

Hezekiah- Resisting the Enemy

by David Ravenhill

David Ravenhill's sermon on Hezekiah emphasizes the importance of seeking God and the necessity of spiritual warfare in the Christian life.

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Scripture: 2 Chronicles 31:20

Topics: "Hezekiah", "Faithfulness in Adversity", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

David Ravenhill preaches on the life of Hezekiah, emphasizing how he resisted the enemy, Sennacherib, through faithfulness and decisive action. Hezekiah's commitment to seeking God led to spiritual prosperity, yet it also attracted the enemy's attack, illustrating that spiritual advancement often invites opposition. Ravenhill encourages believers to recognize the spiritual warfare they face and to actively engage in overcoming the enemy by cutting off sources of temptation and rebuilding their spiritual defenses. Hezekiah's example serves as a model for Christians to mature in their faith and learn to fight against spiritual adversities with God's help.

Transcript

Father, once again we turn our gaze upon you. Lord, you're the author, you're the finisher, you're the one that inspired this Word. And Father, we pray tonight that you would come and breathe fresh life into it.

Lord, it would be more than the letter that kills, but the Spirit that gives life. And so Lord, touch our lives, we pray. Lord, bring us that place of maturity where Father, we can get alongside you, work with you.

Lord, labour us together with you. That's your burden, I believe, for each and every one of us. Bring us that place, we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen. I want to continue where we sort of left off last night. If you turn back with me to 2 Chronicles, and we'll jump over a couple of chapters to the end of chapter 31, and then looking primarily into chapter 32.

If you weren't here last night, we looked at the life of Hezekiah, this wonderful man of God who, even though his upbringing was anything but godly, his father was an idolater. He turned the nation of Israel away from the things of God. He boarded up the house of God, and yet his son comes to the throne.

Hezekiah, the first thing he does, he goes into the house of God, he cleanses it. And he brought about tremendous reformation in the nation of Israel. He was a real reformer, revivalist, if you like, in the Old

Testament setting.

And his life is summarized for us in two verses, verse 20 and 21 of chapter 31. And it says, thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah. He did what was good and right and true before the Lord his God.

Every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in law and in commandments, seeking his God, he did with all of his heart, and he prospered. That's a great summary of somebody's life. I have said many times, I'll continue to say it, that if I die before my wife and there's enough money left to have a tombstone, that I would love those two verses.

Have to be a big tombstone to fit them on, but I'd love those two verses modified. And it would read like this, and thus David did throughout all America. He did what was good and right and true before the Lord his God.

Every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in law and in commandments, he sought God with all of his heart and he prospered. Pretty good way to summarize somebody's life. Everything this man did, he did it because he sought God with all of his heart, and God prospered him, and God blessed him as a result of it.

One of my pet peeves as a teacher are chapter divisions. Chapter divisions are not inspired. We have in the newer translations of the scriptures, mine is the New American.

Somebody said there were five foolish versions and five wise, but you'll notice in verse 20, it begins with bold type, if you have a modern translation, meaning that a new paragraph begins this. So you can eliminate chapter 32, at least the heading, let me read it the way it was written, and thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah. He did what was good and right and true before the Lord his God.

Every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in law and in commandments, seeking God with all of his heart, he prospered. And after these acts of faithfulness, Sennacherib, who is the enemy, the king of Assyria came, and he besieged the fortified cities, and he thought to break into them, or he invaded Judah, besieged the fortified cities, and thought to break into them for himself. Now notice, here is a man that is prospering spiritually.

Everything he does, he does it because God is blessing him. The reason God is blessing him, because he is seeking the face of God. And yet it says, after these acts of faithfulness, not sinfulness, not rebellion, not perversion, after these acts of faithfulness, the enemy comes.

Let me suggest to you that a good measure that you are moving and advancing spiritually, is that the enemy has given you a rough time. That should be the norm in the Christian life. In other words, if you are living in peace right now, and nothing is sort of harassing you or upsetting you, and all hell is not breaking loose around you, you need to ask the question, what am I doing wrong? And I know you didn't come to hear all that tonight.

You see, right from the very beginning in Genesis, God said, He said, I will put enmity, or an enemy between your seed and that of the enemy. In other words, there is a warfare continuously going on. My father went to an old Methodist college, the Bible college, in order to train for the ministry.

He only had enough money to go for one year. The ladies were not allowed in, in those days. So it was an all men, all male school.

But he sat under the ministry of a wonderful old saint, a Methodist that was on fire for God, by the name of Samuel Chadwick. And Samuel Chadwick wrote a number of books on the things of the spirit and revival. He was a tremendous man of God.

And every weekend, the students were sent out on preaching assignments, to gain a little bit of experience. They would go to churches all over the Yorkshire area of England. And this man would gather them in the chapel and give them their assignments.

And then my father said he would pray at the end of handing out the assignments. And at the end of his prayer, my father said, invariably, he would say these words, go and may the devil go with you. Because if the devil doesn't go with you, you're not worth sending.

That's a good Methodist. In other words, the whole reason that you are called into the ministry is to undermine what the enemy is doing. It's to go into the kingdom of darkness and rescue people.

It's to go in and bring deliverance to captives. It's to open prison doors. It's to open the blind eyes.

And when we begin to do that, guess what? The enemy doesn't like it. And so he counteracts. And so here is a man that is prospering spiritually.

Everything about his life, he's doing because he's seeking God. And yet the enemy comes. Now notice something about the enemy.

It says he'd already, verse 1, invaded Judah. And he had besieged some of the fortified cities of Israel. So he's already defeated an awful lot of believers, God's people.

I find, and I've passed it now, my wife and I, for something like 35 years, at least been in the ministry that long. We haven't passed it all, always that length of time. But we've been full-time ministry for 35 years.

And I have discovered that there are so many Christians that live defeated lives. They don't live in victory. They don't know how to overcome.

And God is wanting us to overcome. And so what we're going to look at tonight is how Hezekiah resisted, how he overcame the enemy. What he did.

What was the strategy that he used. Now keep your finger there for a moment because I need to have you look at two scriptures. One in Exodus, Exodus chapter 13 and verse 17.

Exodus 13 and verse 17. Now it came about when Pharaoh had let the people go. That's the people of Israel, the children have gone.

The God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was nearer. For God said, lest the people change their minds when they see war and they return to Egypt. Now we need to understand in typology that the children of Israel were just born again.

They were new Christians. The blood of the lamb had been applied on the lintels of the doorpost. God had brought the nation of Israel out of bondage, out of captivity.

And He brought them through the Red Sea, drowned the horse and the rider and so on. And He wanted to take them into the promised land. And He looked ahead and He said, the quickest way to get where I want

to go, is to go right through the land of the Philistines.

But if I take them through the land of the Philistines, there's going to be warfare. And the children of Israel are not mature enough yet. They're not ready enough yet.

They don't know me, they don't know my ways, they don't know the Word of God and so on and so forth. So I will bypass the problem. Now all of us do that if we're good parents.

Those of you who've got little toddlers, who've got a beautiful little girl here, three years of age. You know, you don't let her cross the street by herself. You don't take her downtown Boston or, you know, Providence or whatever and just say, you know, run across the street.

No, you take that child, at least you hold her by the hand or you pick that child up and cradle her in your arms. And you walk across, you negotiate all that busy traffic and so on. Why? Because that little toddler is not mature enough yet to handle all those trucks and cars and buses and everything else.

And thank God there is a season in our life as Christians, where God exempts us, so to speak, from a lot of conflict. Why? Because He's a Father. I'll never forget, I think it was Bob Mumford many years ago that took the 23rd Psalm and he went through it as far as his own experience was concerned.

He said, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He said, when I first got saved, I went through an I shall not want period. He said, all I had to do was sort of click my fingers and God just seemed to be there.

