

OpenTheo

The Christian's Advantage



Spiritual Warfare - Steve Gregg

In "The Christian's Advantage," Steve Gregg discusses the advantages that Christians have in spiritual warfare. He asserts that the enemy has lost ground considerably, as the gospel continues to spread and Christian conviction shapes worldviews in society. Christians have the edge, as they are able to draw from the intercession of Jesus and use his authority when praying. Gregg emphasizes the importance of persevering in spiritual warfare and trusting in the exalted position and authority of Christ.

Transcript

...to lay out what advantages the Christian has in the warfare that he is, or she is, engaged in. On the one hand, since we are people more aware of physical and tangible and visible things, we might seem to be at a disadvantage because our enemy is invisible. Since we're not wrestling against flesh and blood, but we're wrestling against things in the heavenlies, invisible beings, it would seem like it's a little bit like going into a boxing ring and you're blindfolded and your opponent isn't.

He can see you, but you can't see him. How could you possibly hope to win? Well, I could understand that if a person would think that way. It sounds like we're really at a disadvantage.

But as a matter of fact, we are the ones at an advantage. The enemy, first of all, is in retreat. That doesn't mean he'll never turn around and take a few shots.

He does do that. But the enemy is in flight. Resist the devil and he will flee from you, the scripture says in James 4.7. And we are the ones who are taking new territory.

The devil is not. At one time, the devil had all the territory, it would seem, at least all except for the nation of Israel. And he held it pretty securely up until the time that Jesus commissioned the disciples to go into all the world and disciple all nations.

Until that moment in time, only Israel had ever really been targeted by God, or I shouldn't say targeted. God had targeted the nations, but for the revelation of the knowledge of God, only Israel had been a recipient. But God commissioned the church

now to go out and bring this knowledge of himself to every nation.

Which means Satan is losing ground. He once fully possessed control, unchallenged, of the entire Gentile world. But since the gospel has been going out, Satan has lost ground considerably.

Now, his main objective is to not lose ground very quickly, or not lose any more ground than he has to. But we are the ones who are on the march. We are the ones moving forward.

He is the one who is in decline and in retreat. And this is something we need to remember, because that's not necessarily something the devil wants us to believe or know. In fact, the impression that some people have is that things are going down the tubes.

That we see ourselves living in a society that once embraced what we might describe as Christian values, as sort of an official cultural norm. And now these values seem to be seeping away like sand through our fingers, and there's not much in the way of Christian conviction or worldview left in our society. And it is true that there are a generation coming up who have never submitted to God.

But it is not necessarily the case that those who are true Christians are becoming non-Christians. It's not as if Satan is gaining ground against the true body of Christ. I won't deny that some Christians fall away, but I don't think that's happening wholesale.

I think a lot of people who were thought to be Christians probably are showing themselves to not be. But there is still advance. There are still new converts being made.

And this society, Western society, is a place where this advance is not as clearly seen as most parts of the world. The Gospel is actually going forward with tremendous strides in the third world and in other parts of the world other than here. Even here, true Christians still exist, and it may be that a generation will arise that we have not evangelized as we should, and we may appear to lose some ground for a while here, but the kingdom of God is moving forward.

It's like a mustard seed. It starts out small, but it grows into a great tree. And the growth is one directional.

It does never shrink. The stone, which was the kingdom of God established by Christ, grows into a great mountain to fill the whole earth. It doesn't shrink.

It just grows. Sometimes the growth is not very rapid when the church is not very cooperative. But we have to remember that we are on the side that is advancing and the side that God has determined will be victorious.

And as a matter of fact, the victory has already been accomplished by Christ at the cross, and we are simply going forward with the announcement of his victory and the ultimatum that people subject themselves to Christ as the king. Now, we have tremendous resources, therefore, and we have the edge, as it were. In the Christian battle against Satan, we Christians have the edge.

We have everything on our side, and Satan has very little on his. We already saw that in Colossians 2.15, Paul said that Christ disarmed the principalities and powers. Jesus said in Luke chapter 11 that he had taken away all of the strongman's armor in which he had trusted.

In another passage we haven't looked at yet, in Hebrews, there is even a more striking declaration of the victory that has already been accomplished against Satan. In Hebrews chapter 2, verses 14 and 15, it says of Christ that inasmuch as the children that he came to redeem have partaken of flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared in the same, that is, he became flesh and blood, he became human, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. That is, Satan, who had the power of death, had kept all people under bondage to the fear of death.

The fear of death is a very predominant fear among those who are unprepared to die, and almost all people can be manipulated by fear of death. Most people who are not Christians can be made to do whatever you want them to do if death is held over their head. Fear of death is a very enslaving thing.

The writer of Hebrews says that Satan maintains a dominion and a bondage over people by imposing the fear of death. Yet Christ came to release those who all their lifetime have been subject to this bondage through fear of death, because Christ brings a reason not to be afraid of death. He gives us cause to not fear death.

And this because he has died, and he has prepared a way for us to be restored to God after death, in fact before death, but including after death, death that holds no terrors. In so doing, it is said that Jesus destroyed him that had the power of death. Now the word destroyed in this place is the Greek word *katergaio*.

Kata, K-A-T-A, is a word that means down in Greek. And *gairo*, I forget what it means, thrust down or something like that, but the lexicons and the Greek dictionaries will tell you that *katergaio* means this, to reduce to inactivity. That's what this verb means.

If you've got vines or if you've got strongs or if you've got one of those lexicons off the shelf back there, and look up the word *katergaio*, it literally means to reduce to inactivity. To say that Jesus destroyed him that had the power of death at the cross through his own death, literally means that he reduced Satan to inactivity. Now this seems like a strange thing to say in view of the fact that Satan is active today, but we

should understand that not every activity of Satan has been totally inhibited, but there is a certain activity that has been totally, Satan has been disarmed and disabled from continuing, and that is by the activity of keeping people in bondage through the fear of death.

This activity, which Satan has done all his life and all of human history, is now something that Satan has been robbed of, this activity. He cannot keep people in bondage through fear of death, if they know the truth, because the truth makes free. And therefore, Jesus came to die that people could be made free from this bondage to Satan, this bondage to fear, and it says in Romans chapter 8 that we have not received a spirit of bondage again to fear.

Paul said that in Romans 8. As Christians, this fear is gone. That's verse 15, Romans 8, 15, For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption. So, the spirit of God has replaced a spirit of bondage.

