships, lies about everything, the whole deceptive wicked world system. So the first and major participant in spiritual warfare is this great red dragon who has all these angels following with him who is none other than the serpent of the Garden, who is the devil, who is the slanderer, the liar, the adversary...goes out to deceive the whole world.

He's not alone. Go back to verse 4. We already noted for you in verse 7 that he has angels with him but verse 4 tells us who they were. "His tail...that is keeping Satan in this motif of a dragon, this image of a dragon...when he fell he swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth." This depicts the fact that Satan in his fall took with him one third of the angels. Now that means that there are twice as many holy angels, two thirds, as fallen angels, one third. God's force being double that of Satan's, but there were angels who joined in Satan's rebellion. You can read about his rebellion in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 which describes it. And when Satan fell he took a third of the angels with him, they joined his rebellion against the true God. And these fallen angels became the soldiers in Satan's great army.

How many of them are there? Well, Revelation 5:11 says the number of angels in heaven now is ten thousand times ten thousand, and that's the word murion times murion. The reason that word is used is not because it's mathematically precise, but because it's the highest number in the Greek language and so they just use multiples of it and then add thousands and thousands...or thousands of thousands. So it's ten thousand times ten thousands and thousands of thousands which is another way of saying there are a lot. There are a lot. You don't want to just add them all up, it's beyond the mathematics. And though there are many, many holy angels, an unaccountable number, there are half that many fallen angels in the force of Satan. So the participants in the war are Satan and his fallen angels.

Now that's not all. Go down to verse 11 and the implied addition to his force, it talks about believers here, the brethren, those who have come to know Christ, says they overcame him, that is they overcame the dragon and Satan, because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony and they didn't love their life even to death. Now what does this tell us? It tells us that through the years Christians are going to be...what?...killed, martyred. And at the hand of whom? Human beings. And that takes us down to the final participants in this tremendous warfare and that is the unredeemed people who reject the truth. So you have Satan, fallen angels, and the unredeemed people who are hostile against the truth.

Now let me tell you something that you may not have thought of but it's basic. Satan is not attacking the unregenerate world, okay? He's not attacking the unregenerate world, they're not his enemy,

they're on his team. You understand that? They're participants with him. He's not attacking them, they already belong to him. They are soldiers in his army, they're his human troops that carry out the demons wishes, that carry out his schemes.

So the wickedness of the world...are you ready for this?...the wickedness of the world, the wretchedness of the world is not for the sake of the unregenerate, it is to corrupt God's people. That's what Satan's trying to do. Why? Because he's trying to destroy God's plan. He's trying to destroy the church, destroy the redeemed. He wants defeat...to defeat God. The great war is between Satan and God. Satan hates God, resents God, wants to be above God and still that war wages in his wicked heart. He is not corrupting the world for the sake of the already corrupt, he's corrupting the world in order that his influences might somehow destroy the purposes of God for his own people. So the whole war is being waged against the redeemed. That's why it's crucial to understand we better know how to fight this deal. And we can't get all caught up and try to fight it politically or try to chase demons around and pronounce formulas on them.

Who are the targets? Well let's talk about that more specifically. Verse 1 of this chapter. As this battle unfolds, "A great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under feet, on her head a crown of twelve stars and she was with child." Sees this amazing image of this woman who is pregnant. "She cried out being in labor and in pain to give birth." She's crying in the very last moments of birth pains, about to issue the child. Down to verse 5, "And she gave birth to a son, a male child who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron and her child was caught up to heaven and to His throne." Who is that child? Jesus Christ-Jesus Christ. And the first target for the satanic war is Christ, he's the first target.

From the very beginning of God's redemptive plan way back in Genesis, the enemy began to work his attack. In Genesis 3:15 there is the promise that Satan is going to come out and bruise the heel of the Messiah, right? He's going to assault the Messiah when he comes. Satan wanted to destroy God's redemptive purpose in the coming Messiah. He tried to do it every way he could He tried to do it by literally corrupting the whole of the nation of Israel in idolatry so that they would abandon the true God all together and that failed. There was always a remnant. He tried it by having the Messianic line destroyed and at one point under the reign and terror of Athaliah it got down to one child, the last remaining member of the Messianic line and God preserved that one child against her conspiracy.