He said, I remember being in, I think it was college at the door and said, listen, I've got two alarm clocks, could you use one? You know, and he said, then he needed money and he just sort of prayed and all of a sudden, you know, there was another knock and the money was there and so on. And he said, it was an I shall not want period. And then he said, I went through a season where He makes me to lie down, you know, by streams of beautiful water and you know, green pastures and so on.

I thought, boy, this is the life, you know, this Christian life is incredible, you know. But then he said, God took me to the place where I walked through the valley of the shadow of death and then I had to prove that He was still there. And so, you know, God will exempt us for a period of time from problems.

Now, turn with me over into the book of Judges for a moment. Judges chapter three. Now, this is the same God, this is the same nation of Israel, but a few years have gone by now.

Verse one. Now, these are the nations that the Lord left. Everybody say left.

Okay, good. I'm just taking up on something Steve Hill would do. These are the nations which the Lord left to test Israel by them.

That is, all who had not experienced any of the wars of Canaan. In order that the generation of the sons of Israel might be taught war. Those who had not experienced it formally.

These nations are, and notice number one, the Philistines. Interesting, isn't it? God says, listen, it's time now you learn how to fight. And rather than me taking you around the problem and bypassing the problem, He says, I am now going to put the problem directly in front of you, because some of you have never ever learned how to fight.

And I want you to learn how to fight. I want you to learn how to overcome. Now, again, I know you didn't come to hear all this tonight.

You know, I literally have, as a pastor, I've sat down with people in my office who have come in wanting their problem solved. You know, wanting me to either impart something or depart something. And wanting to walk out 15-20 minutes later with all their problems solved.

And I've said to those individuals, because I've known them. I haven't been hard. I've tried to be compassionate.

But I said, listen, Susan or John or Mary, whatever the name is, you know, you have been saved now for a number of years. And you've come in wanting your problem solved. And I said, I believe God has left this problem in your life to teach you how to pray, how to fast, how to use a concordance, you know, how to do this, how to study the Word of God.

We get very lazy, don't we? This is the problem solver right here. The two problem solvers on the front row here. And we pay them a bit to solve our problems.

That's what they're here for. That isn't really true. I remember the first day that our daughter, we, my wife and I have three children, three daughters.

One in China, one in London, one in Colorado Springs. But the one in China is called Lisa. And her first year of school was in New Guinea at an Australian army school.

And she came home with a sheet of problems, major problems. After all, she was five years of age now. And she was in school.

And the big problem was one plus one equals, two plus two equals, three plus one equals, you know, four minus one equals. And Lisa came to me and said, Daddy, you know, would you help me with my assignment, my homework? And I could have taken that sheet of problems, and in 30 seconds, maybe even less, done them all. One plus one is two, two plus two is four, you know, four minus one is three, and three and two is five, and so on and so forth.

Here, Lisa, go out and play. But you see, she was now in a new phase of life. The childhood stage was now being replaced with the years of school.

And she had to learn that there was another muscle that needed exercising beside her legs and her arms and everything else. And it was between her ears. And I had to sit down with her and say, Lisa, what is one plus one? Think about it, Lisa.

Just try now. What is one plus one? I don't know, Daddy. I don't know.

And about five minutes later, we solved this major problem. Then the problem doubled. Two plus two.

I don't know, Daddy. Can I go out and play? Once again, we got the problem. About an hour later, the problems were solved.

Now, she has a degree now, which I don't. And if I'd have kept on doing her assignment for her, I'd have been getting letters in the mail. Dear Dad, here's your next assignment.

Please have it in by, you know, week Friday. It's got to be something on nutrition, 2,000 words, double spaced, and blah, blah, blah. And by the way, there's a project due at the end of the semester that counts for a third of my grade.

And I'll be giving you details in the next letter, because I want you to have plenty of time to work on it. I don't want to fail. Now, I know we laugh at that, but we do that when it comes to school.

And I know we laugh at spiritual things, don't we? And God is wanting us to learn how to overcome. And so He gives us problems. Count it all joy, my brethren, when you fall into all sorts of trials.

Oh, rip that out. You know, I don't like that, you know. You see, we have this sort of prosperity message where everything is blessing, no problems.

And if you had enough faith, you wouldn't have all these things and so on and so forth. You know, I wish I had the Bible they had, but unfortunately, I don't. Count it all joy.

You know, embrace these things, because the Bible says they come to make you mature men and women of God. Maturity. God is after maturity.

He wants us to overcome. You know why? Because one day we're going to be married to a military man. He's the captain of the host.

And we better learn how to fight. He's not wanting a little wimp that's going to sort of, you know, grab him by the skirt string, so to speak, and hide behind him, you know. No, he's wanting us to be collegial.

We're going to marry a king. We're going to know how to reign. We're going to marry a shepherd.

We've got to have a love for the sheep. We're going to marry a physician. We better know how to heal a few people.

See, we're going to be married one day to an overcomer. And he says, I want you to overcome even as I overcame. God who spared not his own son.

He had to overcome. And God doesn't spare us. Thank God there's a time when he understands our maturity, because he's a father.

And he says, listen David, you're not capable yet. You know, I'm going to bypass this Philistine. But there comes a day when he says, David, I'm going to leave that Philistine there.

I want you to deal with it. I want you to learn how to overcome it. Interesting in the book of Revelation, we'll get to this chapter in a moment, but in the book of Revelation, we have the city of God, which is the bride of Christ, comes down out of heaven.

And the Bible tells us that that city has 12 gates. And the only way you can get into that city, obviously, is to go through one of the gates. And the gates are made of only one substance.

The substance, of course, is pearl. What is a pearl? A pearl is a problem that's been overcome. Isn't that right? They're not made of diamonds.

God could have said, listen, all these gates are beautiful, huge diamonds, or sapphires, or rubies, or emeralds, or some other thing. But he says, no, each gate is made of a pearl. And at the center of every

genuine pearl, there is a problem that gets into the shell of that oyster.

And it does whatever it does, bugs it to death, I guess, until somehow that oyster is able to overcome. And out of that problem, it makes something of incredible beauty. Paul had a little bit of grit in his shell one day.

And he says, I, you know, I asked the Lord thrice or three times that he take it out. And God says, no, I'll give you a little bit of solution that you can apply to that thing. And my grace is sufficient for you.

God is wanting us to be overcomers. He's wanting a city, a bride, a people that have overcome. And the only way we learn to overcome is by problems.

Problems in our lives that we learn to apply the grace of God to, the Word of God to, and so on. So let's go back now. Here is Hezekiah.

He's faced with some problems. The enemy has already invaded certain cities. But Hezekiah says, it's not my city.

He's gone into the cities of Judah. And he's besieged other fortified cities. And he wants to break into them for himself.

Now notice the enemy has one design on your life and my life. He wants us back. He wants us back.

He wants to break in once again and capture you for himself. After all, we're all sons of the devil or daughters of the devil at one stage. We came out of the kingdom of darkness.

We came out of the family of darkness. We were rescued. We were redeemed.

And the enemy is a bad loser. And he wants us back for his purposes. On the other hand, God wants us for his purpose.

Someone said, both the devil and God have the same design on your life. They both want to kill you. Isn't that right? God wants you dead for a good reason.

So he can resurrect you in newness of life. The enemy wants you dead. So that you're, you know, just messed up and no use for anything.

Verse 2. It says, when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and that he intended to make war on Jerusalem. Notice he has word that the enemy is coming. He has word that there is going to be warfare in Jerusalem.

You and I need to recognize we are at war. There is a war going on for your life and for my life. The enemy is there to undermine, to discourage, to defeat us, to sidetrack us, to do whatever he can to frustrate the work of God in your life.

To bring discouragement, to bring doubt, to bring unbelief, to bring sin into our life. Whatever it is. He does not want us to be victorious Christians.

He doesn't want to be, he doesn't want us to be effective in the things of God. And so he will keep us again absorbed in our own problems and our own circumstances and all always caught up battling with different things and so on. And God says, listen, I want you to overcome.

