



Christ's Perfect Provision-Part 8

When Facing the Power of the Enemy

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I can't be sure how your junior high experience was. Mine was kind of rough. I assume all of us kind of had the struggle of just being a part of an explosive social climate in junior high. It was a lot different than elementary school; that made it hard. We all, of course, were dealing with the, you know, biological revolution that was going on in our little seventh-grade bodies. So that made it hard and awkward and difficult.

But it was compounded for me—made more difficult—because I was the son of a policeman, which was really cool in the third grade to tell all my friends. It wasn't cool at all in the eighth grade, because a lot of my classmates were now these funky little shoplifters, or these pot smokers, or they were stealing bikes. And unfortunately, it was my dad who was assigned to patrol the area around my own junior high school. So he was the one busting all the pot smokers and bike stealers and these little criminals around my school. Because my last name wasn't easy to kind of camouflage—it wasn't Smith or Jones—I was pegged, and it was hard to be the son of the policeman, the cop, the fuzz, right, the narc, the pig, especially when they started calling me Piglet.

Now, I haven't been in very many fistfights in my life, but most of them took place in junior high and involved the word "Piglet" at some point, because that really got to me. That was tough stuff—to be harassed and hated by a bunch of punks because of your dad. And you may be saying, "Well, that wasn't the case with me. You know, people liked my dad." Well, congratulations. You had a dad that was a well-liked, respected businessman. Maybe your dad worked for Disney and got all your friends into Disneyland for free, or he was some exec with the Dodgers or the Angels and passed out free ball tickets. I don't know what you did. But you may have had it different than I did, and you may sit here and say, "Well, I'm so glad I did not have the experience of being hated and harassed by a bunch of punks because of my dad."

Well, I'm here to tell you, to inform you, to remind you, to warn you, that you are hated and harassed by a bunch of punks because of your Dad. It's the truth. And I don't know what people you picture when I say the word "punk." But if you can picture these punks, you're picturing the wrong punks, because these are the punks you can't picture. They're the original rebels that God had created as holy who decided to rebel against the authority of God. They were cast out of heaven, the Bible says, and they're here on this planet among God's corporeal or material creation, wreaking a lot of havoc with us.



And Paul said, don't be confused or ignorant about the fact that though you're battling a lot of things in this life, it's really not flesh and blood that we're wrestling against. It's these principalities and powers. It's these—listen to this—cosmic forces of evil. It's the spiritual things that are behind those things that are really causing a lot of the problems and conflicts that you have as Christians.

I mean, we're not naturalists. We're not these empiricists that believe that all there is is material matter. We believe that God creates a material world and enlivens that with spirit, and we are software encoded on hardware. And there is software; there are beings that are in the image of God, and by that I mean they have intellect, emotion, and will, and they're not confined to human bodies. And they interact in this material world, causing a lot of trouble. And these punks, if you will—these original rebels, these spiritual hostile enemies of God—they want to cause you trouble. They hate you. They don't hate you for your sake; they hate you for your Dad's sake.

My dad—I can remember him sitting me down in junior high and saying, “Son, son, I do not want you getting in fights,” because, I mean, I thought, well, good luck with that. “Then you're gonna, you know, work for Disney? I mean, what are you gonna—?” “No, no, I just don't want you to do that.” Then he'd pause and say, “But if it happens, I expect you to win. And so let me teach you how. I expect you to win these fistfights that you may get in. Now, I don't want you to, but if you do, I'm gonna trust you some techniques to get you to win these fistfights.”

First Timothy, chapter two, tells us that we ought to pray that we can live quiet and peaceable lives, this tranquil life that's envisioned in that call to prayer. But, you know, we don't see many of those kinds of things, because while we're praying for that—and that is the ideal—the very frequent and repeated promise and forecast is: you're going to be buffeted, you're going to be pounded on, you're going to be hit, you're gonna be persecuted, you're going to be in a fight. And he even calls us soldiers, warriors, fighters. That's going to be the reality. Now, pray for that as much—like my dad saying, “I don't want you to get in fights”—but when you do, here's the other thing: God says, I expect you to win. I'm going to tell you how to win.

So, hostile world we live in—there's a lot of things that are going to attack you—but I expect you to win these battles. And we have a situation that is described for us in Luke chapter nine, as we return to our verse-by-verse study through this book, where we see something that you may have diagnosed initially if you read it without the spiritual glasses that we have on, where Christ says, here's the real problem. The diagnosis of Christ is different than the diagnosis of the neurologist. But there's a physical problem that Christ attributes to spiritual forces. And then you see a biting indictment in this



passage of Christ saying, well, listen, what I commissioned for these apostles to do, unfortunately they failed to do, and we have one of those stinging sentences from Christ to the disciples in this passage—but not just the disciples, but the whole generation of people. And certainly, it includes our generation and many of us.

But the verses we've gotten to—if you might remember—we left off with the Mount of Transfiguration here, verse 36. We've reached verse 37. Let's study here seven verses this morning, verses 37 through 43. But before I even read this for you, I just want to assure you: this is a text that is not about how to get your healing. This is a text about a healing that was designed and providentially set out for the apostles to accomplish—and it failed, it went awry. And it's about Christ's frustration over that.

Let me set the stage by going back to verses one and two of Luke 9. If you have your Bibles open, let's start there, the remainder of the context, which is: he called the twelve together, and he gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases. Now, that's something he hasn't given you power to do. If he has, then you ought to head over to Chalk and Orange, or over to Mission Hospital, and get to work. But that's not what this is all about. Verse two: he sent them out to proclaim a message, which, by the way, is a new covenant message with people having only Old Covenant scrolls in their pocket, if you will. And so we need an authentication: go out and proclaim the kingdom of God, and two words here—"and heal." That was the imprimatur. I often say that was the certificate, that was the badge they could flash as they rode into town and say, "Listen to us: we have the new covenant message of Messiah, and we're going to tell you about it. We're going to tell you who he is and how to get right with him and how to be reconciled to God. Here's the badge—listen to us." And it was, as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:12—what he says is the signs or the marks of a true apostle—signs, wonders, and miracles. And in this case, authority over demons: you speak the word, they respond. You have someone who's a paralytic, a blind man; you say the word, you reach out, and you're going to see them healed. That was the imprimatur.