He tried in the genocide attempt of Haman, you remember, who wanted to wipe out the whole race of Jews and God used Esther and Mordecai to thwart that attempt at genocide. It happened in the curse of Jeconiah who was in the Davidic line and was cursed and told that no child of his would ever reign on the throne of Israel. Satan used all kinds of means. God had to bypass the line of Jeconiah by bypassing Joseph as a human contributor to Jesus and giving Him a virgin birth. Satan has worked to destroy the Messianic line, to destroy the people of the Messiah, to destroy Israel repeatedly and repeatedly...whether it's Antiochus Epiphanes in the inter-testamental period, trying to

commit genocide, or whether it's Hitler, or whether it's Saddam Hussein or whoever it is who comes against the people of God, it's another outworking of satanic endeavor to destroy God's people, to destroy the purposes of God's Christ in bringing to those people a kingdom.

When the baby was born in Bethlehem, you remember, that Herod sent out the decree that every male child of two years and under should be massacred. What was that? That was Satan in another attempt to destroy the Messiah at His birth. And then he thought He could pin Him on the cross and keep Him dead and keep Him in a tomb and had the Romans seal the tomb. I mean, it's always been that he wants to destroy Christ because Christ is, of course, the key to God's whole redemptive purpose. And why doesn't Satan want it? Because Satan does not want a whole redeemed humanity taken to glory to do nothing but praise God forever and ever because he hates God so greatly. He doesn't want that glory for God.

Secondly, as I already noted, he targets someone other than just Christ. Look at verse 6, here we read about the woman who gave birth to the child. You should have some hint about who this woman is, it's not Mary. On her head in verse 1 she had twelve stars. That refers to the twelve tribes of Israel, and you come in verse 6 and find that this woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God so that there she might be nourished for a thousand two hundred and sixty days, that's three and a half years. That's the second half of the seven-year Tribulation known as the time of Jacob's trouble. And the woman is Israel. The Messiah was born of Israel. The woman Israel in the time of Tribulation will be persecuted by Antichrist in the abomination of desolations in the middle of that seven-year period, he will come against Israel, try to do genocide again. And again, Satan always wants to wipe out Israel, one way or another to destroy them, to wipe them out. He even had an occasion where he got the people who came back from the Babylonian captivity to intermarry with idolatrous women and pollute the whole line of Israel you remember Ezra stood up and told them for the only time we read about it in the Bible, to divorce their pagan wives because divorce was a lesser evil than the wiping out of God's people Israel. Satan endeavors to do this incessantly. Even to this day today they are a much beleaguered people and if much of the Arab world had their way, they would be wiped out. They are preserved by God against this. But they obviously need to be protected.

When in this verse, verse 6, Antichrist comes against them during the Tribulation, the Lord will prepare a place for them, hide them away there for three and a half years that they might be preserved and saved and enter into their promised kingdom. Then verse 7, here we find another participant, the demons, coming after another target, the holy angels. "There was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon." Satan goes after the holy angels. I don't know about that warfare. We have a hint of it, as I mentioned in Daniel 9, but there is a tremendous war going on between demons in the spiritual realm and holy angels and they are battling at that level as well.

And then we come down to the last targets, and that's us. Verse 10, "I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, 'Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down." The first thing that Satan does against the believers is go up to heaven and stay there in the presence of God day and night and accuse us. It says he accuses them before our God day and night. He is incessantly up there accusing us to God.

Now we say, "What is he telling Him?" He's telling Him about everything he knows about you and everything he knows about me, everything he knows about us and he may not know all of us, obviously he's not omniscient and he's not omnipresent, so he doesn't know everything that goes on and he doesn't know everything about everybody. There's nothing in Scripture to indicate he can even read your mind. But he does know enough about Christians to have a long list of the things they do they ought not to do, right? And so he's up there and some he knows probably very well and he's up there in heaven constantly accusing like some lawyer trying to bring an indictment that sticks. And he's telling God how unworthy we are and how undeserving and how unfaithful and unloving and how we violate His commands and we continually sin and we continually fail, we continually disobey. And he continually beleaguers God through all the years since redemption started about the unfaithfulness and the unworthiness of believers. He attacks us at that level.