We are no longer in bondage, where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. This bondage was a bondage to fear, according to Paul. In 1 Timothy chapter 1, I'm sorry, it's not 1 Timothy, it's 2 Timothy chapter 1. In verse 7, Paul said, For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

So, Satan is, in fact, a spirit who uses fear to intimidate, the fear of death. He keeps people in bondage. We have been delivered from that spirit that is at work in the sons of disobedience, and we have been given a spirit that is not a spirit of fear and no bondage.

This spirit that we have received is for everybody to receive. All who receive the gospel can receive this same spirit and be released from bondage and have no fear, because Christ has so accomplished it. Therefore, Christ has accomplished something that can never be undone.

As a matter of fact, what Christ came to do is going to undo the works of the devil, not vice versa. In 1 John chapter 4, no, it's not chapter 4, chapter 3, excuse me. 1 John chapter 3, in verse 8, John said, He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning.

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Now, in Hebrews we read that Jesus destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. I mentioned that the word *katargeo* used in Hebrews 2.14 means to reduce to inactivity, but there is a different Greek word here.

When it says that he came to destroy the works of the devil, the Greek word that is here destroyed is not the same one. This one means undo, to undo, to untangle, to let loose. Remember when Lazarus was called back to life from the tomb by Jesus, but he was still wrapped in grave clothes, and Jesus said, Unbind him and let him go.

This man had been bound by his grave clothes, and humans are bound. Having been in the state of death, spiritually speaking, and they're brought to life by Christ, they still need to be unbound. The works of the devil have to be undone.

And it says in 1 John 3, Jesus came to undo the works of the devil. And so the work of Christ against the devil will never be undone, but the devil's works are guaranteed to be undone. The devil has put out his tentacles into all areas of human endeavor.

He's made his mark and had a tremendous impact on the secular or the pagan world. He even has made inroads into the church, but his works, whatever they may be, can be undone. And Jesus died so that they would be undone.

Look at Psalm 68, if you would. Psalm 68, this psalm is at least partially applicable to Christ. We know this because Paul quotes it in Ephesians 4, and he applies it to Christ.

The verse he quotes is verse 18, which says, You have ascended on high. You have led captivity captive. You have received gifts among men.

And Paul cites this a little bit differently, but the fact is that Paul cites this as being a reference to Christ having ascended. And when he ascended on high, Paul says he led captivity captive. I want you to stay not in Ephesians, but here in Psalm 68.

I want to draw attention to some other verses in it. But when Christ ascended on high, many translations say he led a host of captives. Who were these captives? Well, there's two possibilities.

One is that those who had died in faith prior to Christ's coming, who had been captive, who had been like Lazarus in Abram's bosom, but not free to go into heaven. That those captives Jesus led into heaven when he ascended, that is a possible understanding. But there is another understanding that jives more with the rest of Scripture, it seems, and that is that the demons were led as captives.

He triumphed over them in the cross. When Jesus ascended, he carried in his train captives, possibly not in a literal sense of actually taking the demons with him to heaven in chains as captives, but in a figurative sense, that he is like the victorious general. His enemies are his captives.

They have been conquered. Now, having identified that verse as applying to Christ, I'd like you to go back and look at some of the other verses in this psalm. Psalm 68, in verses 1 and 2, it says, Let God arise, and his enemies be scattered.

Let those also who hate him flee before him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away. As wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

Now, this is a prayer, but it is a prayer inspired by the Holy Ghost. It is a prayer that God

wants us to pray because he wants us to answer it. That prayer is, may God arise and his enemies be scattered.

Scattered like smoke is driven away in the wind, or like wax is melted in the heat of God's presence. Let the enemies of God just melt away and be driven away before his presence. Jesus arose from the dead.

The result has been for the past 2,000 years that the enemies have been scattered and driven back and are melting away. It may not seem like it again if we only look at this little corner of the world, this little moment of history that we live in where it looks at the moment as if God and his forces are losing ground here. But as I said, this is only a very small corner of the world.

Globally, the kingdom of God is advancing as it always has been. And the enemy, it is at the enemy's expense that the kingdom advances. In verses 17 and 18 of this psalm, it says, The chariots of God are 20,000, even thousands of thousands.

The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. You have ascended on high. You have led captivity captive, or a host of captives.

You have received gifts among men, even from the rebellious, that the Lord might dwell there. Even the rebellious, in many cases, have repented and have had to bring themselves as a gift to Christ, as a living sacrifice. Christ is the victor.

In verse 21 of this psalm, it says, God will wound the head of his enemies, the hairy scalp of the one who still goes on in his trespasses. Now, what this declares is that God has arisen in the resurrection of Christ. He has ascended on high in the ascension of Christ.

And the result is the wounding, the scattering, the melting away, the captivity of his enemies. This has already happened. This is at the cross.

This is at the resurrection. This is at the ascension of Christ. Therefore, we are simply living at a time where we have the privilege of enjoying the spoils of victory.

You know, even casting out demons today is not so much spiritual warfare as it is collecting the spoils of a warfare that's already been won. That's what Jesus said, even describing his own activity of casting out demons. He said, you don't do this unless you first bound the strong man, then you do this kind of thing to his household.

Jesus was saying that in casting out demons, he was not acquiring a victory. He had gotten the victory over the enemy. He had bound the strong man, and now he was simply doing what he wished, plundering his house.

And so also, as we go forward and we take the captives away from the mighty, and as we cast out demons, or whatever we may do in terms of advancing the kingdom of life,

this is not that we're accomplishing anything. We're just enjoying the spoiling of the enemy that has already been accomplished by Christ. So we stand in a privileged position in this warfare.

We're not at any disadvantage. We are at an advantage. And if it be argued that the enemy can sneak up on us, he's invisible, etc., etc., well, there is a light that has been shined upon him.

We have, after all, the word of God, and the enemy's devices have been exposed there. We can recognize them if we, like Joshua, meditate day and night on the word of God, then everything we do in this conquest will prosper and will succeed. Now, there's some other things I want to focus on with reference to the advantage or the edge that the Christian soldier has in this battle over the enemy.

One thing that we certainly have, and this is a result of Christ's ascension, is that we now have Christ at the right hand of God interceding for us. Now, I don't know to what degree you have come to appreciate the power of intercessory prayer, but if you read, for instance, Reese Howell's Intercessor, or, for that matter, if you just read the Bible and see how the intercession of a godly man can move heaven and earth, can move God even, can certainly move the enemy, then you know that intercession, even when offered by mere men, is a potent and powerful thing. But we have the intercession of Christ himself on our behalf.