You want a verse for that? Jot down, for them, Hebrews chapter two, verses 1, 2, 3, and 4: that the whole point of the miraculous era of the apostles—laying their hands on people and seeing people that were even dead come to life—was something done so that New Covenant message could be attested to by those of us that sit here 2,000 years later and read it. How do I know it's true? Well, it was authenticated with signs, wonders, and miracles, according to—here's verse four of Hebrews 2—according to the will of the Spirit, right? The Spirit of God chose when to do these very unique acts. And he entrusted this power to these apostles to do these things so that you and I would believe their message. Now, he's not in the habit of giving us some kind of authenticating miracle show in every generation, because he has once for all delivered the faith to the saints, to the people of God, authenticated through the pen of the apostles. He'd just given them this authority in the top of the chapter.



Now we get to our text, verse 37. Let's read these seven verses. On the next day, when they—Peter, James, and John—and Jesus came down from the mountain, a great crowd met him, Christ. They came to see him. And behold, a man from the crowd cried out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only son. And behold, a spirit seizes him, and suddenly he cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth and shatters him, and it will hardly leave him. And I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they"—underline these two words—"could not."

We just read verses one and two. Could they do it? Mmm? Yeah. Here it says they could not. If you were to read the parallel texts in Matthew chapter 17 and in Mark chapter nine, you'd find, hey, the disciples even admitted they could not. Now what's the deal? Dad says, "I brought my son to them; they couldn't do it." The disciples said, "Christ, why is it that we couldn't do it?" They couldn't do it. And yet Christ said, you can do it. What's the problem?

Verse 41—here's the center. Jesus answered. Here's what he didn't say: "Oh, well, thanks for trying. Bring him here; I'll take care of that. You know, they're new at this healing thing. It's okay. I mean, you should have come to me first, anyway." No. There's no second-place trophy here. You didn't do what I asked you to do. You're supposed to be able to do it. You're empowered to do it. "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you?"

Now that's another line from the Bible you don't find on the DaySpring cards. Where's the loving, gentle Jesus? The long-suffering, patient, merciful, loving Jesus who stares into our eyes and says, "I love you. I love you. I don't care how you mess up. I love you." Here he says, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I going to be with you and bear with you?" Wow. That's pretty rough. "Bring your son here." While he was coming, the demon threw him to the ground and convulsed him. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy. Now read that again: "But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy," and gave him back to his father, and all were astonished at the majesty of God.

Now, that line there—that Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit and healed the boy—was exactly what we find in Mark chapter nine and in Matthew 17. And we know that at the end of this we see Jesus saying: here's the problem—it's a spiritual battle, clearly a physical manifestation. If you were to read Matthew chapter 17, the scene is presented to us as the father bringing his son, an epileptic, to him. Now, if you know anything about epilepsy or anything about seizures, you can say clearly that's what verse 39 describes: he cries out, he convulses, even foaming at the mouth. It shatters him, and it will hardly leave him. And all the other explanations in the parallel passages in Matthew 17 and Mark



chapter nine—even more detail about him falling down and convulsing on the ground; if he’s near a fire, dad’s afraid he’s burning himself; near the water, “I’m afraid he’s going to drown.” This is a classic seizure—not a petit mal seizure, but a grand mal, or what they now call a tonic-clonic seizure—of a person going into full, you know, convulsions.

Now, that’s not hard for the neurologists to describe, at least since the ’50s when we have EKGs strapped to your head and we know what’s going on. We know the neurons are firing electrical pulses; we can put the sensors on the head; we can see what’s happening in the totality of the brain, at least on the surface here of the brain, and we know what’s going on. And that is—in a normal brain—you’ve got all these neurons firing to do everything from breathing, to talking, to listening, to focusing your eyeballs, all those things. It’s kind of like—to oversimplify and kind of a ridiculous analogy—it’s kind of like when you’re watching all the fireworks at Disneyland, and it’s like, boom, boom, boom; it’s pretty spooky. There’s your brain—what your brain is doing right now.

A grand mal seizure—a tonic-clonic seizure (tonic: tone, to firm up; and then clonic: to convulse). The tonic-clonic grand mal seizure is when those firings of your neurons start to synchronize, and they get what neurologists call a hyperexcitability and a hypersynchronization. And the classic is three spiked electrical pulses every second—tick, tick, tick. And what does that do to your body? Freaks it out. Some of you have people in your family that have had grand mal seizures, who have epilepsy—who have this manifestation of seizures in their epilepsy, that kind of epilepsy—and you’ve seen them. They’re on medication; maybe you’re on medications, but you don’t have seizures. You know what this is. It’s not hard for us, as modern medical doctors, to say, “Here’s what this looks like. We know what’s going on in the brain.” But ask a neurologist—ask a teaching neurologist—what causes all this. “Oh, well, you see correspondences to brain tumors, to alcohol, to, you know, drug use—all this; we can see some hereditary issue.” “I don’t know what causes those neurons to start firing all at the same time and freaking the body out.” “I don’t know.”

If you haven’t seen it, it’s free—go on YouTube and look it up this afternoon. And it’s very disturbing to see a body that you’re used to seeing talking and, you know, relaxing or dancing or singing, and now it’s just freaking out, and every part of the body is freaking out in this grand mal seizure. It’s really disturbing.

Now, when the story is presented in Matthew chapter 17, it is presented as “My son is an epileptic.” Here, the recounting of the story is with the detail that describes the diagnosis from the beginning. In other words, we recount the problem in light of the diagnosis. You do this all the time. You go to the doctor, you get a diagnosis of the problem, then you retell to your friends all the symptoms you had, and because you have the knowledge of the diagnosis, you start to talk about what’s causing what in



the symptoms—“And this is why my stomach hurt,” or “This is why I had reflux,” or whatever it is—and you say, “This is the problem, because now I know the diagnosis.” Well, in the other passage in Matthew, we see the diagnosis, but initially it looks like a physical problem. But it’s really not a physical problem; it’s a spiritual problem that is manifesting itself through a classic, very old, long-time-recognized neurologic problem.

