

## Finding God's Power When You are Weak

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I Believe in the Church Series

Ephesians 6:10-13

As many of you know, this will be my last weekend here before I take my sabbatical this summer for the months of July and August. I mentioned to you that the church council, which is Vineyard's equivalent of our church board, very graciously recommended that I take some time away from the church and away from preaching to get refreshed and also to read and pray and try to listen to God for my own life and also for the life of the church.

But while I'm gone, you will not be neglected. I've mentioned that we have a great line-up of teachers for the summer. Please do pray for me and pray for the church. My prayer is that the church will grow and be healthier in my absence than when I'm present.

Well, this morning I am going to preach the last message in the book of Ephesians. If you have a Bible, I would like you to open to Ephesians 6. I want to read the text to you. The apostle Paul says in v. 10:

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

Why does the apostle Paul, in concluding his letter to the Ephesians, finish with this exhortation to be strong in the Lord and in God's mighty power, to make sure that we take a stand and that we put on the full armor of God? Why do we need to concern ourselves with the power of God or the armor of God?

Think about this for a moment with me, would you? We have just read one of the most beautiful and profound books in the entire New Testament. There are many commentators who believe that Ephesians is the very pinnacle of Paul's writings. That there is nothing, not even the book of Romans, that ascends to the height of the book of Ephesians. And let's recall some of the main themes of the book of Ephesians.

In chapter 1 the apostle speaks to us about all the spiritual blessings that we have in heavenly places. In chapter 1 the apostle Paul speaks to Christians about our great privileges, about our new identity in Christ. And he reminds us that we are chosen by God. It is not an accident that you became a follower of Christ. You were chosen beforehand. You were predestined unto salvation. If you are one of Christ's followers you are a child of God. You are forgiven through Christ's achievement at the cross. God has placed the Holy Spirit within you and sealed you for eternity. We have this wonderful new identity in Christ – chosen, adopted, forgiven, redeemed, sealed with the Spirit.

In ch. 2-3 the apostle Paul reminds us that our salvation is not just an individual thing – me and Jesus walking through life alone. But that God saves us and immediately plunges us into the church, which is His body. And, miracle of miracles, we all enter the church on the same

footing. It is not just that you get to be a member of the church. Paul says the mystery that was revealed to him, ch. 3, is that you Gentiles get to enter the church on the same footing, the same ground, as the Jews do. God draws no distinctions between people. He is no respecter of persons.

The apostle speaks to us about our identity in Christ. He speaks to us about this wonderful creation called the church. He then calls us to live a life worthy of our new identity and this new creation called the church.

And in chapter 4, he calls Christians to a life of holiness and a life of unity, to the practice of forgiveness and the practice of purity. In ch. 5 he applies the message of the book to the spheres in which we find ourselves – to our marriages, to our child-raising, to our workplaces. Paul reminds us that Christianity is not to be confined to the religious realm of life, but it applies to the whole of life.

Why didn't he stop there? Isn't it enough to be told the truth about who you are, to speak to us about our relationships in Christian community? To call us to purity and to unity and to apply Christian doctrine down to earth where we live in our homes, in our marriages, in our workplaces? Why does Paul go on to add, *Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.?*

These verses are so crucial, and yet, so neglected by Christians. We Christians regularly scratch our heads and are so puzzled by why life is so hard. I know that I am forgiven. I know that I am a child of God. I believe I am a saved person. I am part of the church. I'm

trying to resolve my relationships. I am attempting to apply my Christianity in the workplace and at home. Why am I having such a hard time of it? Why is everything so difficult? Why don't your best resolutions result in instant success? Have you ever wondered sometimes why things are so hard?

The reason why Paul didn't end the letter in Ephesians 6:9, but he went on past verse 9, is because he knows that the church will be utterly defeated unless they understand the simple truth that we Christians are in the center of a spiritual war that is being carried on across the universe. There is a war going on – a war for your children, a war regarding your marriage, a war over your purity, a war concerning your emotions, a war in your relationships, a war at work, a war in this country. And most of the time, Christians are utterly blind. They're resistant to the notion that, indeed, this universe is at war.