If a man's intercession can be so effective, if the fervent, effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much, how much can we expect to be accomplished through Christ's intercession at the right hand of God, the Father? Let me show you some scriptures about this. In the 22nd chapter of Luke, we actually find Christ already interceding for the disciples against the devil, even before his ascension, before he assumed his role as high priest at the right hand of God, he was already engaged in warfare prayer for his disciples. In Luke 22, verses 31 and 32, the Lord said, Simon, Simon, and this is Simon Peter he's speaking to, Indeed, Satan has asked for you that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail.

And when you have returned to me, strengthen your brethren. Now, what is he talking about here? In the context, he's referring to the fact that Peter is actually going to defect. He's going to waffle.

He's going to deny the Lord three times. This is specifically told him in the next couple of verses. That Satan has requested from God an opportunity to sift the disciples as wheat is sifted.

But Jesus has prayed for the disciples and Peter in particular is going to almost fall through the cracks, but he won't. Christ has prayed that his faith will not fail. And although he will seem to defect, he will come back.

He says, And when you return to me, then strengthen your brethren. But what if Christ didn't pray for Peter and Peter denied the Lord? Would he have returned? Would his faith have failed? I don't know. I'm of the impression that it is at least not a given that Peter would have come back to the Lord if Jesus hadn't prayed for him.

Jesus prayed for him that his faith might not fail. In what context did Jesus pray? In the context of a spiritual battle. The devil was in a tug of war with God over Peter's soul.

The devil had asked, actually in the Greek, as I understand this word, is demanded. The devil had come to God and demanded an opportunity to sift the disciples. Now that may not be clear that that's what it means in the English translation, but if you read this in the Greek, you'd find that the word you in verse 31 is plural.

Indeed, Satan has asked for you. Plural. That he might sift you as wheat.

That is, you disciples. However, I believe in verse 32, I have prayed for you, Peter, is in singular. You'll find there is a switch there in the Greek from the plural you to the singular you.

Basically, what Jesus is saying is that Satan has felt himself entitled and has asked God and has received permission from God, just like he received permission to test Job, he has received permission to test the disciples' faith and as such to sift their number. Now the sifting is an image that comes back from Amos chapter 9 where God has said that he would sift Israel in the nations and he said not one grain of wheat will fall through the holes. Not one grain will be lost.

One of the ways in which the Jews separated wheat from chaff was to put it through a sieve. The chaff was much finer than the wheat and would be able to go through the openings in the sieve. The wheat would be retained after the sifting was done and the chaff would be removed.

God said in the 9th chapter of Amos that he was going to sift Israel which suggests that the chaff would be removed. But he said not one grain of wheat will be lost. The remnant will survive the sifting.

Well now, even the remnant is being sifted the disciples. And among them there is found a defector Judas who got like chaff sifted through the cracks. But Peter almost fell through.

And Jesus said Peter the devil is sifting the disciples. You are a special target and you could fall through the cracks but I have prayed for you that your faith won't fail. And therefore, though Judas will be lost Peter will not be because Jesus prayed for him.

Now you might say, well I'm not Peter. Maybe I'm a Judas. How do I know that I'm not going to fall through the cracks? How do I know that if the devil would sift us sift the

church today that I would not be a defector that I would stay faithful? Well, the Bible says that true Christians all have the advantage of Christ's intercession for them before the Father.

In Romans chapter 8 Romans chapter 8 verses 31 through 34 Paul says, what then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son but delivered him up for us all how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died and furthermore is also risen who is even at the right hand of God who also makes intercession for us. Christ is on our side.

Who can be against us? Christ justifies us. Who can condemn us? Christ is interceding for us at the right hand of God even as he interceded for Peter. Therefore, we do not have to stand on our own strength.

We have the strength of God. We have the strength of Christ's prayers on our behalf and the power of God in answer to Christ's prayers for us. Similar teaching is found in Hebrews 7 speaking about Christ as the high priest who intercedes for his people.

In Hebrews 7 in verse 25 the writer says, Therefore, he is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them. Christ is still alive, of course. He died, but he rose again.

Since he is alive and will ever live he ever lives to do what? To pray for us. He prayed for us in John 17. I won't turn you there right now but I hope you are familiar with that chapter where Jesus prayed for the church, prayed for his disciples for their strength and continuance and being kept from the evil one.

Remember in John 17, verse 15 Jesus prayed, Father, I do not pray that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the wicked one. Jesus prayed that his people would be kept safe from the wicked one, from the wiles of the devil. In Hebrews chapter 9, verse 24 it says, For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands which are copies of the truth but into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us.

He appears in the presence of God for us just as the high priest in Israel appeared in the Holy of Holies for the nation to intercede for the nation to request the mercy of God because of the failures and the sins of the nation. So Christ appears before God for us. We could not wish for a better representative.

It certainly gives us the ultimate advantage against the accuser of the brethren. In 1 John 2.1 1 John 2.1 it says, My little children, these things I write to you that you sin not. And if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.

Now what does this mean? Does this mean that a Christian can't fall into sin? No, it

actually says if you do sin, we have an advocate. We have someone advocating our cause, a defense attorney before God. And that is Jesus making intercession for us.

So there is no guarantee. The intercessory prayer of Christ is not a guarantee that we will not sin. Even his prayers for Peter did not prevent Peter from denying him three times.

Peter still sinned even though Jesus prayed that his faith would not fail. So the intercession of Christ does not necessarily guarantee that we are not going to sin. But it does mean that if we sin, we have an advocate before the Father, which means the accuser cannot prevail.

Condemnation cannot overwhelm us. We can still have fellowship with the Father. We can still have a direct line on God's assistance and on God's favor in our lives.

And that's what we need more than anything else in the conflict that we are in. Now, the Bible teaches something that is very significant for us to understand, and it has tremendous ramifications on our advantage that we have over the enemy in spiritual warfare. In Ephesians 1, in verse 20, again we have to pick up Paul's thought in the middle of a long sentence.

It says, which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come. Now, Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of the Father far above all authority, far above all dominion and power, above all principalities and powers. It certainly means that Jesus is in the position of predominant authority over all other authorities including the demonic authorities, if we could say they have authority at all.

But then in the next chapter of Ephesians, Ephesians 2 and verse 6, or 5 and 6, it says, even when we were dead in trespasses, he made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved and raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Now, Jesus is seated at the right hand of God in the heavenlies above all principality and power.

Where are we? We are in him. God has raised us up and made us to sit in the heavenly places in Christ. Now, what this means is that the exalted position of Christ over all authorities and powers, we share in it.