And I say that because you may say, “Well, you’re very anachronistic in this, Pastor Mike. You’re trying to put medical terms in old—” We have descriptions, you need to know, of classic grand mal seizures—or what else are called tonic-clonic seizures. We have that going all the way back to the Acadians, Babylonian, Sanskrit, ancient Mesopotamian writings. It’s one of the earliest kinds of malfunctions of the body—and obviously brain—and this was well known. It’s used throughout the Gospels. We talk about Christ healing epileptics and paralytics. And it’s one thing to heal a paralytic—where you’re used to seeing legs or limbs, like my daughter who’s paralyzed—it’s one thing to see things that can’t move and sit there, much like when we don’t move and we’re relaxing; it’s another thing to see them freaking out.

The question, though, as we read a passage about demonic activity and an epileptic, is: what’s the association here in this text? And what’s the association in my cousin’s life, who takes medication for epilepsy? Or, in my case, my daughter who’s a “paralytic,” to use the biblical term? It’s a good question.

Let’s start with that—bit of a sidebar, but let’s just deal with the topics that are raised in the text—by titling it this way. Number one, on your outline: we need to understand Satan and sickness. Let’s just put those together as a topic and spend a little time—before we really get to the meat of the text—just thinking of what’s the relationship here. Because if you happen to have epilepsy and you read a text like this, you may have a hard go: “Oops, are you trying to say that epilepsy is caused by demons?” And I’m saying, well, in this passage, definitely that’s the case.

With that in mind, let’s turn to Job chapter one. Job chapter one. I want to show you a text that clearly is about the inciting of things by demonic activity—clearly the ultimate demon, Satan, the head honcho—who’s going to go to God in the boardroom and say, “I got a problem with your guy Job,” which really is simply a problem with you, “and I don’t like all the glory he gives you. And I’m telling you why he gives you all that: because you’re so nice to him. So if you were to take that away, he’d curse you.” God says, “Well, try him.”



Verse 12: The Lord said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your hand.” This is Job 1:12. Are you with me on this? “Only against him, at least at this phase of it, do not stretch out your hand.” So don’t touch his body. We’re not talking about any sickness for him right now. “But go out and do your thing.” So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

Now, there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking in the oldest brother’s house—they were there, drinking wine in the oldest brother’s house—and they were there and a messenger came to Job. So they’re having a banquet, but that’s not the point of this first round. Verse 14: a messenger comes to Job and says, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys were feeding beside them, and the Serbians—we’ve got this nomadic thief gang, if you will—fell upon them. They seized them; they took them all.” Now, in an agrarian society, that’s your wealth—took all that stuff; they just ripped you off. “And then they killed your servants; they struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.”

Now, let’s not talk about medical problems. Let’s talk about being the victim of a crime. Let’s talk about being the victim of a thief—having stuff stolen from you. Now, most of us in the room have had something stolen from us. Sometimes it’s your identity. Sometimes, like me—it’s happened multiple times—they break into my car, they steal my car stereo, they take something out of my glove box, or whatever. Fine. It feels violating. Some of you have had people break into your house. That’s a bad thing. It’s a bad thing. It’s a bad thing. Here’s the question: is it a demonic thing? Well, in this text, I guess so, right? Serbians chose Job’s stuff that day. Why? Because Satan went out and incited them. He was the immediate cause of the thief.

Now, when you get ripped off, did you have this thought? “That was demonic.” Did you? You probably didn’t have that thought. You thought, “Oh, there are so many criminals in this world; I can’t believe it—a thief.” You thought very humanistically about it. But can it be that sometimes a thief is immediately caused to do what he does by demonic activity? The answer is: yes, of course.

How about the next one? Verse 15: struck down the servants—killed the servants. Murder. Now, maybe because of the severity of that horrific, heinous crime, you have more of a “Whoa, that—you know, thought when you— But probably not every time you read in the Orange County Register that there was a murder in Cypress or wherever it was did you go, “Demons at work.” You thought, “Oh, people are terrible, aren’t they? Murder people in their own home,” or “That carjacking—got killed—that’s terrible.” But in this case, let me ask you: those servants being murdered that day—is that demonic? Answer: yes.



But would you say that every act of thievery or every murder, or every occurrence of epilepsy or paralysis—would you say every episode of those is demonic? You’re gonna say, “No.” And I’m gonna say, “Sort of.” Sort of—yeah, sort of. It may not be the immediate cause. But before you say, “Oh, no, that’s just people being people,” remember this: when in the Bible there is a theological kind of thought or contemplation of problems like murder or thievery, they’re traced back to Satan.

Think about this. A couple passages on this—this is not off the top of my head now; these are passages from the Bible; I’m not just talking here. Here’s a Scripture for you: here’s John 10:10—talking about Christ, and opposed to the enemy—he says, “The thief comes only to steal, kill, and destroy.” The analogies of the enemy are: he’s a thief, and he’s a killer. How about—let’s get even more specific—John 8:44. He speaks of Satan; he says, he’s a murderer. He’s been a murderer from the beginning, and he’s a liar, and when he lies, he speaks his native language. “And you’re like your father, the devil.” What’s the point? When you lie, you’re just doing the devil thing. You’re doing the Satan thing. You’re doing the demonic thing. When you murder, you’re just doing the demonic thing. Now, does that mean every act of murder is an immediate cause of demonic activity? The answer would probably be “No, not an immediate cause.” But don’t say there’s no relation. Clearly there’s a relationship.

How about one more? 1 John, chapter three. 1 John 3:12 says, “Hey, you guys, do not be like Cain.” Remember Cain, the brother of Abel? “Don’t be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother.” Think about that. Now, the act of murder is a demonic act. Was it incited with the immediate cause being a demon? The answer would be no, not an immediate cause. But it’s certainly in the realm of it, and you could say it is a secondary cause. It is even—I don’t know in terms of time, not in terms of philosophy—but in terms of time, it’s an original cause, if you’re a philosopher—because, “Oh, Illusional, primary, cosmic—” Time about causation—I’m just talking about, who do we blame for this? Ultimately, we can say this is a demonic thing, that at least if the demons aren’t dispatched to make it happen through an agency of a Serbian, or a criminal, or a cell in your body, it certainly is something they applaud, is it not?

