**11142021sm.mp3**

[00:00:00] So let me just tell you, before we're out in scripture, before we can go forward, we have to go backwards. All right. Genesis Chapter three. You'll understand this in just a minute, you guys have been so great over the last couple of weeks, as I've read a lot of scripture to you today, we have just one verse. Don't say amen because it'll hurt my feelings. The Bible says now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field, which the Lord God had made, and he said to the woman, Has God indeed said, you shall not eat of every tree. Of the guard, and let's pray together, God. Thank you so much, Father, we're so thankful we are seeing, not just because we like the melodies, not just because we have an affinity for these songs, but because they proclaim a spiritual reality God that we resonate with, that we identify with and that we are so thankful for. Thank you, God, that you have that we are born again, born again by the spirit of God, that you invaded our lives. That we don't just live in this fleshly temporary world, but God heaven has invaded our hearts, and we do pray God, that you would help us to live out this reality. God, we'd not be ignorant of the spiritual battle that we are in every single day. God, we want to be fully suited up and sobered up. We want to be totally aware and aware of and engaged in the battle that we're confronted with so that we can fulfill the prayer of your son that he taught us to pray. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven in Jesus name. Amen. You can have the sea today.

[00:01:53] So there was a conference at the United Nations a number of years ago, and they wanted to really encourage all of the delegates who were coming from all over these various nations. And so somebody had a great idea that they were going to have a banner in on the banner. It was going to have all of the the languages that were represented. And in each of those languages, they would select the word that represented the word welcome. So, you know, regardless of where you're coming from there on the banner in front of the U.N. building, is your word for welcome? Well, they did it, you know, and overall, it was pretty much a success. But one of the languages, they made a really, really small error. And so instead of saying welcome and not language, it said circumcision. Now, I know I don't need to say to you today, if you're walking up to a building and in your language, especially as the guy is, says circumcision, you're probably not walking through the door because you know everything on the other side just means pain. And you know, the truth of the matter is this sometimes when we preach the gospel, we share the good news we talk about. Rightly so. Don't get me wrong, today we talk about all the benefits that we're going to receive when we put our trust and faith in Jesus Christ. And it is this beautiful picture, and it should be. But you know, it is not altogether comprehensive. There are a lot of things that are missing. You know, oftentimes as pastors, we're not we're not preaching the gospel from the perspective of, hey, the spiritual warfare. When you put your trust and faith in Christ, come to Jesus today.

[00:03:29] Because when you do, chances are parts of your life are going to get so much more difficult. We don't say that. And I think, you know, if we did, obviously a lot of people would not respond to that message. But the fact is, when you put your trust and faith in Jesus Christ, your life gets difficult. There are. I'm not saying that your life isn't blessed. I'm not saying that your life isn't good, but you can start feeling like there's this target painted on your back. And it's like, Well, wait a minute, pastor, didn't you? You've kind of painted the picture that it was going to be smooth sailing, that there were going to be no difficulties, that, you know, everything was going to fall in place. But the fact is, when you believe in Jesus Christ, you become an adversary of the adversary. You used to be right where he wanted you. Now you're right where he doesn't want you. And you know, maybe today for you, you're a young Christian and you're like, Man, what? What the heck is going on? I mean, is it like this in everybody else's life? Answer yes. Yes, it is. But but you're just not aware of the fact because you haven't been taught yet that there is a real spiritual battle happening in your life. But this is not just for the young believers, sometimes as old Earth believers. You know, sometimes we we can find ourselves slipping back into a misconception. We can find ourselves slipping back into what begins as a willful ignorance of the spiritual battle that we're engaged in. And even as Christians who have been walking with God for some time, we find ourselves functioning in the flesh. You know, the truth is that the Bible teaches there are two realms that overlap.

[00:05:15] There's the spiritual realm and there's a physical realm. And within these realms, there is a war between two opposing sides. I did not say to you today that the sides are equal opposites because they're not equal opposites. But in each of these realms, there is a spiritual battle that's happening. In fact, what you see in the physical realm is a reflection of what is happening in the spiritual realm. So I'm just saying you say, Well, what the heck is going on here? Like what the world is just it's crazy. It's madness, and there can be the tendency to say, Well, that man, that's just all the wickedness of humanity while it is true. But the fact is, what we see in the in the physical world is a reflection of the real spiritual battle that's happening among angelic hosts on God's side and demonic hosts on the adversaries side. When we read the scripture, we have ways of expressing the manifestation of this warfare. You see words like light versus darkness or good versus evil or truth versus lie. Sometimes what you'll see in the scripture is the presentation of two opposing kingdoms the Kingdom of Darkness and the Kingdom of Light. And you say, Well, why are we in Genesis chapter three? What does that have to do with the spiritual battle? Well, this is the beginning of it. I mean, really, we're going to go back a little further today, but the Guardian is a picture. It's a microcosm of the reality that is happening every single day in your life. You know, you have God, you have God's kids and you have the predator in the garden. You have the adversary, the one who is against everything that God is for. And in that, you know, very brief picture, you see the conflict between these two kingdoms.

