

Don't Be Ignorant of Satans Designs

by Tim Conway

Don't be ignorant of Satan's designs, for he is a real and powerful enemy who seeks to oppose God's people and hinder God's work.

Duration: 1:05:38

Scripture: Romans 8:38-39, 2 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 6:10-18, Hebrews 13:5, Revelation 12:9-12

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Christian Discipleship"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of being aware of Satan's designs to divide, discourage, and deaden believers. It highlights the need to stay focused on Christ, maintain unity, and be vigilant in guarding our thought life against distractions that lead us away from sincere devotion to Christ. The message encourages believers to be bold, courageous, and to fight the spiritual battle with the armor of God, centered on Christ.

Transcript

2 Corinthians 2 I want to read verses 10 and 11. Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Of course, the Apostle Paul speaking to the church at Corinth.

Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted or taken advantage of by Satan. For we're not ignorant of his designs. Now this message is not on forgiveness.

The title is, Don't Be Ignorant of Satan's Designs. Perhaps we have some visitors not aware of this, but we have three families from our church living down in Laredo, Texas, about two and a half hours down I-35, along with a young man from the church. And we're seeking, with God's help and we believe leadership, to plant a church down there.

Michael Morellis, Michael and Debbie, they were the first ones to move down there. And Michael actually owns the building where the folks down there meet. Michael told me something last Sunday.

I was down there after the services were over and some of us men were sitting around talking. He told me this. He told me that he struggles with discouragement.

He told me that he struggles. His word was boredom. You know the term boredom, it's flatness, apathy, that idea.

But that isn't all. There's something about the timing of Michael's struggle that's really revealing. It started when he moved down there.

And it's been consistent ever since he's been there. And he said, I didn't have these struggles before I came down here. Well, what happened? I mean, what changed? What changed when those evangelistic families went from here and moved 150 miles south right into a dark city, which by the way is right across the border from Nuevo Laredo, which is maybe an even darker city.

What happened is this. These families did not move to Laredo simply for the job opportunities. They moved down there in hopes of bringing light and truth and the Gospel and the message of Christ and a new church to Laredo and the possibility of going across that pedestrian bridge into Nuevo Laredo and starting a church over there.

They moved down there to penetrate the darkness. They moved down there to make a very definite, strategic effort at advancing into the enemy's territory. And you know what, as such, Michael became a threat to the devil that he was one here, but not the same way he is now.

And you know what's very interesting about Michael's experience? It's almost a mirror image of my own. You know what? I was saved in 1990. From 1990 to 2001, I really had very few struggles I felt.

I mean, there were the fleshy things in pride and trying to grow out of that, but just feeling a constant joy in my soul and solid assurance. And it wasn't when I was ordained. It was when we started this church.

Something happened. What happened? We were making advances into the inner city. We were confronting the devil on the front lines.

And I have experienced, sometimes I would call it depression, many times discouragement, but battles in my soul that I never knew before we started this church. And what's going on in this? What happens is we get put in positions where we become objects that show up on the devil's radar screen. The title I've given to my sermon today is Don't Be Ignorant of Satan's Designs.

The fact is, he's got designs. The fact is that there are spiritual oppressions, there are spiritual advances. The devil is real.

And you know what? Paul makes this statement. I get my title right from verse 11. But listen to what he says.

Let's read that again. "...so that we would not be outwitted." That's what the ESV says. It's got to do with being taken advantage of by Satan.

Satan's not going to outwit us. He's not going to get one up on us. And why not, Paul? "...For we're not ignorant of his designs." Now, here's the thing.

I could have called my message, We're Not Ignorant of His Designs. That's the indicative. He's declaring what's true.

I came around at it and I turned it into an imperative, into a command. Don't be ignorant of Satan's designs. But look what Paul's doing here.

Don't you get the feeling that when he says, we're not ignorant of his designs, that's kind of a way of casting a gentle rebuke and a gentle reminder before these Corinthians that that ought to be the case? Because the truth is, you get the feeling from the text that Paul's definitely concerned that they might or we might get outwitted by Satan. In fact, if you look over at 2 Corinthians 11, go over there, because he picks up this theme again about the devil. 2 Corinthians 11.3, Paul says, same letter, I'm afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, in other words, by his schemes, by his devices, I'm afraid that just as he did that to Eve, that your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

Paul is definitely concerned that these Corinthians might be led astray by the serpent. And his fear is that they might be led astray just like Eve was. And how was she led astray? Precisely by being ignorant of the devil's designs to destroy her.

By saying we're not ignorant of his designs to people who are acting like they have forgotten his designs is a gentle way of saying, wake up. And you know, we can become... The thing is, I think the truth is, Paul knew what I know of you. Theologically, I know that you know right doctrine about the devil.

Theologically. I know you have the knowledge of it. Any of you that have spent any time in the Word of God, I know you have some idea.