Because my daughter does not have calves in her legs because they don’t work—because she’s paralyzed. Think about this now. Did the demons go, “Oh, that’s so sad”? No. They don’t think, “Oh, yeah, that’s great.” God created legs to be a certain way, to work a certain way, to look a certain way, and it brings glory to God when they do. And when they don’t, Satan loves it. Demons love it—whether they are the immediate cause, or whether they just stand back and say, “That’s what we’re all about.” He wants to destroy, he wants to kill, he wants to steal. He’s all about those things.

So you have epilepsy. You got a daughter like mine who’s got paralysis. You have migraine headaches. You have arthritis. You have cancer. Whatever that is—before we say, “Oh, no, that’s just how things



work as the divine clockmaker makes the world, and that's just how things go"—let's not dismiss completely the fact that there is a Satanic connection. Though there's not an immediate cause—I don't like that, because that creates the demon-behind-every-bush, you know, the devil-under-every-rock kind of mentality. I'm not trying to create that, and you know me well enough if you've been around. That's not what I'm advocating. But I am saying, it's foolish to be ignorant of these things, because the Bible always tells us that we're not wrestling against flesh and blood; we're wrestling against principalities and powers. And everything is trying to chip away at the glory of God and the way things ought to be. Really, we can trace back in some sense—if not as an immediate cause, as a secondary cause—of the evil in this world. And it's evil when you have epilepsy. What kind? As an immoral evil? I'm not saying it's your moral evil; I'm just saying it's not the way it's supposed to be. If you want a definition of sin, that's a great one: it's not the way things are supposed to be.

I think that's a helpful platform for us to start with. Because if you have epilepsy, if you have a disease, if you have paralysis, if you have cancer—whatever the problem is in your health, your sickness—I'm not saying there's an immediate demonic cause. But I am saying there's certainly a relationship, and one that may not be reversed because of your relationship with Christ—more on that later—but one, at least, to recognize that we should get mad at some of the secondary causes of these things. I mean, I don't go to a hospital and not leave the hospital without thinking, “I hate the enemy of God. I hate the tempter in the garden. I hate Satan.” Why? Because he's the immediate cause of every sick person in every room in the hospital? No, but because he's certainly a secondary cause.

I don't go to a funeral without thinking, you know what, I hate the enemy who baited Adam and Eve into sin, and through that—Romans five—has brought sin into this world and death into this world that spread to every man. I hate that. I don't want to leave him without guilt in this, as the prince of the power of the air who loves and celebrates everything that is less than or different than God designed it to be.

Understand Satan and sickness. And that's just a quick primer. I only had a couple minutes on that, but I think it's an important sidebar, which is not usually my pattern to make it a point in the sermon. But let's start with that, because our passage talks about a spirit seizing him, but a neurologist would say, “Oh, we got into a weird situation where we had spikes of heightened excitability and heightened synchronization in the neurons in the brain.” And I'm just saying, well, let's not make that so mechanical, because not in every case is this demonically induced—sometimes it is, I suppose; certainly in this case it was. But there's certainly a tracing back and an org chart all the way to the garden and to the enemy who takes great pleasure in messing up the creation of God.



Number two on your outline—let's now read verses 37 through 39 again. They're coming off the mountain; a great crowd comes to meet Christ. Behold, a man in the crowd cries out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child." Now, here's the way God designed it: parent-child love; familial love; sacrifice. We want the best for our kids. That is the common grace of God at work in your heart. That's what you want. You don't want your kids to suffer. "He's my only child, but he is suffering."

Verse 39: a spirit seizes him. He's an epileptic. That's what Matthew chapter 17 puts it in those terms. He cries out, he convulses, he foams at the mouth. It shatters him—causes great damage in his life—and it will hardly leave, and it's happening all the time: "He has seizures all the time." While that's sad, Satan rejoices; demons cheer. That's a grievous situation—one that God is going to reverse in every case? Of course not. But in this case, because we know from verse 40, this man brought this young man—and I say that because he's not a little child; it says in the other passages he's had it since his childhood—so he's probably a teenage son of this man. But still, a grieving father had brought this sick, epileptic child to the apostles, who God had authorized to have the power and authority to fix the problem—and they failed to do it. And Satan is cheering even that.

Why does Satan not just pick on God directly? Well, you can't do much there. But he can get at God by attacking his children. Isn't that the paradigm of Job 1 that we just looked at? Satan hates the Father. Think: why did people want to pick fights with me in junior high? I didn't do anything wrong to them. "No, but their brother got busted by your dad." "Well, they hate my dad. Why don't you go, you know, punch my dad in the mouth?" "Well, you won't do that because he'll pull out his gun and shoot you. But you don't seem to be packing, so I'm going to pick a fight with you in the locker room today." Well, I get that. See, we're the easy target. God's creation is the easy target, because demons have power, and the power they have is just—it's useless against God himself. But it's pretty effective against us. So for his hatred of God, these—and, you know, pardon the term—but these punks will harass and hate us because of our Father.

And you could speak generally of mankind, and that's why, even if you walk through the hospital wing of any hospital in the area, you say, "This is terrible. It's not good." This is the kind of thing you look at and say, "Look at the enemy who has had his way in a secondary sense, at least, in causing such grief and havoc in this world." But for us, it's much more personal—just like it was in Job. Now, picture: there are a lot of people living in Job's day, but what was the singular focus of Satan in that boardroom meeting? Job. Why? Because he was blameless and righteous in his generation. He loved God. He sacrificed to worship God. He loved him; he was bringing glory to God. And as he stood out as an outstanding example, Satan goes, "I really hate him."



