



**Prelude to the Cross-Part 5**  
**Strength in Frailty**  
**Pastor Mike Fabarez**

Some of you know I was out in Michigan this week preaching and one thing that I discovered about Michigan is that they love their college football out there. I mean they do. I was up at taking morning walks seeing flags painted on garage doors and bumper stickers. They love their University of Michigan Wolverines. I also learned about their big annual rivalry between the Wolverines and Ohio State. That is a big game. Everyone amps up for that, it's huge, there's all kinds of intensity about it, ferocity. I mean they've met 114 times in their history. I mean they're keeping track, keeping score. And I thought about what it must be like in the locker room before they go out for that game every year. I mean they've got to be geared up and amped up and just the tradition and all that they have going into that game, going through that tunnel onto the gridiron. I mean they must be just ready to just conquer the world.

Well, they needed some of that disciplined, intentional focused ferocity 11 years ago when they played a little team called Appalachian State, which I just picture guys in like denim cut-offs and rolled up t-shirts. I don't mean to bag on that team but there was just no way anyone thought that University of Michigan would have any trouble at all with Appalachian State. I mean there's just no way. That year, 2007, the analysts thought they were just a shoo-in for the Big Ten Conference, that they were going to go to the national championship. I mean, this was just kind of like a bump on their schedule on September the 1st, 2007, and yet, if you know anything about sports, this became known as the biggest college football upset in history. Appalachian State just cleaned their clock. They lost and everyone was stunned and shocked and it was horrible.

Now I know nothing about the mindset individually of those players as they went down the tunnel onto the gridiron that day. I can only imagine that that kind of discipline intensity was not there. I do know though about a battle in the Valley of Elah, some 3,000 years ago, where there was a favored warrior who was expected to win and was handed a demoralizing loss there in the valley. His name is Goliath and Goliath, as you know, had everything going for him, at least when it comes to what the world has to say about winning a battle. I mean, the Philistines were armed to the teeth. They had the money, they had the resources and of course they had him, Goliath. He was huge, he was undefeated. He was the guy who stood there in the valley taunting the armies of Israel.

And out comes a kid with a slingshot and no armor on. I know Goliath's mindset, his mindset was, "What are we doing? What are we wasting time for? Why are you sending this kid out? This is ridiculous. I mean, why am I even wasting my time?" Well, of course, you know the story of David and Goliath and he ends up losing, losing big, he loses his life that day and everyone realizes what an upset. If you're going to talk about the greatest upset in the Bible, that has got to be it, David and Goliath. It still is an idiom in our culture for the biggest upset, the David and Goliath story.

Now, when a preacher brings up David and Goliath in a sermon often times they're trying to get you in the sandals of David and trying to get you to think about victory. But I want you today, it may be more profitable for us, to put ourselves in the gigantic sandals of Goliath. That might be helpful because it's good for us not to walk into battle thinking we got this, for that kind of over confident mindset that Goliath clearly had and was revealed to have.

Matter of fact, that's the concern of Jesus in the passage that we've reached in our study of Luke, Luke Chapter 22. And I'd like to look at just four verses today, Luke Chapter 22 verses 31 through

34. So grab your Bibles this morning and look up this passage as we continue our series through Luke. This passage in particular is helpful knowing the context that Jesus has already told them, there's someone here among us who's going to betray me. That's how the chapter starts. So you wouldn't think this would be a passage about people being overconfident but it soon turns into that. I mean, you remember what happens here when all of that concern about, "Could it be me? Is it you? Who's going to betray Christ?" They're having this discussion among themselves and then they end up degenerating into a discussion about who's the greatest among them.

And in the midst of all of that Jesus stops here in verse 31 and speaks to Simon Peter. And here's how it goes, I'll read it for you, verses 31 through 34. I'll read from the English Standard Version. In Luke 22 as Jesus says, "Simon, Simon." And you know we call him Simon Peter. That's his old name, Simon. His new name that Jesus gave him was Peter. "Simon, Simon," and he says it twice, the intensity, the sobriety of it all. "Behold, Satan demanded to have..." if we were in the Appalachian Mountains we might put it this way, "Have y'all." because this is a second person plural pronoun. And, unfortunately, in modern English, at least in civilized parts, we don't have a distinction between singular... (Laughter) I'm sorry, was that bad? I've been preaching so much this week. In the abundance of words, transgression is unavoidable, so I'm sorry, I apologize. How about "in our parts..." I don't even know where I was at this point. I was in the Appalachian Mountains with cut-off jeans and rolled up t-shirts.

Okay, "y'all," that's what I was saying. Unfortunately in English, the civilized parts I said, we don't have a distinction between "you" and "y'all." But they do. And that's helpful, I suppose, not only in the south, it's helpful in the Bible, and in the Greek New Testament, the language of the New Testament that it was originally written in, we have that distinction between second person singular "you" and second person plural "you," you all. And so we have in this text him directly talking to Simon, an individual, and he says, "Satan demands to have you all." Now we already know it started with this: Satan's already got a hold of one of them, his name is Judas, and it says Satan entered into Judas and he went out to betray him. So now we got 11 guys left. And he says to Simon, who's supposed to be the quarterback of this team, ultimately he's going to be the senior preaching pastor at the first church in the book of Acts, the Church of Jerusalem and it's huge, it's a megachurch 3,000 and 5,000 and lots more than that. I mean this reached at least, by any just reasonable calculated, like 10,000 people in downtown Jerusalem. And here you have the one who is supposed to do that, and he's being told Satan wants to get all of you guys.

He wants to sift you, y'all, sift all of you, like wheat. It's the only the time we see this word "sift" in the New Testament. And it has certainly a violent connotation to it. And I often say as I read this just as a cross-reference, it may not be clear what this means to us in our day, but we certainly know it's not good. Right? We don't want Satan sifting us, a violent shaking. It's like a sieve, might be a better picture of it than what you might think of the basket and throwing up on Araunah's threshing floor or some breezy hill and having the chaff blown away from the wheat. I mean, it has the idea of taking a sieve and shaking it. And here it is, "Satan wants to have y'all and he wants to sift y'all like wheat."

But, verse 32, you might want to distinguish this in your English Bibles, "But I prayed for you." Hopefully your margin says that, "you" singular, not "y'all." Hey Simon, "I prayed for you that your faith," singular, "may not fail. And when you have turned again..." That's interesting. That must imply that you're going to fall into something or go into something or head down something you shouldn't be in, but you got to turn around and get out of that, "Strengthen your brothers." And "Peter said to him, 'Lord, I'm ready to go with you both to prison and to death.'" And Jesus says,



"Oh, Peter, I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day until you deny three times that you know me."