I want you to live in victory so that you can begin to help others. That was one of Paul's longings there. If he wrote the book of Hebrews, he said, by this time you guys should be teachers yourself.

But you still need somebody to teach you and instruct you and look after you. You see? And so God is wanting us to get free from those things so that we can begin to minister and help the needs of others around about. We are at war.

Hezekiah saw again that the enemy had come, that he intended on making war. The warfare that we are involved in, again, is a warfare that we can't see. It's an invisible warfare.

I just heard recently, I think it was on Peter Jennings, one of those nightly news programs where it says that there within the next five years, it is inevitable that we will have some sort of terrorist attack in the United States of a major proportion. And what they are afraid of is chemical warfare more than anything else. Somebody releasing, you know, a bottle of anthrax going into New York City and just releasing that thing and wiping out half of Manhattan or whatever or all of Manhattan.

And the thing about chemical warfare is this. It is deadly, but it's invisible. And spiritual warfare is the same.

It is deadly, but it's invisible. We don't see demons sort of running around, but they're there. We've got to believe that.

The Bible says your devil, or your adversary rather, the devil goes around as a roaring lion, but I can't see him. No, but he's there. There are two extremes that we can go to when it comes to dealing with the enemy.

One is to give him absolutely no credit at all. The other is to give him too much credit. There's, in the realm of theology, what we call the higher critics.

Those are people that get into the, you know, sort of a very much an analytical way of looking at the Word of God. And their brains are bigger than their faith, obviously. And so they've got to make excuses for everything.

And they say that there's no such person as the devil. That 2,000 years ago, you know, when the Bible was written, and they didn't have any words for mental illness and depression and other things. And so they sort of blamed it all on this sort of mythical figure called the devil.

Well, obviously that is not biblical. On the other hand, and so they deny that the devil even exists. But on the other hand, is the other extreme where we blame the devil for everything.

My father used to tell the story of the devil weeping, sitting by the side of the road, just sobbing his eyes out. And a well-meaning believer going along, putting his arm around the devil, said, devil what's wrong? And the devil between these sobs says, it's you Christians, you blame me for all the things I'd love to do, but I don't have time to do them. And that's the other extreme.

You know, every time you sneeze, you've got a devil, and everything's the devil. You know, if I knock this glass of water over, it was a devil. You know, if I do this, it's the devil.

You know, that, but between those two extremes, there is a real devil. We need to recognize that. So Hezekiah recognizes that he is at war.

Now let's look then at how he overcame. Number one, verse three, he decided with his officers and his warriors to cut off the supply of water and so on and so forth. There was a decision made.

We need to make a resolution. We need to decide. There's too much passivity when it comes to dealing with the enemy.

In other words, we never really actively engage in warfare. We just allow the enemy to come in, run roughshod all over us, and so on and so forth. We've got to make a decision.

I remember as a young man, 18 years of age, I'd just been saved, raised in a Christian home, but like every young man, possibly young woman, battling with all sorts of lust and everything else in my mind. I was in Bible school at the time, and just started. And I was out in the print shop, and I was involved in the art department, designing jackets for books and that sort of thing.

And I was sitting there at my drafting table, and my mind was just, you know, constantly bombarded with all sorts of temptations. And I would have a wonderful devotional life that morning, and go to class, and have all this wonderful teaching from Bible school. Then go out to work, and sit there, and just be totally defeated.

And I remember one day making a decision. And the decision was, Satan, I am not going to allow you to just torment me like this anymore. And I began resisting, actively working on resisting the devil.

Now I am convinced the first day, it was at least 1,000 times. I'm convinced the second day, it was at least 999.9 times. And the third day, 998 times.

And the fourth day, you know, I mean, but after three months, there was an automatic response. You see, our will, if we begin to use it, and cooperate, and agree with the Word of God, we can begin to resist the devil. And those thoughts that would come into my mind, didn't get into my mind.

At least I didn't entertain them anymore. You know, Martin Luther said, you can't stop the birds from flying over your head. But you don't have to let them build a nest in your head.

Or if you want to modernize it a little bit, you can't stop the Mormons from knocking on your door. You don't have to invite them in, and listen to what they have to say. You know, you don't have to open the door to temptation.

Temptation is not sin. Jesus was tempted in every single point, like you and I. Yet, what? Without sin. He never entertained it.

He never opened the door and said, come in jealousy. Come in anger. Come in lust.

Come in pride. Let's sit down and mull this over, and nurture this thing a little bit. No.

He slammed the door on that thing. And I was determined, again, to do something about it. Hezekiah is not passive.

He is decisive here. And he says that he was going to cut off, notice, the supply of water, verse 3, and the springs which were outside the city. And they helped him.

And so many people assembled, they stopped up all the springs in the stream which flowed through the region, saying, why should the king of Assyria come and find an abundance of water? Now, that may sound like a strange thing, but we need to understand, here is a city. And around that city, there is a river flowing. There are also springs at certain places.

And Hezekiah gets to thinking, listen, if the enemy comes with all of his men, thousands and thousands of troops, the only thing that will keep him around the city is the fact that there is a water supply. And water is essential for life. We get so used to taking water for granted.

We just turn on the spigot, you know, go to the tap, or the faucet, or whatever, and there's always an abundance of water. We never really think too much where it comes from. But if you go anywhere outside of America, to, you know, even Mexico, other places, whole villages are built around one single water supply.

Water is absolutely essential for life. And so an army, an advancing army, may be able to carry in their, you know, water skins, a certain amount of water. But they certainly can't camp around the city, and mount a siege against that city, unless there is an abundance of water.

And Hezekiah says, listen, if these guys come, there's all of this water around the city of Jerusalem. We'll never get rid of them. And so we have got to take away that which will sustain the life of the enemy.

We've got to remove that which the enemy can feed on. Now notice this was not an easy task. I'm a teacher, not an evangelist.

Evangelists get upset when I say this. But evangelists, you know, have a special dispensation, I think, from God to be able to lie. And they tell you, you know, if you come forward tonight, all your problems will be solved.

If you're unsaved, and you don't know Christ, you know, just make your way forward, and God will clean you up. And then you'll, you'll be, you know, love, joy, peace, happiness, everything you ever, ever dreamed of, you know. And of course, if they weren't all that, they'd never come forward.

But us teachers then have to clean the fish, you know, after you catch them. And the fact is that, you know, when you accept Christ, He slams you down on the potter's wheel, spins you out of control, applies all sorts of pressure, because He's going to mold you into a vessel that He can use. And He takes out His chisel, and He begins to chisel off all the rough places, because He's going to conform you to the image of Christ.

And it's painful, and there's a process there. And those that He loves, He what? He chastens. He disciplines.

He's a disciplinarian. And, you know, now if we told you all that before you got saved, you'd never make it forward. So the evangelist sort of has a special agreement with God, I think, to sort of, you know, have this wonderful sort of a warm fuzzy sort of thing about, you know, why don't you come forward and let God just clean you up.

But this is not an easy task. But He is determined. And notice again, He has got to fill in springs.

In other words, there is a force behind that. There is a river that flows through the region that has got to be diverted totally. Now that's a difficult task.

But such is the willpower of Hezekiah and these men. We are not going to allow the enemy access. And you and I need to do the same thing.

We need to ask ourselves, and this is where honesty comes in. We spoke last night about the fact that the seed that grew and brought forth thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold fell into an honest heart. Not a pure heart.

Nothing wrong with a pure heart. Not a righteous heart. But an honest heart.

They were willing to be honest. Hezekiah has been honest about the condition of his city. And he says, listen, we've got trouble.

And I've got to cut off the supply of water. Now the counterpart of that in the spiritual sense is this. What issues out of my life that sustains the life of the enemy? The New Testament says, don't give place to the devil.