See, Satan hates God's creation because of his hatred for the Father. But Satan really hates his redeemed re-creation—his regenerate children—because of his hatred for the Father. You are special targets. As it says in John, "If they hated me, they're gonna hate you." And we often think of human beings in that text—and rightly so, that's the focus—but those human beings, as it says in Ephesians 6, are really just the front and the surface expression of such cosmic hatred toward us.

So we need to realize Satan hates us so much more because we're allied with him. Therefore, it wouldn't be bad for us to look at the passage I've already quoted, because I want to think through the reality of the problem that we are. And I'll just put it this way—point number two—we need to realize we are in the line of fire. We are, in some sense, pawns in this whole thing, just like I was a pawn as a junior high student getting picked on. Why? Because of my dad. It wasn't because of me. "Why am I a Piglet?" "Well, because of your relationship with your Father. That's what we don't like." You're in the line of fire.

And let's turn to the passage I quoted earlier—Ephesians chapter six—just to spend a second in that passage. Just a minute. Ephesians 6:12—I've quoted it; I want to read it verbatim. I want you to highlight it; I want you to look at it. And I want you to see the verse that comes after this classic text that we've quoted twice already. Ephesians 6:12—surface eruptions of the problem can be a variety of things, but the source is revealed: "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood"—it's not the authorities, it's not the centurions, it's not the soldiers, not the high priests, it's not the Sanhedrin, it's not Nero the Emperor—"it is ultimately against the rulers" that aren't physical, and the authorities that aren't flesh and blood, "but against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces"—not the physical forces—"the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." And they are out to get you. "Therefore"—verse 13—"therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day"—and that's not with a capital D, because that's not some eschatological day at the end of time; I'm not talking about the Great Tribulation or anything like that—"we're talking about the day you start getting beat on, the day you're under attack. And that might be tomorrow, that might be this afternoon, it might be next week. But we want you to stand in that day, when you start getting punched on, having done all, to stand firm."

You're in the line of fire. And when you realize that, you can start to be cognizant of that, prepared for that, taking every precaution so that you don't get pummeled. That's so important. See, the most vulnerable soldier at any given time in a conflict is the one that doesn't realize he's in the thick of the conflict. Is that simple enough? The one who is most vulnerable to get picked off in some skirmish is the one who forgets he's in the middle of a skirmish. You've got to be cognizant. You need to be aware. You need to be vigilant. "Oh, I don't want to be that demon-behind-every-bush and devil-under-every-rock guy you talked about." I don't want you to be either. But I don't want you to be dismissive and ignorant of this, either.



One verse on this I've quoted; jot it down: 1 Peter chapter five, verse eight—"Be sober-minded and watchful. Be sober-minded and watch." Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Now, I know he doesn't want you to be preoccupied with "spiritual warfare" or demons. You don't want to be preoccupied with it. But this certainly says you shouldn't be ignorant of it. You need to be sober-minded. You need to be watchful. Certainly my dad taught me that. "Hey, you gotta look over your shoulder every now and then to make sure—you've got to be prepared—because you do have an adversary." And he hates us for our Father's sake, and he wants to devour you.

Now, the apostles have been given authority over demons and sickness—you haven't been given that authority. The attack is going to come in this particular passage by a kind of sickness that seems so bizarre and so difficult that the apostles cowered in the face of it and said, "Oh, I don't know if I can do that." Think about this now. Follow this: one thing to heal a paralytic—a pair of legs that just dangle dead off of someone's body. And you say, "Well, that doesn't look that bizarre. It doesn't look right, but it doesn't look that bizarre." But to have a convulsing body foaming at the mouth, who drops to the ground because the neurons start firing in sync, and they fall there and convulse and shake and get stiff and their arms come up and all of that—apparently the disciples—Peter, James, and John were up the mountain, but some of the other nine—whoever these apostles were who this epileptic was taken to—they cowered at that. The attack in this case was a severe form of illness that, though they had the power to cure it and heal it, according to the first two verses in the chapter, they freaked out. They couldn't; they backed down; they couldn't do it. And yet they could have, but they didn't.

I want to give you eight things, real quick, that are our—quote-unquote—"epileptic opportunity to respond." What is the attack on us? It's not going to be that you really are facing a really difficult disease in the hallway of some ICU unit at Saddleback Hospital. That's not what we're talking about, because that's not the authority or power you've been given. But you have been given an authority and power to do certain things—to combat the kinds of fiery darts that are tossed at us, as Ephesians 6 goes on to say. What are those things that you've got to extinguish? Well, the rest of the New Testament doesn't say the enemy is illness. It doesn't say the enemy is sickness; it doesn't say the enemy is blindness or even death. Ultimately, those are things I can't deal with in this particular epoch of church history. But what I can deal with are the inevitable, perpetual attacks of the enemy.

Let me give you eight of them real quick. Number one: 2 Timothy, chapter two—relational conflict. God wants to bring dishonor to the Father by attacking his children with all kinds of bad relationships. He wants to mess your relationships up. He doesn't want you to be at peace with all people; he certainly doesn't want you to be at peace with your brothers and sisters in Christ. He doesn't want you to be at peace in your household. He wants fighting and anger and conflict and hatred and people



threatening to walk out and divorce and leave, and people threatening to leave groups and churches. That's what he wants. That's what he's gonna attack you with. And sometimes the problem will be big and you'll go, "I don't think we can handle this." And yet God said, "Yeah, you guys can be unified—the unity of the Spirit; you should have that." Satan's gonna come after us in terms of our relationships.

How about this one: 1 Corinthians 7—he wants you to commit adultery. He wants you to commit adultery. His demons are going to work at trying to get you to be unfaithful to your marital covenant. That's what he wants, because that will bring dishonor to the Father. It'll cause all kinds of secondary problems in your life, in your marriage, in your heart, in your mind. This is what he wants, and he's gonna work hard at it. He will, according to 1 Corinthians 7, tempt you to do this. And if you're not married—find some kind of sexually immoral behavior outside of marriage. You're not married yet; you're a single person. Great. You are supposed to, according to Hebrews 13, keep the marriage bed undefiled. That is an act for marriage. And the Bible's very clear Satan's out to try and get you to do that. And the battle that you feel in terms of temptation—the lure that you feel in terms of, "Oh, that's an understanding person," and all that draw and attraction—is a satanic attack. The Bible says that's his arena, even in a non-Christian's life. That's what he wants.