But just what I'm saying here is he knew that they knew. The Corinthians knew about it. But what happens is we forget.

When it comes to the practicalities, when the devil's upon us, suddenly we forget what his tactics are. I want us to think about this. The first thing I want to do before I dive more into the actual battle of this thing, I want to do a little bit of a theology on the devil.

Certainly not everything that could be said, but some things that I think are important that need to be said. The first one. I could have said the devil is an engineer.

The devil is a designer. The devil is a schemer. The devil is a plotter.

And you see that there. Go back to 2 Corinthians 2.11 if you went over to chapter 12. Go back to 2 Corinthians 2.11. And look at the last portion of v. 11.

We are not ignorant of his designs. You all see the word designs. That word literally has to do with the devil's intellect.

With his reasoning powers. With his capacity for thinking. What you need to realize is this.

The devil is thinking. He's contemplating. He's strategizing.

He has an intellect. This has to do with his reasoning powers and capacity for thinking as he schemes against God's people. Christian, the devil thinks about you.

See, that fly came back again. How come when I talk about the devil, it's Beelzebub, right? The Lord of the Flies. Listen, I really think there may be something to it.

He's a schemer. He's thinking. He has reasoning capacities.

And what you have to realize is we are in those thoughts. The demons as they're thinking and contemplating. It's not like they're out there thinking about the cornfields.

And that once in a while, they happen to glance over and say, oh yeah, there's those folks that meet over there at Fatty's. What you have to understand is as he's reasoning and plotting and scheming, we are the center of those thoughts. He is a schemer.

He is a planner. Just think about this. There are wicked angels spending their time using all their thinking capacities to engineer cruel designs meant to oppose those who hope in Christ and those who seek to be faithful witnesses to Christ.

We need to not be ignorant of that, brethren. We are on His radar screen. John Sykes and I have talked at times, and we have seen very distinct manifestations of demonic activity precede and sometimes follow every one of our evangelistic advances, both here on the home front, in church planting, and out on the mission field.

I mean, it is like clockwork. What does it tell us? There are demons strategically positioned to watch us, think about us, and come up with schemes to hinder us. He designs.

He schemes. He plans. He plots.

He is an engineer of wicked and cruel devices. And we're not to be ignorant of Him. The second thing is this, the devil is a master of disguises.

So not only is he a designer, he is a master of disguises. Now go back to chapter 11. Jump back over there.

2 Corinthians 11. And look at verse 14. And no wonder he's talking about false prophets, false apostles, just false teachers that come in and how they sell themselves.

And he says this, and no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. The second thing we know for certain, the devil is not only a designer, the devil wants us ignorant of his designs. You say, how do you know that? Because he disguises himself as he's about his business and doing his schemes, he wants to appear different than he truly is.

Seen by the very fact that he wears disguises. Brethren, this is a very helpful observation. It means that when and where he's up to his devilishness, things will appear different on the surface than they really are.

Listen, the devil knows throughout history. Isn't it true? It's like as long as we're not aware he's there, we think we're going through different things, and there is something about the church of God when she sets her eyes on the devil and recognizes he's there, there's something that just emboldens the church of Christ. They rise up and they withstand him.

He knows that. He knows when the church of God recognizes his presence. We typically become prayerful.

We typically become bold and even fierce in our stand against him. When once Christians recognized Apollyon and what he was up to in Pilgrim's Progress, he put his hand on the hilt of the sword. That's what happens when we see he's there.

There's something, brethren, when he manifests himself. Isn't there something? I mean, when we have a demonic outburst or a demonic manifestation in the church or among some in the church, there tends to be a boldness that gets infused into the people of God. And he knows that.

He knows that. Brethren, this he does not want. The devil is all too aware that when the church of God arises and is awake and watching and praying, she goes to God Almighty to fetch power against him.

He knows that. Oh yes, he knows, brethren, that the weapons that God has instilled in the church are mighty through God to the tearing down of strongholds. And those are his strongholds.

He knows it. And brethren, right there at the end of Romans, you know what the God of peace is going to do shortly with those Romans? Crush the serpent's head with their feet. And he knows it.

He's got concussions and split, fractured skull and wounds and bruises from the brothers and sisters that have gone before us. And he knows it. He knows that we in and of ourselves are weak.

And it must just cause him unending fury. But when God instills His power in us, brethren, we pull down strongholds. Brethren, look at this.

Turn over to Ephesians. You have this reality in Ephesians. Look at this, brethren, in chapter 3, verse 10.

So that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to who? Rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. And who are these rulers and authorities in the heavenly places? Who are they? Brethren, these are demons. These are the powers.

These are the rulers. These are the ones we fight against. These are the ones that when you come over to Ephesians 6, these are the ones that we wrestle against.

In verse 12, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over the present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. You see them in the heavenly places there. These rulers and these authorities.

