

“Humility and Watchfulness” Part 2

Holiness

Dr. Bruce Bickel

1 Peter 5:8-9

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Bruce: Good morning, men.

Men: Good morning, Bruce.

Bruce: Don, do you want to set the tone for us, brother? Let’s go before the Lord and know that He is God. (*Music.*)

Sovereign and merciful Lord, You are the Creator, the Sustainer, the Giver of life. We realize that life is about You, not about us. It’s about Your glory and not our needs. Yet You provide our needs so that you will be glorified. May we always recognize with gratitude the mercies that You shower upon us. Father, take us to the cross this day, that we might sit at Your feet and behold Your glory and all of Your majesty. And together we just thank You for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: You know, sometimes the Lord in His mercy takes you through a situation in life which is just a great encouragement. I had the privilege this past Monday of attending a memorial service at the Anglican Church in Falls Church, Virginia with pastor John Yates. It was one of the most meaningful experiences I’ve been through in recent years just because it was a wonderful, glorifying memorial experience, a memorial service for a friend of mine who went home to glory. But it was so wonderful, and as I walked away, driving six or seven hours back to Pittsburgh, I got to thinking about the realization that most of the decisions that you and I make as followers of Christ are contrary to human nature.

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: I just began to ponder that a little bit. All the decisions that you and I make as followers of Christ are really contrary to human nature. Look at the Lukan version of the Sermon on the Mount and compare it with Matthew chapter five. You’ll notice jump for joy when you’re persecuted. That’s contrary to human nature. When somebody is persecuted, what do we do? Gripe, complain and moan. The follower of Christ is told to jump for joy. Now you can’t do that apart from the grace of God. It’s part of the new nature that we have through regeneration.

And we need to understand, men, that most of the decisions that you and I are going to make are going to be absolutely contrary to the world system, contrary to human nature. Jump for joy when you’re persecuted.

How about this one? “Bless those who curse you.” That’s contrary to human nature. What is our normal response. When somebody curses us, swears at us, derides us in some way, what it stimulates within us is this spirit of anger and retribution.

Participant: That’s right.

Bruce: Yet the follower of Christ chooses a different course. We choose a course of “bless those who curse you.”

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How about “love those who hate you?” How about “pray for those who wound you?” How about forgive those who hurt you? You see, for us as followers of Christ, we have to really fight this battle of making decisions that are contrary to human nature. Because the human nature of this world is going to be absolutely contrary to what we’re studying.

That’s what Peter is teaching us in this portion of Scripture. He’s teaching us this. How do you and I live a holy life in the midst of the opposition and persecution of the world? And one of the ways in which we have to do that is to realize this—that the decisions that you and I make are going to be contrary to the human nature of the world.

A person can only act out with the nature that they have. If they do not have a new nature through regeneration, you should not expect them to think or act like us.

I’m in a situation with some difficulty between a mother and a daughter. And the daughter is acting out her nature, and the mother can’t understand that. “Why is she saying this? Why isn’t she thinking like this? How can she say that?”

And my won response is, “That’s all she can do. That’s her nature.” She’s not regenerate. God has not given her a new nature. She can’t think the way that you do. She can’t act the way that you do,” because you and I are taking a response to this situation that is contrary to human nature.

Now that’s what Peter is teaching us. And that’s why he started off in this portion of Scripture, 1 Peter chapter five; let’s go back to our passage for consideration. I want to read it again for us.

He starts off with talking about leadership. He says that you’ve got to have the right kind of leaders in the right situation at the right time for the right reason, so that you can become people who will make decisions contrary to human nature when you’re opposed or when you suffer opposition and persecution. He’s saying that this is how you live a life of persecution. You do it by making decisions that are contrary to the human nature of this world. And we’ll see more of how we do that today.

And that, friends, is a spiritual battle known as spiritual warfare. So let’s open our eyes and have the Lord speak to us through this passage, 1 Peter chapter five.