Another way of putting that is basically, don't feed the devil. And if there's something that I'm feeding the devil with, if I'm feeding the devil with bitterness, with lust, with resentment, with anger, with pride, with jealousies, you know, with all of those things, the enemy is never going to leave me alone. Some of you have made the mistake, I'm sure, of going outside on a cold, blustery winter's morning, you know, where there's four or five inches of snow and it's sub-zero temperature.

And you go outside to take the garbage out of something. And there at the door, there's a little stray ball of fluff called a kitten. And you may not be into cats especially, but, you know, your compassion takes over.

And you go to the refrigerator and you pour a bowl of milk and you put it down to that poor little thing that is freezing and shaking. And it sits up there, I mean, it looks up at you with those woeful eyes and, you know, a big smile on its face, so to speak. And you think, oh, I've done my good deed for the day.

The problem is you've just started a good deed that will last not for one day or two days or three days or four days, but forever and ever and ever. Why? You fed it, try and get rid of it. You see, and we feed the enemy, don't we? We feed the enemy by mulling over things, by allowing the enemy to come in and fill us with self-pity and doubt and fear and whatever it is.

And so we have got to cut off that which supplies life to the enemy. Jesus said, Satan and he has nothing in me. Jesus said, listen, the enemy comes, but there's no grounds.

He can't get into my life. He doesn't have access into my life because there's nothing there to give him access to. There's no sort of landing strip.

Sin provides a landing strip, so to speak. And so we've got to cut off that which supplies life to the enemy. If it's pornography, then, you know, unplug the internet or get rid of the girly magazines or muscleman magazines or whatever it is.

You know, if it's some other thing, you know, novels that are full of all sorts of lust and so on. Burn the things and turn off the soaps in the afternoon, whatever it is you have to do. But be ruthless about it.

Make a decision and follow through. The next thing that Hezekiah does, it says that he took courage, verse 5, and he rebuilt all the wall that had been broken down. The wall is broken down, and when the wall is broken down, we are vulnerable.

If it was raining outside right now, and we had holes in the roof or holes in the wall, obviously the rain would come in, the wind would come in, and so on. A city without walls or broken down walls is vulnerable to the attack of the enemy. The Book of Proverbs says that we are like cities.

You're like a city, I'm like a city. Like a city that is broken into and without walls, the Bible says, is a man or a woman of no control over their own spirit. You see, years and years ago, I was born in England.

I'm not saying years and years ago about me, but although that's true too, but hundreds of years ago, all over England, all over Europe, the cities had walls around them. The city of York, which is a tourist attraction in England, there are many cities, but the city of York still has part of that original wall going around it. The tower's way up.

Nancy and I were in Germany last year, and many of those cities, you still see the old city walls going up 20, 30 feet, and you know, the four or five feet thick huge stone fortresses, and as long as that city is confined by walls, the people inside are safe. They're secure. The enemy can come, but he can't penetrate.

He can't get through the wall, but if the wall has been broken down through neglect, then the enemy can come in, and there's a lot of Christians that instead of being in control, they are being controlled. Again, I pastored long enough to be able to sort of go down the rows in the church, because you get to know people after a while, and say, you know, with a wall, without a wall, with a wall, without a wall, with a wall, without a wall type thing, you know, and those that have walls that are built, they're in control of their own spirit, but others are being dominated. Again, pride, anger, bitterness, resentment, all sorts of problems.

The enemy has come in. He's established sort of a beachhead, and he dominates that area of the life. It may be tobacco.

It may be swearing. It may be some other thing that the enemy's just got a stronghold. They can't seem to get rid of that thing.

Hezekiah, again, is honest. He goes around the wall of Jerusalem. Why? He's got word that the enemy is coming, that the enemy is going to break into the cities already destroyed, many, many cities, and so he goes around and says, listen, we have got to repair this area here.

We're vulnerable right there. If the enemy comes, there's a weakness. There's a huge gaping hole.

There's a crack in the wall right there. That area is an area of weakness. This area is an area of weakness, and so we need to be honest about the areas in our life that we are vulnerable in.

Now, the devil doesn't know everything. He's not omniscient, but he does know everything he needs to know about you, and the way he knows that is he's a fisherman, and what he does, of course, he takes out his sort of spiritual fishing rod, and he puts a little bit of bait on the end of it, and passes it into your life, and plays around there for a while, and if there's no biting, he may try it a little bit longer, and nothing. Try it again, nothing.

Takes it back, changes the bait. Says, boy, that guy, I tried anger. That guy doesn't seem to get angry at all.

I, you know, cast anger in there. He just doesn't seem to get upset. He's sort of a mild, placid, sort of laid-back sort of a guy.

I'll try something else. Lust. Gotcha.

So, you know, he has his little rolodex, and he puts, you know, John Brown, lust, and then maybe takes another bait, and puts it on there, casts it in. After a while, he's got a whole list, and he knows exactly your areas of weakness, and so he hammers away at those things, day after day after day. I know how I can defeat this person, you know.

It's not just the Monday morning blues. The devil says, it's your turn, you know, and he knows how to get in. He knows how to kick away, and he doesn't have to worry about anything else, and we've got to be honest, and say, you know, that one area of my life, or this area, or those three areas, or four areas, or ten areas, whatever it is, I've got to start rebuilding.

Now, how do you rebuild a wall? Rebuilding a wall is not easy, but there has to be a determination. Turn with me, keep your finger there, over into the Book of Ephesians, and let's look at how to rebuild some walls here. In the Book of Ephesians, Ephesians chapter 4, the Bible talks about putting on and putting off.

In the, uh, but, uh, down in verse 27, do not give the devil a place. My Bible says an opportunity. Verse 28, let him that steals, steal no longer.

Now, here's a person whose problem, obviously, is stealing. Now, this guy doesn't just have a little problem. I mean, he's not the sort of guy that goes into the 7-Eleven store to show his friends that he can, you know, take something off the shelf, and get outside without being caught, and sort of brag to his buddies, and say, listen, see, got a packet of cigarettes, and nobody saw me.

Now, this guy's person is, is much worse than that. I'm not saying that isn't a problem, but this man's problem is far worse. This man's problem is, he has never worked.

He's lived as a professional thief. How do we know that? Because of what Paul says. Verse 28, again, let no, let him that steals, steal no longer.

In other words, stop doing what you're doing. And Paul says, but rather, let him labor, let him work. This guy has never worked.

I mean, after all, why work when you can steal? You need a bicycle, wait till your neighbor goes off to work, break into the shed, steal the bicycle. You need some food, wait till your neighbor goes off to work, go in the backyard, help yourself to his tomatoes, or whatever else he's got growing there, you know, kill one of his lambs, and you know. I mean, why work when you can steal? And what happened, of course, in the New Testament, somebody described the church.

It says, the church was like an island, surrounded by a sea of paganism. And people would get saved, and of course, they had lifestyles. And you don't understand that everything is wrong.

The very first, you know, Sunday in church. And so, maybe this man had been coming to church for a while. And one day, Paul, he's talking about the Ten Commandments, or something, thou shalt not steal.

And the guy says, oh, I didn't know stealing was wrong. I mean, Paul himself said, I didn't know that covenanting was wrong, until I read it in the Word of God. And so, all of a sudden, he's convicted.

And maybe he comes up to Paul. He says, hey, Paul. He said, my whole family steals.

I mean, you know, we were gypsies. We've wandered all over the world stealing, you know, that thing. And they're, you know, we're just used to it.

It's part of our lifestyle. And Paul says, listen, you can't do that anymore. It's wrong.

Stop stealing. But Paul, what do I do? I mean, I don't know how to get a job, you know. What's a job? And so, he gets a job.

And then Paul says, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that, he may have something to share with him that has a need. Now, you see, the way you build a wall, is not just identifying the problem. That doesn't rebuild it.

That just tells you what the problem. I've got a problem with stealing. There's a big hole in my wall.