[00:07:14] And I have to lay this out. I do believe I have to lay this out because if we're not careful, we'll read the book of Genesis and we'll read them like just stories that are connected. When I say a story, by the way, I'm talking about history. Sometimes when we talk about the Bible stories and we use that terminology, we can think, Well, that story a fiction, a fable, a myth, a fairy tale. Now this is these are actual historical events and behind each. Of these historical events, historical events is a spiritual reality. When Cain murdered Abel. That wasn't just an act of an evil man. There was a spiritual reality that was happening behind that. In Noah's world, in Noah's time, remember I'd mentioned to you how pervasive the wickedness was. Well, yes, that wickedness was localized within the heart of every individual, but there was an adversary behind that seeking to derail the divine purposes of God. Next Sunday, we're going to talk about the Tower of Babel and what was happening as humanity was seeking to build an alternative for themselves so they wouldn't have to worship Yahweh. Behind that, of course, is a spiritual reality. Abraham, the calling of Abraham Abraham, is polytheistic, totally pagan, living in absolute darkness, a culture that's worshiping false gods. And what does God do? God breaks into that. God reveals himself to Abraham. Abraham did not just wake up one morning and say, Hey, I've got an idea, let's create the concept of a monotheistic God. You know, while he is saturated and polytheism know that happened because heaven invaded his heart because God gave him divine revelation. You think about Sodom and Gomorrah. Not just an issue of the wickedness of humanity, but for sure we see angels engage there.

[00:09:07] We think about the dysfunction that was happening in Joseph's family and Joseph sold into slavery. And yet the divine purpose of God always working behind the scenes. So you might say, Well, what do those stories have to do with me? Everything, everything. As a Christian, let me just be really straightforward with you and I always will be. But the Christian life is not a playground. It's a battleground. The Christian life is not a playground. It's a battleground. Some of us are playing games. We've been playing games with God. You know, we've got this concept of God that, you know, we've got him right where we want him. He fits within our box. He meets the needs that we have, and that's pretty much what he's for. You know, you satisfied certain areas. And so we we play, we play the Christian game. You know, we go through the ritual rituals and we consider ourselves to be in a good spot. But the truth is this it's not a playground, it's a battleground. You know, I was watching a movie a couple of days ago and it was oriented around World War One and there was a scene where, you know, the English were coming out of, you know, the trenches. They were crossing over no man's land and they were in conflict, obviously with the Germans. And if you've ever seen pictures of World War one, that no man's land, I mean, barbed wire and bloodied bodies and parts of bodies all over the place and chemical warfare, I mean, it is just as it is just as grotesque as you possibly could imagine. I mean, honestly, I was watching it and my heart was breaking over what what we have foisted upon humanity. But could you imagine if if one soldier got up and just kind of started meandering through no man's land, bullets flying chemical gas, you know, bombs going off and they're just going for a walk like a Sunday stroll picking the daisies? There were no days is in no man's land, but you know what I'm talking about? It would be like, Dude, you're you're a fool.

[00:11:03] Hey, Fool, what are you doing? You're going to die. You'll get shot like, wake up, jump in the trench, or at least act like a soldier. And I think a lot of us in our Christian lives are picking daisies. We're picking daisies. We're in this massive battle and we're functioning in life almost as if it doesn't exist. And I'm here to tell you today it does exist. You battle on a daily basis. Now the truth is, you may not have been realizing this, but you get to the end of your day and you're looking back and you're thinking, Man, it was a good day. Like it was a good day. Why am I so emotionally fatigued? Why am I so wiped out? Why do I? If it wasn't as if I had all of this physical or emotional investment, I feel like I'm just so tired. Like every step that I took, anybody ever feel like that before? I'm looking for a reason. Thank you very much. Every step I take is like trudging through the proverbial mud, like what is going on while you're in the middle of a battle and the devil is pushing against you. How you battle real darkness. And when we look at this, this guardian story, what we see is a predator in the garden. He is called the serpent. The Book of Revelation calls him the serpent of old, but he was not always called the serpent. He at one point was named Lucifer. That word means Lightbringer or light bearer. He was an angelic being of the of the order of the cherubim. In fact, you know, I would encourage you later on. I don't have the time to do this today, but we get our biblical understanding of Satan from Isaiah, Chapter 14, Ezekiel Chapter Twenty eight and Revelation Chapter 12.

[00:12:53] So, you know, it's those portions of scripture that we draw from to understand who are adversary is. And what we learn is that he was the anointed cherub. There is a special calling an anointing that God had on his life, in fact, he was probably part of the Divine Council in order of celestial beings that God had brought close to himself that he actually extended authority to. There does seem to be some information in those scriptures to indicate that in fact, Lucifer was at least one individual that was leading the angels in the worship of God. But you remember the story he was filled with pride. His his heart was focused on himself, and in the day he was made, he was made in perfection until iniquity was found within him. And he was so consumed with pride that he literally thought he could not only ascend above all of the other angels, but that he could ascend to the mount of God and even to the throne of God itself. He was so self deceived that he thought he was stronger than God. And so, you know the story he gathers, we'll talk about this scripture in just a second. Somehow, he deceives a third of the angels to be divided against God. You know, sometimes in leadership, when there's division, it's like, Man, I'm the worst possible leader. There is. But you know, there was division on Jesus's team and there was division in heaven as well. You know, deception is a real thing. And so he draws a third of the angels and he confronts the throne of God. And let me just tell you something God did not stand up. God did not have to lift a finger. God was not concerned.