Now, that doesn't mean that we can exercise some kind of authority like a loose cannon doing anything we want to. It means, though, that as we operate under his authority, we are entrusted with his authority. We operate in his authority.

This is what it means to act in the name of Jesus. We're going to talk about the name of Jesus in a moment. Let me show you some other related texts to this concept.

In Colossians 2, it says in Ephesians 2, 12, that we were buried with Christ in baptism in which you also were raised with him through faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead. This speaks about our position in Christ. It says in Colossians 3, verse 1, if then you were raised with Christ seek those things which are above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God.

We've been raised with Christ. We're seated in Christ in heavenly places. If you would look at 1 John 5, you'd find what advantage this confers over the enemy.

In 1 John 5, verse 18, John says, we know that whoever is born of God does not sin. This means does not practice sin. Doesn't go on sinning as a habit.

But he who has been born of God keeps himself and the wicked one does not touch him. Now, that expression, he that has been born of God keeps himself, reads a little differently in the Alexandrian text. Only one word different.

And that is keeps him or guards him. Now, the question is who guards whom? The way it reads here in the Textus Receptus is the one who is born of God keeps himself, guards himself. The Bible tells us to keep ourselves in the love of God, to keep ourselves from evil and so forth.

There is a sense which we are exhorted to keep ourselves. And the person who keeps himself out of the devil's territory, the wicked one, can't really lay hold of him, can't touch him. But the way the Alexandrian text reads, he that is born of God keeps him, keeps who? Well, we've got the one who is born of God as the one being kept.

But he who has been born of God keeps him, would suggest Christ who has been born of God keeps him, the person who has been born of God. And therefore the keeping from the power of the enemy would be something that is done by Christ keeping us rather than us keeping ourselves. No one knows for sure which reading, the Alexandrian or the Textus Receptus, is really the original.

Either one would make perfectly good sense in reference to other scriptural statements. We are kept from being seized upon by the enemy by Christ keeping us but also by us keeping ourselves. Both statements are true.

But the point is that because we are born of God we have an advantage that Satan cannot seize upon us. He cannot overcome us that is if we don't let him. All of this is important to note that when Christ intercedes there is still free will.

There is still our opportunity to thwart God's purpose in our lives. There are times when Christ wishes to draw people as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings but they do not come. There are times when Christ would pray for us to overcome sin but we still sin and therefore he prays that we be forgiven of sin.

The way to understand the balance of this is to see it as it is in 1 Peter 1.5 which says that we are kept by the power of God through faith. The word kept in 1 John 1.5 where it says we are kept by the power of God is a word that means to guard as with a troop of soldiers to put a garrison or a guard around something. Actually the same Greek word is used by Paul in 2 Corinthians when he talks about how Aretas the king of the Damascenes kept the city in order to try to capture Paul but he was let out a window in a basket in an escape.

He used the same word here. Aretas the king of the city or the king of the Damascenes kept the city of Damascus. That means guarded it with a garrison of soldiers.

That's the word that is used here. We are kept by the power of God. Sounds like a pretty secure position.

However, it goes on to say through faith. That is so long as we are exercising faith so long as our trust is in Christ then God's power keeps us. We don't have to be kept from the power of Satan by our own strength.

Fortunately, we have but little strength. But our faith is our salvation. If we trust God, His strength comes.

Now we all know that it is possible to stop trusting God. We know people who have trusted God at times in their lives and at later times in their lives don't trust God. We probably have even known in our own hearts times when we weren't trusting God as much as we did at other times.

We know that the Bible says that many will depart from the faith. Not everybody who trusts God at an early time in their life trusts Him to the day they die. Perseverance is not guaranteed in the faith.

Jesus said, Whosoever endures to the end shall be saved. So we know there is not a guarantee that simply because Christ prays for us or simply because the power of God is there to keep us or guard us that we will necessarily benefit from it. It says in Hebrews chapter 2 that the Jews or chapter 3 I guess it is that the Jews in Moses' day did not benefit from the promises of God because it was not mixed with faith in those who heard it.

God had made a promise to them but it didn't materialize automatically. It says in Hebrews chapter 3 no 4, excuse me verse 2 Hebrews 4.2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them but the word which they heard did not profit them not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. There are promises of God.

There is the power of God accessible to us. But if it is not mixed with faith in those who hear it it will not profit us. We are kept by the power of God through faith so long as we trust God so long as we have faith then His power keeps us.

But having faith is something you can decide to do or not to do. At any moment any time you can say I will trust in the Lord I will believe God. You can just decide to do that.

I realize there is a major theological system out there that says you can't make that decision but I believe the Bible puts all the responsibility on us to believe. We are the ones commanded to believe. The Bible doesn't command God to give us faith.

The Bible commands us to believe all the time continuously. When a person lapses from faith it is not God who gets the blame it is the person who gets the blame. It is our responsibility to choose to believe.

If we make that choice then we have resources that are out of this world. We have the power of God. We have our position in Christ.

The wicked one touches us not. Now there are limits to what I understand that word to mean. The wicked one touches him not.

I mean after all the Apostle Paul himself was afflicted in the flesh with a messenger from Satan. There is a sense in which the wicked one touches us not but not in every conceivable sense of that phrase. But we will examine that a little more later when we talk about demons more specifically about demonization.

But suffice it to say we are in a very exalted advantaged, privileged protected position in Christ. It may be that we have fierce, cruel, hateful enemies but none is equal to He that is for us. If God is for us who can be against us? And so long as our faith remains so long as Peter's faith does not fail he will not be lost.

Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not fail. It did falter but eventually he recovered. And so it is tremendous to have the intercessory prayer of Christ and our position in Christ as advantages in this warfare.

There is another advantage and this is related to what we just said and that is the mighty name of Jesus. The Bible indicates that the name of Jesus is a mighty resource. In fact, in Proverbs I wish I had written it down it is not in my notes.

I think it is Proverbs 18 but I am kind of guessing here kind of working from an old man's memory. I thought it was Proverbs 18 it may be elsewhere. It says that the name of the Lord is a strong tower.

It is verse 10. Proverbs 18, 10. The name of the Lord is a strong tower.

The righteous run to it and are safe. The righteous man knows that in warfare his safety is not in his own strength, not in his own authority, not in his own skills. His safety comes in running into the strong tower that is the name of the Lord.

He puts his trust in the name of the Lord not in his own resources. But what does it

mean? What do we mean by the name of the Lord? Look what Jesus said in Mark chapter 16. If you happen to have a defective Bible it may not have these verses.

Some Bibles do not have them. And some verses have them but tell you that they are not authentic. But that is... I disagree with that assessment.