And the enemy is always coming in through that. And Paul says, okay, number one, stop. Number two, get a job.

Number three, learn to operate in the opposite spirit. Now, you can imagine how miserable this man had made people's lives. When Nancy and I were first married in 1964, we worked with David Wilkerson in New York City.

And at that time, the number one drug was heroin. I guess it's coming back. And they estimate that the average addict had a \$100 to \$150 a day habit, the average addict.

Which meant he had to steal somewhere between \$400 and \$600 of goods before he could take that down to the local pawn shop and, you know, turn it in and get \$150 for it. So, can you imagine there were literally tens of thousands of addicts in New York City? Can you imagine the amount of damage that was done every single day? People coming home, their apartments broken into, television gone, stereo gone, ladies jewelry gone, you know, some kid's bicycle gone, whatever it is. Tools missing, a camera missing, all of these things.

Anything that they could redeem at the pawn shop was, was stolen. And people worked hard for these things. They would come home only to find out that things were missing.

I mean, that's terrible. And Paul says, listen, now that you've got money, let's, let's assume, just flesh this out a little bit, that this is a 19, 20 year old guy. He's not married yet.

And he's been stealing all his, all of his life. Paul says, stop stealing, get a job. He gets a job.

A few weeks later, he comes to Paul. He says, listen, he says, I've got all this money. I don't know what to do with it.

He says, you know, what do I do with all this money now? He said, God's provided a wonderful job. Paul says, well, look, look around the church there. See, there's a single mother over there.

Husband walked out on her. Maybe he got killed or died or something. She's got three little toddlers.

She doesn't know how she's going to clothe them. And little Johnny, it's his birthday this week. Seven years of age.

He's been running around telling everybody in the church that he's going to get some rollerblades or whatever the equivalent was 2,000 years ago. And, you know, I know that mother can't afford rollerblades for that little boy. And you've got all this money.

Listen, why don't you do good with that money? Why don't you buy Johnny some rollerblades? Drop them by his house. Don't put a name tag on there. And just tell Johnny, I know you lost your father a number of months ago.

Maybe he died or left or whatever. I know you don't have a father anymore, Johnny. But God wants you to know he's your father.

And he loves you. And this is just a gift from the Lord for you, for your birthday. Now that's really what Paul is saying here.

See that he may have something to share with him that has a need. Instead of making people's lives miserable, what? He is now blessing people. It is the opposite spirit that you rebuild a wall with.

You don't just identify the problem. You go to the other extreme. Now you say, well that's not my problem.

Well, I hope it isn't. But number, oh the next one may be, verse 29. Let no unwholesome word proceed out of your mouth.

My margin says, literally, let no rotten word proceed out of your mouth. Now this is a problem that we all have to a certain degree, don't we? My father used to have a saying, the tongue being in a wet place is very apt to slip. And some of us have problems with our tongue.

And many times the things we talk about are not wholesome. Especially when we're talking about somebody else. Because the more we can demean somebody else, the better off we make ourselves look.

At least we think that way. And so we love gossip. And we love to, you know, criticize.

And we love to find out what the latest thing is. And so on. And Paul says, listen, stop doing it.

Let no unwholesome word proceed out of your mouth. But rather, he says, such a word as is good for edification. The word edifying, edification is a word that comes from the construction world.

And it means to build, to build something up. So Paul says, listen, instead of destroying people's reputation with your conversation, stop building people up. Start edifying people.

And he says that it may give grace to those that hear. In other words, be gracious, not justice. I remember Steve Hill saying, the number one song in the world is amazing grace, not amazing justice.

You see, we give grace to those that hear. Oh, we can tell the truth, but there's no love in it. There's no compassion in it.

We've got to give grace to those that hear. The next problem he deals with is in verse one, uh, 31. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander be put away from you along with all malice.

Here there's individuals that are full of bitterness. They've got all sorts of wrath and anger, clamor, slander. He says, put it away from you.

Be kind one to another. What? Tenderhearted, forgiving. Hard for a bitter person to forgive.

Hard for an angry person to forgive. A slanderous person. But he says, listen, allow God to tenderize your heart.

Identify the problem, Lord. I'm so full of envy, and bitterness, and resentments, and all that that just churns every time I think of that situation. Every time I think of that person that wronged me.

Every time I think of that person that did this to me, or that to me. You know, I mull over in my mind. I allow the enemy to come in, and we talk about it, and we nurture this thing, and we, and I get more and more bitter, and more and more resentful, and so on and so forth.

No. Paul says, hey, stop doing that. Ask God to give you a tender heart so that you can forgive.

After all, God forgave you. That's how you rebuild. Paul, it's not easy.

And I'm not saying it is. Nowhere in the Word of God does it say that maturity is easy. We walk in obedience to the Word of God, and we have to begin to apply the Word of God.

James says, listen, it's not what you know. It's what you do with what you know. He says, otherwise it's like somebody looking in the mirror, and he knows this is that he's got a speck of dirt on his face, but he doesn't do anything about it.

He's not obedient. He just goes away again, and he forgets all about the speck of dirt. We've got to look in the mirror, and what the Word of God reveals to us, then we've got to apply and it's the application of God's Word.

It's not going to be a test one day when we get to heaven about how much we know. It's about how much we did with what we know. To whom much is given, much is what? Required.

And so we're not going to, you know, have a test on, you know, did you realize, you know, that this means that and so on. No, it's what you do with it. That's what matures.

Let's go back. Rebuilding the wall. The next thing that Hezekiah does, it says he erected towers on it.

Now, what were the towers? Well, the towers were the early warning system of trouble right across America now, North America, I guess, you know, possibly up in Vermont or somewhere, the decoders and so on. We have satellite dishes, and those satellite dishes, 24 hours a day, are scanning the heavens in case there is a nuclear attack. And if there is an attack from Russia or China or Korea or wherever it may be, then that satellite dish picks up a little blip on a screen, and we immediately mount some aircraft or a missile or something and try and deter that object before it comes to the states and destroys one of our cities.

It's an early warning system. Now, in the Old Testament, obviously, they didn't have electronics. But what they did have, they had towers built at strategic places on the wall.

And in those towers were men that were employed, constantly looking out, they were the watchmen. And their job was to constantly look out and see if there was anything advancing towards their city. And if they noticed that there was a cloud of dust on the horizon, then they had to discern, is this the enemy or is this a, you know, a bunch of camels and men coming, you know, selling spices or bringing wares or whatever it is, they had to discern what is it.

But once they discerned it was the enemy, then they would sound the alarm, they would blow the trumpet. And when the trumpet was blown, then the next tower would blow the trumpet, the next tower would blow the trumpet, and all around that city then the trumpet was sounded. And people in the surrounding fields would gather up their children, gather up their produce, maybe dig a little extra food, and they would come into the city and they would close the gates of the city.

Why? Because they know that they're in trouble. Now, the Bible says in the New Testament, of course, be alert. Your adversary, the devil, goes around as a roaring lion.

In other words, we need to constantly be watching, watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. And so the Bible warns us all the time, be alert, be watchful, you know, don't slumber. Peter, you recall, when Jesus was in the garden there just prior to the crucifixion and he left the disciples, he said, I'm going in a little bit further to pray.

And he comes back, he says, you know, watch with me for an hour. He comes back, everybody's asleep. He wakes them up and he says to Peter in particular, Peter, watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.

He goes in again, he comes back, they're all asleep again. He tells Peter again. What was it? I think three times he warns Peter.

Why? Because I think Jesus knew something. You see, Peter was the one who had sort of bragged about the fact that, Lord, you know, the rest of these guys that you chose on the team, if I were you, I'd have, you know, I'm, you know, I don't want to advise you, but I don't think that, you know, the sort of guys are really reliable. But, Lord, you're looking at somebody here that I'll go to death for you.

You know, I'll die, Lord. I'll be there all the way with you. You know, you don't have to worry about me.