[00:14:33] God wasn't counting the numbers. God was not plotting a strategy. God just simply spoke the word, and Lucifer fell to Earth and was transformed from Lucifer to Satan. In fact, Jesus said, I saw this is the the word of the eternal son of God because he was present there. He said, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. And in that moment, this light bearer, this anointed cherub who was on the Divine Council was turned into the adversary. He poses, the Bible, says, as an angel of light. He is called the devil. He's called the dragon. He is called our enemy. The Bible refers to him as the wicked one. Jesus called him the father of lies. And in the scripture, he is called the god of this world. You know, you look at the world today and you think, Man, why is it? Why is it this bad? Is because Satan is the god of this world? Christ said he's a murderer. The scripture says he's the prince of the power of the air. Peter says Peter at least likens him to a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. John calls him the ruler of this world. Other scriptures say he is the serpent, the tempter, the thief, the accuser of the brethren. He is called Satan. He is called the slander and revelation 12 four says this. His tale drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the Earth. Who are you fighting against? You're fighting against an adversary that is greater in strength and power than you, although not greater in strength and power than God. With him, his fallen angels have turned into demons. Demons are spirit beings without physical bodies. I just want you to know some things here about these fallen angels because there are times where we conflate the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of light.

[00:16:24] Like I said, sometimes we believe or we perceive them as co-equal opposites. And in fact, we give more authority. We give more power. We give more strength to the adversary than he deserves. Demons are localized, but they are not omnipresent. They are intelligent, but they are not omniscient. They are powerful, but they are not omnipotent. The kingdom that the adversary is Satan rules over is ordered network and strategic, and his demons are strategically assigned. Now I'm going to read a scripture that expresses that in just a minute. But, you know. When we talk about spiritual warfare, it's not as if Satan himself is battling us because we're not important enough in the Kingdom of God for Satan to focus on us. But he does have his demonic kingdom ordered and structured structured so that there are even demons assigned to attack us and to undermine every good thing that God has planned for us. I'm not trying to scare you today. There's another side to this just hold tight, but I just you're like that. Where is this going? Because I'm not encouraged at all. But but I am saying, listen, you know, you watch these nature shows and you see how like a lion will be very specific in observing its prey, it's watching, it's waiting. It's not just jumping in and, you know, closing its mouth on the neck. There's a strategy that's involved and the adversary has a strategy against us as well. You know, I would encourage you to read C.S. Lewis, C.S. Lewis book The Screw Tape Letters. It gives an interesting fictional perspective on what that side of the spiritual battle looks like. But remember the adversary, though we're not fighting him directly. He has arranged his demonic minions, and through them, he tempts us.

[00:18:26] He just seeks to deceive us. He accuses us. He leverages powerful allies against us, like our flesh and the world. He seeks to blind us. He wants to build his kingdom through unwitting souls. He argues against the things of God he desires to distract us from the purposes of God. He wants to divide the people of God so they can fulfill the purposes of God, which is the great commission. And the adversary is always there to bring a word of it, of discouragement, to always discourage you in what God isn't doing in your life when you hear talk like that. I want to remind you that is not the Holy Spirit, that is our adversary. And in addition to that, there are gateways to his activities the use of illicit drugs, psychedelics, the occult, religious pride, unrepentant sin. You know, all of these things are gateways into demonic activities that the Christian the believer should avoid. This is why Paul said in Ephesians Chapter six, verse 12, we wrestle against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Now I just I just want to let you know that you are battling against real darkness, but I've got good news for you today because you are surrounded and supported by real light. God is on your side. God is on your side. Well, what does what does God's side look like? God has a whole host of heavenly beings. You know, I just want to go through some of them today. Actually, this is pretty much all that are represented in scripture. God has angels, ordinary run of the mill angels, right? Who are spectacular to behold. In fact, as you see great figures in scripture being confronted by angels, oftentimes what they do is they they bow down.