The picture that I have in my mind of most Christians is that we are sitting down in the locker room with the coach and it is before a big game. He's drawn the x's and o's on the blackboard. We've run through the plays in practice. We've memorized the play book and we are full of enthusiasm. We get on the field and all of a sudden, someone comes running down the field and knocks us down. We get up and someone else knocks us down.

We say, "Wait a minute. Hold on here. I know the play book. I've practiced. I have great intentions. I have a wonderful relationship with my teammates. Why do I keep getting knocked down?"

Because there is another team on the field. Because we, the church, are not playing alone. And we are not involved in a theoretical game. There is a war going on. There's a reason why Jesus in the Lord's Prayer didn't end the prayer with "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." But he went on to instruct us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

We face real opposition. So to prepare us for the real world that we live in and the real war that we face, the apostle Paul finishes his great letter to the Ephesians by saying, *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power*. I'm going to talk about finding God's power when you are weak today. Let's just ask the Lord's presence.

Why do you need God's power? Why do you need to learn how to be strong in the Lord? Why do you need to learn how to take a stand or to put on God's armor?

The reason why we regularly come up with inadequate answers to life and for our problems is because we don't fully grasp the power of the opposition arrayed against us. I just read a study of churchgoers, a massive study, in which the author of the study, George Barna, probably America's premier church demographer, found that in only one major Christian denomination, The Assembly of God Churches, did more than half the members believe that Satan really existed, that he was a personal being who made war on this world. Only one denomination had even half of its members believing what the Bible teaches about Satan.

Every other denomination – Southern Baptists, Episcopalians, Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians – has seen Satan as either some mythological creature running around in red tights with a pitchfork, or a symbol of evil, or some kind of archaic holdover from the Middle Ages when people didn't understand mental illness.

Is it any wonder why Christians are so defeated? We don't know that there is another team on the field. We don't understand the power of the opposition. And so when we are smacked down and our faces are run into the turf, we express shock and surprise and say, "I don't know why this is happening to me."

Have any of you been there? Are any of you living in great difficulty, something completely out of the blue has completely smacked you down, smacked a loved one down?

I want to give you a brief look at the power of Satan this morning because unless you really believe at the core of your being that you are in the middle of a war - there may be a lull for the moment in your life or in your experience, but there is no permanent peace treaty here - unless you see that you are in a war, that you have a powerful enemy arrayed against you, you will not really passionately try to find God's power or regularly think about putting on God's armor.

In comprehending Satan's power, what I would like to do is have you flip back to the book of Job. Verse 1:6 says:

*One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord. Satan also came with them. The Lord said to Satan, 'Where have you come from?' Satan answered the Lord, 'From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it.'*

We read that Satan is not omnipresent, that means he is not everywhere, he must travel from one point to another. And in the same way that he is not omnipresent, he is also not omnipotent, that is he doesn't have all power. But as we are going to see, he has great power.

The apostle Peter calls him a "roaring lion seeking people to devour." John, in the book of Revelation, calls him the "great dragon." He has great power. And if you want evidence of the power of Satan, understand that he didn't hesitate to attack and go after Jesus Christ the Son of God himself. So much confidence did Satan have in his power that he went after Jesus.

Still, his power is a limited power. And anything that Satan does only comes by the permission of God. The message of the book of Job is clearly that the Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice. But in the mystery of God's reign, He has given Satan permission to do evil. So we read in Job 1:8,

*Then the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on the earth like him. He is blameless and upright.' And Satan insinuates, 'Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. Stretch out your hand and strike everything he has and*

*he will surely curse you to your face.’ The Lord said, ‘Very well. Everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself, do not lay a finger.’*

Now, let’s consider the following experiences of Job. Remember we are looking at Job to understand the great power of Satan. And why we desperately need the might of God when we are facing a power like Satan’s power.

As we read through the chapter we find that Satan is able to stir up people to attack you. It says in verse 13:

*One day when Job’s sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother’s house, a messenger came to Job and said, ‘The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were grazing near by and the Sabeans attacked and carried them off. They put the servants to the sword and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!’*

Do you ever say to yourself, “What is going on here? Why are there suddenly so many problems, especially people problems? Everyone at work seems to be in such an uproar. Or in my home, or in my small group. There doesn’t seem to be any reason for this, any rationale that I can come up with. Why am I being attacked? I thought that we had ironed everything out between me and my spouse, or between me and my mother?”