As we get started with this passage I want to start at the bottom, verses 33 and 34, because even when I read that I read it the way most of you think about this passage, and that is that Peter is sitting here bloviating about his own strength and he says, "Oh Lord, I'm ready to go with you, both to prison and to death." And you start saying, "Ah... Christians shouldn't say that," because when I read that Peter says, "I'm willing to go with you both to prison or death," you go, "Oh Peter," you roll your eyes. Peter, Peter, Peter, Peter, Peter, Peter, Peter, Christians shouldn't say those things." OK?

But I guarantee this: when you're reading through the New Testament and you get to Acts 21 verse 13 and Paul says almost the identical words, you don't roll your eyes and go, "Paul, Paul, Paul, shouldn't say that." No, Paul says the same thing. He's in the house of Philip there and Agabus says you're going to go to Jerusalem and run into all kinds of terrible things, and Paul responds, I'll quote it for you, here it is, the text, "I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." You don't go, "Oh, Paul, you shouldn't be saying that." Why? Because you know what happens.

He does go to Jerusalem, he does get arrested, he gets taken to Caesarea and put in a prison. He ends up going off to Rome, eventually appealing to Caesar. He gets released for a while, then he gets re-imprisoned, then he gets executed. And you go, "There's a martyr of the faith, right there." But you know, because Jesus immediately says it in our passage, "Oh Peter, it's not going to work out that way for you. You're going to fall right on your face." The rooster will not crow this day. Now you know the context: last supper, it's evening, it's night time. "We won't even get to the morning. I'm going to go to Gethsemane, I'm going to get arrested and the next day I'm going to be crucified and before the morning dawns, as the rooster starts crowing, you're going to already have denied me three times."

I mean this is big. It's like standing at the front of an auditorium and exchanging vows on your wedding day. "I love you, I love you. I'm going to be your husband, I'll swim across the biggest ocean, I'll climb the highest mountain for you." And then you get off the platform, you go onto the patio, you got your, you know, refreshments out there and someone starts picking on your wife, and you go, "I don't know her. I don't know who she is. I've never met her." I mean, this is just a complete utter failure. What are you doing? You just vowed that you're so committed, you would go to prison and death. As a matter of fact, the parallel passages in Mark Chapter 16, no Mark Chapter 14, and Matthew 26, there it is I pulled that out. Busy week of preaching. You have him comparing himself to the other disciples, which we got in the context earlier they're arguing about who's greatest and I'm sure Peter is going, as it says in the other passages, "Even if everyone else falls away, I will never fall away."

So what is the difference between Paul saying those things and Peter saying those things, besides the fact that as they move beyond that statement, one of them actually does it and one fails, right out of the gate he fails? Now we know he turns because he does end up being crucified upside down as a martyr, but there is this failure that so notorious that Jesus is pointing out to him. What is he trying to do? Well here's the thing. Do not in any way in your mind think that the goal of the Christian life is for you not to be resolved like this. I want you to go out of this parking lot today saying, "Hey, no matter how bad it gets, no matter how tough it is as a Christian, I'm ready to go both to prison and to death for Christ." I'd love for you to have that kind of resolve. The Apostle



Paul had that resolve. The Old Testament says you should have that kind of resolve. We memorize those verses in Joshua 1, "Hey, be strong, be courageous, don't be afraid."

We see the New Testament, First Corinthians 16:13. You ought to be strong like a strong warrior man. Be strong. Be a man. Be strong. That's the command in the New Testament. But there's something in Paul's mind that is absent in Peter's mind and the distinction there is critical. The distinction is that Peter must not have the same mindset that Paul had. When you asked him about the other Apostles, he said, "I'm the least of all the apostles." You ask Peter, we know in the context, he's arguing with the others about who's the greatest. There is something about Peter's self-assessment where he does not see in himself any apparent weakness. He thinks I can do this. He has an over confidence in winning the battle of temptation.

Paul, on the other hand, we know enough about his biographical sections in his letters, where he makes it very clear, "Listen, my sufficiency is not of myself. We have this treasure in earthen vessels, in jars of clay, to show the surpassing power, the greatness, can be seen to be from God, not from us." We're weak. What is Paul? What is Apollo? Nothing. Everything comes from God. There is a sense of dependence on God and an inherent respect for the weakness of being a human being, and apparently Peter doesn't have that.

Number one on your outline if you're taking notes, let's just observe from versus 34 and 33 that we should "Be Mindful of Your weakness." Be mindful of your weakness. I'm not asking you, carefully now, I'm not asking you to wallow in your weakness. I'm not asking for you to glory in the fact that you're nothing. I'm not asking for that. I'm asking for you to be strong and here's how it works in the Bible. If you recognize your inherent weakness God can take people like that, this has been the message of our passage, and be humble, we've seen this in the context, and then God can take humble people and highly exalt them. God can take people who see their inherent weakness and know, you know what? God can get me through this, God can empower me. I'm not talking about a mystical empowerment, unless you're talking about the fundamental foundation of our mystical empowerment. What?

OK. Here, listen. Two ways in which we're empowered. One is on a spiritual level. Let me put it this way, every single person you know, non-Christian, atheist, agnostic, Christian - everyone - is made to be alive because of God. "In him all things hold together." Christ is the composite thing that keeps the entire universe together. He empowers everyone, as Paul said in Acts 17, "In him we live and move and have our being." So, you cannot get out of bed in the morning without God empowering you. And in that sense you are alive because of Christ. You live in him, he empowers you, you live and move and breathe in him. He gives you life and breath and everything else. He's actively involved in his creation. In that sense you are completely dependent upon God.

There is another sense, a very practical sense, in which you need to recognize that the weakness of your own humanity is something that makes you necessarily crave the fact that God would keep you on a path that steers you clear from the kind of failure that Peter is about to walk into, a kind of temptation that you may face that's common to everyone because they are human. That God would provide a way of escape for you that's outside of yourself, that God can provide something for you that will keep you faithful in your marriage, keep you integrous at work, keep you doing the things that God asks you to do in your community, in your workplace, and not cowering and backing down because you're afraid. God can provide you what it takes and that's in a very practical set of things that the Bible tells us about. But it begins by you recognizing your inherent weakness.



Let me talk about them more specifically. The analogy I often use is the difference between software and hardware. You are software. You're created in the image of God, not the parts of you that you can see or touch, but the parts of you that are immaterial. You're also a human being who is made biologically out of the dust of the Earth and you're animated. And you're animated because there's firmware, if you will, attached to your hardware. That firmware animates you, just like an animal, just like a kangaroo, just like a cockroach. You have living cells in your body because of God animating that humanity.

According to Genesis 3 he cursed the dirt. Right? All the phosphorous, all the calcium, all the oxygen, all the nitrogen, all the carbon, all of that has been cursed and the firmware attached to your hardware is now in rebellion against God. You, as a spirit that is encased in that hardware, maybe a better word is enmeshed in that hardware, as a whole, what they call a psychosomatic whole. You're both spirit and body but you are primarily spirit as a person. You could cut off my arms and my legs, I don't recommend this, but if you did that you wouldn't say, "Well, Mike's half the guy he used to be." Right? I hope you'd say no, Mike still 100% Mike Fabarez. It's just that my body now, I don't have half of my body. That is the material part of me, I'm encased and enmeshed in that.