[00:20:30] They're so extraordinary. They're so supernatural and magnificent. The natural human reaction is to bow down before them. And every time you see a human being down before an angel, the angel says, Don't do that. Worship God. I want to remind you today, Christian, you should be worshiping the Lord. Angels are spectacular to behold, but they'll always direct you to worship, to try you and godhead there. Yeah, it's true. It's true they are innumerable, these these angelic, ordinary run of the mill, angelic beings are innumerable. In fact, when John was looking at the heavenly scene, he saw all of these ordinary angels and he tried to count them. He's like one two three four five six seven eight nine 10, and he got to the point where it's like, Man, there's so many I just can't count. And so John says, and I saw all of these angels ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands. So the highest number and the Greek numerical system was ten thousand. And so George is just like that take the highest number that you can think of, multiply it by itself and then add a whole bunch of thousands on top of it. There are innumerable angels that God has on his side, and the Bible says in Hebrews Chapter one, verse 14 that the purpose of those angels one in fact purpose is there. They're sent to minister to those who inherit everlasting life. Hey, you have angels that God sends to support you to enable you to fulfill the purpose that he has for your life, I think is fully appropriate for us to say God. We prayed today during this church service that you would surround this property with warring angels, I think is fully appropriate for for you to start your day as a business owner and to say, God, set your warring angels around this business.

[00:22:22] God in the midst of this conflict, right? God, I'm not going to be ignorant. I know I'm not. I'm for sure not going to be a daisy picking Christian. I don't even know what that means, but you know what I'm talking about. I'm not going to be a daisy picking Christian. I'm not going to be standing on the battlefield, totally disconnected from the reality of what's happening as all hell is breaking loose in my life. I pray today, God, thank you for your angelic beings. Thank you, God, that they're sent to minister to those who inherit everlasting life and God, I pray north, south, east and west. You would set them around my business, around my family, around my friends. Totally appropriate. Hey, that's just the lower rung of angels. Next up, we have seraphim singular serif, plural seraphim. They are the burning or fiery ones. They are always, as you read, the scriptures always connected with the throne of God, always around the throne of God, and they have one song that they consistently sing Holy Holy Holy. The Bible says that they have six wings with two. They cover their face with two. They cover their feet and with two, they fly. In fact, Isaiah said this as he was taken up into the very throne room of God. And he describes this heavenly scene. He is looking at the throne of God. And he says above it, the throne stood Seraphim. Each one has six wings with two. He covered his face. You're like, Where did you get that pastor? Well, I got it from Isaiah. Six Where to? He covered his face with two. He covered his feet and with two, he flew and one cried to another and said, Holy like, this is their dialog.

[00:23:57] This is their discussion. This is what you know. They proclaim praise to each other concerning holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory. Isn't that amazing? You know, their song, their song, their declaration is about God. That God is holy. They are proclaiming the manifest perfection of God that he is all together. Unlike anything in this created world, there is nothing like him. And and it's attributed. Most likely commentators agree that is attributed to the father, one holy to the son, the second holy and to the Holy Spirit. The third holy holy is the father. Holy is the son, and holy is the Holy Spirit. Not just some bland theological statement, but God as we consider your manifest perfection. There is no one like you, God. There is no one like you. You're like this beautiful diadem with all of these facets. And as the light of heaven reflects off of this beautiful jewel God, we are compelled to worship you. You know, and I think, you know, whenever that phrase is embedded in a worship song, I don't know if you guys have noted notice this doesn't matter if it's an ancient hymn or modern song that we're seeing there is. You can feel like I'm just telling you as a as a Christian who's walk with God for twenty five plus years when we sing Holy, Holy, Holy. There is a power that is present among the people of God. They're special. They're special words. The next level of angelic beings is our cherubim cherub is singular. And when I say cherub, you're thinking little miniature munchkins that are fat and plump and naked and have little arrows that they should total perversion, you know, and I think the cherubim are probably like, Really? What the heck is that? Of all the angelic beings, God, why do you let that happen to us? That was a that was a bad era for cherubim.

[00:25:59] But as you read the scriptures, what you'll recognize is they seem to stand between the presence of God in human beings. We've been introduced to cherubim before because you remember when God kicked out Adam and Eve, he didn't really just kick them out of the garden. You know, it was it was this. It was this idea. This care for them. It would have been horrible for Adam and Eve in this fallen state to continue to eat of the Tree of Life. And so what does God do? He pulls them out of the garden and he sets his cherubim with flaming sword standing between humanity and God. We see cherubim engraved in the Tabernacle and in the temple. If you were the high priest, what you would have done is you would have gone into the most holy place the holy of Holies. You would have offered once a year a sacrifice for yourself and a sacrifice for the people. You would have sprinkled the blood on the top of the Ark of the Covenant, where to cherubim were looking towards each other and touching each other's wings, standing between humanity in the presence of God. But before you actually got into the most holy place, you had to have gone around or through the veil and embroidered on the veil were cherubim to cherubim standing between humanity and the presence of God. You'll notice as you studied scripture that the cherubim are always declaring God's glory. You have two angels that are mentioned by name. You have Gabriel, who is the patron angel of Israel, and you have Michael the Archangel, the only Archangel mentioned in scripture. So you have angels, ordinary run of the mill. You got Seraphim Cherubim, an archangel, a patron angel of Israel.