Do you know that Satan can stir up attack through people? You sit there and wonder about some of the really hurtful things that people who are close to you do to you – mean things.



Things that people say. Where is that coming from? An unfair criticism. Someone slanders you. Your motives are totally judged wrong.

So often, when we experience attack through people, we say, “Ahhh...I must have blown it. I must have done something wrong. It is probably my fault.” Does it dawn on you, friend, that you are in a war? That what is coming against you is not just flesh and blood? It is not just this other person? But that there is a spiritual power arrayed against you?

And we go on and we see a power that Satan has that many of us don't think about. It says in verse 16:

*That while he was still speaking, another messenger came and said, 'The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up the sheep and the servants and I am the only who has escaped to tell you.'*

The fire of God is lightning. Did you know that Satan has a certain amount of power over nature? Now, it is clear that not every lightning storm comes from Satan. But some of it does. This one did. And I believe that when Jesus was in the boat traveling across the Sea of Galilee to go to the other side and the winds came to sink the boat, I believe that that storm was stirred up by Satan. It was energized. Certain natural disasters come from Satan. God is over all, but there is a certain limited amount of power that he has given to Satan including the power to hurl lightning bolts.

Then read on in verse 18:

*While he was still speaking, yet another messenger came and said, 'Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the older brother's house when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house and it collapsed on them and they are dead.'*

Not only lightning, but a mighty hurricane. Again, it is not the case that every hurricane comes from Satan. The winds are at the command of God. But in this case, Satan was given the power to stir up a mighty wind and to murder.

Tremendous power, imagine, over nature. You see in the case of the Gadarean swine that Satan has power over animals from time to time. And, of course, we know that Satan exercises terrible power over men and women, the minds of men and women. Lying and discouraging and driving people to suicidal thoughts, to homicidal thoughts, to violent thoughts—we must come to grips with the power of the enemy. His power to assault you with lust. To stir up your pride. To insert in your mind a desire for something that two minutes before you weren't even thinking about.

Has that every happened to you? You just have this sudden impulse out of nowhere? Maybe a few minutes before you were thinking about God, or you are thinking about work and then suddenly, you have this intense anger that comes into your heart, or intense lust, or this compulsion to call someone you know is not a safe person. This pressure comes into you that two minutes before you weren't even thinking about.

Satan can stir two people to violently fight with each other. To mistrust each other. To call each other motives continually into question. You know, folks who just three years before

stood at an altar at a church and said, “We will love one another until death us do part,” fighting like cats and dogs.

Now, we need to go further than a simple recognition of the power of the enemy. In order to discover, I mean really discover, our need for what Paul is saying in Ephesians 6:10, “Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power,” we also need to come to a very frank and honest recognition of our own profound weaknesses. Not only look at the enemy, but then we need to take a look at ourselves.

You know, we often talk to you about the danger of introspection, about sinking into yourself and digging at yourself. But like everything, we don’t want to go to an extreme. It is appropriate to examine ourselves as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 13:5 to examine ourselves to see whether we are in the faith and to look at ourselves as he tells us in 1 Corinthians 11 before we take communion. When we do so, we frequently find that there are points of entry that the enemy can easily access our spirits through a particular weak door or weak veins. There seems to be this almost completely unguarded, open highway right to the center of our beings that an enemy army can just march upon and grab a hold of us and wreck us.

Do you see that in your life? Are you in touch enough with yourself to say, “Here are the weak places”? These are the places that the enemy has access to me. You ought to have enough self-awareness to be in touch with your weak points. Maybe you have a tendency temperamentally or by genetic predisposition to depression. It is a weakness of yours. Do you think that Satan understands that weakness? That he would be the one tempting you

toward isolation, to withdraw from relationship, to get yourself into a place that you just spiral down again?

Perhaps for you, you see an emotional attachment that is growing with someone who is inappropriate for you to be attached to. You are just toying with a major problem. Perhaps your weakness is in the area of always trying to please people. You grew up really trying to please your mom and dad and you got strokes because you were so accommodating. But that, for you, is a weakness. Do you think that the enemy knows that you are a people pleaser, so that he plays upon that weakness to get you to compromise your convictions, to just go along with the crowd, to not stand up for what is right, for what you know to be true?