And what is it? His manifold wisdom is He displays it through the church. Brethren, it is through the church we crush the serpent's head. It is through the church that the nations are evangelized.

It's through the church that we are going to minister our gifts to one another that we might grow in holiness and build one another up for the sake of the ministry. Brethren, He has so designed it so that this power is poured through men. Yes, it's the God of peace who crushes His head, but He does it through our feet.

And the devil knows this. He's aware of this. The devil's head is banged up from this.

So his approach is one of disguise. Don't be ignorant of this. When he comes through the door, it's not exorcist, typically.

He comes as an angel of light. An angel of light looks good. He comes looking good, but his schemes are deadly and destructive and meant to bring ruin and pain and harm.

Third thing, go to Revelation 12. This one, the devil is not only a designer, he's not only a master of disguises, as he designs and as he disguises himself, he is full of wrath and fury. I want you to see this.

Revelation 12, verse 9. The great dragon. Does that tell you something right off? That God would tell us he's a dragon? I mean, I don't know in any story or movie you've ever watched, typically the dragons are nothing but fire-breathing monsters, right? That's the idea. The great dragon was thrown down.

We have cosmic battle here. Michael throws down the ancient serpent. Thrown out of heaven.

No place. There was battle in the heavenlies. There is a great cosmic battle taking place here.

He's thrown down. This One who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world, He was thrown down to the earth and His angels were thrown down with Him. Another place in Revelation you'll see.

A third of the stars. That's the picture here. Now go to verse 12.

Therefore rejoice, O heavens. Yeah, the heavens can rejoice because He's out of there. You who dwell in them in the heavens, but woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath.

That's another thing, brethren. We need to understand, He's moving around about us and He is full of great wrath. He is full of hatred.

He is full of venom towards us. It is not just that He's got His eyes on us. It is with deep, deep hatred He comes because He knows that His time is short.

Brethren, I'll tell you this, He doesn't scheme endlessly and procrastinate about putting those schemes into practice. He knows His time is short. That means He is hasty in His attacks.

He's hasty in His schemes. Look at verse 17. Then the dragon became furious with the woman.

Do you want to know who the woman is of Revelation 12? We could talk much about her, but follow this. And He went off to make war on the rest of her offspring. Who's the woman? The woman is the one who has offspring.

Who are those offspring? Those offspring are us. You say, how do you know that? Keep reading. Those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

Brethren, we live close to the border. If I told you Mexican mafia is after you, they are full of wrath. They are full of fury.

And it's specifically towards you. If I told you they're right here in San Antonio, if I told you they're coming here to make war against you, if I told you that they only had a short time to get you, if I told you they were secretly scheming to take you out right now, they were going to come disguised, I think you might be alarmed. But if I tell you there are angels pitted against us, brethren, that puts that thing on a whole other level.

We're not talking men. We're not talking the mightiest of men. We're talking the anointed cherub Himself who was thrown down is after us.

And you just listen to that wording in Ephesians 6. These are cosmic powers. These are authorities. Brethren, we have high-ranking angelic beings who are furious with short-term scheming and disguised.

Brethren, who are they making war against? I mean, this is the thing. You know, we so much see with our eyes and we look around. What you need to understand is in all their ranks and their dominions and their hierarchy and their authority levels and their power levels, it is not the mayor of San Antonio they're against.

They're not against the police. They're not against the National Guard. They're not against our military bases.

They're against us! They're coming for us! Those who fear God. Those who keep His commandments. Those who are bearing the testimonies.

You don't think they know the Wilkinsons are going to India? They know for certain that that is happening. Brethren, this is the level. We're in the thick of it.

The greatest cosmic battle on the face of the earth. And you are the objects. You are in their sights.

That's what Scripture says. And oh, brethren, you know these things, but don't we become ignorant of it? We walk out of church. We walk out into the world.

We have to recognize this world, these fallen angelic hosts out there, they are bent on destroying us. They are bent on hindering us. Go back to Laredo.

Our story about Michael Morales, his struggle with spiritual apathy and discouragement. Brethren, these fallen angels are concerned with us. I'll go back to this again.

That time when we were in process of scheming ourselves, although that puts a negative spin on it, but we were plotting to basically take our entire church out to the east side and seek to reach this east side. John Seitzman and I came under such spiritual oppression, virtually unlike anything I've experienced in my entire life. Both of us.

In fact, you guys know John. John's the stalwart. He's over in India.

The guy wears a smile all the time no matter how hard things get. But when we were taking the whole church out in groups to reach this east side, John was coming back from Corpus that day. He came under such clouds of spiritual oppression, he couldn't even be involved.

He told me he had to go home. I was going through the same sort of thing. Why does that happen? Because we're on the radar screen, brethren.

Now that's a good place to be. That's not a bad place to be. He who is with us is greater.