It is true that some manuscripts leave these verses out but it is interesting that these verses were quoted from by Irenaeus who wrote earlier than even our earliest surviving manuscripts of the New Testament. So the writings of Irenaeus confirm that these verses existed in the New Testament earlier than even the Alexandrian text came into existence which leaves them out. But Jesus said to the disciples or of the disciples in Mark chapter 16 verse 17 These signs will follow those who believe.

In my name they will cast out demons they will speak with new tongues they will take up serpents and if they drink anything deadly it will not by any means harm them. They will lay hands on the sick and they will recover. Now these are a variety of miracles that we are told will be done in Jesus' name by the believer.

The first thing is particularly related with the conflict between Satan and Christ and that is that they shall cast out demons. So long as demons inhabit people and keep them in bondage Christ's victory has not yet been realized in those lives. However, when you cast out demons you realize the victory of Christ you enforce the victory of Christ in that case.

This is part of spiritual warfare or as I said earlier it's actually gathering the spoils of a warfare that's already been won. But Jesus said that the casting out of demons will be accomplished by believers in His name. What does it mean in His name? I grew up in a Christian home and we always said in Jesus' name when we prayed.

I remember once even going somewhere with my father in a car and we were listening to a Christian radio station and some program was on with which we were not familiar. My father didn't know the preacher who was speaking and in fact he had some concerns about some of the things the guy said. He wasn't sure whether the guy was right or wrong.

I remember him commenting during the man's talk on the radio that he wasn't sure about that and wasn't sure about that. So I guess you know where I got my skepticism. But at the end of the program the preacher on the program prayed and at the end of his prayer he said in Jesus' name we ask.

Oh at least he prayed in Jesus' name. And he meant that. I could tell by his tone and by his manner of saying it.

Oh well that absolves everything. The man might have said all kinds of things that I questioned but he did pray in Jesus' name and I guess that means he's okay. Now my

father probably was no more naive than most of us are with reference to the significance of praying or doing anything in Jesus' name.

I grew up thinking and I think I'm in good company because most Christians seem to think so that to pray in Jesus' name I thought meant to simply say the words in Jesus' name at the end of the prayers. In other words it is the attachment of a spoken formula to a prayer. So that so long as you pray no matter what you pray so long as you say in Jesus' name afterwards you have prayed in Jesus' name.

Now Jesus made it very clear that prayers that are offered in his name will be answered. This he made very clear in John chapter 16 verses 23 through 27. Jesus said, And in that day you will ask me nothing.

This is John 16, 23 through 27. And in that day you will ask me nothing. Most assuredly I say to you whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give it to you.

Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask and you will receive that your joy may be full. These things I have spoken to you in figurative language but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language but I will tell you plainly about the Father.

In that day you will ask in my name and I do not say to you that I will pray the Father for you for the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came forth from God. Now notice Jesus keeps saying you will pray in my name and what you pray in my name the Father will do for you. You've never prayed in my name before but from now on I want you to pray in my name and it will be done for you.

He says I don't say that I'll pray the Father for you about these things. You talk to him yourself. You talk to him in my name.

What does it mean to pray in Jesus' name? I think that most Christians like my father when I was growing up and I myself for many years believe that it just means that when you pray you better make sure that at the end of your prayer you say these words in Jesus' name. Amen. And that if you just said amen without the Jesus' name part you are somehow neglecting an essential part of Christian duty in prayer because we are supposed to pray in Jesus' name.

As the years went by and I studied the scripture more I understood that doing something anything in Jesus' name isn't quite like that. That's not what it means. I remember reading a book by a well-known author a Christian author when I was young in which he was speaking about Colossians 3.17. In Colossians 3.17 Paul said whatever you do in word or in deed do all in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Now I knew that we were supposed to pray in the name of Jesus but what does it mean

whatever you do in word or in deed do all in the name of Jesus. And I remember reading I was probably about 12 years old reading a well-known Christian author who was talking about this passage. And he said how do you do everything in the name of Jesus? He says well you do that by invoking the name of Jesus when you do something kind.

If you give a gift to a poor person or you do some kind of kindly deed just say I'm doing this in the name of Jesus. And therefore you do it in His name. Now once again I got the impression confirmed to me through that means that doing something in the name of Jesus means to utter a formula a formulaic collection of words.

The words are in Jesus' name. And that so long as you utter those words somehow you are acting, speaking praying in Jesus' name. But that is not necessarily what is meant when we act in the name of Jesus or in the name of anybody.

To act in somebody's name means to act in their place and to do in their place what they would do if they were there doing it. That is to say you can do some piece of work you can make some kind of official decisions in the name of another if you've been authorized by them to use their name. If someone gives you their credit card and gives you permission to forge their signature on it it's probably not legal to do but you can still do it and he's not going to take you to court about it because he gave you permission.

You've got the authority to use their credit and their name on that card. Perhaps more within the realm of obviously legal things. When an emissary of a government or an ambassador is sent to represent his country that person acts, hopefully always in the name of his country.

He goes there commissioned authorized and entitled to speak and act in the name of his country maybe even to enact policy that will affect everybody in his country. The one who commissioned him has given him the right to act in his name and to act in the name of another therefore means to do with their authority and with their permission what they would do if they were there. You are an extension of that person if you act in that person's name.

Now what's interesting is when you read of the prayers in the Bible and there are a few recorded in the New Testament as well as in the Old there are some prayers they do tend to end with the word Amen. But none of them end with the phrase In Jesus' name, Amen. When Jesus said when you pray pray like this and he gave a model prayer the last word in that prayer was Amen but there was no In Jesus' name, Amen.

We have the apostles praying in Acts chapter 4 or 5 I forget which it is they have a prayer their prayer ends with an Amen but not with In Jesus' name. In fact we don't have any reference in the New Testament to anybody attaching that formulaic saying to the end of their prayers. Were they then neglecting to pray in Jesus' name? I think not.

Because to pray in Jesus' name doesn't really mean that you attach any special words or any special formula to your prayer. It means that when you pray you pray as one commissioned by Christ in his authority to pray what he would pray if he were there praying right now. You pray as if you were him.

That means you pray for the things he would pray for and you expect answers just like he would expect answers because you're praying with his authority. So it is to act in a person's name in general. To do whatever you do in word or in deed in the name of Jesus as Paul said to do in Colossians 3.17 simply means that no matter what you do at any time of any day you should do what Jesus would do as his official representative doing the very thing that he would do if he was standing in your shoes as his agent, as his representative as one commissioned by him to represent his interests and to do his thing for him here.