But the fallen humanity of my hardware, with all that firmware that is struggling in this humanity and pushing in rebellion against God, now I become a Christian and my spirit, that used to be in concert with that flesh, just wanting to do whatever I want to do, it doesn't matter what God's rules are, now I have a heart that beats in sync with God. I've got my heart of stone turned into a heart of flesh. I am Second Corinthians 5 "a new creature in Christ." Now I want to serve God. Now I want to pray. Now I want to read my Bible. And here's the problem, when Peter was trying to pray in the Garden and he couldn't do it, Christ said, "Hey, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." You've got a problem. As Peter put it later, "the desires of your flesh, they wage war against your soul."

Therefore, I need to look at my inherent weakness, that every person you hear about who morally wipes out, everybody who stumbles and falls, everyone who backs down in a workroom when a discussion about homosexuality or Christianity or the Bible comes up and they fold, the things in their firmware, in their fallen humanity, are arguing and passionately fighting that desire to do what is right. And you ought to say, it's an overused phrase, I get it, but you ought to think about it in the best possible sense that you can say, "There but for the grace of God go I." Were it not for God, were it not for God helping and sustaining and having me take part of the resources that he's given me, I would fall too. Why? Because my humanity, it's crying out for the same things every person who falls is crying out for.

In other words, when the Apostle Paul says, "I'll go to prison and I'll even die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." You know that underneath all that, to use another familiar phrase, he is saying, because he proves it throughout the rest of his writings, "So help me God." So help me God. So help me God. Why? Because I've got the same weak humanity that Peter has, the same weak humanity. And when Paul confronts Peter in the letter he writes to the Galatian churches, he says it as much, "You folded. You folded Peter under the pressure, the peer pressure," about a different situation in Peter's life, but the same concept. But, you know what, I think Paul recognizes this, he's got the same weakness.

And when you look around at someone in your small group who bails out, you look at the headlines of the evangelical news of another pastor falling, you need to say, "There but for the grace of God go I." You say, "I'm going to be faithful, I'm going to be integrous, I'm going to speak up for Christ," you need to say, "so help me God," because I know I've got the same inherent human



weakness that they have. That is super important for us. And it better be the thing that we say because we know that we could be Peter. Here is what he says, verse 34, "Before the rooster crows this day you'll deny me three times." How easy was that for a human being to do even with the best intentions, who has a willing spirit?"

"Well, his flesh is so weak." How weak is it? Dropped down to verse 54. Here's the scenario. We don't even get out of the chapter in Luke 22 until we read in verse 54 that when "They seized Jesus," they arrested him, "and led him away, they brought him to the high priest's house," that's Caiaphas, the big compound there in Jerusalem. And Peter was following side-by-side, shoulder-to-shoulder, saying, you're not going to take my master. No. "He's following at a distance. And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard, Peter sat down together." So now he's sitting with the people who are against Christ. He's not sitting as though he's standing with Christ or being with Christ. "Peter sits down among them and a servant girl," of all people, a servant girl, "seeing him as he sat in the light of that fire, she looked closely at him and said, "This man is with him also." She says it to other people sitting around. "I think that guys one of... I saw him in the front row on the Temple Mount when Jesus was preaching."

And Peter denied it, verse 57, "saying. 'Woman I don't know him.'" Verse 58. "And a little later someone else said to him, 'You also were one of them.' But Peter said, 'Man, I am not.' And after an interval of about an hour..." If you're on the patio after your wedding ceremony and saying all these nice things about this gal who you're devoted to, and you had an hour between your second and third denial, that's a lot of time for you to say, "Wow, what am I doing. I just said I'd be devoted for the rest of my life. I'd swim the broadest sea, I'd climbed the highest mountain, and I'm now saying I don't know who that lady is? You had an hour to think about this. But the pressure was on again, the tip of the spear was in your chest. "You don't really believe that stuff do you? You don't really believe the Bible's God's word do you? You're not really thinking we're going to hell if we don't trust in Christ? You don't think that do you?" Again it was the same pressure in his weakness.

After a man said, "Certainly this man was also among him, he's a Galilean," the other passages tell us it's because of his accent that they said that, as a northern Galilean, "And Peter said, 'Man, I don't know what you're talking about.' And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter," from a distance. You can picture this as Jesus is standing where all the activity is going on, Peter's sitting in the courtyard where the fire is in the middle of the courtyard and Jesus turns and looks at him. "And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said, 'Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times.' And Peter went out and he wept bitterly."

Now he's not going to watch what happens. He split, went through the gate, went out and cried, maybe in the Kidron Valley, about the fact that he couldn't be faithful to his Lord. I think you understand, don't you, that you could do the same thing. Matter of fact, I say that and you might say, "I just did that. I had a chance to stand for Christ, I folded. I was supposed to be faithful here and I wasn't. I was supposed to have integrity here and I didn't. I was supposed to tell the truth here and I lied." If you say that maybe you've stumbled enough to be humble which is the context of our passage. That's a good place to start.

So that if you do say, and I hope that you do, the whole point is to be strong. That's what he ends up wanting Peter to do is to strengthen his brothers. I want you to be able to say, "I will stand up. I will do the right thing. I will trust the Lord. I'll be imprisoned if I have to, I'll even die for Christ." I want you to say that. But underlying all that I want you to say, "It's not because of anything inherent in



me. By the grace of God I'll do that. So help me God, I'll do that. That's certainly is my intention. But I need God to steer me through that temptation."

Jesus makes that point clear, like the Apostle Paul later, who talks in First Corinthians 10 about the people who came out of Egypt under Moses. They had all of this miraculous stuff. I mean, the plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire and all these things, the manna, the quail, all of these miraculous things. And yet given time, and it didn't take much, they did what all of us want to do. I want to live like the Egyptians. They want to sit down to eat and drink it says First Corinthians Chapter 10 verse 7 and they wanted to rise up to play. "I just want to have fun. I want to be comfortable, come on." And then it says, because of that mindset they fell into sexual immorality. If there was an Internet connection in the wilderness, they'd be looking at porn, that's the way these people were, "because, you know what, I know we're not supposed to but I just... whatever. I just want to be happy, I want to feel good."

And God started disciplining that generation. And Paul says, you know what, all that was written for our example. "That was written so we would learn," verse 6, "not to desire evil things as they did." Now my flesh desires evil things but I am supposed to, Romans Chapter 6, I'm supposed to deny myself, I'm supposed to marshal the members of my body and to present myself as "a slave to righteousness." That's a battle I can't win on my own.