We're reminded, however, that attack is unsuccessful. In Romans 8, "Who is he that condemns? It is God who justifies." Satan can be up there as long as he wants saying what he wants but God who has already justified us will not reverse His decision. and that's why the intercessory work of Christ is so important. All the while that Satan is accusing, Christ is defending. We have a lawyer in that court who is our advocate, constantly at heaven's court defending us by the simple reminder that He has already borne all of those sins in His own body on the cross for us. Satan attacks then in heaven against believers. And what he's trying to do is to get God to change His mind about us and decide to damn us rather than save us. He's trying to change God's mind against us. That's why Romans 8 is so important. "What's going to separate us from the love of Christ?" What? "Nothing, not principalities, not powers," those are names for demons, not Satan, not anything. It is God who justifies, the price is paid, Christ has died, we are His, chosen before the foundation of the world, He will lose none of them, raise them all, bring them to glory. Satan is wasting His time. But nonetheless is passionately relentless.

Then on earth, go to verse 17, the dragon was enraged with the woman who is Israel, and so he goes off to make war with the rest of her offspring. Now who is that? One thing that happens in the Tribulation is really interesting. Toward the end of the Tribulation there is a tremendous conversion of Jews and God picks 144 thousand of them, twelve thousand from every tribe, to evangelize the world. And they do that and they're successful. They're so successful that Revelation 7 says there's an innumerable number of people who are converted out of every tongue and tribe and people and

nation. The greatest evangelism the world has ever known will be done by Jews during the Tribulation after they've come to know their Christ.

In fact, as a result of the 144 thousand the whole nation of Israel will be converted after the rebels are purged out. They will...they will be the instruments that through which the whole nation will be converted and the instruments of the conversion of Gentiles all across the world. They will be the witness people finally that God designed them to be and they'll continue to be that even into the Kingdom when in the millennial kingdom they will lead the nations of the world to the knowledge of the Son of God. So the Jews are going to have offspring. That's what verse 17 is saying. They're going to have offspring, that is those people who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus, believers. And the dragon is mad at them. Here we find it again. Satan is against Christ, he is against holy angels, he is against Israel and he is against believers in any age and every age.And that gets the battle right down to us.

Look at 1 Peter for a moment, or just listen to it, don't need to look it up, but in 1 Peter 5 it says in verse 8 that Satan goes about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Then it says, "Resist him firm in the faith." Now the point here is that he goes about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour people who are in the faith. And again I say, Satan is not attacking the unregenerate. There's no reason to. They're already on his side. He uses them...he uses them to attack us. Can you believe that? The whole rotten, wretched, vile, wicked world system is not an assault against the ungodly, it's an assault against Christ and God and against believers. That's what it is. Satan is really serious about this. Do you know the lengths that he's gone to in this country alone to corrupt a system that he wants to corrupt the church with?

Now, in 2 Corinthians 4:4 it says, "The god of this world...Satan...has blinded the minds of those who believe not." They don't know what's going on. They haven't got a clue. Their minds are blinded. He has them so deceived they don't understand. They think that all this develop in the human system is freedom and equal rights and fulfillment of personal goals. The whole world is so deceived. We're not though. The god of this world has not blinded our eyes, the blinders are off, we know what's going on...at least I hope we do. I wonder about these Christians who are trying to solve this problem politically and trying to solve it by chasing demons around as if they could identify them to chase them. We don't need to be ignorant, let's put it that way. We don't need to be blind to reality. We have a massive spiritual war going on and it is going on because Satan has developed a world system that tempts Christians and what he wants to do, believe me, is destroy the church...which is God's purpose and the fulfillment of God's promise. So Satan comes at us through the world system. Again I say, you don't have to worry about getting overpowered by some demon that's all of a sudden going to move into your house. I've had people (defect in tape) and say we just bought a new house, would you come over and pray the demons out? And I say, "I wouldn't know one if I saw one and I've never seen one. And if I did come over and pray, I don't know whether they'd do anything anyway." And I'm not sure they live in houses, I think they may more likely live in people, unregenerate people