[00:27:42] You have a divine counsel like I had mentioned to you before celestial beings that God has brought in to share his authority with and to execute his mission. In Hebrew, these are referred to as the Elohim. Now listen, before you get confused, let me just tell you the word Elohim is used in a variety of different ways, and the context really determines how we translate. So in Genesis chapter one creator God is called Elohim, and the Bible says that he is the Elohim of Elohim. The Bible says that there is no Elohim besides Yahweh. And so of all of the celestial and earthly rulers, the greatest of all of them is the god of all creation. This word is used of earthly rulers or judges. It is also used of spiritual beings that comprise this divine counsel to execute the purposes of God. Next up is the Angel of the Lord. We're going to run into the Angel of the Lord in the Book of Genesis. He is throughout the Old Testament. He is the angel of Yahweh. He is a pre incarnate appearance of Jesus. So he is Christ made visible in the Book of Exodus when Moses is standing at the burning bush. He is confronted with your way, but your way. The Angel of the Lord, the pre incarnate appearance of Christ. In addition to that, the Angel of the Lord is, in fact, the pillar of fire that goes before Israel by night and the pillar of cloud that goes before them. By day, we'll see that the Angel of the Lord is present at the binding of Isaac, that he is the angel that wrestles with Jacob and that he is the angel that is present with Hagar when she is banished and left for dead.

[00:29:28] He meets her there and she discovers him as the God who sees. And then finally, on the side of light, we have the Triune Godhead. We have the uncreated creator of all things. We have the non contingent being who is absolutely an altogether self-sufficient who is greater than any other being that's ever been made because he himself is the one who has made them and he himself is on made. Now, I'm just saying like, you don't have to be a neurosurgeon to understand what side you want to be on. All right. You want to be on the side of light. I mean, there absolutely is no comparison when you look at the adversary in a third of those fallen angels. And then you look at ordinary run of the mill angels and you got cherubim and you got Seraphim, you got the angel of the Lord, the Triune Godhead. You've got an arch angel. You've got you've got Gabriel, who is the patron angel of Israel. You know that if God is for you, no one can be against you. Greater is he who is in you? Then he who is in the world, but every single day. Brothers and sisters. Every single day. You are caught up in the tension of this spiritual battle, and that is a reality for all of you. And it's a reality for me as well. How do we deal with it? Well, Jesus, I'm going to give you three scriptures today. This will go pretty quickly. Jesus, why do I? Why am I directing you to the word of God? Well, I mean, I know it's obvious, but Jesus. When he was tempted in the wilderness after 40 days of fasting, he was confronted with the adversary. And you know, his response was to go to God's word.

[00:31:17] And I want to encourage you today. I'm giving you three scriptures. Now this is the flip side right to whom much is given. Much is required. So you can't walk out of here going, man, I never knew that. You know, God, you never you never equipped me for this spiritual battle. No, he did. Right here, November. 14TH. Twenty twenty one. So we're going to the word Peter says this, I think this might actually be first Peter Chapter five, it's my fault. Be sober, be vigilant because your adversary, the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Like, it'd be really a bummer if it ended there. You know, and I think some of you are living in that spot like you put a period on that you've come in today and you're like, Oh man, the devil, the devil is the devil out. And you know, it's all the devils fault and that bad guy, that bad guy. And look what he has done to my life, you know, and I've just thrown in the towel I've given up because he's just so powerful. I can't stand against him. Well, that's not how the scripture ends here, Peter says. Resist him, resist him steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world like you're not in this spot was like, Man, you know what? My life is so hard and this spiritual battle so miserable for me, and no one's got it like, I got it. I'm so tempted to say, shut up, I don't know why, but I'm not going to stop it, stop it like that is the way our brain justifies continuing to live in a condition that God doesn't want us to live in.

[00:32:49] No, everyone is going through spiritual adversity. So just a couple of points on this scripture. No one sober up, sober up, be sober minded, be absolutely aware of the reality that's happening around you. You're not ignorant anymore because you know what the scripture says, but don't live in willful ignorance. Live a lifestyle that reflects that you know what's happening. That you know there is a spiritual battle that you know that there are two realms that are overlapping that you know, when you put your trust and faith in Christ that you became an adversary of the adversary. And now he wants to undermine every good thing that God desires to do. When your life sober up, wake up. You know, when people get drunk, I'm not going to say when you get drunk because you don't get drunk, but when people get drunk and they need to sober up, sometimes they're drinking caffeine. Maybe a couple, maybe a gallon of coffee. Sometimes water gets thrown in their face. Sometimes there's a friend who loves them enough to come alongside and slap them. You know, I just want to let you know that I'm that friend today. You're getting a loving pastoral nudge today to wake up to the reality of what's happening, you know, as the adversary has been seeking to pull strings in your life. Maybe you've been concealed conceding. Maybe you've been yielding. Now is the time for that to stop. And let me tell you something, the devil is a rational being. He's a rational being. Some of us are like, You all recognize the devil. When he shows up, he'll knock on the door, he'll ring the doorbell. He'll have red leotards on. Right? I mean, he'll have a pitchfork. He'll have a black goatee.