I'm not telling you we need to cower up and go in the corner. In fact, just the opposite. His schemes are meant to get us there.

In fact, let me tell you about his schemes. Brethren, the devil all too well knows small beginnings. He knows what they swell into.

They grow into these tidal waves of opposition against him, washing him backwards in defeat. He knows, brethren. I mean, you think about it.

One little, lone guy out there in the poor parts of London. Ministering to some poor people, thinking he ought to go to China. That turned into a tidal wave that washed him backwards in defeat all through China.

What could the Wilkinsons do? He knows not what they can do in their own strength, but should God get a hold of them and cause them to be mighty for the sake of Christ over there? He knows. He followed a little shoemaker on his boat ride over to India one time. He saw what turned into some translations of Scripture in almost 30 different languages.

And how Adoniram Judson went off into Burma. He knows the kind of things that happen. Brethren, the enemy's tactics.

I'll tell you what they are. And you know this. One, divide.

Two, discourage. Three, deaden. Brethren, did any of you notice the common threads that ran through our missionary reports that I read on Wednesday? Let me rehearse several in your ears.

Joseph Urban, prayer request. That our walks with Christ would be kept fresh, intimate, living ever so close to Him, so as not to succumb to a spirit of lukewarmness or half-hearted service. There's the deadening.

Another prayer request. For us to not get discouraged in the face of many difficulties and discouragements. See, the discouragements are there.

There's your discouragement. For the brethren to be kept in the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace in the midst of recent attacks and difficulties. See, the discouragements and the difficulties and the deadening, they're at hand.

He's not just speculating, well, pray for us in case they come. He's asking you to pray for what he's in the midst of right now. There's Joseph Urban down there in Guadalajara.

Brethren, I have to believe God's hand is upon him. What may God do in Mexico? I'm hopeful. We have never seen major revival in South or Central America or Mexico.

Joseph Urban could be one of the vessels in God's hand to bring that about. I mean, God's Spirit has been meeting in a special way with them. And then he goes on.

And he says, "...for protection from the attacks of Satan who earnestly desires to destroy us with intense zeal and devour us like a raging lion." Then there was Trevor Johnson. He told us his little son, who seems to have been well-converted and already has a burning desire in his heart to become a missionary, and now all of a sudden he's seeing demons at night. Trying to discourage him with fear.

And then did you notice that Trevor said there were only two of the evangelists that he said really seemed... Listen to what he said. He wants prayer for Jimmy, who is now rather burned out, and I fear for his long-term health. There's the deadening.

The fire getting put out. And Trevor said this about him. In the Corowai region, the Donny Popwin evangelists I work with are making many outward Christians, but only Jimmy and Perrin seem to be reaching the heart of the people.

Why would Satan attack this one? Because he's the one that's going for the heart. He's the one with the pure Gospel. He's not just making outward Christians.

He wants to see a deep working of the Spirit of God and conviction. And he's taken that Gospel deep. And Trevor's fearing that he's going to burn out and not be able to go.

Remember what else Trevor said? Also pray for some of our friends. Most of our close friends have or are having signs of depression or marital stress right now. And what's marital stress? Division.

There's the division. Right in the family. Brethren, these attacks are real.

These attacks are meant to hinder. He says one of my friends has thought of moving back home due to deep depression on the part of his wife here in Papua. Remember Prem Wagmeier? I continue to battle with the fallen self as well as with the enemy of our soul.

Our family often sings what Martin Luther penned many years ago. And though this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us. The Prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for Him.

From His rage we can endure, for lo, His doom is sure. One little word shall fell Him. Brethren, I was reading Hudson Taylor's biography this week.

Taylor and Christians from all over the world. Right there about 1890, 1991, 1992. He got to the place.

He's closing in on 60 years of age where he asked the churches of this world to pray for 1,000 missionaries for China. And by the way, God sent them. And while they're planning, while they're thinking, while they're beginning to pray, when they have a conference that they should begin to spread the Word all over the world to pray for 1,000 missionaries, you know what began to happen in China? The devil stirred up all sorts of riots.

Taylor said this, the great enemy of souls has been simply raging against the missions in China. You get that word raging, right? It comes from missionaries. I look on the recent riots as Satan's reply to the appeal for 1,000 additional workers.

And Taylor added this, but God will have His response. While the enemy is mighty, God alone is almighty. During the same season, Mrs. Hudson Taylor said this, the enemy's tactics are to divide, to discourage, to deaden.

Brethren, it's the same. Let us realize our oneness in Christ. Let us be strong and of good courage and seek zealously and continuously the quick-leaning influences of the Holy Spirit.

Brethren, His devices are the same today as then. He seeks to divide. Of course the devil wants to divide.

Why? What happens when he divides? Brethren, when he divides a church, what immediately happens? Our focus isn't our word anymore. Our focus isn't against him. It isn't against taking ground from him.