Friends, let's look in the mirror. Where is your weak point? Where is the weak vein that Satan knows? Where do most of your attacks come out of? Are you in touch with that? Your anxiety, and tendency toward anxiety, and globalizing all the awful things that could happen. Or you are a feeling-based person and you have a tendency to read everything through the grid of your emotions. So long as you feel it, it must be true, no matter what anyone else tells you. Could he use that against you?

You bet he can! Unless you are in touch with the power of the enemy and also in touch with your own weakness, you will not see your need to really lean into the power and strength of God. Clothe yourself with God's armor. To take a stand. You just won't get it.

And there's a third thing. We need God's power because of what is at stake. It is the very nature of demonic temptation to minimize the cost of sin and to maximize in your mind the

pleasure of reaching out for what you know is wrong. Satan always lies to us about what is at stake.

I want to read to you a letter to Dear Abby that caught my attention a few days ago. Here's what this fellow writes:

Dear Abby,

I have a true story to share. It is the story of a man who married his high school sweetheart. She supported him through college, encouraged him to pursue a degree, and gave him two beautiful children. She became a wonderful mother. She never missed a ballgame. She took the children to church. She worked full-time and went without in order to give us more. And he, on the other hand, never helped around the house and became obsessed with his job.

A female co-worker, with a questionable reputation, began to flirt, flatter, and confide in him about her inattentive husband. He allowed himself to be convinced that an affair was justified, since his wife was so busy raising his children.

Soon the affair became common knowledge. He had to leave his home and family, which suddenly seemed valuable beyond belief.

Abby, I traded everything important in life for a woman who is not fit to wipe my wife's shoes. Although I never strayed before, my reputation is

ruined. My children will never again respect me. I will be known for the rest of my life as someone who committed adultery and lied to everyone I know and love.

If there is a man reading this, who is considering following in my footsteps, I hope this letter makes him think twice. He should go home and help his wife, be part of his children's lives, and stop believing he should be the center of everyone's attention. I wish I could change everything I've done. I didn't know what was at stake when I said yes to an affair.

The enemy always minimizes what's at stake. What's at stake could be your marriage, or your children's welfare. What's at stake could be your emotional health, your reputation, freedom from addiction and bondage.

If you are a follower of Christ, you need to think about something else that's at stake. When you are under attack, what is at stake is also the reputation of Christ and the church. If you have let it be known that you are a Christian, and Satan minimizes for you an issue of lying or financial integrity or relational integrity saying to you, "It's no big deal. It doesn't matter." And then your cutting corners becomes known, you have injured the reputation of Jesus Christ, your faithful friend and Savior. You have caused people around you to harden themselves to Him.

Have any of you ever done that? By giving way you became a stumbling block to someone else finding Christ? Your children? Coworkers? Another church member?

We need the power of God because of what is at stake. Our salvation, the salvation of others around us, and chiefly the reputation of Jesus.

And in dealing with the power of the demonic forces that are arrayed against you, your only hope is the power of Almighty God. Take refuge in Ephesians 6:10. Maybe you are here today, and you are going down for the third count. You were barely keeping your head above water and then someone threw an anchor around your legs. You are really struggling in your marriage, or in your workplace, or your emotional life, financial worries. Maybe you have dating problems. The enemy has come and assaulted you. Maybe he has assaulted your body, he has assaulted you with discouragement or depression, or horribly fearful thoughts. The only answer is to find refuge in the words of Ephesians 6:10, “Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.” We are going to explore the dimensions of that today.

Some of you may know that the founder of the Association of Vineyard Churches that we are a part of was a man named John Wimber. John was a dear friend, who passed away several years ago. And he wrote a number of books with the word “power” in their titles. One was called “Power Evangelism” and another, “Power Healing” and a third was called, “Power Encounters.”

Well, some folks in the broader church world decided to take it upon themselves to critique, which is fine and fair if there is something to critique. One very critical book about John and the Vineyard was called “Power Religion.” And the cover of the book says this, “Power tie, power lunch, power broker, [and then they ask] power religion?” Here is the sub-point

on the cover: It says, “Contemporary society is on a quest for power. Few would argue that. But what happens when the evangelical church follows that path?” And then they go on to discuss the danger of a church that pursues power.