"Don't put Christ to the test," verse 9 says in First Corinthians 10, and "don't grumble," verse 10, "as some of them did. Now these things happen to them as examples, and they were written down for our instruction." And verse 12 says, "Therefore anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest the fall." You've got lots of reasons to trust Christ. You've heard a lot of sermons, I trust, that have proven to you the veracity of the message that you hold to. You know Christ is coming back and you're confident of it. You have every reason to trust Christ this week, every reason to stand up in evangelism and apologetics, every reason to disciple people, every reason to be faithful and to be truthful, every reason. But you know that people with a lot more reasons to be faithful than you have fallen. And the Bible says, "You got to learn from those elder brothers in our spiritual lives." But, this is a battle you got to win.

The next verse, do you know what it is? "No temptation has overtaking you except that which is common to man." Everyone struggles with the same temptations but God is faithful and he won't allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able. But with the temptation, he's going to provide a way of escape. He's going to come and give you an out. See, Peter should have said, "But for the grace of God I would fail, but so help me God, I'll stand." With that mentality, I bet he could have been faithful, but he wasn't.

He wasn't because there's something about an overconfidence in the statement in verses 33 and 34. Why can someone with so much passion to do what's right still fall? Well, we started the passage with this and I think it's the next place we should go back up to verse 31, Luke 22:31, because there's a spiritual battle going on in the background. "Simon, Simon, behold Satan demanded..." Not only is the word "sift" the only occurrence of that Greek word in the New Testament, it is the only time we see this Greek word "demanded" a strong command. I demand to have them. I want them all. "That he might sift you like wheat," to shake you.

Picture those little plastic chess pieces on a chessboard. They're so vulnerable, someone bumps the table, they could fall over. Someone wants to come and shake that entire board. They want to knock everyone over. And that "you all" there, I know what specifically it applies to, the 11 other apostles



besides Judas. It applies to Simon and the 10 others. I get that. But Peter turns around and says, that's true of all of us. He writes his letter to his Christian audience and he says in First Peter Chapter 5 you guys need to be "sober and alert because your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour." He knew that from personal experience, and he says that to you and to me.

And you may be a very modernized, you know, Western-thinking, iPhone-carrying, you know, South Orange County Christian. But if you don't think there's a spiritual battle going on of real persons who have intellect, emotion and will, they're persons. Right? That doesn't mean they're human, they're persons. They're made in the image of God in the sense that their intellect, emotion and will. They don't need hardware. They live disembodied because they were never made to be in bodies. We had a whole bunch of these people... "Bunch," there's a theological word, a very exacting word, a bunch of these beings created and a bunch of them fell and became what we know of as demons, and they're out to get you.

You need to know, number two, the forces against you. "Consider the Forces Against You" invisibly in this world, right now, that are against you. If you don't believe this I guess there's no reason for us to have you back next week. Right? I mean, think about it. If you don't believe what the Bible has to say about a spiritual battle... Jesus taught about it, as much as he talked about the realities of anything positive, was the reality that everything in this world negatively, the spiritual battle that goes on behind the scenes. Satan wants to take you out because he doesn't want you to be faithful, he doesn't want you to be truthful, he doesn't want you to be an evangelist, he doesn't want you to stand up for Christ, he doesn't want you to stand up for biblical truth. He just doesn't want that. And if you say, "Well, yeah, that's because he hates me." Well he does hate you but he doesn't hate you because he hates YOU.

Here is an illustration that may help you. Baron Trump. Baron Trump. Picture him. You've got him in your mind? Baron Trump. Never in a position paper, I don't think he's ever been out stumping, he hasn't given any speeches on political theory, I have never heard his view on the economy, I don't know much about Barron Trump. But I do know this: people attack him all the time. Right? Jane Fonda's brother, stellar individual that he is, Peter, writes on his Facebook page to his 59,000 followers on Twitter that Baron Trump ought to be put in a cage and locked in there with pedophiles to sexually abuse him. That's what Peter Fonda thinks. And you know what I want to say? What did Baron Trump ever do to you? Well nothing. See, Peter Fonda is going to attack Baron Trump, not because Baron Trump did anything. He hates Baron Trump because he hates Donald Trump, and that's the reason he attacks him. The tripe on Saturday Night Live the writer of Saturday Night Live, you heard that one, said Barron Trump will be the next mass murderer in our society. Can you imagine if someone said that about your 12-year-old to all of their followers? One of the most influential comedy shows ever. That is the kind of stuff that they're writing and propagating to their followers. And you're thinking, what in the world, what do you see in the 12-year-old? Well, it's not about the 12-year-old. "Oh, I want to get at the 12-year-old. No, really, I don't want to get at the 12-year-old, I want to get the 12-year-old because I want to get at his dad."

See the day you put your trust in Christ, you change teams. And the enemy who hates God and hates God because God has said, "You are condemned, you'll be sealed in a place called the Lake of Fire. You're going to be tormented there. You have lost." Those demons hate God and they will pick on you because you're a much easier target than your dad, you understand. And so you're under attack.



If you were to go to the beach, park on Pacific Coast Highway, go down to the Thousand Steps Beach for instance, we're going to go down to the beach. If I said, "OK, let's just go to the beach this afternoon and in broad daylight, bring your kids, bring the bucket for sand, for the kids to play, bring your towel and your chairs, we walk down to the beach. No big deal. But if it's a new moon, pitch dark, you've never been to the west coast before. I mean, you flew in from some weird place and I said, "Listen, hey, I've got to say we're going to go from Pacific Coast Highway here down to the beach, and it's dark and there are no lights. I just want to tell you, there's lots of beasts that live in the, you know, in the bushes around here and those houses there. Sometimes they come out from the houses, sometimes they attack and they eat little children. So, all right, let's go down to the beach. I guess you're going to say, "Can we go to a different beach?" is probably what you're going to say. "I don't want to go to this beach." I say, "No, no, we got to go to this beach. The master says we got to go to this beach." I bet you'd walk down the stairs a whole lot less carefree than if we were just going to do it today and you had no fear of what's going to happen.

You know, if I said there are beasts that come out at night and eat little children, you would be circumspect, to use a biblical word, you would be careful, you would be vigilant. When Peter says there's a roaring lion, an enemy, an adversary that wants to devour you, it starts with this, "Be sober-minded, be alert," you know to have in your mindset, not a paralyzed fear, but knowing this: we have no other path, but to get to the kingdom, as Paul said in our Daily Bible Reading, "through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." He goes back, and here's the word he uses, he "strengthens the disciples." That's what Luke said. Same concept here, to strengthen your brothers. I want to strengthen the disciples by telling them it's going to be a perilous path. If you don't have some healthy respect for the spiritual battle that goes on, like the one we just are still reading in our Old Testament Daily Bible Reading in Job, where Job is attacked, not because Satan hates Job, but because Satan hates God. And just because God said, "Here's a guy, look at him, man. He's awesome." I mean, I want God to be proud of me and all, but I don't want him bringing me up in a meeting with Satan. And that's exactly what happens there. Right? "Look at my servant, Job." And Satan goes, "Let me at him. Let me at him. Let me at him. Let me have him. I'll sift him like wheat." I mean you can put that phrase right on top of Job Chapter 1. That's exactly what he does. He attacks his kids, he attacks his finances, he attacks his health, he attacks his marriage, all of that.