I'm going to be faithful to death. Now, of course, the Bible says pride, what, comes before a fall. And Jesus said, Peter, you watch, lest you enter into temptation.

Peter, watch. Peter, watch. It's possibly only an hour at the most.

Jesus is arrested. He's betrayed by Judas. And the Bible says Peter followed at a distance, came down into the courtyard where Jesus was being taken.

And he's warming himself around the fire because it's the cold winter's night. And there's a little girl that looks at him and says, I've seen you somewhere. You're familiar.

I've seen your face. I know. You're one of his disciples, aren't you? He said, no, no, not me.

No, no, I just, you know, just happened to come in off the street and, you know, wondered what was going on. Heard all this commotion, you know. Three times he denies the Lord.

Why? Because he's not watching. See, the Bible says it's the little foxes that spoil the vines. Oh, it's not big crucifixions, you know.

Boy, if CNN was here tonight, the headlines, and we were going to be broadcast all over the world, you know, most of us would say, listen, I'm ready to die. You know, take my picture here. You know, I'm ready to die here.

It doesn't happen that way. It's the little things that come in. And the enemy already had his number, so to speak.

Watch him pray. We have to be alert. There's a spiritual warfare going on.

And we should not be ignorant, the Bible says, concerning the enemy's devices, the schemes, the ways that he works. Many times we're ignorant, aren't we, of the way in which the enemy works. So we have to have talents.

And then it says he made weapons and shields in great number, verse five. You see, so far, what Hezekiah has been doing, of course, has been totally, what's the word I'm looking for? He's been defensive. He's been defending himself.

He's been strengthening areas. He's been cutting off certain areas. He's defending himself.

But now, he's going to go on the offensive. He's making weapons as well as shields. My wife and I, about 13 years ago, were in Malaysia doing some ministry for a little while.

We were in a place called Penang, staying with a wonderful Chinese doctor there in a beautiful, huge house. You know, the gates opened automatically when you drove up. He had a Mercedes-Benz and, you know, just a wonderful place.

And one afternoon, he said to us, we had meetings in the morning and meetings in the evening, the afternoon off. And he said, would you like to watch a video? And we said, sure. And he put this video in.

And it was our first, at least my first introduction to a lady by the name of Suzette Herring. She's a German lady. Some of you have heard her teach on spiritual warfare.

And for many, many years, in fact, she still works a little bit with Reinhard Bonnke. And she used to go in in advance of all his crusades in Africa and other places and get all the churches together, teach them on prayer and intercession. She's just an incredible woman.

And this video was her teaching on spiritual warfare. And she is in the city of London in England where the video was made in a huge church there called Kensington Temple. And on the stage are some men.

She calls one of them up. I think he was a youth pastor or something. Calls him up and she said, listen, I want you to help me here.

And she has this little toy outfit that she puts on him. And she's going to dress him up as a soldier. And she puts on this plastic helmet and she said, this is the helmet of salvation.

And then she puts on a breastplate and puts on a belt around his loins there and puts a sword on, gives him a shield and puts the, you know, shoes on his feet. And she talks about all the various parts of the

armor. And then she reaches over to the piano and she's got a knife and she says, we're going now to fight.

I'm going to be the devil. You're going to be the believer. You've got all your warfare on there.

And she says, let's fight. And she begins to stab away at this guy and he moves his shield all over and she stabs away and he keeps moving his shield. It goes on for about 30 seconds or so.

And she says, okay, stop, stop, stop. She turns her congregation. She says, see, he's like most Christians.

He never used the sword once, only the shield. I've never forgotten that illustration. Never used the sword once, only the shield.

In other words, many times we're always in a defensive mode. We're always, you know, sort of ducking and scheming and trying to avoid all that, but we never go against the enemy. See, when Jesus was taken into the wilderness, what did he do? He took out the sword and he says, it is written, it is written, it is written.

You see, we've got to learn to fight the weapons of our warfare. The Bible says they're not carnal, but they're mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. God has given us weapons.

The name of Jesus is a weapon. At the name of Jesus, every knee has to bow, every tongue has to confess. The blood of the lamb.

Again, we overcome him on the basis of the blood of the lamb. 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ stripped the enemy, made an open shoulder, triumphed over him. And we remind the enemy that there is a finished work that you were defeated 2,000 years ago.

See, we don't have to defeat the enemy. He's already been defeated. We've got to reinforce what Jesus Christ has already done.

We've got to apply what he's done. The victory has already been done. See, we don't have to do it.

He did it. It is finished. But we have to let him know on the basis of that, I come against you with the blood of the lamb.

And then, of course, the word of God. We use the word of God. It is written, it is written, it is written.

Now, it's interesting if you study Ephesians 6, that the Bible says that we gird about our loins with what? Truth. But then we also take up the sword of the Spirit, which is what? The word of God. What's the difference between the word of God and truth? Well, the psalmist says, the sum of thy word is truth.

The sum of thy word is truth. In other words, when you get all the word together, it is truth. Jesus said, I am what? The way, the truth.

And so we have our loins gird about with truth. And then from that, if you like, from the logos of God's word, from the totality of God's word, we draw a specific word, the rhema word, to apply in certain situations. In other words, we take the sword from, that's where the sword hangs.

And that's why it's important that we know the word of God. In other words, when the devil comes, you don't just quote scripture. For God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten son.

Or in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God. I mean, that doesn't cut it. You've got to have a specific word.

Turn these stones into bread, the devil said to Jesus. And he says, no, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. And so we need a specific word that we can draw from the truth.

And use it against the enemy. See, there are weapons that God is wanting to give us. And so Hezekiah makes weapons now.

And we have to begin to use the weapons. Numbers, or the next one, whatever number. It says, he appointed military officers over the people.

He gathered them into the square at the city gate, and he spoke encouragingly to them, saying, be strong, courageous, do not fear, do not be dismayed because of the king of Assyria, nor because of all the multitude which is with him. For the one that is with us is greater than the one with him. With him is only an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us and to fight our battles.

And the people relied on the words of Hezekiah, king of Judah. He gathers all the leaders together, and he encourages them with the word of God. And he says, listen, be strong, be courageous, don't fear, don't be dismayed, because God is the one that is with us.

He will help us and fight our battles. Now where does he get that from? Go back into Deuteronomy chapter 20 for a moment. At least this is where I believe he got it.

Verse 1, here is a promise. When you go out to battle against your enemies, and you see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them. For the Lord your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you.

And it shall come about when you're approaching the battle, the priests shall come near and say to the people, hear, O Israel, you're approaching the battle today. Do not be faint-hearted, do not be afraid, or panic or tremble before them. For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies and to save you.

Now there is a wonderful promise. Notice when you go out to battle, and there are enemies that are more numerous than you. Now that's always a time to be afraid, isn't it? I mean, when you're walking down the street at nighttime, and there's 10 of your buddies with you, and there's only one person coming towards you, you're pretty confident when there's 10 of you.

You know, you don't get too upset. But when you're alone, and there's 10 guys walking towards you, you know, with chains, sort of swinging their chains, you know, so a bunch of bikies, you know, then you have reason to fear. You're outnumbered.

And so God said, listen, when you go out to battle, and you're outnumbered, horses more than you, chariots more than you, armies greater than you, don't panic, don't tremble, don't be afraid, because I am with you, and I will fight your battles. I am the God who what? Brought you out of Egypt. That was a mighty battle.

He drowned the horse and the rider, and so on. And so Hezekiah is encouraging the people, be strong, be courageous, don't be afraid, because the Lord our God is with us, to fight our battles, to help us. And so He encourages Himself.

Now the Bible says in Romans chapter 15, through the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope, through the encouragement of the Scriptures. I have a friend called Winky Prattney, some of you may know. Winky does a lot of youth rallies, and so on.