1 Samuel 15—he wants you to be a rebel. I call these people the original rebels—these punks, these spiritual demons. I call them the original rebels because that's what they are. And in 1 Samuel 15, when Saul sat there and said, "I'm not going to wait for the prophet; I'm going to sacrifice. I don't care about the priesthood; I don't care about all that; I'm going to do what I want to do, and no one's the boss of me," Samuel showed up and said, "That's the sin of witchcraft. You're dealing now in demon territory." Rebellion. When you start feeling that—the sanctioned leadership in your life, whatever that might be: your boss, your manager, your pastor, your leader, your politician—and you have this rebel heart? That's Satan at work. He's going to attack with that.

Expand on relational conflict a little bit: rivalries. He wants a competitive spirit in your heart so that you can't rejoice with other people's victories. You're always going to compare yourself with others in terms of "I've got to do better; I've got to have more; I've got to get more of the spotlight." That competitive spirit, according to 1 John chapter 3—that kind of rivalry that leads you to an anger toward your brothers in Christ because you want to be better than them—that's demonic.

How about this one—what are we at, number five? James chapter three. This is a more moderate form of rivalry; it's called jealousy. It's when you look across the room: "Why is their life so much better than mine? If only God had given me a better husband..." And you sit around: "That guy's got it easy—his job, and he's paid well, and he's—" Listen, jealousy—just another form of this kind of



rivalry, only it's the defeatist form of it—where Satan's at work. He calls it in that passage—James 3—earthly and demonic. That's the attack on our lives. How are you gonna respond to them?

How about this one: anxiety. 1 Peter 5—worrying. Some of you sit there and, because the world is fine with that sin, you think you can be fine with that sin. And God says, “Listen, don't worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will take care of itself; every day has enough trouble. Don't—look at the lilies of the field, look at the birds of the sky. Why are you worrying and chasing after all those things the pagans do? Seek first the kingdom. Stop worrying. Be anxious for nothing.” That's the command of God. He's giving you the power in Christ to do that, to fight that. And if you sit there, get that attack, and roll, then you're not doing everything to stand firm. You haven't taken the right precautions.

How about Ephesians 6—just to be as broad as we can be: the derailing of our sanctification. When we were making progress—taking a few steps forward—here, all of a sudden, now we're taking three steps back. And I know that's a broad summary of Ephesians 6, but Satan's job is to derail your sanctification—making progress, move you back.

Number eight: apostasy. I know that's a Bible word for some of you. I don't know—you're not sure what that means. That means you're done—“I'm walking away from this. I'm disillusioned; I'm frustrated.” It usually starts with leaving your church, leaving your ministries, leaving your small groups—“Now I'm done reading the Bible; I'm done praying; I'm done with all this.” Satan would love to see that happen. It brings great dishonor to the Father.

Just look through that list. Those are the kinds of things: relational conflict, sexual sin, rebellion, rivalries, jealousy, anger, anxiety, derailing sanctification, apostasy. That's the kind of attack that we have—not some grand mal seizure that seems too big to heal. It's those kinds of attacks that you think you're not able to overcome. Realize you're in the line of fire, and these are the kinds of fiery darts that are going to come at you.

I don't know if you're still in Ephesians 6—are you? Take a look at verse 16. Ephesians 6:16: “In all circumstances take up the shield of faith.” That Greek word “shield”—if you've had some of them teach you this passage before—it's the Greek word for the Roman piece of equipment for the centurion or the soldier that was a full-body shield; it was giant. Take up that gigantic shield— that wall of—what? Love? No. That shield of—what? Faith. “Trust me.” With which—right, faith—now you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.



See, where my dad tried to teach me to fight in junior high so that I wouldn't get my face punched in, one of the things he said: "You better protect your face. If you're not gonna get your teeth knocked out, your lip fattened, and your eye blackened—well, you better put your dukes up, and you better protect your face." What is it that God wants us to protect? See, I said the Father wants us to win these battles. We need to do everything to stand firm—firm in what? To use a phrase Paul loved: firm in our faith.

Number three on your outline—let's put it that way: you need to guard your trust in Christ. Guard your trust in Christ. And we may need to lean a little bit on Matthew's Gospel and on Mark's Gospel to make this crystal clear, but I want to show you—I'm not stretching our text—that when, in verses one and two of Luke 9, they're told, "You have authority and power over demons and to cure diseases," they failed because they didn't have faith. And they later were told that specifically when they asked Christ, "Why couldn't we cast this demon out?" Jesus said, "You have little faith. You don't trust me." And even further, in Mark chapter nine, he says, "This comes out by prayer." You have to ask me. You have to trust me. And that should be clear anyway, because as I get into verse 41, the disciples were begged to cast it out; they couldn't. Jesus answered, "O faithless—" Now, you can look at the word "faithless" and think, "Well, someone that doesn't do what they say they're going to do." That's not how this is used here. "Faithless" means you're without faith. That's the point. And certainly the context bears that out. They were accused of not having faith. Even the father was accused of not having faith who brought the epileptic son with him to Christ.

It's worth looking at the parallel passages—not right now, but look them up. When he comes to Christ, he says, "Your disciples failed. Now, if you are able to do anything—here's my son—heal him." Jesus stops him. He says, "If I'm able? If I'm able? Do you not believe that I can do this? Where's your trust and faith that I can do this?" Maybe you remember the famous line from the father of the epileptic here: "I do believe, but help my unbelief." Remember that line? "I think—I mean, I believe you're the Messiah; I just don't—I need you to help in believing."

Faith is what this text is all about. And here is the indictment: "O faithless and twisted—or perverted or messed up—generation, how long am I to be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." While he's coming—one last hurrah—here the demon throws him down on the ground, neurons firing in sync, convulsed on the ground. Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit, and because that's the immediate cause of this epilepsy, the boy was healed, and he gave him back to his father, and everybody was astonished—the majesty, the power, the glory of God.