That's what it means to act in the name of another. Whether you are casting out demons whether you are praying for the sick no matter what you do whether you're praying you can actually pray in Jesus' name without saying in Jesus' name at the end of your prayer. Now I've always had the habit of saying it so I always end my prayers by saying in Jesus' name but I am aware, very fully aware that I could say that and still not be praying in his name.

It's possible to put those words at the end of the sentence and not in any sense really be praying in his name because I'm not praying anything that he himself would pray for. I'm not praying anything that in any way represents his interests. I could pray an extremely selfish prayer not at all guided by the Holy Spirit not at all the kind of thing Jesus would pray and say I ask this in Jesus' name and I'm lying.

I'm not asking it in his name because to ask in his name is to ask as he would ask to be in his person doing what he would do as his official authorized agent to use his name to transact his business to cast out demons likewise. You can utter the name of Jesus like the sons of Sceva did in Acts chapter 19. Do you remember? They met a demon possessed man they'd heard of Paul casting out demons in the name of Jesus so they decided to try it.

They were already exorcists of the Jewish sort which means they had their own formulas they were accustomed to using. They thought they'd try Paul's formula. Maybe he was getting better results than they were.

I don't know. But they encountered a demon possessed man and Acts 19 tells the story how they said we command you in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches to come out. And in fact the demon did not obey although they used the name of Jesus.

The demon said well Jesus we know. Paul we know. But who are you? And we read that the demon possessed man leaped on these seven men and tore them up.

Tore their clothes off them and they ran out into the streets naked and wounded. One guy against seven. Supernaturally empowered by demons to beat them up.

Fortunately for them he didn't kill them. But what went wrong? They used the name of Jesus but they couldn't act in the name of Jesus. They didn't know Jesus.

They were never authorized by him. They were not his agents. They weren't Christians.

Only Christians can act in the name of Jesus and they can do so with or without uttering the formula. Sometimes in the Bible the formula is uttered and sometimes it is not. But when Christians act in the will of God trusting God they are acting in the name of Jesus.

And that name is a name that is above all names. That every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess even the devil himself cannot resist the authority of that name. Let me show you something in the book of Acts that I personally think illustrates Peter's own development of his spiritual understanding about this.

Because he had heard Jesus say ask things in my name. He had heard Jesus say you will cast out demons in my name and you will lay hands on the sick in my name and they will be healed. He knew that he as a Christian was supposed to act in the name of Jesus.

So what did he do? In Acts chapter 3 I said 2, excuse me, chapter 3 it says that there was a lame man that Peter and John encountered at the gate of the temple. And in verse 4 it says and fixing his eyes on him with John, Peter said look at us. So he gave them his attention expecting to receive something from them and Peter said silver and gold I do not have but what I do have I give you.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And indeed it happened. The man did receive strength in his ankles and he rose and walked and leapt and praised God.

What did Peter say? He said in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. He used the formula and he acted in Jesus name and it worked. But if you look at chapter 9 of Acts the same apostle and another situation facing a lame man.

It says in verse 32 of Acts 9 Now it came to pass as Peter went through all parts of the country that he also came down to the saints who dwelt at Lydda. There he found a certain man named Aeneas who had been bed ridden 8 years and was paralyzed. And Peter said to him Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you.

Arise and make your bed. Then he arose immediately. So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

Now Peter here again helps a man who is incapable of walking. This man is paralyzed. And he raises him up from his bed.

He does not however say in the name of Jesus Christ I command you to be healed. Instead he said Jesus Christ heals you. Now was this acting in Jesus name? Of course it was.

But what Peter exhibits here is an awareness that by he himself acting in the name of Jesus it was actually Jesus acting. Peter there healing in the name of Jesus really was Jesus healing. Peter was authorized as a member of the body of Christ to act as Christ.

And what Peter was there doing he could declare Christ was doing. Paul said something like that we'll look at in a moment over in 2nd Corinthians he said that he acted in the person of Christ. As an apostle commissioned by Christ.

But Peter healed this man in the name of Jesus. But his words were not quite the same as in chapter 3. He didn't say in the name of Jesus Christ be healed. He said Jesus Christ heals you.

He still acted in the person of Christ. He still acted as Christ's agent. In fact it was Christ healing through him.

And he gave acknowledgement of that. But then you look at verse 36. At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha which is translated Dorcas.

This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her they laid her in an upper room and since Lydda was near Joppa and the disciples had heard that Peter was there they sent two men to him imploring him not to delay in coming to them.

Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come they brought him to the upper room and all the widows stood by him weeping showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. But Peter put them all out and knelt down and prayed and turning to the body he said Tabitha arise and she opened her eyes and when she saw Peter she sat up.

Now notice what Peter said. Did he say in the name of Jesus Christ arise? No not as the record shows he just said Tabitha arise and it worked. Did he do this in Jesus name? Of course.

He had no power of his own to do these things. Whatever Peter did miraculously he had to do in the name of Jesus. But what do we see here? We see that he didn't use the formula but he was nonetheless walking in the reality of operating in Jesus name.

Now what does it mean to act in Jesus name? It means to do what Jesus would do in those circumstances as his representative, as his agent. It's interesting that Peter had three times at least seen Jesus raise the dead. He saw how Jesus did it.

In each case Jesus had a very simple way of raising the dead. First he would address the person who was dead. He'd actually speak to the dead person.

He'd either say Lazarus or little girl as in the case of Jairus' daughter or young man in the case of the son of the widow of Nain who had died. Jesus first addressed the person who was dead and then he just simply said arise or come forth. Told him what he wanted him to do.

Get up, come out, wake up. Arise. In other words Jesus method of raising the dead was simply to address the person and command him to get up.

Did Peter follow that example? He certainly did. He said Tabitha arise just like Jesus would have done. In other words Peter did just what Jesus would have done.

Peter had seen how Jesus did it and he imitated him. That is acting in Jesus name too. Now that doesn't mean that we shouldn't utter the name of Jesus.

Frankly I think it's a very valuable thing to do. Now see here's an interesting thing. The one time we read that Peter didn't utter the name of Jesus he was alone with the corpse.

He put everyone else out. But when Peter did public miracles he always made sure Jesus name was mentioned. He wanted to make sure that in the eyes of others no one would give him personally the credit or think he was acting in his own name or his own authority.

A point that he belabored to make clear when he was called before the Sanhedrin in chapter 4. He said it's not by our own godliness or our own power that we've done this thing. It's done in the name of Jesus. In a public setting to utter the name of Jesus makes perfectly good sense to make sure that Jesus gets the credit in the eyes of the observers.