Suddenly we start fighting against each other. Our strength, our energies go into defending ourselves. Into proving ourselves right and others wrong.

Division scatters. Where two or three are gathered together in My name, you see unity there. They come together.

He's there to split. You hear Trevor. He's trying to split families.

Isn't this what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7? He says that a man and a woman should be intimate together lest Satan get the advantage right there. We see it, brethren. Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a limited time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, but then come together again so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Satan is looking to divide on the basic level of the family and right into the church. Division. Division.

Divide a church. Both sides fight against each other. And then advances outward in outreach, missions, holiness.

They get put on hold. The invasion of the devil's territory is not forefront. It ceases while both sides try to get the upper hand, prove themselves right, defend, protect.

We see the design of Satan on every level. Every level. The devil came and wanted to divide the Lord from Job.

Stretch out your hand. Touch His bone and His flesh and He will curse you to your face. Brethren, doesn't it seem like the very devil was at work at this church in Corinth? Paul acknowledges all these divisions and factions in the church that were rising up.

And you know, didn't Jesus tell us very plainly the devil understands the science of division? Does he not? We're told this, every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste. No city or house divided against itself will stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself.

How then will his kingdom stand? Jesus is telling us He understands the principles of division quite well. And I have to believe if there's anywhere the devil is trying to work his divisive schemes, it's missionary teams out on the front lines. Brethren, even Paul and Barnabas, the very prototype team, separated! Right there in Scripture.

Has our church not seen missionary teams split? Brethren, this is real. Reading Hudson Taylor's biography, the divisions there were real. And Jesus prayed, Holy Father, keep them in Your name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are one.

And the devil fights with savage fury to pull us apart. Brethren, beware. Beware.

Beware when you feel offended by others. What a protection it is every time we prepare for the Lord's Supper that we should not despise the church. There's nothing between us and anyone else.

To keep our accounts with one another very short. To cover over a multitude of sin. To not be so thin-skinned.

To let things pass. Brethren, beware. Beware when somebody does something and suddenly that voice comes in your head.

You know what I mean? Thoughts come in there and suddenly you're thinking some evil thought about somebody else. Brethren, watch it! You have to know! Angels are watching you and they're looking for opportunities to divide this church and to divide friendships, divide our missionary teams, to divide our church planting teams. And to divide us from other churches.

Brethren, it's real. The second thing, discourage. What is discourage? Isn't that another military tactic? You take the courage out of your enemy.

Take the courage out! That means they're no longer lion-hearted. They're no longer bold. This is exactly Ahithophel's counsel to Absalom.

Listen to it. It comes out of 2 Samuel 17. Ahithophel said to Absalom, let me choose 12,000 men and I will arise and pursue David tonight.

I will come upon him while he is weary and discouraged and throw him into a panic and all the people who are with him will flee. I will strike down only the king. And I'll tell you what, that plan would have worked.

It was foiled. Brethren, lion-hearted men and women of courage turn the world upside down and the devil seems to walk through this world carrying a special cup of cold water to put out that kind of soul fire. He looks for men and women who are full of passion and he's looking to put that passion out.

Let me throw my cup of cold water to discourage, take the courage out of them. Leave them like Job in a pile of dust and ashes. Of course, the main weapon in his arsenal to discourage us is simply his lying lips.

Right? Think about the things he comes along and says to us. Look at all the sin. Look at the sin in your life.

You think God's going to use you? You're nobody. You're weak. Look what you are.

Or he comes along and he says, look at all the other gifted people in the church. God has just kind of passed you over. God has forgotten you.

That old snake, he's a liar. He's a slanderer. And look, he'll slander you to you.

He's going to come to you and say God won't use you. You aren't a fit vessel. I mean, you're too something.

You're too young. You're too old. You're too stupid.

You're too backward. You're too new a Christian. You're too uneducated.

You're not like brother so-and-so. You're not like sister so-and-so. I mean, what's the use? Don't go to prayer meeting.

I mean, what good is it? Those prayers don't get answered. And if they do, they're not your prayers. They're somebody else's.

It's a constant line of deceit. What's the use of memorizing Scripture? What's the use of setting time aside to get your family together to look at God's Word and pray? What's the use of evangelizing? Nothing ever happens. Nobody's ever been saved through your preaching or through your evangelism.

Or if it does happen, it's happening to the other guy. The devil specifically... Brethren, I'll tell you, when he's trying to discourage, if there's anything he tries to discourage, it is prayer. God is sovereign.

Your prayers don't matter. It doesn't matter whether you come to the prayer meeting or not. Brethren, there's a famous allegory at the Interpreter's House in Pilgrim's Progress.

You remember it. There's a wall with a fireplace in it and there's rooms on both sides. And when you look at it from one side, you've got a guy throwing water on the fire.