Why? What did Job do to Satan? The only thing you did to Satan, really, was you changed teams. And he hates your dad, he hates your father. And if you don't walk with a sense of healthy respect, I'm not trying to have you find a demon behind every bush, and just because you can't find a parking place, Satan's attacking you, I'm not saying that. I'm just telling you that when you're tempted to sin that is his nickname, the Tempter. When you're tempted to stray, when you're tempted to fold, when you're tempted to compromise, I know who's behind it and the Bible makes that very clear. Oh, I know you got firmware that's desiring to do what Satan is going to pitch to you today, but you need to understand there's a battle going on. You've got to, not only understand your inherent weakness, you've got to consider the forces against you.

Turn to one passage real quickly with me, Ephesians Chapter 6. The thing that might make you walk down those stairs with a little bit more confidence, not in yourself, but confidence that you'll get there safely to the beach, is that you've got some armor on. This is a very helpful passage. It's a classic one, you know it, Ephesians Chapter 6 verse 12. First of all, it tells you what I'm already telling you. When you feel the tip of the spear in your chest to compromise, to do wrong, to fold, to shut up when you should speak up, to sit down when you should stand up, when you have that temptation and pressure, whether it's the Caiaphas courtyard experience or standing before King



Agrippa or Felix and Festus, like Paul had to, remember it's not flesh and blood that you're fighting. That pressure to compromise is the rulers and the authorities, not physical ones, but the cosmic powers over this present darkness against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places. "Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand the evil day, having done all, to stand firm."

My dad was a cop in Long Beach. I remember vivid memories of him as a kid coming home from work, taking his badge off of his chest, putting it on the dresser, taking his gun out of his holster, putting it on the dresser, taking off his dark blue uniform, and then underneath that was that black Kevlar vest. And I remember that because with Velcro, you know, back in the day, ancient times right now, this new thing, and I remember just hearing that Velcro rip off. And then he'd pull that thing off over his head and I'd see his white t-shirt just dripping with sweat. And every night, if I saw my dad come home, that's the picture I had. And I know, you know, he had lots of guns everywhere, pulling them off his ankles and everywhere. And I thought, I'm glad my dad goes out there into this world, that at nighttime, I'm watching the news of all that's going on in suburban L.A., I'm sure glad dad has all of those tools. I know one thing you wouldn't want, you wouldn't want to be out there without those tools.

Just like marching through that tunnel onto the gridiron. It's really good if you've got a helmet on, you got your shoulder pads on, you got some knee pads on, you got some hip pads on. Good for you to be prepared. I doubt you're going to play the way you ought to play unless you've got the equipment on. And that's the picture here. "Having done all, stand firm," stand firm. Why? Because the whole point is walking out onto the gridiron strong. Look at verse 10, go up to verse 10. "Finally be strong in the Lord in the strength of his might." And how is he going to get you strong? "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil." You've got to gear up. And a lot of people are walking into their workplace without their Kevlar vest on. You're walking into your workplace without your weapon on. You're not ready for the spiritual battle. You walk into a Saturday night to sit down on the couch and you are not spiritually prepared for the temptations you face.

This is a great passage. We don't have time to get into it, but verse 14, "the belt of truth," it better be about truth. If you don't know the truth, if you don't know the things that correspond with reality, if you don't know what it is that God has said, you're in big trouble. "Breastplate of righteousness." I don't think that's the imputed righteousness of our salvation. I think that's what Paul's constantly pushing us toward. In the book of Romans for instance doing the right thing, of being a slave of righteousness, of putting to death the deeds of the body. It's about the best defense being a really good offense.

It's about you going to the workplace, not passively hoping you can stand up for Christ, but going in with a mission to stand up for Christ. I'm an evangelist, I'm someone who is there to counsel, I'm there to step up and say what's right. "Shoes." Now I'm thinking about the imputed righteousness of Christ, the "shoes on your feet" that give me stability. The readiness given by the gospel of peace, like a soccer player with his cleats on. I know that I'm right with God, I have peace with my maker. "And in all circumstances take up a shield of faith." I better trust that truth. I better know the right thing. I know that the world saying be on the right side of history, believe these things, stop with the exclusivity of God. But I'm going to say, no, no, no, no. I know what the truth is and I trust it, no matter what my culture says, no matter what the polls say, no matter what my feelings say, "the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one," and the "helmet." Speaking of helmet, the helmet of salvation.



Salvation, that picture, though I think of it in our vocabulary as present, it's often in Scripture, most often, future. I'm going to be saved, that we'll be saved in the day of God's judgment, I'm going to be saved. I know that in the end we win. That keeps me protected in my mind and my heart. And then one more thing, the "sword of the Spirit." Jesus certainly exemplified this in the wilderness with Satan. He pulled out Scripture, he pulled out Scripture, he pulled out Scripture. Even when Satan twisted Scripture, he pulled out Scripture, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," not to mention prayer, "praying at all times in the spirit," which is not some kind of mystical euphoric experience, it's you praying in line with what the Spirit of God wrote in the book that he wrote. It's speaking and teaching and praying in line with the truth.

"With all prayer and supplication. To that end be alert with all perseverance, making supplication," another word for intensive intercession for other people, "making supplication for all the saints." Pray, pray, pray. Belt, breastplates, shoes, shield, helmet, sword, prayer. Much more, maybe for your small group or just for your own devotions, to spend some time considering the force against you and the tools that God gives us elsewhere. But in this passage, the only tool we have, verse 32, and the one that we should be leaving thinking about this morning is this one, "But I have prayed for you," verse 32. Luke 22:32. "But I have prayed for you,"

Let me put it this way. Let's make this as personal as I can. There's a chessboard full of Christians right here in our church and they're starting to stand, some are standing really tall for Christ. Satan wants to come and knock us all down. And I'd love to think that God is going to protect us and no one's going to be shaken, but we're going to be shaken, I just walked out here to preach hearing about people in our church who are being shaken. Shaken by all kinds of things, terrible things, and I know we're being shaken and you're going to be shaken. God allows that. Sometimes like Job, I wish he didn't. But he says, "OK, have at them." The leash is on Satan, but there it is.