“So I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight—not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.””

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties upon Him because He cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of sufferings are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace who has called you to His

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eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen and Amen. Last week we learned the understanding of what Peter is saying when he says, (*paraphrase*), “Be humble toward one another.” We talked about humility. Let me just give you a quick review of what causes a person to be humble.

A person is humble because he has the correct vision of God. He sees God correctly. A person who is not humble is a person who does not see God correctly. He has an incorrect view of Him. Let me give you the things we talked about last week. This is a review to help us understand how humility is created within a person because he has got to think right. Now this is contrary to human nature.

The world says, “Forget what he’s going to say because you need to be proud.” Peter says, “Humble yourselves one toward another.” In the midst of spiritual warfare you humble yourselves.

What are the causes of humility, as we saw last week? Let me just give you a quick review. First of all, humility is not demeaning ourselves or thinking poorly of ourselves. Humility is not thinking of ourselves at all.

So what is it that causes humility? I offer these for your consideration, as we looked last week. Humility consists in a low estimate of our own knowledge. “The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know.” You can’t take pride in your knowledge. Knowledge is a gift. It is something that God gives us.

Another sign of humility would be this. Humility consists of a proper estimate of our relative importance. “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” Jesus says at His first staff meeting. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Do you have a right view of yourself as it relates to your relationship to God? God is supreme. He is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Giver of life. Life is about Him, not about us.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: It’s about Him and His glory. We are created and called to love Him and enjoy Him forever and live for His glory.

I offer for your consideration another sign of humility. It would be that humility consists of a correct estimate of our moral condition. The prayer of the publican in Luke 18 is a powerful prayer. “Lord, have mercy upon me, the sinner.” You see, my definition of humility is seeing that which is perfect and realizing that I can’t achieve it.

Now what do I mean by *perfect*? The definition of perfection is the Person and work of Christ—His sinless perfection and perfect obedience. When I see that and focus upon that—the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ—I realize this: that I cannot achieve that. I cannot earn that. I cannot make that happen. That’s what produces humility and understanding—that I see what is perfect—His sinless perfection and perfect obedience—and realizing that’s not me!

And therefore, one of the other signs of a humble spirit would be one that has a proper estimate of our constant dependence upon God. You see, a proud person is not dependent upon anybody or anything. But a person who is humble realizes this. I see that which is perfect, and that is not me. Therefore I am absolutely dependent upon the sinless

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perfection and perfect obedience of Christ to be given to me through my justification by faith. At the moment of my justification God gives me credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. Humility is a powerful, powerful weapon in the midst of spiritual warfare.

So the first thing that Peter says is that when you’re involved in spiritual warfare, making decisions that are contrary to human nature, you’ve got to realize that you’ve got to be humble toward one another. Let people see that humility as a means of drawing attention to the Person and work of Christ.

But then he gives us another admonition in this passage that I want us to look at today, and that is when he says “Be watchful.” Notice. “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time He may exalt you. Be sober-minded; be watchful.”

Now what does he mean by *watchful*? Two things I would offer for your consideration in verses eight and nine in our passage in 1 Peter chapter five would be this. Recognize who he is—the evil one. In spiritual warfare we need to recognize who he is.

Now Peter describes him as a dangerous enemy, a formidable enemy who roams around like a beast in fierce hunger.

Notice what he says. “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” Now that’s the enemy. If you do not know and understand the tactics and strategies of the enemy, you’re going to be eaten alive.

Do you notice when you see any of these shows on Animal Planet or National Geographic, when they’re filming these animals in Africa, that you’ll notice that the lions never attack the strong? Who do they attack?

Men: The weak.

Bruce: The weak. They go for the weak. What is Satan going to do? He’s going to go after the weak in the body of Christ. That’s why it’s so important, men, that you and I are confirmed in the Scriptures that we study every week, because that’s going to be our source of strength. We’ve got to protect ourselves and be strong in understanding God and His word. So the first thing we’ve got to understand is to be watchful for his techniques and who he is.