Well, the absurdity of their argument never hit me to the degree that it did until I was meditating on Ephesians 6:10. *Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power [or his strength]*. Actually, in the sentence, there are three Greek words for “power.” Paul tells us power is the key to dealing with the power of the evil one, our own personal weakness, and what is at stake.

I pulled out my Greek concordance. Many of you know that the New Testament was not written in English. Not even written in King James English with a lot of “thous and thees” and “doths and shouldeths”. It was written in Greek.

I pulled out my Greek concordance and lo and behold, I discovered that “power” is one of the central concepts running through the entire New Testament. One of the words for power, *dunamos*, is found 148 times in the New Testament. Add to that the word *exousia*, authority or might and *kratos*, strength, *ischus*, power—and you literally have hundreds of references to power. The vast majority of them deal with the power of God. The word power is literally found everywhere in the New Testament.

Consider just a few of these references so that you understand the importance of the central concept of the word, “power.” Romans 1:16, Paul writes, *I am not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. First for the Jew and then for the Gentile.*



There is power in the gospel. 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul says, *The message of the cross is foolishness for those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* There is power in the cross of Jesus Christ.

Paul wants us to know that what we are into as Christians is not just talk—words upon words upon words, massive heaps of words piled up high until we all choke on words. He says, “No, my message and my preaching were not with whys and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power so that your faith may not rest on men’s wisdom but on God’s power.”

He makes this claim, again, to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 1 saying, *The gospel came to you not simply with words and more words and more words, but with power and with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.*

Paul says that his weapons included truthful speech and the power of God, 2 Corinthians 6. You talk about the one-two punch. Truth and the power of God.

The other apostles were not ashamed to pray for power. They didn’t critique it. They didn’t engage in all of these fine distinctions and sophistries. When they were opposed, they said, *Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your Word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your Holy Servant, Jesus.* And it says, *After they prayed the place where they were meeting was shaken and men were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly.* Power!

So, I looked at it more closely because I thought, “My goodness, it is everywhere, this word power.” Why are portions of the church almost blind to this as a central defining principle of New Testament Christianity? Why are there books being written and why are people so upset when you start talking about the power of God as absolutely necessary? And as I read through my Greek concordance, I found, “Oh my, guess what it is that defeats Satan?”

Yes, Satan is defeated by truth because he is a liar. But over and over again, the scriptures say that he is defeated by the power of God. In Luke 11, Jesus says, *If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you...[and then he goes on and says]...when a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe.*

Note how he talks about Satan. He talks about him as being a strong man. He is powerful. He is not going to be dealt with in our lives, in the life of this church and the world—his subversive influences, his philosophies, his attacks are not going to be dealt with by the paper thin, flimsy instruments of political maneuverings, explicit talk about sex. Jesus says, “It is only when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him. He takes away the armor that in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.”

What is it friends, that is the mark of false religion? Paul tells us what it is. He says, “Watch out, because there are many who have the form of religion, the form, the appearance, but they deny the power.” You see, it is the power of God that is one of the main weapons, hopes and refuges, for the weakness of the church that we come into in dealing with the power of the evil one.

Understand this: that the only way anything is going to happen that is going to be good on your behalf in defeating the work of the enemy, in whatever way he is assaulting you, the only way anything good is going to be done on behalf of the church, this church and the church at large and the way that the enemy is assaulting it, or the larger society, the American culture that we live in and watch daily disintegrating around us, our only hope is the power of God. And that is a big hope! This is the reason for the joyful optimism of Christians. This is why Christians can say, with Paul, that we are not discouraged. Never. Never, ever, should a Christian lose hope!

Let me put it more simply. The Old Testament had a way to express the power of God in impossible situations when things looked bleak. There was a man named Abraham who, at 100 years old, was promised a child. His wife was 90 years old. I believe 90 is somewhat past menopause. The Lord comes along and says, "You are going to have a child." Sarah laughs. And here is the way the power of God is described in Old Testament words. The angel of the Lord comes along and says, "Why did Sarah laugh? Why throw up your hands and say, 'It doesn't make any sense at all?'" Here is the key phrase: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" That is the power of God. Is anything too hard for the Lord?