What we need to know is that that shaking and that threat to our lives, the greatest hope we have, this text says, is that God will pray for you. So, in this church, chessboard full of Christians, standing at different heights, God's trying to make us strong, he's asked us to be strong, there's a shaking going on and then your piece, your pawn, he looks at you and he prays specifically for you. And I'm not saying that just because Jesus is saying he prays for Peter. I know Jesus, here comes, Romans Chapter 8 verse 34, says he prays for you, all of you, all of us as Christians. "Who can condemn us? Christ Jesus, he's the one who died -- more than that, he was raised from the dead -- and he is at the right hand of God. Indeed he is interceding for us." He's begging God for us. As a matter of fact, that's the word. If you want a little tidbit into the language here, Luke 22 verse 32, the word "pray." We say in English "pray" we translate at least two primary words in the Greek New Testament for pray. This is the highest, most intensive word for it, "Deomai." Deomai is the Greek word of intensity. It's translated in the old translations, here's a word we don't use anymore, "beseech." Beseech, to beg. You could translate it accurately, "But I have begged for you." Begged what? I begged God for you that your faith may not fail.

I don't want you to be cast utterly headlong in this Christian life. I don't want you to be silenced. I don't want you to fall and just never get up. You're going to stumble in Caiaphas' courtyard, he promises that in verse 34, it's going to happen. So this isn't an unanswered prayer. This is a prayer about when you do stumble, I want you to get up. And when you have turned again, when you turn out of that, when you stumble and you turn from that, then I want you to get back in the game and I want you to strengthen your brothers. I want a strong Peter strengthening the other disciples. That deomai, that begging of Christ on our behalf, and that promise that God is there praying for you and



for me ought to give us a great sense of confidence. Not in our own abilities but in the fact that Christ stands there right now before the Father praying for us. It's not just an empty request, it is a powerful request. It is him saying, I know I can get this kid down those steps to the beach, through many tribulations, will enter the kingdom of God. This is where you and I need to be.

Number three and your outline, "We need to "Put Our Confidence in the Right Place." It's not you, it's not your flesh, it's not who you've been, it's not your past, it's not because you haven't fallen in the past, you need to put your confidence in the right place. You want to be specific? The key of that is the right person and it's not you and me. I want to finish strong. Don't you want to finish strong? I want to finish vocal, I want to finish strong. I want to go to death or prison, whatever it takes for the truth of Christ, but I want to put my confidence, I should put my confidence, at least, I'm hoping to put my confidence where God says it should be and that is that Christ intercedes for me.

First John Chapter 2 verse 1. "I've written these things," John says, "to you that you may not sin. But if we do sin, we have an advocate with the Father." What a good thought that is. That he stands before the Father and he advocates for us. If you're in trouble and you're guilty, which we are when we stumble, I know this, before the judge, the Father, I got a great attorney and that attorney stands there and says, "Mike Fabarez? Let me defend him."

Do you know that God is looking at you right now with Christ standing between the two of you, saying, "That is my guy. That's my gal and I am going to strengthen him. I'm going to be with him. He's mine." Oh, Satan may shake us and ask to have us, but the having is only to harass us. When Peter warns us about being sober and alert knowing about our roaring lion, he says, you better pray, you better trust, you better resist the devil, he will flee from you. Put your confidence in the right place.

That word "Epistrepho" is the word, epistrepho, to turn. When you've returned, it's a physical turning around and Peter had to make that physical turning around. It's both physical and metaphorical. He has to turn from this failure, this weakness, this weakness of confidence in himself and it happens in John 21. Real quick let's look at this before we end. John Chapter 21. There are so many parallels here to what goes on in Caiaphas' courtyard. Peter says, "I'm going fishing." Now you need to understand the geography of this. They're in Jerusalem, Jesus rises, he appears to his disciples there in the Upper Room. And then Peter goes back to Galilee and it says in this passage, the Sea of Tiberius it's called in verse 1, he goes fishing.

Now when Peter was fishing, he was a fisherman and Jesus comes on the scene and says, "You're no longer going to be a fisherman you're going to be with me, you're going to be fishing for people, for men." And then he says, "I'm going to groom you and make you a preacher and you're going to be the first pastor of the first church in Jerusalem, a megachurch, the preaching pastor, the senior lead pastor, that's going to be you." And instead he's out here fishing and he takes with him James and John, he takes Nathaniel, take a look at this text. "I'm going fishing," verse 3, the setting, verses 1 and 2. They get in the boat. They catch nothing, verse 3, it's daybreak. They've been fishing all night with nets, of course, that's how they fished. Jesus stood on the shore. Right? It's just dawn. So the shadowy figure on the shore, his disciples didn't know who it was, they didn't know it was Jesus.

Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" That's an interesting way to talk to them but, of course, that's how Christ talked to them. They were his followers. Yet they weren't following



very well right now. And they said, "No," we didn't catch anything. No? He said, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you'll find some." Now that's a *deja vu* reading for you. That's because that's a *deja vu* moment, Luke Chapter 5, is where Jesus is introduced to Peter on the lake fishing. He doesn't catch anything. So, providentially he takes all the fish away from this net and says, "Hey, move it over here four feet and you'll catch a bunch." It was an absurd request, but God is showing his providence, Christ is showing his sovereignty, and Peter catches fish and in that he recognizes the deity of Christ, he recognizes the authority of Christ.

Same thing happens here. They cast the net on the other side, verse 6, so many fish they couldn't even haul it in. John identifies himself, who's also there, he says, "It's Christ." Peter jumps in the sea and starts swimming the 100 yards to the shore, verse 8. They were dragging in the net but Peter is to the shore first. Verse 9, then "they got out of the boat," now underlined this, "they saw a charcoal fire." Charcoal fire? We talked about the words "demanded" and "sift" being only used one time in the Greek New Testament, not only that, in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, very rare words. Here's a word that's not used anywhere else except for John 18:18. It's the way that John describes the fire in Caiaphas' courtyard, a charcoal fire.

Again now, Jesus sits there, I mean it's almost painful, the same kind of fire, the same kind of glow, early at dawn, he makes a charcoal fire. And he put some fish on it and some bread. And Jesus said, "Bring some of the fish you've caught." So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled in the net full of fish, they counted them, 153. Verse 12, Jesus says, "'Come and have some breakfast.' None of them said, 'Who is this?' They knew it was the Lord." Jesus came, took the bread, gave it to them. So with the fish, they're having breakfast, a bit of an awkward breakfast. Peter is supposed to be the pastor in Jerusalem. And here they are in Galilee and Jesus is having breakfast with them.

It's the third time Jesus is revealed to them. "When they'd finished breakfast," verse 15, "Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon," Uh-oh, there's his old name again, just like in Luke 22, John 18, "Do you love me more than these?" Man, talk about painful. Same kind of glow of a fire. Who knows, same temperature. There they are, same glow of red, they're eating breakfast. It's a bit awkward. Fishing for fish, you should be fishing for people. He says, "Do you love me more these?" This is a comparison statement, "Do you love me more than these?" A little demonstrative pronoun, it needs an antecedent, demonstrative pronoun.