You've got to guard your faith. Christ indicted the generation with some of the disciples clearly in view because they didn't have the faith. They didn't pray, they didn't ask, they didn't rely on God to do what God said they were able to do. You know, you have not been granted the authority or power to walk through the hospital and heal people. I get that. But you were granted some promises that are absolutely 100% in vogue for the entirety of the church age. And it's true of you. And the question—much like the authority they had—you've got to look at the things that God has promised you and say, "Do I believe God and act on that belief so that God will accomplish those things?"

I'll start with the general one. Jot it down—recite it, because I'm sure you know it—1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 13. 1 Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has overtaken you except that which is common to man, and God is faithful"—means every time he is—"who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide a way of escape so that you will be able to endure it." "Well, you know what—the sexual temptation is just too much. Too much. I had to give in." Really? Do you not believe what God clearly said in his word—that there's no temptation, first of all, that's so bizarre you're just a unique victim of it? No, no. They're common—the categories are common; the specifics are common. But God is so faithful that he's not going to allow that temptation to be beyond your ability. So you can't throw your hands up and say, "God, I had no choice. I'm a victim." No—never. That's what the Bible says. Either believe it or not—just like when the men looked at this epileptic and said, "This is too bizarre; we can't do it." They came back and Jesus didn't say, "Oh, I know—it was too much for you; you need really the superstar for this." No. "You faithless and messed-up generation—how long do I put up with you?" You don't want Christ to say that to you, do you? Therefore, I want to say, "You know what—I believe what you say: with every temptation there is a way of escape, so that I can endure that and not give in to it."

How about this one—I'd like you to turn to this one—James chapter one. I want you to look at this one with your own eyeballs, because this particular passage not only gives us the promise of something that is true for every Christian throughout the church age, but it also gives us the other side that we see in our text played out by disciples that were promised something that they were—quote-unquote—"not able" to do because they didn't have the faith. Take a look at this one: James chapter one, verse five. "If any of you"—James 1:5—"lacks wisdom"—how many situations are we in? We go, "I don't know what to do. I don't know what I'm supposed to do here. What would a Christian do here? What would the godly thing be?"—"Hey, if you lack wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to"—most people? Underline "most people." Well, that's not what it says: "who gives to all without reproach"—not like, "Well, look what you did with it last time; you didn't—" No, no. You ask him again. You're in another situation; you need insight; you need wisdom; you didn't know what to do. The Bible says he'll give you wisdom. He'll give you insight. He gives it without reproach. That's the God we're talking about. "And it might be given to him"—underline the word "might." Is that what it says at the bottom of verse five? "It will be given to him." Now, either that's true or that's not. Now, that reads a lot like 1 Corinthians 10:13—very emphatic, superlative statements—that in every case there's a way out of temptation, and in this case, in every situation, if you ask him, he's going to give you wisdom.



But it doesn't end there. Verse number six: "But let him who asks"—there is a condition—"ask in faith"—as though I didn't know what the word "faith" means—here it comes; it's emphasized—"with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind." Underline this now: "For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all of his ways." He says he trusts God, but he doesn't trust God. He believes that he's going to be saved because of trusting Christ, but when he asks God for wisdom—which God said he promises to give generously—he doubts that God will do it. Why? "Well, maybe the situation is really tough. Maybe it's this situation—I don't know, man, a lot of people don't get into—I don't even know if God can supply me with a system—I don't know if I've been good enough." It says "without reproach." Ask him with no doubting.

Now, apparently this is at least parallel to what the disciples met up with. Here's this terrible grand mal seizure that they might have seen multiple times in their time with this dad and his son—this epileptic—and they sat there and did not believe that they could do it. And because of the doubt, it is true: they could not. And yet they were supposed to be able to do it. They were supposed to be able to do it—but they weren't able to do it. Why? They didn't trust God. And that's clear because Jesus, in both Matthew 17 and in Mark chapter nine, makes it clear. They said, "Why couldn't we do it?" "You don't have faith." What's that about? God said he would do it. What is faith? Believing that God will do what he says he's gonna do. And he said you'll have wisdom if you ask him. He said to the apostles, "You will be able to heal and cure diseases, because I tell you that—I've given you that authority."

Don't need to turn to this one, but how about 2 Corinthians chapter nine? 2 Corinthians 9. The Bible says that you, as a Christian, should be giving. You ought to be generous. You ought to take what you get, and you want to take a portion of that, and you want to give it to God. "I can't afford to." You've just proved with that statement—"I can't afford to give"—you've just proved you do not trust God, who makes a clear promise that if you give, God will supply your needs. He will supply both seed for the sower and bread to the eater. He's going to give you what you need. God is a God who—if you sow sparingly, well, then I guess so: you'll reap sparingly; he'll give you back sparingly. Is that prosperity gospel? Is that—are you gonna—Mike—gonna start on TBN this week? No, I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about you sitting there saying things like, "I can't afford to be generous." The Bible is very clear: you can't afford not to be, because the principle of how God supplies for his children is that those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed. The Bible is so clear on these things. He says—you want to know—he says this to the post-exilic Jews: "You want to know why you bring money home, put it in purses that seem to have holes in it? You want to know why, at the end of the month, you don't have any money left? Because my temple over here that I told you to give to sits here halfway built, and you're sitting there paneling your own houses with your money, and you're not doing what you should be doing—which is taking a portion of that and giving that generously to God's work." Just think of that simple principle. Don't tell me you can't afford to give—you can't afford not to give. It's what the Bible teaches.



You've got to guard your trust in Christ. If you start looking in the Bible—I just gave you three examples: the overarching example (1 Corinthians 10), the specific example of asking for wisdom (James 1), the specific instance of trusting God that when I give he'll supply enough for my life to manage (2 Corinthians 9)—we could go on and on, but you need to trust him. Guard your trust in Christ.

