

Well, let's turn in our copy of the Word of God to Ephesians chapter 6. We've got two more weeks left in Ephesians, and then we're going to look at the temptation of Christ. Ephesians 6, with the Word of God open, let's pray together. O Lord God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, by the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of your mouth all of their hosts came into being. Your Word is upright, O Lord, and all your work is done in faithfulness. The earth is full of your lovingkindness, and your truth And you're near to all to call upon you, O God, and lay hold of you in truth. And we pray this morning, our Father, that you would come and grant your servant help, help from the sanctuary, help in the Holy Spirit, O God, that you would make your word manifest today in the preaching with which I have been entrusted, and that your people would be made strong in the strength that only you can provide. We offer these prayers in Jesus' name. Amen. This is the Word of God. Let's begin in verse 10. We'll read down to verse 18. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, having done all to stand firm. Stand firm, therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one, and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints and also for me, that the words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly as I ought to speak. Don't you worry. So Paul's been telling us that we stand against an infernal enemy. with massive authority even in this world. He's called the prince of the power of the air, the leader of the spiritual forces of wickedness who hound you down, dog your steps, and assault you constantly with these flaming arrows that they fire at you to penetrate you and to burn you and to set you on fire with the fires of hell. And that's pretty frightening. But Paul says you don't stand against the devil in your own strength. Remember way back at the beginning of this study, he told us that we are strong in the Lord and in the strength

of his might. We have all of the strength that God himself has, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit living in our hearts. They exist to strengthen us, to stand and hold the line. We're not even called to conquer the devil, that's Christ's job. We're just called to hold the line, to stand firm. So we stand with the armor of God, we don't stand with the strength of God, sorry, we don't stand in our own strength, and we don't wear our own clothing, our own protections. God's protection is the armor that God gives. Put on the whole armor of God, he says. We've been looking through that armor in recent weeks. There's the belt of truth, that foundational piece of armor, the piece that which everything else attaches, the scabbard, the breastplate, would buckle into that belt of truth. So much of the rest of the Roman soldier's garb attached to that foundational piece of armor, the belt of truth. And we said that was, you remember, the truth of the Christian world and life view. having your mind, your soul grounded in the Christian world and life view, that mental map for living life that God has given us in his word. And then we're to have also, we learned, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, that breastplate that protected our heart, our lungs, our liver, and our spleen in the physical world, but it protects our heart in the spiritual world. And it's that sense, that confidence that we stand in the imputed righteousness of Christ. that we don't stand before God and we don't stand before the devil by leaning on our own works, but we trust the works of Christ. We lay our own deadly doing down. And then next, the shoes for your feet having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. which are those hobnail boots or sandals that the Roman soldiers wore which were studded and helped them keep their footing in the quagmire of battle so they wouldn't get pushed back or pushed over or slip and slide away with Paul Simon. And for us, that's the gospel of peace. That sure and certain sense that we're at peace with God and he's at peace with us. And along with that, you remember, we said that goes along with a clean conscience. We keep a conscience void of offense before God and before men. When we live, even if we're born again, even if we've been justified by faith alone, if we start living like one of the enemies of God, as James says in James 3, Do not be a friend of the world, for everyone who is a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Now, we can't lose the peace of the gospel, but we all know as Christians, if we live in sin and defy God's commandments and live like a rebel, we begin to wonder, are we one of God's friends? And we lose that sense of assurance, that well-grounded sense of assurance that we need if we're to keep our footing in the in the conflict with the devil. So it's a conscience at peace with God through the gospel and through our guarding our conscience

and washing our conscience in the blood of Christ. And then, we got this out of order, remember, but the helmet of salvation, no, sorry, we're ahead of ourselves, again, in all circumstances take up the shield of faith That's one of the great defensive weapons that we have on our arm, that we're trusting God and laying hold of him, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. We've got to believe God and not the devil if we are to stand in the spiritual fray and take the helmet of salvation. that spiritual mindset set above where Christ is. We gotta think like a saved man or woman, you remember, that we have been saved from our sins, that we are being saved from our sins, and that we shall be saved from our sins. Well, this morning we come to the only offensive weapon that God has given us, and it's his word. It's his word. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The sword which the Spirit gives. The sword which the Spirit uses in our lives. which is the word of God. And our lesson this morning for us is very simple. If you don't fill your mind with the word of God and fill your mouth with the word of God, you have no weapon with which to fight against the enemy of God, the devil. You gotta have God's word in your mind and God's word in your heart if you're to fight back and not just be in a punch bag for the devil's assault in this battle for your soul and the soul of your family. And a Christian who does not engage in daily Bible reading is like a Navy SEAL going into battle with no bullets and no gun and no plan to get one. I sometimes say a pistol is like a parachute. If ever you need one and don't have one, you'll never not need one again. You need the word of God. It's our battle sword. It's like a man hiring a painter for his house. and having the painter come and not buying any paint for the man to change the color of the walls. You can't change the color of the walls with a dry brush. It's like a farmer praying for rain when he hasn't bothered to buy and sow seed. If the Spirit of God is the rain on upon our hearts, it's the Word of God is the seed that will grow us up and make us wise in this spiritual conflict. So I want to think with you for a short time about this weapon that God has given us. Let's think of all, first of all, about the source of this weapon. It's the sword of the Spirit, which the Spirit gives. If you're turning your Bibles to 2 Timothy 3 and 16, it's one of the great chair texts of our conviction regarding the nature of the Word of God. All Scripture is breathed out by God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. Now, the old Latin translation, I think, takes the word inspirata, which is from Jerome, inspired. But actually, that's exactly