Turn with me to Revelation chapter twelve. Now Satan’s techniques—and I’m just going to give you a quick overview—are twofold. There’s a corporate way in which he attacks the church and that is through heresy, apostasy and church divisions. That’s how he’s going to attack the church at large.

But then he also attacks people personally. And he does that through three means. And that would be through the mind, the experience and the practice of the believer.

He’s going to attack us in our minds, and we see this in Revelation chapter twelve. Look at verses 9-11. “And the great dragon was thrown down, the ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan.” Now notice. “The deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God

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and the authority of His Christ has come. For the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.”

Now notice the two tactics that you see in verses 9-11—deception and accusation. That’s where he’s going to attack us at the mind. He’s going to deceive us in our minds of our worth and our value and accuse us in our significance in things that are contrary to human nature.

He’s going to attack us at the point of our minds. How can God use you based on what you’ve done in the past? You see, we need to recognize what? That we’ve been justified by faith alone. We’ve been given credit for what? The sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. You’ve got to fight this in your minds, men, because he’s going to deceive us. He’s going to accuse you in your worth and deceive you in your value.

That’s why we spend so much time telling teenagers that they need to have self esteem. (*Laughter.*) Self esteem is the disease, not the cure.

Participant: That’s right.

Bruce: It’s the disease. That’s the deception. Now there’s nothing wrong with feeling good about yourself in a sense of seeing myself in a relationship to Christ. That’s how I feel good about myself, not in the eyes of the system of this world. We spend so much time in getting people to focus on themselves, to make them feel good about themselves. That’s a deceptive tool of Satan.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Because he’s going to get you in the mind and say that it’s all about you and what you think about yourself. You think about yourself in relationship to Christ. That’s what humility is! It’s a sane estimate of who you are in relationship to Christ. It’s realizing my importance in relationship to Christ.

You see, by subtlety, he’s going to deceive us in our minds. The whole system of this world says, “Let’s get people to feel good about themselves.” You see, you feel good about yourself when you understand God esteem, not self esteem. I see myself in relationship to Him. There’s my worth, there’s my value. And that cannot be destroyed. That cannot be removed, because that is a gift that God gives you when you’re in Christ. It’s part of the consequences of being regenerate. You now have a different nature. God changed your nature through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

You cannot be deceived. You have to fight that. He’s going to attack us at the mind. Two key words there you’re going to see—*deception* and *accusation*. He’ll accuse you in your value and deceive you in your worth. And that’s exactly the thing that we need to fight, because the Scripture says this. Jesus says, “I am the way and the truth and the life,” and I “set you free.” The last thing Satan wants you to be is what?

Participant: Free.

Bruce: Free. The last thing he wants you to be is free. He wants you to be in bondage. And he is going to do that in the mind—how you think about things. That’s why I wanted to introduce this by saying that the decisions that you and I make are contrary to human nature. We have a new nature, men. If you’re in Christ, you have a new nature. It is contrary to the system of this world and you have to recognize that

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when it comes to fighting it, because he will attack us at the mind by deceiving and accusing us.

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, please?

Participant: Wouldn't it be more accurate, then, instead of saying, “Have mercy upon me, a sinner,” to say to God, “Thank You for having mercy on me, a redeemed sinner?”

Bruce: Yes and no. (*Laughter.*) Yes and no. I'm not going to change the words of Scripture, which say, “Have mercy on me, the sinner.” I'm not going to do battle with that at all. I'm going to say that because it's from the Scripture.

Participant: Okay. Right.

Bruce: But I'm also going to say, “Thank You for having saved me. I'm a redeemed sinner.” So that's a yes and a no. You don't change the Scripture, but you add that on because you understand it with a sense of gratitude. It's a both/and, not an either/or. How about this? Go to 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.