and I can't cast them out of unregenerate people. But I had some people ask me one time to pray the demons out of the restaurant...and I did it, they were out of business in about six months, that restaurant. That was the last restaurant prayer I was asked to do. I was pretty young in the ministry and wasn't too sure what I was doing, but thought maybe it's a nice thing to do for these people.

I wouldn't know a demon if I saw one. As I said, I've heard them speak, that's a rare occasion to do that, but I don't think you need to fear that. We have a formidable war. There is a way to fight the war. And the way to fight the war is given to us very clearly in Scripture.

Now I want you to understand something and this is a footnote that you have to take into consideration. All of this whole enterprise of Satan, all of this massive development of a scheme of deception that tries to cross the bridges of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life and through the world system draw Christians into temptation and destruction, all of that stuff that Satan does he does because God allows it. You must understand that. It's not as if you need to get in a cheering section and say, "Come on, God, we're rooting for You, I know it's a tough go, but we'd really like You to win." I want to get you past that ridiculous thought. It's not that you have two kingdoms of equal power vying and nobody knows who's going to win. Satan is the servant of God and he does nothing that God doesn't allow him to do.

So God has a purpose in all of this, in all of this. He has a purpose to us in order that we might learn to trust Him in our temptation, in order that when we have victory we might give Him praise and glory, in order that we might learn strength through our weakness, in order that we might be able to help others when we have been helped in the midst of our trust. God has all kinds of purposes, one of which is to display His grace when we sin. He wants to display His mercy and grace to the holy angels who are watching because they don't have any grace in their sphere and they can only see the display of His grace in ours. God has purposes.

Take Job, for example, Satan goes to heaven, starts accusing...starts accusing. Accusing the brethren like he always does and says, "God, the only reason these people are faithful to You is because You bless them all the time. Stop blessing them, they'll curse You." So God said okay, take Job, I'll take My hand of blessing off him, you do whatever you want to. Turned him loose. Now I don't know how Satan is able to do this but he was able to do it somehow by the supernatural power he has invading the natural world, he killed his whole family, Job's whole family and all his animals and the only person he left alive was his wife and she was a nagger. And I think he would have killed her if she had been more harm alive than dead. I mean, at least he could have a little peace in his own heart if everybody was gone. But he had to have somebody saying, "Why are you...why did you have to do this to you? Why did you let this...?" You know, that...so anyway, she was good for the process. I'm sure, I can't imagine how many speeches he heard about, "Well, if you were the kind of man you ought to be this never would have happened," you know, that speech. So anyway, there she is in Job and he gets boils and it's a horrible, horrible thing.

You say, "Why did...why did God let Satan do that?" Well it was...it had a positive effect on Job because when it was all done and the Lord blessed him, he said this, "I had heard of You with the hearing of my ear, but now my eye sees You and I repent in dust and ashes." In other words, I had a limited knowledge of You before this, now I see You clearly. I have seen You in my adversity in ways I'd never seen You before, and seeing You more clearly makes me see me more clearly and I repent in dust and ashes. What it did, it brought him to a greater awareness of his sin and a greater penitence and a greater brokenness which made him a more righteous man. And that was good for Job, but I don't think that was the real issue, that was a nice benefit for Job. The real point was not regarding Job, the real point was regarding Satan and I think the whole angelic host. And the point was this, I don't care what Satan is allowed to do to somebody, he cannot break saving faith. That's the point. You can't break it, it's permanent. I think Satan's thing was...I can get back people that are committed to You if I just have enough freedom to do it. And so God said have at it. And the point proved was once a person belongs to God, that cannot ever be changed. And all that hell can pour out on a person will not break his faith because the gift of faith is the gift of a permanent faith that endures to the end. God's purpose was to show the power of saving faith to Satan and the power of saving faith to demons, to discourage them from this tremendous effort that they're continually undergoing to smash the faith of the redeemed and to get God to turn His back on them.