Jeremiah has the same experience. The city of Jerusalem is being attacked. They have siege ramps by the Babylonians up against it. They are firing over the walls. The leaders are fleeing the city. It is like Beirut, Lebanon, or Sarajevo; it is under siege. The Lord comes along in that impossible situation and says to Jeremiah, "I want you to go out and buy a field." In the middle of this war, "Jeremiah, I want you to go out and buy a field."

And Jeremiah goes before the Lord and says, “Don’t you see the siege ramps of the Babylonians? Don’t you see that people are being led out to be slaughtered? Don’t you see the sword? Don’t you see the power of the enemy? And, yet, O Sovereign Lord, you say to me, ‘Buy the field with silver and have the transaction witnessed.’” Jeremiah 32:26 says, *The Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, ‘I am the Lord, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?’*

What are you currently struggling with? Your marriage that is under attack? A rebellious child? Depression? Your rent payment? You are out of work or you have real stress on your job? Listen to what God says: *I am the Lord your God. Is anything too hard for me?*

So, let me bring this home for you so that you can begin to understand the very practical and pragmatic ways that the power of God can be of assistance to you in your life when you are doing battle with the enemy. We, first of all, need to bring to mind the power of almighty God. And second, we need to lay hold of the power of the blood of Christ in dealing with the enemy. You know, Satan gains power in our lives through sin. That is what gives the devil the upper hand in our lives, sin. If we never sinned, if Adam in the beginning never sinned, Satan would have no leverage point in our lives. We would be able to keep him at bay. But the truth is that we frequently open the door and we invite the devil in.

And so what is our remedy when we have invited the devil in? The power of the blood of Christ! You know the hymn, “There is power, power, wonder-working power in the blood of the Lamb. There is power, power, wonder-working power in the precious blood of the Lamb...”

Revelation 12:11 says, *They overcame him, the serpent, the devil, by the blood of the Lamb.*

Here is how it works. You have sinned. You are up in the middle of the night and you hear the stream of accusations. “Look at what you have done. You blew it. You are a failure. You are worthless. You missed the one great opportunity to serve God. You are never going to amount to anything. You know you never should have done that and you did. Here is another area where you aren’t doing enough. You are not fulfilling your obligations. You are not a good enough mother. Your children wouldn’t have turned out the way they did if you were a better mother or if you were a better father. You are a hypocrite. You made your bed, now you can lie in it. You are a loser as a mother. You are not a good provider. Why can’t you overcome your emotional problems? You need to do better. You need to do more.”

Have you heard that voice? “Worthless, failure, loser?” How do you overcome it? Satan would want you to continue to agree with him and to beat up on yourself as the way to deal with the accusations. Satan would want you to deny that they are true.

“No, I haven’t done that. No, what you are accusing me of isn’t true.”

Or, perhaps, to try to balance out the accusation of guilt with some protestation that you have done good in another area. Satan would want you to attempt to look inside and discover how sorry you are for what you have done.

“Well, I am really remorseful.”

Or resolve to be better in the future?

Those are all paper-thin defenses. There is only one way to deal with accusation - any failure, anything at work; your failure as a parent; failure as a student; failure to do your duty; failure to obey God - there is only one way to deal with sin and failure and the accusations that come with sin and failure. You admit that all that is being said is true.

“Yes, I am vile. Yes, I have failed. I don’t deny it. Yes, I am a sinner. All of this is true. I have nothing. I am nobody. And I have no hope, except that the Son of God loves me and gave himself for me. And in the bloody sacrifice of the Son of God, God, my great Judge, is satisfied. Satisfied completely.”

The justice of God, the righteousness of God, the judgment of God is completely satisfied by the death of His Son. So utterly satisfied that when I hold the blood of Christ up, God, my Judge, says to me, “You are innocent in my sight. Absolutely free. Not vile, not worthless, not a failure, free, accepted, clean, forgiven.”

That is why so many of the hymns center on the blood of Christ.

“My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.  
I dare not trust the sweetest refrain,  
But holy lean on Jesus’ name.”