Transcriber's Note: 2 Corinthians 11:13-15. *“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.”*

Bruce: He is disguised as an angel of light. Now what does light signify? Purity, holiness, godliness. So he's going to be disguised as an angel of what? Of the doctrines of the Scripture. He's going to disguise himself to deal with the mind with the doctrines of the Scripture, because the light is a reference to purity and holiness and to that which is good. It represents God Himself. And so he's going to come in and try to change your view of who God is, meaning that he seeks to counterfeit what God does.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: He seeks to counterfeit what God does. You have to fight that and recognize that it's contrary to human nature when we make our decisions.

You know, there's a lot of interest in recent years in some of Satan's subtle and overt activities, such as witchcraft and Ouija boards, séances, all those types of things. With these particular techniques Satan has captured thousands. But with false doctrine he has captured millions because that is what he wants to do. Yes, please?

Participant: Can you say a little more about fighting? How would we fight?

Bruce: We'll get to that in a minute, reading after that. A great question. We need to figure out in a moment how to resist him. That's our next point.

How about 1 Timothy chapter 4, verses 1 and 2?

Transcriber's Note: 1 Timothy 4:1-2. *“Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars, whose consciences are seared.”*

Bruce: Two ways in which he works in the mind, referred to as “deceiving or seducing spirits” and “doctrines of demons,” which Jesus says in John 8:44 are lies.

You see, Satan's great counterfeit is this—to cause us to settle for good rather than settling for God. He wants us to settle for that which is good in the eyes of this world

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because it’s a deceptive counterfeit. It looks good, but it is not godly. And so he wants us to settle for those things which we think are good.

Look at some of our worship services. Are they really God-focused and God-centered? Or are they good in the sense that they are entertaining to people? Just a subtlety there. I’m not picking on worship or anything. There are all sorts of things that we could talk about. But all I’m saying is that you’ve got to be careful not to settle for the good. You need to settle for God. Satan will try to deceive you because he is disguised as an angel of light. And he’s going to take the doctrines of Scripture and twist them to make them look good enough to be good, but not enough to do good, because he’s going to change the doctrines of Scripture. That’s how he’s going to play with our minds. He has captured a lot of people through his techniques and he has sent millions of people into bondage because of false doctrine. That’s why you and I have to understand the Scripture. Yes, please?

Participant: I think we have to keep in mind that this battle has been going on in the heavenlies before man was even created.

Bruce: Oh, yes. Amen to that.

Participant: So even with such a vast battle, if you don’t know that you’re in a war, you’re in trouble because this war has been going on for a long, long time. This is actually God’s master plan to beat Satan. And it bombards us every minute of the day.

Bruce: That’s why it’s a battle of the mind. Absolutely correct. Yes, please?

Participant: I was going to add on to that lion in the jungle in Africa. Not only do they go after the weak, but they separate the weak from the pack.

Bruce: Great point.

Participant: Am I connected to the body of Christ? Do I have a group of men? And the other thing is that God’s plan is the family. And we’ve been assigned as the spiritual leaders in the family. He has really gone after us guys. And once he destroys us, the family is—

Bruce: Amen to that. Great insight. Yes, Carl?

Carl: Bruce, would you go back and tell us the three things. You said the mind, the experience, and what was the third one?

Bruce: Practice. The practice of how we apply our faith.

Carl: thank you.

Bruce: He attacks the mind and the experience. How much time do we always talk about experience? You see, he wants us to settle for that good experience rather than a God experience. Settle for good, but don’t settle for God. That’s a subtlety because we’ve become so experientially oriented, because that is what? The human nature of the world. It’s human nature. The decisions we make are contrary to human nature. So we have to be very, very careful. He’s going to attack us in our minds by false doctrine. He’s going to attack us in our experience in settling for the good as opposed to settling for God, and then in our practice.

We’re going to be saying, “I’m going to be doing this because it feels so good.” Sometimes the practices we have are good practices, but they’re not godly practices. Yes, sir?