[00:34:27] And he'll smell like sulfur, like it's going to be obvious. I'm just telling you he's not the deceiver because he comes in obvious ways. Right? He's a rational being. You say, Well, it's not too rational to think that you can kick God off his throne. Well, it was, but he had a bad starting point. He started to think that he was as strong as God and that the next rational step was, Hey, I can be God myself. He had a bad starting point which deception will always lead you to, but don't think for a second that he's not a rational being. Don't think for a second that he's not going to try to influence you with rational thoughts. That makes sense, you know, and he will. He'll come to you and influence you with ideas where you can connect the dots. And where in your mind? If you're not careful, you'll be thinking, Well, this makes sense. This is what I should do. Know what you should do is you should go to the Bible, open it up and make sure that what you're hearing is in alignment with scripture. All right, because God will never tell you to do something that is in conflict with the word. And then in addition to that, listen, you got to be savvy because because he's savvy. In addition to that, you need to be thinking long term, Hey, what does the fruit of this behavior? What will the fruit of this behavior produce? What is the end here? Look, there would be, I think, so much division in the church that would be avoided if we would just consider the fruit of our action. Right. Hey, you know, I've been wronged. It makes sense for me to make my case.

[00:35:59] It makes sense for me to post this on social media. It makes sense for me to gather a group of people to me so I can explain my position. Well, let me tell you that the end of that is division. And God is never going to guide you into something like that. Number one, you need to sober up. Number two, you need to saddle up. He teaches us here. You need to saddle up. Can I just lovingly remind you that you're part of God's army? You are part of God's army? Hey, you came in today and you're not totally connected and you're sitting among the people of God. You're not. You're not flying solo. You're part of God's army. This is the terminology that Paul used in Philippians Chapter two. He says, Hey, collectively, we are standing fast together. Collectively, we are striving together for the faith of the gospel. When Paul uses that terminology, it's military terminology. He's saying, we're not. We're not just like assassins fighting on our own. No, we're locked together. We've joined arm in arm, heart and heart. We stand together as one. If you want to try to fly solo as a Christian, you are going to crash. You're going to crash. And it's exactly what the devil wants. You know, like I said, you watch these nature videos and I can't watch them with my wife because her feelings get hurt every time. You know, some poor little, you know, antelope or something like that gets eaten by a lion. And I'm like, Man, I think it's actually pretty cool. But but you know what they do. The park will focus on the one who's disconnected. The pack will focus on the one. The pack of lions will focus on the antelope or whatever it is, who is disconnected from the group, from the body.

[00:37:43] Because when you get disconnected from the body, you become an easy target for the adversary, he says. Be sober. He says the Brotherhood experiences this. He says, resist him. Now I know I don't need to tell you this, but the him here is not God. The him here is the devil. Don't spend your time resisting God. Spend your time resisting the devil. Ephesians Chapter six is the second scripture today. He says stand there for having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace, above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to clench all the fiery darts of the wicked one and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. Praying, always the second scripture today, obviously, the Apostle Paul wrote this, and the third point for us in being more than conquer is in Christ and really being victorious in the battle that you absolutely are in today is suit up so you can stand up suit up so you can stand up. Paul gives this amazing illustration. Everybody in the culture would have been aware of it because they'd seen Roman soldiers as though Paul, like metaphorically, just says, Hey, the righteousness. The righteousness is like a breastplate that we wear. The gospel of peace are like soldiers, sandals that you put on and et cetera, et cetera. And so he gives this picture of a soldier that's going to battle, that's wearing full equipment. Now I have heard people say, Yeah, you know what you're supposed to do with the armor of God. You're supposed to go through this mental exercise every morning where you visualize yourself putting on the breastplate and putting on the helmet and holding up the shield of faith.

[00:39:34] And I just want to tell you today, that's stupid. All right. So if you read it, if you read it, it really misses the point. We're not talking about some mental image. Imagine a imaginary. The word can I use it? All right. Imagine a Tory process that you go through. I like it. I think it's great. You know where it's like, OK, I went through this, I went through this exercise this morning and I put it all on, and now I'm just going to do my thing. No, we're talking lifestyle, we're talking lifestyle. He's pointing to lifestyle. Right. So when it's righteousness, it's like this god today. Today I'm waking up and I will go through each one of these things, but I'm determining today to do the right thing in your eyes. I don't care what other people tell me is the right thing. I'm not going to live my life doing what others are telling me to do. I'm going to do what's right in your eyes, God. Today I am going to be all about the gospel of peace. You're going to have me doing 100 things today, God. And I'm open to all of them. But I will not lose sight. I will not lose focus. I know that above all of those things that I'm going to be engaged in today with family and friends and the workplace with hobbies. My fundamental purpose, my target today is to preach and live the gospel of Jesus Christ, right today. Today, God, I'm taking up the shield of faith. I'm taking up the shield of faith that I'm going to walk by faith. I'm going to trust you by faith. I'm going to resist doubt and discouragement and despair today, by faith.