You go around to the other side and there's a man throwing oil on the fire. Well, one is the devil. The other is Christ.

And that is the devil. He is the cold water thrower. And he will seek to discourage us.

He will seek to tell us it doesn't work when you try to plant churches. It doesn't work when you try to send forth missionaries. It doesn't work being on the mission field.

You might as well come home and pursue the medical career. Because it's too dark over there and you'll run into the people and they don't want you over there. And there will be people who will despise them, who will not want them to be there.

And you say, what's the use with all this? Can you imagine being William Carey and working for seven years? And you see nothing? Can you imagine the devil in his ear? Just go home. Go home! Go home! Go home! It's not working. It's not coming together.

Jesus says in a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. Brethren, why? Because that is our tendency. To lose heart.

The devil is constantly trying to douse and discourage and make us lose heart when it comes to prayer. God doesn't hear you. Your prayers don't matter.

Praying doesn't work. The sovereignty thing, brethren. The sovereignty thing.

He'll try to get us with that. But God has His purposes and He's going to do it whether you pray or not. And that's not what Scripture says.

Scripture says God works through our prayers. You have not because you have not asked. Brethren, we are told in Scripture, 1 Corinthians 16, 13, Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong, be of courage.

Brethren, back there where it says I will never leave you or forsake you, words given to us in Hebrews 13, but originally spoke back there to Joshua. Brethren, repeatedly, three times where he said I will not leave you, I will not forsake you. He said don't fear, be of good courage, be strong.

Three times, be of good courage. Have courage, man. We are people that ought to have courage.

God is with us. We can take on angels, brethren. Not in our own strength, but in His.

Ephesians 6, 10, Finally, be strong in the Lord in the strength of His might. We can look the devil in the eyes. We can confess we're weak.

But in Christ, brethren, we are strong in the Lord. That's how you get men like C.T. Studd. Have you ever read? Just go look that up sometime on the Internet.

Just Google C.T. Studd quotes. The man had just phenomenal, every once in a while I'll do that. Every time, listen to two of them.

Let us not glide through this world and then slip quietly into heaven without having blown the trumpet loud and long for our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Let us see to it that the devil will hold a thanksgiving service in hell when he gets the news of our departure from the battlefield. Don't you like that? When we're in hand-to-hand conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil himself, neat little biblical confectionary is like shooting lions with a pea shooter.

God needs a man who will let go and deliver blows right and left as hard as He can hit. And the power of the Holy Ghost. Nothing but forked lightning Christians will count.

You've got to like that. Forked lightning Christians. That's a new banner.

Well, the third thing, deaden. Then there's the devil's design to deaden us. Discourage is to lose heart, to be disappointed, to cast down, to deaden.

That's what happens, brethren, when we get lulled to sleep. The devil can't spiritually kill us. Physically kill us, yes.

But he can't spiritually kill us if we're true children of God. But you know what he tries hard to do? He tries hard to lull us into a spiritual sleep. That's why if you get these words, I mean, think about it.

To the Galatians, let us not grow weary. 2 Thessalonians, as for you brothers, do not grow weary. Hebrews 12, 3, consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself so that you may not grow weary.

Revelation 16, 15, blessed is the one who stays awake. 1 Thessalonians 5, let us not sleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. Again, you remember Christian in Pilgrim's Progress right after the Interpreter's House.

He finds three guys sleeping. Presumption and Swath and I don't know, another guy. There they are just laying there.

He tries to rouse them up. Brethren, are we not acquainted with the devil's lullaby tunes? What does he come along and tell us? What is it to take the power out? What is it that he does to deaden us and to lull us to sleep? Again, his deceptions. But what does he tell us? Things like this.

You're fanatics. Act normal. You're being legalistic.

Loosen up. Or how about this one? You might get killed. I mean, was that not the tone of the words spoken to John G. Peyton as he contemplated giving his life to the cannibals of the South Seas? What did they tell to him? You'll be eaten by cannibals.

And to which Peyton responded with those famous words, Mr. Dixon, you're advanced in years now. Your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave. There to be eaten by worms.

I confess to you that if I can but live and die serving and honoring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I'm eaten by cannibals or by worms. And in the great day, my resurrection body will rise as fair as yours and the likeness of our risen Redeemer. Brethren, the devil is trying to put us to sleep.

And he'll come along. You need to seek security, safety, rest, comfort, ease says the devil. Sleep your life away in front of the computer, in front of the TV.

And this is so often the one. Yes! Be aggressive! Tomorrow. You have time.

You need rest right now. You'll get after this thing tomorrow. Oh, what words! Brethren, how often the term later! How much damage that's done to Christians! You have lots of time.

May God give us the grace. You remember Revival hymn, Ian Paisley? The church of Jesus Christ I wish I could have his voice right now, is largely sleeping like a great bedroom. And you've all Christians in bed and they're all sleeping.