And Winky says, how many of you know that the Bible is full of mistakes? Here is a man, he's written numerous books, books on theology, you know, and he says, I want you to know the Bible is full of mistakes. People sort of flabbergasted to hear Winky say that. After all, here he is, you know, traveling around the world in huge conferences, and he says, the Bible is full of mistakes.

Well, I believe him. It begins with Eve's mistake, followed by Adam's mistake, followed by an awful lot of mistakes. And aren't you glad that it's full of mistakes? Because you see, this is a redemptive book.

And we see in this book, before and after stories, all the way through. What a man was like before God got a hold of him, what he was like after God got a hold of him. And it's an encouraging book.

Can you imagine if this book was absolutely without any sin in it? There wasn't a single individual, from Adam, all the way through to Revelation, every single page, every single person was absolutely blameless, perfect. Never doubted God, never sinned, never stole, never lied, never cheated, no adultery. I mean, every single individual, absolutely perfect, perfect, perfect, perfect, perfect.

I mean, how many would enjoy reading that? How many would get any encouragement out of that? I think it'd be very discouraging, wouldn't it? I mean, we know that Gary's reached that stage, and he could identify, but the rest of us now, we would have problems. You know, we'd say, you know, isn't there anybody like me? I mean, didn't anybody ever doubt God? Wasn't anybody ever fearful? Didn't anybody ever sin? I mean, am I the only person in the world that's got this problem? You see, through the encouragement of the Scriptures, we might have hope, and you can find individuals in here just like you. Every conceivable sort of individual, illegitimate kids mentioned in the Word of God, Jephthah, he's listed in Hebrews 11 as one of the great heroes of faith.

He was a bastard, you know. You've got people like Ruth who are, you know, Moabites. I mean, they came out of an incestuous marriage, the Moabites, and they were banned from the house of God.

But who was it? Ruth was a Moabite, and she's brought into the family of God. You've got men who are adulterers like David. Added to that, he was a murderer.

But what does the New Testament say about him? A man after God's own heart, you know. You've got men like Jonah, who God called to the mission field, go to Nineveh, and he goes the opposite direction. But you know what the Bible says? The Word of the Lord came a second time to Jonah.

That's encouraging, isn't it? You think, boy, you know, when I was a 14-year-old kid at that campfire, everybody was giving their lives to Christ, and I said, you know, I'll go to the mission field, and I threw in my sort of faggot there into the fire, and said, Lord, I'll, you know, I'll be a missionary. The years have gone by, and I got married. I forgot all about it, and you can say, Lord, let the Word of the Lord come again, a second time.

See, I'm convinced God is the God of the makeup test. Don't you love that? See, I was never very good at school. I have report cards somewhere, they're possibly gone, but that have got more than one F on them, especially in English.

And I hated school. The most wonderful day in my life was graduated from high school. You know, I just couldn't stand it.

Now, I came out with the C plus average, because I loved art, and that sort of balanced the books. I always had straight A's in art and F's in English, but but I loved the teacher that had the makeup test, where when you fail, she said, listen, those of you who fail, we're going to take this test again on Friday, and you had time to sort of cram, and you know, God is the God of the makeup test. We talked about Peter a little while ago.

Three denials. What happens after the resurrection? Peter goes fishing, he's so discouraged, comes in, he catches nothing, Jesus is made, nice fire there, he's got breakfast already cooking, and he says, hey Peter, come here, I want to ask you a question. Do you love me? Yes, Lord.

Sure about that, Peter? Yes, Lord. Positive? Yes, Lord. Three affirmations for three denials, the makeup test.

Through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope, and we need to get into the Word of God. We need to encourage ourselves. We need to read this Word.

So many Christians never really read the Bible. They leave it up to the pastor to, you know, do everything on a Sunday morning. They think, you know, I mean, if you ate that way physically, you know, we'd all be six feet under.

One meal a week would not cut it. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Give us this day our weekly bread, the Lord's Prayer.

That's the modern translation. No, give us this day our daily bread. We need daily bread.

We need to get into this Word, find out what it says. And so, obviously in those days, not everybody had a Bible, because everything was done by hand. And so, there were only certain, you know, scrolls around because of the incredible expense.

And so, people had to read it. Listen, let me encourage you. This is what the Word of God says.

Don't tremble. Don't panic. Don't be afraid.

God is with us. Now, the enemy finally comes. He arrives.

And it's interesting the way in which the enemy begins to harass the city of Jerusalem, Hezekiah, and all these men. Notice it says, verse 10. This is the word of the enemy now.

Thus says the Nekarib king of Assyria, on what are you trusting that you're remaining in Jerusalem under siege? Is not Hezekiah misleading you to give yourselves over to die by hunger, by thirst, saying the Lord our God will deliver us from the hand of the king of Assyria? In other words, he's saying, listen, are you guys trusting in God that he's going to deliver you? You guys are crazy. He says, has not this Hezekiah taken away his high places, his altars? And he said to Judah in Jerusalem, you shall worship before one

altar. On that you shall burn incense.

Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the people of the lands? Were the God of the nations able to deliver their land from my hand? Who was there among all the gods of nations, which my fathers utterly destroyed, who could deliver his people out of my hand, that your God should be able to deliver you from my hand? Now, isn't it fascinating that this is the very thing they've strengthened themselves in. The enemy comes. He says, listen, what are you trusting? You really think that God is able to do all that stuff for you? I mean, listen, check my record.

We have obliterated city after city after city. I am my father's, you know, you guys don't have a chance. Now that's the importance of reading the word of God, because once you've got that word in you and you go to work that afternoon, whenever you have your devotional life and the enemy comes and says, you know, God doesn't love you, but you've read that that morning, the thoughts I have concerning you are not thoughts of evil, but thoughts of good.

Boy, it's good to have that. Why? Because you can use it against the enemy. I'm loved with an everlasting love.

I've been accepted in the beloved, you know. Your sins aren't forgiven. Oh yes, they are.

I read it this morning. If we confess our sin, he's faithful and just to forgive us our sin, cleanses from all unrighteousness. Enemy, you see.

But if you don't have that word and the enemy comes, all of a sudden you fall prey to all this stuff, you know. Your God, he's not able to help you. Look at what, check my record.

We've been here. We've defeated city after city, town after town. Nation after nation.

What makes you think you're any different? Now, the enemy comes. We'll cut this in just a moment. And finally, you can read the rest of it.

There's letters of insult. There's all sorts of things that they do to the people calling up on the wall in their own language and so on. Finally, Hezekiah, verse 20, calls for Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amos, and they pray about this and they cry it out to heaven.

And the Lord sent an angel and he destroyed every mighty warrior. Isaiah says he destroyed 185,000 Assyrians. One angel destroyed 185,000 Assyrians.

Jesus said on the cross, I could call what 12 legion of angels. Want to be much left of the old earth if he had. But 185,000.

And it says the king of Assyria returned in shame to his own land. When he entered the temple of his God, some of his own children killed him with a sword. And the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all others and guided them on every side.

Now, I would love just in closing to rewrite this chapter. And I'd like to write it this way. Going back to this wonderful record of Hezekiah, every work that he did in the service of the house of God in law and commandments, seeking his God, he did with all of his heart and he prostrated.

And after these acts of faithfulness and Hezekiah, the king of Assyria came. And Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet prayed about this and the Lord sent an angel and destroyed every mighty warrior. And that's the way I'd love it to read.

You see, I don't want to have to rebuild walls. I don't want to have to encourage myself by reading the Bible. I don't want to have to erect towers.

I don't want to have to make weapons. I don't want to have to do any of that hard stuff. I just want God to sort of send an angel zap and take me out of here or, you know, zap and just solve all my problems for me.

And I thank God that God does come and God helps us. But God is wanting us to mature. He's wanting us to learn how to fight.

He's wanting us to learn how to pray. He's wanting us to learn to use his weapons. He's wanting mature men and women of God.