Or

“When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within,

Upward I look to see him there

Who made an end to all my sin.”

So, when you are being accused of a failure, you don’t present the paper-thin defense of your own remorse, your own faith, your own resolve, your own good deeds. I am trying to do better. I am trying to fix my life. None of that can heal the power of guilt. Answer every accusation with the power of the blood of Christ. “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.”

You say, “Well, that is great for the past and even present failures. But what about the future? With what is arrayed against my family right now, I am so afraid for the future. With what is arrayed against my kids and the state of the world, I get so anxious. With the scope of problems and the way the enemy seems to be battering our marriage, I just don’t know. I don’t know if I can have hope.”

Paul says, “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.” In this case, I would remind you of the mighty priesthood of Christ. Look at Hebrews 7 for a moment. About the mighty priesthood of Jesus Christ, it says,

*And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible*

*life...[look down at verse 23]...Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. [And here is the key verse] Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him because he always lives to make intercession for them.*

You say, “What if the economy crashes? What if I never get married? What if your spouse really leaves? What if I can’t get pregnant? Or find a job?” It says in Hebrews 25: *He is able.* That is the key.

Our hope is not in the fact that we are able, that we have lots of faith, that we won’t fail when we are tried in the fire. My confidence is in the simple fact that he is able. Jesus is able. That is what I am relying on. His might. What is he able to do? It says, “He is able to save completely.” That word “completely” means “to the uttermost”. Jesus is able to save absolutely to the uttermost. There is no circumstance that the enemy could bring your way, no problem, no storm, no lightning, no wind gusts, no deaths, no future horrible event that Jesus cannot save you from. If all of your wildest fears, whatever you dread right now, came true; you lose your job; the diagnosis is, in fact, malignant cancer, or Alzheimer’s; all the prophecies of doom regarding global warming or the economy that are sweeping this country; if it all came true, Jesus is still able to save completely. He is able to save to the uttermost. No circumstance can keep Him from saving.

And, then, Hebrews 25 says, *And now this is the reason you can have such total peace as a Christian in the might of God. He is able to save you because by his powerful, indestructible life, he always lives to intercede for us.*



Remember, I spoke about our weakness at the beginning of this talk. All the weak veins that Satan can travel up in my body. All the entry points. All the hooks that have not yet been removed from your personality, from your past. All the weaknesses that I see in the church—in the Vineyard and in the church in America, why can I be optimistic?

Because Jesus, my indestructible high priest, at this very moment is standing in heaven, while I preach to you and while you sit there and when we go to sleep at night and when we are driving in the car with our radio on and when we are yelling at our spouses and when things are unraveling about us, at every moment and at this moment, Jesus is praying for me. And He is praying for you. And He is praying for the whole church and for every church in this city, every church in this country, and every church in the world. Think about it. It is awesome. While we sit here, Jesus our indestructible powerful high priest is in heaven praying for us.

That is what gave Paul confidence. You know the passage in Romans 8 where Paul makes the declaration that he is convinced that neither death, nor life nor angels nor demons, nor things present, nor things future, nor any powers, nor height, nor depth or anything else in all the creations can separate, from the love of Christ.

How can he say that with such confidence? That nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Because he says that, “I am convinced that Christ is right now interceding for us.” Think about this. This is your security. This is the battering ram against Satan’s discouraging thoughts, but more particularly his anxious thoughts that flood your mind and

grip you and obsess you. “What about...What if...What’s going to happen...” Jesus Christ is praying for you always.

What is it that distinguished Peter from Judas? Both of them betrayed Jesus. Why did Peter fall and then get back up whereas Judas fell and never got back up? What was the difference between Peter and Judas?

There is only one answer. Jesus prayed for Peter. But for a reason known only to Him, He didn’t pray for Judas. That is what Jesus said in Luke 22: *Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith won’t fail. And when you have turned back strengthen your brothers.*

I prayed for you that your strength won’t fail you. And I know that you will get back up. You are going to turn back to God. This is my hope when I pray for a loved one. This is my hope when I pray for someone’s salvation. This is my hope when I pray for strength in weakness. My prayers are being joined to the powerful prayers of Jesus. Power in weakness. Let’s pray.