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Participant: “Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.”

Bruce: Our poet laureate has spoken. (*Laughter.*) Absolutely correct. Yes, Don?

Don: Yes. This happens and I’ve heard it so many times from people. “Well, I know that the Bible says that it’s wrong for me to divorce my spouse. But that other person makes me feel so good. You know, I feel so much at peace, so it has to be right.” Or whatever sin deceives us. It’s my feelings. And you know, you’ve always said, “think right, act right, feel right.” But Satan says that your feelings are what counts.

Bruce: We’ve got to be careful about our experiences. There is nothing wrong with experiences. But you need to make sure that you have the right motive and the right intension and the right source behind it. The experience of the Holy Spirit is what we’re after, not the experience of the human nature of this world. Yes, Bill?

Bill: Another thing. The lion, like any predator, goes after the young.

Bruce: It goes after the young.

Bill: And maybe that’s why Paul said, “I want to present every man mature.”

Bruce: Amen. He goes after the young, after the weak and that which is separated. That’s why it’s so important, men, that you and I have somebody that holds us spiritually accountable. That’s why I appreciate so much that we’ve had 767 men come through the halls here in the last twenty years. Hopefully, we’re just connecting with each other so that we can wage spiritual warfare.

Let me just take you through something very quickly to help you understand the subtleties of this. I’m not going to go into great detail. Perhaps, if you want me to do this, we can do this another day. But in 1652 Thomas Brooks wrote a wonderful masterpiece called “Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices.” And he lists twelve techniques or strategies of Satan. I’m going to give them to you right now. I’m not going to explain them. If you want me to do this, we can do this another time.

Participant: Let’s do it.

Bruce: If you want to do it, we’ll do it next week.

Participant: Good.

Bruce: Let me give them to you, though. We’ll use this as an introduction. This is just a summary.

Number 1. This is Satan’s most common scheme. *He presents the bait and hides the hook.* I’ll explain those to you next week.

Number 2 would be this. *Satan misrepresents sin so that it appears not only harmless, but even virtuous.* He hides the sin so that it not only appears harmless, but in our minds it becomes virtuous.

Number 3. *Satan downplays the seriousness of sin so that we think it possesses no danger to our souls.* Did you know that one of the things that we abuse so much is God’s patience?

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: “The wages of sin is death.” “The soul that sins shall die.” Well, I’ve not had the consequences of my sin yet. It’s okay. You see, we have to be careful with God’s patience. There are consequences to our sin. It may just not be today. We have to realize that they may be down the road in another form that you and I don’t know. So we

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become complacent. Well, I sinned. I’m okay. God forgave me. I can do it again because I haven’t experienced the consequences.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Not yet. You’ve got to be careful of that. Be careful of God’s patience.

How about another one? *Satan tempts us to excuse sin and be unconcerned about it by showing us the sins of great men.* Well, look what *he* did!

Participant: Yes. Look at David.

Bruce: Exactly. We also highlight David. Look at David. He was a man after God’s own heart. I’m okay. Now I’ll go into greater detail on all of these, if that’s what you would like me to do.

Participant: Yes.

Bruce: Number 5. *Satan tempts us to think that God is so indignant that we need not fear punishment for our sins.* That’s why I say that you’ve got to be careful about God’s patience.

Participant: That God is not indignant, or is indignant?

Bruce: That He is so indignant that we need not fear.

Participant: But that doesn’t seem to make sense.

Second Participant: No, it doesn’t.

Third Participant: The English construct doesn’t seem to make sense.

Bruce: That’s right. I’ll explain that next week.

Participant: It’s seventeenth-century English.

Second Participant: All right. Okay.

Bruce: Right. *Satan tells us that repentance is easy and forgiveness is available, so yielding to temptation is not serious.* Just look at that. Repentance is easy and forgiveness is available, so yielding to temptation is not serious. Where does that play on us?