But when he was all alone with the corpse there was no one to make that impression on. He just acted in the name of Jesus. He just did what Jesus would do.

Tabitha arise and it happened. Which shows that there are times when it is absolutely appropriate or right to use the formula in Jesus name. But it is not always the case that the formula corresponds with the reality.

You can act in Jesus name when the formula is not uttered and you can utter the formula when you are not really acting in his name. So to say that we have the advantage of the name of Jesus and in his name we can cast out demons and so forth simply means that we have the privilege of being in him authorized by him to act as him. We are members of his flesh and of his bones.

We are his body. We do his work through his authority. But of course you do not act in Christ's name if you do not do what he would do.

Therefore to pray in Jesus name has a lot more to do with the specific thing you are praying than it does with the specific utterance of a formula at the end of the prayer. Also to cast out demons in Jesus name, the sons of Sceva were unable to do so even though they uttered the formula. They said in the name of Jesus but the demons knew that the speakers did not know Jesus because the demons did.

The demons said we know Jesus, we know Paul but we do not know you. You are not in the circle. We do not know who you are.

We do not acknowledge your authority. But in the same town demons were acknowledging Paul's authority every which way. In fact it is in that very town according to Acts 19 verses 11 and 12 that Paul could even send out aprons and handkerchiefs from his body and people who were demon possessed not even in Paul's presence would come the demons would come out of them it says in verse 12.

Just when they received a hanky from Paul there is authority. We know that the hanky was not uttering the phrase in Jesus name but because it was a hanky from Paul who was Christ's representative standing in Christ's place and doing what Christ would do it happened, it worked. Look over at 2 Corinthians.

I mentioned that we turn here. In 2 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 10 Paul is talking about a rather unpleasant relational problem that had occurred in the church a man had been disciplined and put out of the church and apparently had come around to the degree that Paul felt he should be restored to fellowship now and so Paul is urging the church to have the man back and forgive him for what he did he does never specify exactly what it was the man had done. Some people think this is a reference to the man in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 who had been living with his father's wife but there is no indication in 2 Corinthians that this is that same man but he says in verse 10.

Now whom you forgive anything I also forgive for if indeed I have forgiven anything I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ. I think the King James renders it in the person of Christ but in the presence of Christ I forgive him indicating that I am standing in the presence of Christ as Christ's representative forgiving this man if I forgive him Christ is forgiving him I forgive him in Jesus' name. By the way the apostles were allowed to do that.

Jesus said to them in John chapter 20 whose sins you remit they are remitted, whose sins you retain they are retained. The apostles had it would appear a special authority in that respect. Another place in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 2 Corinthians 5 verse 20 Paul says now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God were pleading through us we implore you on Christ's behalf or in Christ's stead as his representatives we implore you be reconciled to God.

To act in Jesus' name means you act on his behalf you act in his authority you do his

deeds that he would do if he were there because in a sense he is in you and you are his bone and flesh you are his body. So what is he does through you? He does it is his doing and we have the name of Jesus when we stand before demons or before the devil we have the authority to invoke the name of Jesus frankly I always think it's a good idea to invoke the name verbally although I personally believe that even if the name were not verbally invoked if we are in fact standing in Christ's place acting in his name the demons must obey anyway not because of the words we speak but because of who we are and where we stand in Christ because we in Christ are seated in heavenly places above all principality and power we have an authority that the demons have no right to challenge now there are times when demons do not come out when a Christian commands it and we are going to have another session at another time where we talk about demon possession exorcism, deliverance and one of the issues we'll talk about is why sometimes demons don't come out but it's not because of any defect in the name of Jesus it's a strong tower, a mighty fortress now we have one other thing, at least one other thing to our advantage in addition to Christ's accomplished victory in the past, his intercession presently before us, our position in Christ and the use of his name which all authorities and powers and dominions must acknowledge the authority of Christ's name we have also promises from God and God cannot default on his promises we have to believe them though and to believe them we have to know them, it says faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ, therefore without hearing it we won't believe it, so I want to acquaint you with some of the promises of God for us and these promises should be memorized it seems to me because they are the sort that we will need to lean upon them, we will need to trust in God's faithfulness to keep his promises and that requires that we know what his promises are if we are to mix them with faith in 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 4, excuse me chapter 1 verses 3 and 4, I keep getting those numbers wrong today for some reason I guess I'm kind of spaced out 2 Peter 1 3 and 4 Peter says as his divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness that would include all things necessary for our warfare, through the knowledge of him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, now there's lots of parts to those sentences and it makes a really good lengthy bible study just to go through it phrase by phrase and talk about it but what I wanted to point out to you is he makes reference to the great and precious promises that we've received from God which enable us to escape the pollution of the world, the bondage that lust brings us into, we certainly cannot have any advantage in spiritual warfare if we ourselves are slaves if we're chained, if we're in bondage we must be free ourselves first and through the promises of God this freedom is obtained, what promises? Well there's a lot of promises of God, some of them are directly related to spiritual warfare, others are related to other matters one of the promises of Jesus directly related to spiritual warfare and our security in this battle is found in Luke 10 verse 19 Luke 10 and 19 Jesus said to his disciples behold I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of