[00:41:07] God, I'm going to believe that every thought that the adversary seeks to influence me with, like a fiery dart that comes out my heart and mind today, I am going to block by the shield of faith because you are my god, I am your child. I am heaven bound and nothing can thwart your purposes for my life. Stood up to stand up and then number four on this one is get trade up. Get trade up. You got to get trade up like maybe. Of all of these things. I hope that this is such a take home for you because the fact is this as Christians, we just dwell in our heads. You know that the brain is a battleground. It really is the battleground. And sometimes this is this is the shallow place that we dwell in. By that, I just simply mean we try to solve our problems in our minds. We try to set our course in our mind. We try to mentally find solutions for the issues around us in our mind. And what we ought to be doing is taking it from our mind into our heart, and we take it from our mind, into our heart by praying. Now listen, you can't get to the heart without going through the mind, but just because you're in the mind does not mean you've gotten to the heart. Some of us, some of us are. Our whole day is just spent thinking about things, pondering how we're going to solve problems. You know, I mean, concerned and consumed about all of the adversity and burdened and weighted by it. And we never take the most important step and go to God with these issues. You know, God, I'm not going to just sit here and try to create solutions myself.

[00:42:51] I've got a lot of counsel, but you are the counselor, you're the counselor. And so, God, I'm going to ask. I'm going to ask. I'm stepping out of this shallow zone of of interfacing with you solely in my mind. And I'm asking you, God, I'm bringing this into the heart. Take me deep. Take me into your spiritual purposes. But God, I can't know them unless you divinely and objectively reveal them to me. God, I need your help today. I know I'm confronted with things that I can't fix. I can't solve. I can't connect together. But I know that with you, God. All things are possible with man is impossible. But with God, all things are possible, right? I'm not going to deceive myself in thinking that just because I've thought about this issue, that somehow the solution will appear. God, I'm coming to you in prayer and I'm laying this need before you at the altar and I'm asking you to do what I myself can't do. God, I need you to show me your perspective. I need you to show me. I know how I see this, but my brain is screwed up. Sorry, I had to say it like that today. My perspective can get all jacked up. Just because you think that you're perceiving reality doesn't mean it's the right reality. No, you need to take it to God and say, God, show me the way that you see this God. I'm impatient. God, you know I want to act God. I want to solve this problem. But in prayer, what I'm saying is I'm going to be patient. I'm going to trust in you. Look, what would have happened in the garden? What would have happened in the garden if Adam and Eve would have just said, you know, this doesn't make sense, something's not right here.

[00:44:33] God, can you help us? God, we want to pull you into this because because this did something's wrong with this, dude. Something's wrong with this guy, and we need you to show us the way. How many issues in our lives would have divine engagement if we would just simply act? James, Chapter four over seven says this God resists the prowl, but he gives grace to the humble, therefore submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you, draw nearer to God and he will draw nearer to you. You know, in the last service, they actually read that with me as I was reading it, like they couldn't wait to get to it. So I'm not saying you guys are less spiritual here today because I know that. I know you're. I know you're taking it in. But why don't we just read that last sentence together already starting to draw what to draw near to God and he will draw near to you? Say it again. Draw near to God. Yeah, you say it like you're excited about it. All right. Final two. Good. That was better than the first service, OK? The final two points. Thanks for your patience. Final two points is this go low to get grazed up, go low to get gray stuff. So listen silver up. Saddle up. Suit up to stand up. Get prayed up and go low to get grazed up. Look, if you for a second, think that God's going to give you his grace when you're standing before him saying, you know, God got this. You know me, God, I'm a pretty strong guy. I can handle this. You know, God, I appreciate that you want to help, but I've kind of got this all figured out.

[00:46:11] That type of attitude is the very attitude that God resists. Don't expect, don't expect to get God's grace if in fact you are trusting in your own abilities and powers. But when you and I humble ourselves before God, it's when you and I come with open hands and an open heart that is the gateway to the grace of God, who in this room does not need more of God's grace. And so what do we do? We come humbly. We come acknowledging God, I am weak. God, I am incapable. You have strengthened me in some areas and I thank you for that. But even in those strengthened areas, I know I can still fall. But God, I need your help in these areas. Father, I come to you acknowledging that I can't do it without you, and I'm believing God in your word by faith that as I come humbly, you will not resist me, but God, you will supply every good thing that I need through your grace. By grace, the Bible says you're saved by grace, you stand by grace, you've been justified by grace. You've been accepted into the beloved. The Bible says in his grace, you are bound. The scripture says his grace is sufficient for you. For in your weakness, his strength will be perfected. Listen, you might be weary and burdened today, and it's possible is because you have not yet humbled yourself. Gone to God and gotten yourself grace up. The sixth and final thing today is this stay close to God and he will show up. Stay close to God and he will show up. Communion equals closeness. Communion with God equals closeness. Communion with God equals closeness. You know, I think sometimes as Christians were like, well, God's always close, God's always close.