And, you know, sometimes when our trust is most tested is when we say, “Well, God, I’ve done the right thing—now where are you at—getting Satan out of my life?” In other words, let me give you another promise here: James chapter four, verse seven—“Submit yourself to God; resist the devil; he’ll flee from you.” Now, you said some things, Mike, are the immediate causation of demonic activity, and some things are only the secondary or background causation. And so I’m saying here, “I’ve submitted to God; I’ve resisted the enemy; now Satan is supposed to flee from me. What about all these effects, whether immediate or not immediate?” Well, here’s when our faith is really tested: when we do exactly what God asked us to do and the effect of the enemy is still present and lingering in our lives. Has that ever happened to godly people? Job—the whole book is about that. How about Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12—a thorn in his flesh. You know what he called it, right? A messenger of Satan. And he pleaded with the Lord—that’s a strong word. He pleaded and begged the Lord—*parakaleō*—he begged God, “Please remove it from me.” “I begged three times, and he didn’t do it.” Do you think that would test your faith? Absolutely. And you know the response of God, don’t you? “My grace is sufficient for you.”

“You can resist the enemy—submit yourself to God; Satan will flee from you.” The effect of Satan—either immediate or secondary—it may remain, but “I’ve given you enough grace to fulfill your calling,” which isn’t to be healthy or live forever—not in this state. You’re all going to die; you’re all going to get sick. That’s the promise of Genesis three—that I can trust God will provide enough grace or favor or opportunity or wherewithal in my life to where I can still be godly, even if my daughter stays paralyzed, even if I have migraine headaches, even if my hands get twisted backwards because of arthritis, or whatever the problem is—cancer, epilepsy, you name it. I can still carry on. Why? Because I know that what happens when God sends his Son to the earth and purchases our redemption—in that purchase price is a solution for every problem I face, including the medical problems, including the illnesses.

“And now you’re starting to sound like a Pentecostal, Pastor Mike.” Well, in this case, I agree with the Pentecostals: Christ’s redemption on the cross took care of every problem, including every physical problem I might have, including death itself. The question, though—and my contention with the Pentecostals—is: when does the Bible say those benefits are all realized? Let me give you three quick passages; with this, I’ll close.



1 John 3:8—“The Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil.” The Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil. Trick question here: did he do it? Yeah. “But you said it was a trick question—sounds like it should be ‘yes.’”

Hebrews 2:14—Christ came so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death—that is, the devil. Came to destroy the works of the devil. One of the main centerpieces of the devil’s work is death. He came to destroy that. Did he do it? “Now I see the problem—I see where you’re going with this. But he came to destroy the problem of death, and you shouldn’t die—still going to funerals.” As a pastor, I’m still going to a lot of funerals. What’s going on with that?

Third verse: 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 26—1 Corinthians 15:26—“The last enemy to be destroyed is death.” “What do you mean the last enemy to be destroyed is death? I thought he already destroyed the one who has the power of death. I thought he came to destroy the works of the enemy.” He did. He did that on the cross. Then when will it be destroyed? Well, it’ll be destroyed—to quote the rest of that passage, verse 54—“when the perishable puts on imperishable, when the mortal puts on immortality; then the saying will come true, that death is swallowed up in victory.”

What are you trying to say? I’m trying to say that because of my alliance with Christ, he will give me the grace and the wherewithal to please him and live a godly life. He gives me that. And every time I don’t, it’s a lack of faith and failure on my part, and I need to confess that and get back on the beam. But the effects of the enemy in my life—including my daughter’s paralysis, your epilepsy, my migraine headaches, or whatever it might be—some of those will remain. God gives me grace to be godly, but in the end, all of those will be fixed by the redemption that took place on the cross. It will—when? When the perishable puts on imperishable, when mortality puts on immortality. Then the saying will come true: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your sting?” That’s when we won’t go to funerals anymore.

The question is, do we trust God? Do we have that hope, based on the past redemption price of Christ, that we can look to the future with that kind of confidence, and therefore be godly in the present? It’s as though you woke up in the ninth inning of a baseball game at Dodger Stadium. You fell asleep through four or five innings. And the guy that brought you is sitting next to you, and you wake up because he jumps to his feet, screaming. And you wake up and say, “What’s going on?” And he says, “Walk-off home run.” And you know what that is, right? End of the game. Why? Because the guy got up to bat and hit it over the fence. And now the score—without any response by the other team, because we’re in the bottom of the ninth (or the top of the ninth, depending on who was the home team)—you have, in



this scenario—in the bottom of the ninth at Dodger Stadium, and it’s the home team—at the bottom of it, you know the game is over.

And yet you wake up and the game isn’t over because this big guy who was the fourth position—you know, cleanup hitter—he’s still trotting around the bases. And you’re going, “I thought it was over.” “Well, it is over.” “Well, not really.” “Well, let’s see.” You’re looking at the scoreboard; the scoreboard hasn’t changed. “Yeah, well, then why are all the fireworks going off? Why is everybody cheering?” “Well, because—trust me—he hit it over the fence. You didn’t see it, but you’ve got to trust me and everyone else here—trust this: it is done.” And yet he hasn’t touched home plate yet. But that’s a formality. “Well, a formality but a necessity.” “Well, yeah, can the big slugger get up, hit it over the fence in the bottom of the ninth, and say, ‘I’m too tired to run the bases,’ and go back to the dugout?” Answer, baseball fans? No. Of course not. You gotta run the bases. “Oh, my knees are hurting.” “Run them slowly.” You have to run the bases.

But is it over? Well, it is and it isn’t. Am I redeemed? Well, I am and I’m not. “What do you mean?” I am redeemed; I’m reconciled with Christ; he has paid the price for me; I’m forgiven. But one day—Romans eight—as I crave and yearn for and groan for in my own heart, I will have the redemption of the body, and that is the completion of our salvation. It’s yet to come.

Stand with me; we’ll dismiss in a word of prayer. “God, as we stand here before you, we want to acknowledge our lack of faith, even as that father did as he was confronted by your Son. To the extent that we’ve not believed you—even in things we’ve confessed just now in this time of introspection—we do pray: help our unbelief. Give us that ability, unlike the disciples in this passage, to trust that you’ll do what you say you’ll do, and that we can bank on it. We can count on it. We can act upon it. Make us good, growing, resolved, convicted, assured men and women of faith. In Jesus’ name, amen.”