the enemy and nothing shall by any means hurt you now this is specifically about spiritual enemies because it talks about all the power of the enemy, the serpents and scorpions here are not likely to be intended as literal serpents and literal scorpions although of course we know in another place Jesus said those who believe in me can take up serpents and Paul demonstrated that this promise is true in Acts 28 when a serpent bit him and he didn't die but not withstanding those facts I believe that serpents and scorpions here is simply another way of saying all the power of the enemy which are demonic, we know that the snake or the serpent is an established symbol for the devil or for demonic power scorpions also apparently are there is reference to scorpions in some of the prophecies of the Old Testament in a context which seems to speak of spiritual enemies but perhaps more familiarly in Revelation chapter 9 we have scorpion like locusts who have scorpion tails released on the world, I take those to be a reference to demonic forces but interestingly these creatures afflict everybody except those who have the seal of God on their forehead, it specifically says that it was given to them to torment for five months those who dwell on the earth except for those who have the seal of God the Christian nothing shall by any means hurt you, that is if you are walking in the authority of Christ, if your faith is in his promises then you are immune to demonic attack now later another time we'll talk about whether a Christian can be demonized or not but let me just say this we have this assurance that if a Christian is trusting in the promises of God here's one that says that he will not be harmed by any power of the enemy by any demonic power in Romans 16 20 there is a promise to know and to retain and to count upon also, in Romans 16 20 Paul said and the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly that's very similar to Jesus' promise we just read where he says I give you authority to tread upon or trample upon serpents and scorpions here Paul says the God of peace will trample or tread or crush Satan under your feet shortly so this is another promise of victory against Satan one promise that we need to be aware of is 1 John 4 4 in 1 John 4 the opening verses are telling us that there are spirits to beware of so don't believe every spirit in addition to the spirit of God there is a spirit of antichrist in addition to the spirit of prophecy there is demonic spirits that inspire false prophets and he says about these false spirits in 1 John 4 4 you have overcome them little children because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world he says you are of God little children and have overcome them you have overcome these demonic powers because greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world he who is in the world is a reference to Satan quite clearly in this case and he who is in you is Christ no question but that Christ is greater than Satan and that gives you the advantage that gives you the power to overcome them says John a promise I've made reference to previously is James 4 7 James 4 7 resist the devil and he will flee from you now I just want to clarify that I've heard people mistakenly quote this rebuke the devil and he'll flee from you the bible doesn't say that rebuking the devil is not anything that the bible advocates anywhere in scripture and it's much simpler than the reality it's not so easy as just to say I rebuke you Satan there he goes running screaming it doesn't always happen quite that neatly it would be very nice just every few minutes I'd take time out and say I rebuke you Satan

and I'd never get any attack but it's not that easy the thing that causes the devil to flee is resistance putting up resistance if you resist the devil he will flee from you there is not anything stated about how long this resistance must be sustained but I think it is implied that the resistance must be sustained as long as the attack is sustained if you are being tempted if the devil is bombarding you with fears or anxieties or inducements to your lusts or pride and you notice this and you resist it so long as the attack continues the resistance must continue you might say what kind of promise is that maybe it will last 10 years or at least 10 hours what assurance is there from that promise that gives reassurance since I don't know how long I'll have to resist the assurance is this that so long as you don't stop resisting you will win in any conflict one side turns tail and surrenders or flees it will not be you if you resist if you resist as long as you need to now see the reason that is a valuable promise is because without such a promise we might think well I resisted and resisted but I was just overcome I never stopped resisting but I got defeated this is a promise if you don't stop resisting you will not be defeated the devil will be defeated you may have to resist a longer time than you think Jesus was led out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil for 40 days but I don't think he knew in advance that it would be 40 days we don't know, we know by hindsight it was 40 days perhaps he knew but the Bible indicates that after 40 days of fasting Jesus was hungry and when you fast for 40 days and your hunger has returned it means you're dying, you're starving and therefore Jesus knew very well his body was at a state where he would die if he did not eat and it was at that time Satan came to him and said turn these rocks into bread the temptation to do so would be much more extreme in those circumstances since Jesus knew that if he didn't eat soon he would die than at other times but Jesus resisted he held out 40 days, finally the devil had to leave and it says the angels of God came and ministered to Jesus and apparently took care of those needs but what if Jesus had not resisted that long what if he had decided well I've resisted for 40 days but now I'm starving it's just God can't expect me to keep resisting now he would have missed out you see the devil eventually had to flee it's just that Jesus probably didn't know at what point that would be Jesus all he knew to do was resist and resist and resist and resist, eventually the devil had to go away and leave him for a season the Bible says likewise when you're being tempted the devil will eventually have to leave you for a season you just don't know when he's going to have to leave but you know this that you have to resist until he does might be days might be weeks but you have to keep resisting so long as you are resisting you are not succumbing and so long as you don't stop resisting you will never succumb the Bible says there is no temptation taken you but such is common to man and God is faithful who will not allow you to be tempted beyond that which you are able to endure but will with the temptation also provide a way of escape that you may be able to endure it 1 Corinthians 10:13 1 Corinthians 10:13 it's a guarantee you will not need to succumb ever if you resist there is never a temptation that God will allow you to endure that he will not also give you the resources to endure if you succumb to temptation it's because you stopped resisting before you had to you just got tired of the fight you've got to be strong and courageous you need to be persevering

and you will never lose that's a good promise to have resist the devil and he'll flee from you James 4 7 how about Isaiah 54 17 Isaiah 54 in verse 17 now there is no question that this promise is to the church although it's found in the Old Testament in Isaiah chapter 53 and 54 we have you're probably familiar with Isaiah 53 it's a description of the suffering of Christ the humiliation and rejection and suffering of Christ in fact it's the most famous chapter in Isaiah the most often chapter in Isaiah quoted in the New Testament and probably it's one chapter that every Christian can identify by it's number Isaiah 53 Isaiah 54 is a chapter about the results of Christ's death and the redemption especially of Gentiles the focus is on Gentiles coming into the church Paul himself quotes from the opening verses of Isaiah 54 and he applies it to the church he does this in Galatians chapter 4 and verse 27 so we know that Isaiah 54 is about the church and the promises in Isaiah 54 are for the church and one of those promises is the last one in the chapter last verse in the chapter no weapon formed against you shall prosper and the word prosper means succeed no weapon that is formed against you will succeed against you this presupposes that you're at warfare it presupposes that weapons will be brought against you by the enemy since we know this enemy is the devil it is referring to the devil's ploys the devil's resources whatever he has to bring against you it will not succeed assuming you are trusting in his promises and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn certainly the devil would like to rise up and condemn you and accuse you but you're actually in the final analysis going to be there to condemn him this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their righteousness is from me says the Lord our righteousness is from the Lord and therefore we do not have to be concerned about whether the devil's accusations will ever stick his weapons against us will not prosper we are guaranteed that if you look at one other passage Isaiah 49 and verse 25 49 25 it says but thus says the Lord even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away that is the devil's captives will be taken from him by the church and the prey of the terrible will be delivered for I will contend with him who contends with you and I will save your children now God says that he will contend with the one who contends with us it is not we who need to be mighty it is not we that need to be powerful it's a matter of who is with us remember God said to Joshua in Joshua 1 9 have I not commanded you to be strong and courageous do not tremble or be dismayed for the Lord your God is with you wherever you shall go this was in the context of his imminent battles that he was going to fight against a land of giants don't worry about that the Lord your God is with you I will contend with the ones who contend with you and therefore there is great security the Christian has God the Christian has the name of Jesus the Christian has God's promises the Christian has an exalted position in Christ, in Christ's authority and the Christian is also marching against an enemy that's already defeated and that is in retreat it's simply a matter of the Christian being obedient and faithful to move forward and fulfill the commission that has been given this is our assignment this is our task as Christians in warfare