[00:48:02] I mean, he's omnipresent. So, you know, he's close that way. Jesus said, I'll never leave your forsake you so always close that way. Pastor, you said that we're sealed by the Holy Spirit, so he's close that way. Well, those aspects of closeness don't translate into communion. He is with you. He will never leave you or forsake you. You have been sealed by the spirit God dwells within you. But here what we see is this the exhortation to draw nearer to God in communion, in relationship, to engage God in every moment of our lives, to live in a way where we are practicing God's presence? Right? You're an accountant. You're in your office, you're typing away, you're doing, you know, payables or whatever. And you know, you're still connected to God just because you walked into your office and close the door. Doesn't mean that God's on the outside. And so in that place, you're like, Man, you're doing the payables and then and you're praying, you're seeking the face of God. And I'm not saying that you're praying some thesis statement. I mean, they might be small statements. God, I just want to say, I love you. I love you, God God, I want to thank you for this job. Thank you for fingers that work so I can do what you've called me to do. God, I pray that you fill this office. I pray you touch my coworkers. God, thank you for the CEO of this organization. He is so lost. He is so messed up. God, he is so far from you. But the Bible says that your arm is not too short that it cannot reach right God. You or your ears to death and it cannot hear you hear my prayer and you can reach that heart.

[00:49:38] Right. God, do it today. God do it today, your coworkers, like, you know, you got a smile on your face, your coworkers like, dude, are you on psychedelics? Because. And you're like, just communing with God. Just just connecting with my heavenly father. Thank you very much and praying for you in the midst of it. You have no idea what's about to happen in your life. You have no idea. Look, it's it's in that place in the midst of the battle that we we really experience that the battle belongs to the Lord. You know, I don't want to fight my battles myself. I want God to fight them for me and for that to happen, it means we have to be communing with him. Just want to wrap up today with a little story and. And this is how this story goes. I don't know if you guys know who Robert the Bruce was, he was the King of Scotland. Scotland in the thirteen hundreds had been invaded by England and I mean, they just had an overwhelming force, you know, so. So, Robert, the Bruce's army was totally dispersed. A lot of them were killed. He was forced into hiding. He's hiding in this cave, he's hiding in this cave and he's like, Man, I might as well just throw the towel in like, it's all over. How can I combat this force? And while he's sitting there, he's looking into the flickering firelight. He sees the spider trying to connect its web to the wall of the cave. He was trying to anchor the web to the wall of the cave because it kept, you know, the web kept falling down. And what he noticed was this spider never stopped, never stopped trying over and over and over again until finally he connected that single strand to the wall of the cave and the light bulb went on.

[00:51:27] He had a total epiphany. You know, he realized in that moment it was all a metaphor that he needed to come out of the cave of isolation. He needed to get out of that cave. He needed to get back in the battle. He needed to gather his forces together, and he needed a fight in a way where he never stopped. And all of that from this little, you know, metaphor that he was given. You guys know the story. Eventually, Scotland, because of his leadership, won their independence. And I want to tell you today, come out of the cave, come out of the cave. Today, you've been living in isolation. You've been maybe living in willful ignorance. You've been right where the devil wants you. God is saying, come out of that and step into this battle. Be fully equipped with everything that I have given you. I've already given you your independence, but with me, you are more than a conqueror in Christ Jesus. Let's pray today and God, we thank you father for your presence today. Your goodness just undeniable. You've been with us, you've been with us and God. We know today there are real difficulties. There are hearts that are really hurting. God, there are battles that are being lost. And today we need you to invade this place with the power of heaven. We need you got to influence. We need you to influence our lives. And today we're open to receive all that you have for us. Let's all stand together today. We're going to end a little differently this morning. And I just want to really encourage you guys, please don't leave right now. This is such an important moment for people. And you guys know when a church kind of gets our size that it can become an industrial complex where, you know, we've got it's like a machine that runs and you come in and we do our thing and you go out and it's like, you know, it's like a machine.

[00:53:28] We don't ever want to be a machine. All right, because you matter too much for that to happen. You have real issues happening in your life. Maybe they're known by other people. Maybe they're totally unknown by people, but known to God, where we are not unaware that some of you are really struggling and suffering and burdened. And and maybe you know your are transparent about that. Maybe, you know, especially for guys we can we can be like, Hey, I got it handled. You know, sometimes I find out that somebody in the church has been struggling with something for a year, and I'm like, Man, if you ever come forward to get prayer, have you ever let the elders pray for you? And it's like, Well, no. And and for me, you know, for me, it's like, man. Why not, why not, why not bring it to God? Why not get the leaders of the church to lift up your real need? Because because we want to give God an opportunity to supply the miracle, we want to give God an opportunity to to bring the strength and the courage. We want God to have the opportunity to reframe our perspective and just supply us the patience that we need to trust him in the difficult moment that we're living in. And you know what, when you come and you have the people of God, pray for you. If two or three who are gathered together agree in his name as we pray, according to his will and for his glory, let me tell you something, he's going to do it. He's going to do it. So what we're going to do right now is I'm going to have the pastors, some of our team leaders, some of the men and women just come on forward to the front.

[00:55:03] And we, Tony, is going to lead us in a couple of songs of worship and we're going to invite you to come forward. And just to bring your need, bring your need forward so that we can lift it to the Lord and believe and expect together that he's going to do the miracle.