Participant: Every day.

Bruce: Every day in our minds.

Participant: Mm-hmm.

Bruce: *Satan tempts us to fear sin so little that we do not keep a safe distance from it.* We just don’t avoid it. Do you realize that Satan cannot cause you to sin? Satan tempts you. Who chooses to sin?

Participant: We do.

Bruce: We do. You can’t say that Satan made me do it. Satan will tempt us. But we are fighting the battle, fighting temptation.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: He cannot cause you to sin. He will tempt you. But the choice to sin is mine.

Participant: Can I blame it on the woman? (*Laughter.*)

Bruce: Adam was the first cad. (*Laughter.*) Here’s another one. *Satan causes us to see clearly the happiness and comfort that flagrant sinners seem to enjoy.* “Well, how come they can do that and enjoy that and get away with it? And you’re telling me that I can’t do that?” Do you see the subtleties of this? What is he playing upon? The deceitfulness and accusation of our minds.

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Satan causes us to clearly see the disappointments and difficulties that godly men face—to see the disappointments that godly people face. “You don’t want that to happen.”

How about this one? *Satan tempts us to compare ourselves to men whom we think are worse than we are.* Remember, pride is two things. With discouragement, you always see someone who is better than you and you get discouraged. With pride, you always see somebody who is worse than you and you become proud. Comparison has no value to us. You’re either going to be proud or discouraged when you start comparing.

Satan encourages spiritual ignorance and unbiblical thinking in us. Satan encourages us to cultivate close friendships with ungodly peers. What type of friends do we have? What type of friends do our children have?

You see, those are just some of the twelve techniques that Thomas Brooks wrote that Satan employs. And if you want me to, I’ll go through some of these in greater detail next week and we’ll discuss them.

Participant: Thank you.

Bruce: Because we need to understand the subtleties of how he approaches us through our minds.

So the very first thing Peter says is to be watchful. You’ve got to know your enemy—know his techniques, know his strategies, and you have to resist him.

The second thing we have to do—and this is in answer to your question—is to resist him because of who you are in Christ. That’s how you stand. You resist him because of who you are. We avoid him because of who he is, but we resist him because of who we are. If you’re in Christ, you have the power of God’s grace to resist him. God cares for you and has equipped you to resist him—not take on, but to resist.

Now how do we resist? The word *resist* means to withstand, to be firm against someone else’s attack. Remember, you cannot fight Satan, but you can only withstand him by standing firm in the faith. That’s what Peter says—“stand firm in the faith”—back to 1 Peter chapter five. “Standing firm in the faith.”

Now notice this. The opposite of sin is not obedience, it’s faith. Go to Hebrews chapter eleven. I want you to see this. The opposite of sin is not obedience. It is faith.

Hebrews 11 verse 1. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that were visible. By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken up so he should not see death. And he was not found because God had taken him. Now before he was taken, he was commended as having pleased God.”

Now notice this statement. Verse six. “And without faith it is impossible to please Him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him.”

How is it that we please God? We do that by our obedience. What is the foundation of our obedience? It is our faith. You cannot please God without faith. Without faith

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you will not be obedient. The opposite of sin is not obedience. It is faith. Faith produces that obedience in the work of grace in our lives through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

It means this—that faith does not need an explanation. You don’t need to explain your faith. You don’t need an explanation, because faith is what? Hope in those things that you do not see.

See, what is the real test of your faith? It’s that you believe when there is no evidence. A lot of times people will say, “Well, I need to pray and throw out a fleece. I’m just going to lay something down and throw out a fleece.” Now that would be the weakest level of faith in my judgment.

Participant: Yeah.

Bruce: It’s when you have to have proof before you act. The most mature level of faith is when there is no evidence. There’s no proof and you still act, because that’s what faith is.