And they're saying, please don't wake me up. I want to sleep on. And of course, when God starts to operate a revival, people cannot sleep.

You can't sleep in church when the Spirit of God awakes the people. Look at the first verse of the 52nd chapter of Isaiah. Awake! Awake! Put on strength! Wake up, you sleepy Christians! Awake thou that sleepest! Arise from the dead.

Christ will give you life. So says Ian Paisley. What are we to do? Brethren, I'll tell you this.

I'll wrap up with this. You turn back to 2 Corinthians right now. Chapter 11, verse 2. I'll just wrap up with this.

I feel a divine jealousy. 2 Corinthians 11-2 For you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ, but I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. Brethren, I want you to see something.

In all of it, the devil's tactics come back to one. And it's really amazing to me. You think you go in there, having done all to stand in the evil day, we are to be girt up with the armor of God.

What's the armor? What makes up the armor? Tell me part of the armor. Belt of truth. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.

We wear a belt of truth that comes right back to Christ. What else do we wear? The breastplate of righteousness Does not 1 Corinthians 1 say that God has made Christ to be our what? Righteousness. Brethren, He is our righteousness in imputed fashion.

And He is our righteousness in practical fashion. Did He not say, learn of Me and follow Me? He is our example in love and righteousness. And He is our imputed righteousness that we wear, that there be no condemnation now for those who are in Christ.

What else is it? Or what else is the armor? The helmet of salvation. There is salvation in none other. Brethren, there is none other name given among men under heaven whereby we must be saved.

There is salvation in none other. So we're talking helmet of salvation. We go to Christ.

We talk the belt of truth. We go to Christ. We talk a breastplate of righteousness.

We go to Christ. What else? A shield of faith. Brethren, do I even have to explain? Faith takes us straight to Christ.

Faith is setting my eyes on Christ. It is called faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. What else? The shoes.

The Gospel of peace. Brethren, does not Mark say it? The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mark 1.1 This is the righteousness of Christ.

It is the truth of Christ. It is the salvation of Christ. It is the Gospel of Christ.

The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. That Word of God is called the Word of Christ. Christ is the Word of God.

In these past days, past times, God spoke to us by the prophets. And this time, brethren, He speaks to us by His Son. It is the Word of Christ.

It is the Word that Jesus said, this reveals Me. In this you look for life. It speaks of Me.

Brethren, it all prays. Did not He say that we should pray, brethren? We should pray. He said if you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

Our prayers are in His name. The Word is His Word. It is the Word of Christ.

Brethren, it all comes back there. It is all there. All the armor brings us back to Christ.

And you see what's being said in 2 Corinthians 11? What you have is this. Paul says, here's my fear. I betrothed you to one husband.

Not five. One. Did you catch that in v. 2? One husband.

One. Not many. One.

And do you see there in v. 3? Sincere. Sincere is the idea of singleness. It is purity.

Think of purity. A woman isn't counted impure if she's with her husband. She's counted impure if she's with other men.

One husband. Singleness. Oneness.

Purity. Christ. Alone.

And what is it the devil's trying to do? All of his dividing and all of his discouraging and all of his deadening and all of his fights and all of his fury and all of his disguises and all of his schemes. You see, Paul goes to the thoughts. Brethren, our faith is lived in the mind.

It is lived in the thought. It is lived in what we believe and what we hope in here. It is lived.

He sees the very essence of the Christian life in a single devotion to one husband in the thoughts. And that the thoughts not be led astray into insincerity or unsingleness. Impurity.

Nothing else defiling. Brethren, you want to know how we stay united, how we stay undiscouraged, full of courage, full of boldness. How we stay alive.

I mean, it comes at us everywhere in all different manners and symbolism and allegory. We have to abide in Christ. We are those branches that have to stay abiding in the vine.

Our thoughts. Brethren, guard your thoughts. I know that in our school, in our work, you can't always think about Christ in the forefront of your mind as fully as you can at other times.

But I'll tell you this, our Christian life needs to be one of progressively moving towards filling my mind with Christ thoroughly, always, fully, at all times. To the place, brethren, where even when we're in the workplace or in the school, we're able to keep Christ rich in our thoughts, immersed in our thoughts, all ingrained in our thoughts, threaded through. That thread of Christ going through everything.

Brethren, anything that can come into our life that robs our thought life of Christ, run from it like the plague. And I guarantee you, He comes as an angel of light. And He comes in His disguises.

And it is always with that in mind to lead you away from Christ. Because that's where your power is. That's where your unity is.

That's where your prayer life is. That's where your ability to do Him damage lays. The power is the power.

It is the sap. It is the essence of Christ flowing from Him to us. And it comes, brethren, in our faith, in our thought life, in our hope, in banking on the promises, in filling our thoughts and our minds with the glory of Christ.