These... These what? Got to define it. Well, grammatically it could mean at least three things, "these." Do you love me more than these fish, these nets, these boats, this life? I hope you love me more than that. That would be a good question to ask. I don't think that's the question Jesus is asking. "Do you love me more than these? Do you love me more than Nathaniel, more than Philip, more than Peter, more than James, more than John?" He could've been asking Peter that, which is a problem for some of us, do you love people more than you love Christ, but that I don't think is Peter's issue and I don't think that's the question he's asking Peter. He's asking the question that he was boasting about in John 18. Asking him the question that really he was inferring in his question in Luke 22. He thought he had a greater love for Christ than those guys. "Do you love me more than these guys love me?"

Now I know there's a distinction in words here and I know first-year Greek students like to tell preachers they don't know what they're talking about when they make the distinction between the word "love" in verse 15 and "love" at the bottom of verse 15. Do you "agapao" me more than these? And then Peter says, "Yes, Lord you know "phileo" you. First semester Greek students like to point out that pastors don't know anything about it. But if you get around to studying enough about what's



going on here, there is a great exegetical point in a large body of very accomplished Greek scholars who say there is an important distinction going on here in this passage. Nevertheless, I'll leave that for debate for another time.

But at least to read it the way you would read it in the first century, "Hey Simon, son of John, do you agapao me more than these guys, agapao me?" "Well..., you know, I phileo you?" And he said, "Fine, then feed my lambs." We're not talking about fish anymore. We're metaphorically talking about you being a shepherd, being a pastor, being a teacher, strengthening my brothers. "And he said a second time, Simon, son of John," there's that word again, "Simon. Do you agapao me?" He said, "Yes Lord, you know that I phileo you." And he said, "Tend my sheep." And he said to him a third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you phileo me?' And Peter was grieved because he said to him a third time, 'Do you phileo me?'" Oh, by the way, the third time. You'll deny me three times, he denies him three times and now he asks him three times. And like, we're back at the altar saying, "Would you repeat those marriage vows for me again. You just denied me on the patio, but could you please tell me you love me now?" Here's a guy who doesn't want to say it. Here's a guy who is struggling saying, "If you love me then would you do what I've asked you to do?" And he says, "Feed my sheep." He says, "You know everything, you know that I phileo you," then Jesus says, "Feed my sheep."

Then he's says, "Truly, truly..." much like the prefix, Simon, Simon, "I say to you when you were young you used to dress yourself, walk wherever you want wanted, but when you're old, you'll stretch out your hands and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go." Well that picture, stretching out your hands, John knows because he's lived into the 90s now when he writes this Gospel and he knows that Peter was executed and the best sources, at least, say he's executed upside down on a cross, he stretches out his hands and he dies as a martyr. And you think, well that's a very distressing thing to hear at breakfast.

It was the best thing Jesus could have said. He's there saying, I'd swim the widest ocean, I'd climb the highest mountain, I'd die for you. And then he goes out and falls on his face and he denies he even knows him. Then he comes back and says, "Do you love me, do you love me, do you love me?" "You know I love you." "Then feed my sheep," be a pastor, be a leader, stand up in front of people and be a force for strengthening my people. And then he says, "You know what, you're going to die for me. You are going to love me so much, you are going to be faithful, you're going to walk to the end, you're going to be in the book of martyrs. That's how much you're going to love me." Ah... this is encouraging even though it's a horrible thing.

As a matter of fact, he responds later verse 21, "Hey, what about this guy?" He's pointing to John now. "What's his story?" Jesus said, "If it's my will for him to remain until I come what is that to you? You follow me." That's exactly what happens in verse 19. He says to Peter, "Follow me, follow me, follow me." I'm going to say to you exactly what Jesus says to Peter and that is Satan wants to attack you, you probably already have stumbled into some of his snares. I want you to get up, I want you to turn, I want you to be strong, not in your own confidence about your own self, but about the fact that God gives you armor to walk into the battle, that he can take weak people and make them strong to go out and say, "I will stand for Christ, I will die for Christ," to go out there and to do that and to recognize that when it comes down to it, you're following God's path for your life, you're doing what God has asked you to do.

Be strong, not in yourself, but in those simple words because you're following Christ. Well, we know by Acts Chapter 1, he's leaving us, he's abandoning us, he's going up to the sky, it's the



ascension. But he said in the Upper Room discourse, "I will not leave you an orphan." Matter of fact, he ends the Great Commission in Matthew 28 and he says, "I am with you always, even to the end..." of the first century. No. Even to the end of your lives. No. "Even to the end of the age." We're in that passage you understand. We're disciple-making people in the time of the second time of Noah. Right? The new Sodom and Gomorrah. We are here right now and he says, "Go make disciples. Be light. Be salt. Do what I've asked you to do, fight temptation. Go and do it."

And he's saying to you and he's saying to me, I will be with you. Moses goes out, falls on his face, kills the Egyptian, working for his father-in-law, that's got to be somewhat depressing. God shows up and says, "Go back and talk to Pharaoh." Moses says, "I don't want to do that, I can't do that, I can't even speak well. I'm a failure." God says, "I will be with you. Go." God says, "Jeremiah, go speak to the people." Jeremiah says, "I don't want to do that. I'm too young. I can't speak, I'm not trained." God says, "I will be with you." God says, "Gideon go fight the Midianites." Gideon says, "No. Come on. We're terrible. I don't know anything about fighting. How can I do it." God says, "No, go do it. Don't be afraid, be strong Gideon." Why? "I am with you." Solomon. "I'm inexperienced, how can I lead this people, I can't be the king of these people?" God says, "I will be with you." You know the passage, Joshua 1:9. "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened. Do not be dismayed," here it comes, "for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." You walk into the lunchroom, you feel the tip of the spear against your chest. I hope you got your armor on that day. But remember this: not only is he interceding for you, in the person of the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, he is with you. Go back to that scene in the Valley of Elah. I don't want you to be in the gigantic sandals of the overconfident Philistine.

And there are a lot of preachers would like you rather to be in the sandals of David, but I don't even want you there today. I want you to be in the sandals of all the Israelite soldiers who stood up on the mountain. It says the Israelites and the men of Judah up on the mountain there who were paralyzed, they were at a standoff, they were at an impasse, they couldn't defeat the enemy, they couldn't push them out of their territory because they had Goliath standing there. And then a shepherd boy steps up, he had been anointed by Samuel. He takes a bunch of stones, he puts them in a pouch, he runs to the battle and he throws that rock, gets that gigantic giant of a man to fall down, and I know this is gory, PG-13, sorry, but he goes up to Goliath, he takes his gigantic sword out of his sheath and I can see him now and he takes that head and he chops that head off. One swipe? I don't know how sharp it is. It's just gross. He's taken the head off and then he takes that mangy hair and picks up a gigantic melon of a head, then he stands there in the valley. That's the picture, read it for yourself. He's got a severed head, dripping blood out of a neck that's just been decapitated. He was the strong one was he not? He conquered the enemy. What happened to all the people in the sandals up on the mountain range?