Hebrews 11:1. *“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”* You see, what is it that pleases God? You can’t please God without faith, men. And how is it that you and I withstand the evil one? We don’t take him on. We don’t fight him. We withstand him through our faith, standing firm in the faith. Faith in what? Faith in the Person and work of Christ. That’s how we resist him. You stand firm in your faith. You don’t need evidence. You don’t need an explanation. You don’t need a defense. You believe because your human nature has been changed now to a new nature that God has given you through regeneration. So we resist him by standing firm in the faith.

Faith prepares us for battle. We need to be solid in our faith, which comes from the study of the word of God because that’s where we get our strength and where we get our protection.

Now notice the sequence here. Truth sets you free. And the one thing that Satan never wants you to be is to be—

Men: Free.

Bruce: Free. Be watchful. Understand who he is. But also resist him because of who you are in Christ. The real issue is this. I resist him because of who he is, but I resist him because of who I am, because I’m now in Christ and I have a new nature. I can make decisions that are contrary to human nature because I’m walking by faith, not by sight.

Participant: That’s right.

Bruce: Faith prepares us for battle. Before you can stand before Satan, you and I must bow before God. Before you can stand before him and withstand him, you must bow before God. Withstanding Satan is based upon our dependency upon God in His grace and His word which we find in the Scripture. And one of the makes of humility is what? Dependency—being dependent upon His grace.

We must bow down before God, the author of this book. If you’re not submitting to the book, you’re not bowing down before the author. If you’re not bowing down to the sufficiency of Scripture, you’re not bowing down to God, because God is the One who authored it, wrote it, and designed it through the work of the Spirit. And when you do not

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bow down before God, God will; oppose you and call out His armies against you, because “God opposes the proud.”

Why is it that we study humility first? Because one of the signs of humility is absolute dependence. And in our fighting against Satan we do not fight him. We withstand him because we are absolutely dependent upon the work of grace in our lives because of standing firm in our faith. We are dependent upon the faith that God has given us as a gift. That is our weapon against him. We resist him because of who he is, but we also resist him because of who we are in Christ. God has given us the resources. But you and I, before we can stand before Satan, must bow down before God.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: If you’re not in Christ here today, men, may God humble you to see yourself not as the accused awaiting trial, but as the convicted awaiting sentence. May you and I see that which is perfect and realize that we can’t achieve it. We accept it by faith—the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ.

But if you are in Christ today, men, “cast your anxieties upon him,” because He is the one in His providence, he uses the sufferings and opposition of this world to bring humility for us so that we can resist the evil one. May God be pleased to give us the grace to do so.

Next week I’ll go through these in greater detail. I just want you to realize and to be aware of this—that Satan’s attack against us is going to be in the mind, in our experience and in the practice of our faith. And we’ll cover those things that Thomas Brooks went through next week. Any questions on what we’ve covered today so far? Yes, Don?

Don: I think that Satan’s strategy is that we either deny him or downplay him, Or we overemphasize him. We either deny him, like in a lot of the things that Thomas Brooks was saying that you were saying. Well, sin isn’t that bad. Satan isn’t that powerful, etc. Or ,there is the devil under every nook and cranny.

Bruce: and so we have the tendency to say, “The devil made me do it.”

Don: Right.

Bruce: Now when you look at those, Thomas Brooks is going to teach us that the three things that Satan uses—our minds, our experience and our practice what it does is that it produces imbalance in our faith. We need to have balance and we’ll talk about that next week. Yes, sir?

Participant: If we’re bowing down before God in this spiritual warfare, isn’t that surrender?

Bruce: Can we really surrender? Yes, there is surrender, but we’ve got to be really careful with this—that all you have to do is surrender. Surrender is a fight. Surrender is difficult. I can’t surrender everything because I’m not mature enough to do that yet. So we have to be careful.

Back in the 1850s there was a movement that said that all you have to do is surrender. Total surrender was called for. If I can just totally surrender, then everything is going to be okay.