Brethren, this is where the battle is fought. Do not surrender ground to the devil. Do not surrender your thought life to the world, to the devil, folks.

Don't surrender it. Listen, you know what? Every one of us are in a growth pattern. And I would say this, if you want to heed Brother David's words from the Sunday school, don't be hearers only, but be doers of the Word of God so that you're not deceiving yourselves, take this home with you.

Try to identify the one thing in your life that most takes you away from thinking about Christ when you're involved in it and put it out of your life. Can you imagine if we all do that? The entire church right now in fighting this battle, in seeking to maintain unity and liveliness and boldness and lion-heartedness like C.T. Studd, being those lightning-forked Christians. Brethren, how do you get there? There is a way to get there.

There's a way to fight for that. And I would say this, if every one of us put away that one thing in our life that most distracts us from Christ, most takes our thoughts away from Him, whether it's something you read, something you do on the Internet, something you do on television or in a movie or with your friends or conversations you get into, if there's anything you can pinpoint in your life that is the greatest area that steers you away from thinking about Christ, then let's all do spiritual amputation and be rid of it. God, help us to do that kind of inventory right now.

To be doers, brethren. Let us be victorious in this fight. Brethren, He that is with us is greater than he that's in the world.

We can do this. And we will be victorious in the end. Brethren, the Romans' feet were not the only ones to crush His head.

I have to believe that we have already done damage to Him with our feet and I think we can do a lot more. And brethren, He will come on with a fury. And the battlefield may be strewn with some bodies.

But brethren, press on. This fight is not in vain. And we will be more than conquerors.

Brethren, neither angel or powers... Those are two of the things there in Romans 8. They can't separate us from the love of Christ. No matter how furious He may come on, there's no angel going to separate us from the love of Christ. We are in the Father's hand.

And the devil himself cannot move one of those fingers. He can't pry them back. We're in a safe place.

Brethren, He may come on like a roaring lion, but brethren, our great Savior has pulled His fangs out. He may still have roar, but He's got no bite. You know why? Because though He take our life, we go straight to glory.

There's no hell anymore. He can't threaten us with damnation. We're free people.

We're people of the King. We can meet Him like Apollyon on the road and say, we actually like the service of this Prince much better than your service. So out of the way.

And He's given us a sword. The Word of God. The promises.

Brethren, the promises. And I'll tell you, you keep reading there in Revelation 12, it says He defeats the saints. Brethren, you start the book out, He's going to throw some of us in prison for ten days.

But that's all in this world. He may strew our bloody bodies across the battlefield, but brethren, we're more than conquerors nevertheless. Because we will stand there with Christ victorious, risen.

The grave isn't going to keep us. And we will judge angels, will we not? We will cast sentence against the devil himself. And we will watch our victor throw him into the lake of fire.

We are more than conquerors, brethren. But don't weary. Don't tire.

Press on. This is a battle to the end. It's life and death.

It's a battle for the soul. Press on, brethren. May some of that CT stud fire fill our veins.

The stuff that took John G. Payton to the New Hebrides. May it take us up and down our own streets. The Wilkinsons to India.

And others of us to faraway places we don't yet know. God help us, brethren. It's good to be a church that's on the devil's radar screen.

When he doesn't mess with us any longer, when we're no longer a concern to him, then brethren, that's a bad sign. That means we're all asleep and we're no threat anymore. Who was it? Dangerous.

Wasn't that Jim Elliott? Make me dangerous. Oh, brethren, may that be your heart crying. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, I pray, help my brothers and sisters, Lord. May You help us all to do spiritual inventory and be doers of the Word and to amputate that thing. Brethren, Lord, I have to believe that every one of us have an area that we can grow in, that we can sever, that we can let go of, that will bring our thoughts more perfectly into harmony with Christ, to that sincerity, to that purity, that single devotedness to one husband.

To not give our minds in a whoring fashion to other husbands. To not give our spiritual love to those who should not have it. Lord, help us.

Help Your people. Lord, put that lightning-forked reality into the Christians in this place. Lord, I pray for men and women who have been sold out to Christ.

Help us, Lord. Help us persevere. Help us to run fast.

We have an enemy that is fierce and diligent and scheming. Lord, we pray that we would not go to sleep in the midst of a battle. Help us to watch and to be watching and to watch with prayer and to be on our guard and to watch for that one who goes about like a roaring lion.

Lord, we pray for those men and women that we know and we support in faraway places and closer to home. Lord, we pray that You would uphold them. Don't let these men and women burn out who seek to take the Gospel there into Papua New Guinea.

Please, Lord, please encourage them. Give them grace. Hold them up.

Keep them going. Lord, keep us unified. Father, our Lord prayed for our unity.

Please hear His prayer and preserve the unity of our church. I pray these things in Christ's name, Amen.

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