Here's what it says, First Samuel 17:52, "And the men of Israel and the men of Judah arose with a shout and they pursued the Philistines as far as Ekron." They pushed them back into their own country. Yeah, there's a mystical, spiritual empowerment, you can't get out of bed without God. But then there's the empowerment that you get, not only by throwing on the armor of God, being ready for battle, but looking, I know it's bloody, at the bloody victory of the son of David, who took our enemy and decapitated him. And he looks now at you and says, "Hey guys, we're forgiven." Oh, Satan can harass you, he can kill your body, but he cannot kill your soul or cast you into hell. The one who can condemn you is now your advocate, he is your friend, he's your supporter, he's going to stand in the workroom with you, he's going to stand at the mailbox with you, he's going to stand there in your life and defend you. "Don't be afraid." I love it. "The men of Israel and Judah arose with a shout and they ran, they pursued the Philistines."



I want you to be strong in Christ. I want you to know that your confidence has got to be in the son of David who severed the head of the enemy. On the cross he's disarmed all the powers against us. It's kind of a mess. Right? They are still running around like a chicken with his head cut off. That's the, I mean this is a terrible analogy, but Goliath is still running around making a mess. But he has a severed head. I mean, he's not going to have any reign over us in the next life. All he can do is mess with us right now. "Be strong and courageous. Don't be frightened, don't be dismayed. The Lord your God is with you wherever you go." Because Christ won our victory for us in that regard. And there's nothing eternally that can befall us.

I want to take the Lord's Supper right now. I going to have the ushers come forward and pass out the bread and the cup. Those really are emblems of something very bloody and gory. I have no apology for the fact that our victory was won on a bloody Roman execution rack where a naked Christ died in the most heinous way. But that was a symbol of God's satisfaction that he said, "No longer is Mike Fabarez as a sinner in my eyes. I will impute my righteousness to him because of Christ." We're going to celebrate that by you taking this bread and taking this cup, they'll be passed to you, hang on to those. If you're not a Christian, though, let these pass by. Please don't take these if you are not a Christian, if you do not know what it is to put your trust and confidence in Christ. But if it is there, you take those elements and you spend some time thinking about your own weakness, not to revel in it, not to glory in it, but only in the sense that because I'm weak I know God can make me strong in this battle. When I shift my confidence from myself, like Peter had it, to Paul, where I can leave this auditorium this morning and say, "You know what, I will be imprisoned and die for Christ if I have to."

God can give you that strength as you put your confidence in the right place. It starts by you knowing that your sins are pinned to the cross. If you've stumbled like Peter and you're really ashamed of what happened in your life, it's time just to confess it, if you haven't. "He's faithful and righteous to forgive your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness." Could you right now just say, "God I feel like a loser like Peter out fishing when I should be doing something else that you've got me called to do." Tell him you're ready to start fresh, right now. Like a charcoal fish and bread breakfast, let this time of a Lord Supper be a fresh start for you. You talk to God silently, we're going to take these elements together at the same time in about four minutes when everyone gets them served. You talk to God silently and get your heart ready to remember the victory that Christ won on the cross.

It may be tough for us sometimes to imagine the paradox of what I've been talking about here at the end of this message. That is that the victory has been won and yet there's a battle that still rages. It may be lame but, I mean, I think the analogy of the baseball walk-off homerun is helpful in this regard. But picture yourself on a team where you're at a rival stadium and they're just the most crazy crowd. I mean just the most despicable opponents that we could have, and your designated hitter gets up and hits the ball over the fence.

Well, in that sense you'd say at that point, if you were in the dugout in the opponent's stadium, you'd cheer, you'd say we won because the ball went over the fence, but there's still a playing out of that play that has to finish. You've got to run the bases. And as you do, picture the opposing crowd and the opposing team just going crazy and rioting and you still got to go around and touch those bases. And I guess that's the picture of the fact that 2,000 years ago Christ he, as it says in Colossians, he disarmed the principalities and powers. He defeated the enemy. I mean, we won at that point. But there's a battle that rages. I mean there are some bases we've still got to run and that may be tough



for us to imagine but that is critically important. And one of the reasons this has taken so long, we saw this last time in Second Peter 3, is because there's more people on that rebellious other side that's against us right now who need to be on our team. They need to be in our dugout, they need to be on our side.

I flew back into Orange County yesterday and I look out my window at all the people. We've got to reach our community for Christ. We have got to take some of these rebels against God and say, "You need to be on the winning side." They think because the crowd is jeering and they're against everything we stand for, that we need to be on their side to be on the right side of history. See, they don't understand, their view of history is very short. See, Christ already knocked the ball over the fence. We've got to run this race as it says Hebrews 12, "the race that is set before us, with endurance."

We look beyond the cross to the crown, just like Christ. We look beyond all the hassle that we get, in getting between here and the kingdom with all the tribulation and trouble. I don't know, it's hard for me to participate in the Lord's Supper without that evangelistic thought in my mind. We have got people who need to have what we have right here. Our feet that are shod, as the old translations say, our feet that are made ready by the Gospel of peace. We know where we stand with God. It's good for us to know that we're forgiven. I just hope we leave wanting to go and fight the battle. If every thought that raises itself up against the knowledge of God with weapons, as Paul said, "For the right hand and for the left." This is not a battle with the weapons of warfare, as Paul said, that the world uses, we're not militantly through real bombs and guns trying to fight a battle, we're fighting a battle of ideas. Speak up for Christ this week. Share with your neighbors, your friends, your extended family. We have a lot to share with this community. We've got churches to plant, we've got people to reach. Praise God that your sin and mine are pinned to the cross. If you're a Christian and you know what it is to trust in the son of David who's defeated sin and death for us, let's, with great thanksgiving, eat this bread and drink this cup.

Pray with me please. God, we are grateful for what we study in the Bible, a historic event of Christ absorbing the wrath that we deserved and rising from the dead to prove that the wages of sin have been reversed. Christ is no longer dead. As the first fruits, the archetype as Greek says, the prototype of those who will be resurrected, we know that our life after this life is so much more important. And yet we have no chance to build the kingdom in the next life. We've got to build it now. We have to see the message of the Gospel go out from us and through us. God, thank that we have a church filled with people who can be a part of that effort. We can strengthen the brothers, we can win people from being hostile to the Gospel to being our brothers and sisters in Christ. God, if we fail them, we feel incapable or unworthy, I pray we would today get past any of that concern about ourselves and just like Peter there, get up, get back in the game and say we've got to do our job. It doesn't matter what the calling is for anyone around us, it doesn't matter what the calling is for any missionary, any pastor, our calling is where our calling is, and we've got to be faithful to it. Make us faithful as we put our confidence in the right place, in the right person, in whose name we pray.

Jesus Christ. Amen.