And there is a season when he bypasses the problems, like I said at the beginning. But once we begin to mature, he leaves problems in our path to teach us how to overcome. And Hezekiah did everything.

That's why the Bible says, you know, put on the whole armor of God. Now, why do we have to put it on? Why doesn't God just take care of it for us? I don't want to have to fight. I don't want to have to dress in this heavy armor.

I don't want to have to learn to memorize all the scripture and use the sword all the time and have to use a shield. I just want God to sort of stand in front of me and take care of everything so I can sit back and sip on a Coke and, you know, kick up and watch TV and flip through the channels. And I don't want to have to learn how to use a concordance and, you know, all this hard stuff, you know.

No, God says, listen, I will supply what you need. You've got to apply my righteousness. You've got to put on the breastplate or the helmet of salvation.

You've got to learn to use that shield of faith. You've got to learn to use that sword. And then having done all, you've got to stand.

And when all else fails, listen, I am still God and I will back you and I will help you, but I'm not going to do your assignment for you. I'm there to back you up. I'm there if the going gets really rough, which it does with Hezekiah.

You see, there was a time in my life when I said to the Lord, I will never go forward again to the altar. Now, please understand. It didn't mean that God can never, ever get me to the altar, but you see, I was always running forward for people to pray for me.

Always having somebody else solve my problems, lay hands on me, you know, I was always in need and running forward. And one day this thought came to me, David, where do these people get this wisdom? How can they quote these scriptures and how come they've got, you know, they can say this and that and, you know, where did they get that from? I thought they've got to get it somewhere. Why can't I go to the same source? Why can't I learn to be a counselor? Why can't I learn to pray? Why can't I seek God? And there came a time in my life when I consciously began to say, God, I'm going to solve my own problems.

Oh, don't misunderstand that statement. Didn't mean that I can do it in my own strength, but Lord, I'm going to learn to find you as a wonderful counselor. I'm going to find what your word says about my problem and my need.

I'm going to apply it for myself. I'm going to learn to grow up myself. And there have been times, many times, when I've gone to counselors, even as a mature person where I haven't been able to solve a problem, whatever, and I've asked the man of God or others to join with me.

Here was Hezekiah. He was humble enough, even as a king, to go to Isaiah the prophet and say to this man of God, listen, I need your help. There's a time and there's a place for that, but there's also a time and a place when we need to learn to grow for ourselves.

And I think one of the great weaknesses in the church in America is, again, the spiritual infancy of God's people. There's nothing more wonderful than a baby. But if that baby's 12 years of age and it's still a baby and you've got to change its diapers and give it a bottle, there's something tragically wrong, tragically wrong.

If it never develops, if its brain never develops, if its limbs never move, if it doesn't learn to talk, it can't hear, it can't see, and so on, it's just basically a vegetable. It's got life. What a tragedy.

See, God is looking for men and women that will grow. Paul's great burden for the Corinthians. He says, listen, I would love to give you a good steak.

I'd love to give you some solid meat, but I've got to give you the bottle again. He still bathes in Christ. God is wanting us to grow up.

One of the things that makes us grow up, again, is facing the problems and difficulties and learning to apply God's Word. Now the good news, or the bad news, again, as I close, is that, as I used to say in Kansas City when I was there, new levels, new devils. That as we advance in the things of God, the devils get bigger, right? Wouldn't it be nice if when you started first grade, the exams were so tough, and then second grade they got a little easier, third grade a little easier again.

By the time you got into college, it was one plus one. Now, by the time you get to college, you have college exams, and you think, man, high school was a breeze in comparison. God does the same things personally.

Why? Because if we're moving on with God, the enemy is going to pull out all the stops. But thank God for the encouragement of God's Word, that we can read it, we can be encouraged by it, and God allows that. He really does.

Remember the morning, I will promise how close it was. I'm embellishing this a little bit without distorting it, but Peter comes down to breakfast one morning, and he says, Lord, did I hear somebody knocking at the door there about five o'clock this morning? And the Lord said, yeah, you did. He said, well, I thought I did.

That's awfully early, wasn't it? Who was it? Jesus said, well, you really want to know, Peter? Yeah, who was it? And it was the devil. The devil? You're kidding. Really, Lord? I mean, he came to see you this morning? Yeah.

Really? Yeah. What did he want? Well, actually, Peter, he came about you. Me? Oh, I mean, you could already see Peter now, really focused, you know, his eye.

Come on, Lord, it's stupid. Don't play games with me, Lord. I mean, no, he did.

He wanted permission to do something to you. Now, Lord, please, I mean, it's too early in the morning to play games. No, Peter, I'm serious.

Lord, you really are, aren't you? What did he want? Well, he wanted permission to give you a rough time, to grind on you a little bit, you know, to put you through all sorts of temptations and harassment and so on and so forth. Oh, Lord, am I ever glad you answered the door? Oh, Lord, what a friend we have in Jesus. What did you tell him, Lord? I said, go ahead.

What? Lord, please, I mean, you know, this is not funny. Lord, what did you really tell him? I said, go ahead. And Peter, when you're strengthened by it, when it's made you a mature man, you're going to be able to help others.

What a friend we have in Jesus. Let's close in prayer. Father, once again, we thank you for your Word.

Lord, that Word that is able to make us wise unto salvation, that Word that is a light unto our feet, a lamp unto our path, that Word that is able to build us up and mature us. Thank you, Lord, for your Father heart, that, Lord, you're concerned about us and about our spiritual life and our spiritual state. Lord, there's not a single thing you allow without your divine, sovereign permission to come into our lives.

You are Lord, that even the enemy has to ask permission. And yet, Lord, you don't immune us from problems. Lord, I know in a room of this size that there are people that are overwhelmed with some of the problems they're facing, difficulties, trials, tests.

And Father, I pray tonight that, Lord, it would truly be through this Word, an encouraging Word to each heart. But, Lord, I'm also mindful that Hezekiah needed somebody to stand with him. And I pray, Lord, for those that are going through just a very dark period, the valley of the shadow death, where everything seems to be in turmoil around about them.

Lord, they're in the midst of the storm. That, Lord, you would come tonight and touch lives. Lord, you're the master of the storm.

You can speak that Word. So, Father, I ask that, Lord, you know the state of each and every one of us. You know, Lord, what we face, what the problems are, the difficulties are.

Give us an understanding, Lord. Give us insight. Lord, we don't want to run away from these things.

We want to triumph over them. The Word says, who always causes us to triumph. Lord, you make our hands able to war.

Lord, so that we can bend the bow of bronze, your Word says. Father, give us the strength to fight. Thank you for the weapons that you provided for us, the Word of God, the blood of the Lamb, the name that is above everything.

Father, we pray tonight, Lord, that you would just simply open our understanding in a new way. But, Lord, we would not consider it strange any longer, the trials and the problems that come in. But, Lord, we'd

embrace them, knowing that it's part of your process of maturity.

Let's just stand together. I'm going to ask you, I know some of you, God is going to challenge and say, listen, it's time you didn't run for it, because this is a new season in your spiritual life. You've avoided some problems.

That doesn't mean you're mature, that you don't have them. It means you've been immature, and God has kept you from them. Some of you are going through them, and God is saying, listen, I want you now to learn to fast, to pray, to seek me, to get weight upon me.

There are others, and you've done everything you can, and it's a season in your life, like Hezekiah, where all hell seems to be breaking loose, and you say, I need a man or a woman of God to stand with me and just pray. I can't bear this thing any longer. It's going on and on and on.

But don't expect problems to be solved when God is saying, listen, you cut off the supply. If you're at that stage where you say, listen, there's things in my life I need to cut off. I'm into this.

I'm into that. I'm into this thing. You know, don't come forward expecting God to help you in that area.

But if you've honestly been doing what the Word of God says to do, you've been walking in obedience, and yet it just seems that the enemy is just still there, day after day after day. Why don't you come and let God just have your life?

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