And God allowed Satan to come after Peter. Remember? Jesus said to Peter one day, "Satan desires to have you." And if I was Peter I'd have said, "Well, You told him no, right?" Jesus said, "I told him yes." You want Peter? Go after it. Now I'm sure Satan thought he had a vulnerable guy in Peter because Peter had so many human foibles. And so the Lord said...have at him. And Satan went after him. And his vicious attack is recorded in the gospels around the trial of Jesus. Peter's disaffection and disavow of the knowledge of Christ and all that horrible stuff, but Jesus said to Peter...This is okay, this is okay because it's going to prove My point and in the end, Peter, you're going to turn around and strengthen the brethren.

You know what Peter's response when he got to the pit and the depth of that terrible assault from Satan? It says that he wept bitterly. He wept bitterly. And those were tears of broken heartedness and those were tears of penitence. And Jesus came back to him and restored him when He asked him three times, "Peter, do you love Me?" And three times Peter said I love You for the three times Peter had denied Him. He couldn't break Peter's faith and he couldn't break God's hold on Peter.

A messenger from Satan, according to 2 Corinthians 12, was sent to Paul. Paul prayed three times for it to be removed. The Lord said I'm not removing it. And Paul learned to rejoice in it.

I think Satan would have loved to destroy the faith of Job who was the most righteous man of his time. I think he wanted to destroy the faith of Peter. He wanted to destroy the faith of Paul. He couldn't and the lesson is always the same, when God puts His hand on a man and makes him His

child, that is forever. And Satan needs to know that and demons need to know that and no amount of lobbying at the throne of God against the advocacy of Christ will succeed and no amount of earthly onslaught will break that true faith. That lesson is a profound and powerful lesson. And Satan still is relentless and he goes around seeking whom he may devour. And unless...you're not going to lose your salvation over it, but you can sure get chewed up and spit out in little pieces and be terribly defeated. And the goal is having done all to...what?...to stand firm, useful to God.

Satan's come after you and he's developed a whole world system to do it. But you can stand against him. How do you do that? Go back to Ephesians 6, it's very simple in terms of the expression, "Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil," verse 11. Verse 13, "Take up the full armor of God...he says it twice...that you may be able to resist in the evil day." When's the evil day? Any day that evil really comes. "And that having done everything you stand." The idea is to stand your ground firm against the onslaughts of Satan when he comes in the day that perpetrates evil.

I don't know how it is in your life but I've noticed that there are...there are those days that seem quiet on the front. There are those days when I don't feel too embattled, when my heart is filled with joy and there's a rest and a peace and I accomplish things for the kingdom and the Word is alive in my life and quickened in my spirit. I mean, there are those wonderful, happy, joyful days. You know, those are the days you break 80. And you rejoice because your mind is free and clear. And then there are those evil days when you just feel like all the guns are pointed and you just...the battle just rages. And in those evil days we need to be able to stand firm and resist the devil so that he turns and...what?...flees from us. And the way to do that is to put on the full armor of God.

Well now you understand the battle, I trust. And tonight we're going to put on your armor. Now we don't want you to go out and try to fight without it, so you be here tonight. This is one of the most exciting, one of the most interesting, thrilling portions of Scripture as we look at the armor of the Christian in verses 14 through 17. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You again for Your Word. We thank You that we don't need to wander around in confusion about the battle because You've told us exactly what's at stake and drawn the lines of conflict for us. We thank You that our advocate, the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ triumphs in our behalf against the accusations of Satan in heaven. And we thank You that even as Satan by developing this wretched, sophisticated world system that appeals to our lusts and our pride, even though it comes at us in such formidable ways, with such great power, You have told us that we will stand and we will endure to the end. We don't have to just barely make it, we can make it standing firm if we have the armor on. We can make it triumphantly and victoriously and bring You glory and eternal reward if we fight with the full armor. Show us what that means, Lord, tonight as we come together and equip us for victory. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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