Now look at that logically. Can you totally surrender? No. You cannot do that. I cannot do that. It sounds good. It really sounds good. But surrendering is a fight. I do

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that moment by moment. With the things that come into my mind, I’ve got to fight that warfare, to remove those things that Satan puts in my mind and remove them with spiritual disciplines. So surrender is a real fight. It’s not something that is easy. It is not something that will change my perfection, if I would just totally surrender. That’s not something a person can do. So be careful of that. It sounds good. But it may be very, very difficult. You’ve got to be careful. Yes, please?

Participant: I think also it would lead to pride.

Bruce: Surely.

Participant: Pride is the worst thing.

Bruce: You know, at a church in Kansas I had a young woman come up to me. And she said, “You know, you’re talking about sinless perfection and perfect obedience. I haven’t sinned at all this week.” (*Laughter.*)

And I said this. “And I bet you’re proud of that, aren’t you?” (*Laughter.*)

Participant: She just committed her first sin.

Bruce: Yes, she just did. Yes, please?

Participant: My answer to the gentlemen’s question about surrender. It’s interesting that James put it another way in James chapter 4 verse 7. He uses the word *submit* rather than *surrender*. And he says, “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” So James seems to be saying that there’s a sequence. First you submit yourself to God and then resist the devil.

Bruce: That’s how you’re bowing down. All I’m saying, guys, is that we’ve got to be careful about this concept of total surrender. It really sounds good, but you’ve got to be careful of it. That is a difficult thing to do. I cannot do that totally.

Participant: Come on!

Bruce: Has there been a moment in my life when I’ve totally surrendered? Absolutely not! Here’s another thing. “Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.” Have I done that every second of my life?

Participant: No.

Bruce: Absolutely not! I can’t do that. That’s part of the fight. That’s part of the battle. That’s what we’re involved with in spiritual warfare. Yes, please?

Participant: You’re saying that Satan attacks us at our weakness like a lion especially, But many times with what we believe is our strength.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Participant: In other words, Peter thought that his strength was that (*paraphrase*), “I’ll never deny God.” He didn’t know it was his weakness because he was deceived.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Participant: I believe it’s our strength.

Bruce: Sometimes he’ll attack us either way. Thomas brooks will cover that next week for us. He’ll attack you wherever he can attack you because he wants you to be in bondage, not to be free. Bishop Rodgers?

Bishop Rodgers: I was just never able to get a congregation to surrender ten per cent, much less all. (*Laughter.*)

Bruce: Yes, please?

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Participant: I just want to thank you for touching on the patience of God, on testing the patience of God.

Bruce: Yes.

Participant: We’re taught so often that God is a God of grace and a God of mercy. He is those things, but in reality, we don’t tend to think of the fact that, you know, we could be testing the patience of God and causing Him to take action with us.

Bruce: You know, the Scripture tells us that there are consequences to our sin. If we don’t have an immediate consequence to our sin, what do we think? I’m okay. That’s where we presume upon the patience and grace of God. If you ask me, one of my greatest sins is the sin of presumption. I presume too much upon God’s patience. I presume too much upon His mercy. I presume too much upon His love and His mercy and His grace. That’s what Thomas Brooks is going to teach us about the subtleties of Satan. We presume too much upon the patience of God because we don’t see the immediate consequences for our sinful choices. That may come down the road. It may seem unclear right now. We’ll go into that in greater detail.

Participant: That is good.

Bruce: So let’s come back next week. I’ll try to have Sig send out an outline of these for you so we can take some notes. But we’ll go through this for the next couple of weeks. It’s very, very important that we understand this.

Let’s pray. Father, thank You for the clarity of Your word. Help us in our unbelief. Help us in our lack of faith. Father, we realize that our obedience is a direct correlation to the amount of faith that we have. Grant, Father, the peace that passes all understanding because of our faith in the Person and work of Christ. And may it be so for Jesus’ sake. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen!” (*Applause.*)