the opposite of what's meant. It's not the inspiration of God, as in the breathing in of God, it's actually the expiration of God. The Greek word is theopneustos, which means God breathed. God breathes out. You breathe out in a cold day. Not many of those at the moment in Columbia, and there's not gonna be any for a while, I think. But when you breathe out, your breath condenses in the atmosphere and forms fog, as it were, a mist. Well, when God breathes out, Paul says, his breath crystallizes, condenses into Scripture. And not just some Scripture, do you notice, but all Scripture. All Scripture, or each Scripture, is breathed out by God. The Bible, its length, its breadth, its height, its depth, is God's Word. What it says, God says. And what God says, it says. And while it comes through man, And you'll see the personalities of the human author in the writings. John is different from Mark, he's different from Matthew and Luke, and Paul is different again. And you can see the personalities of the author, just like when you write with a pen, if you write with a big pen, ballpoint pen, you get all those black smudges in the page, it's very aggravating, as the pen kind of dredges up the wood fibers in the paper and soaks them in ink and then deposits them all over the page. But if you write with a fountain pen, you get a very different character of ink on the page. But you can still determine that it's your handwriting, whether you use a Bic pen or a Pilot or a fountain pen. And God uses the human personalities of these authors to write his word. And you can tell it. You can tell Amos is a farmer boy from the country land. And you can tell that Isaiah was an educated royal preacher from the royal court, a priest. And they're different. But the product of these men's writing is the word of God. All scripture is breathed out by God. All of it. Not just some of it. You remember whenever Jesus was arguing with the Sadducees? And they believed there was no resurrection. And they say, teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies having a wife but no children, the man must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife and died without children. And then the second and the third took her and likewise until all seven took this one woman and left no children and died. Afterward, the woman also died. In the resurrection, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as a wife." And they're arguing because the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection. Of course there can't be a resurrection because the whole marriage would be a disaster. You can't have seven wives in heaven. Therefore, heaven mustn't exist. And Jesus comes back and says, the sons of this age marry and are given a marriage. But those who are considered worthy to attain that age into the resurrection from the dead,

neither marry nor are given in marriage. For they cannot die anymore because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed in the passage about the bush where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now he's not the God of the dead. but of the living for all live to him. And Jesus bases his argument on the resurrection in that in the Old Testament God doesn't say I was the God of Abraham but I am the God of Abraham. The very tense of the Hebrew verb is inspired and the declares the character of God, present tense, as the God of Abraham. And then Jesus looks at the Sadducees and says, you are mistaken, for you know neither the power of God nor the scriptures. They're inspired down to the right tense of the verb. Or as Jesus says in Matthew 5, Heaven and earth will pass away, but I tell you, not one jot, not the smallest Hebrew letter, the yod, not a yod, or a tittle. A tittle is the smallest stroke of a scribe's pen. What makes the difference from an L on your typewriter to a one? Just a tiny stroke at the top of the upstroke is a one. Without that, it's an L. Right? And you're a typed writer. And that smallest stroke, not even the smallest stroke of a scribe's letter will pass away, Jesus says, until all is fulfilled. So it's the Word of God. Another important passage to read is 2 Peter 1. I'm in first pit of one and he's in second pit of one. Peter says, we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed to which you will do well to pay attention as a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. It wasn't that the writers of Scripture had a thought or an experience and then tried to interpret that thought or that experience and then write it down as if the Bible was merely man's word about God. That's the great lie of liberalism. The Bible just contains human thoughts about God. No, no, that's exactly what it doesn't contain, Peter says. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Like a surfer being carried along on one of those big waves off the shores of Hawaii, being borne along, propelled along, the wave doing all the work, the wave producing all of the motion. The prophets of the Old Testament, the apostles of the New Testament, spoke from God as being borne along by the Holy Spirit. So the source of this weapon, it comes from God. Then secondly, I want to think with you about the character of this weapon. The character of this weapon. First of all, it is strong. It is strong. How strong? Strong enough to make the universe. Why is there something and not

nothing this afternoon? Why is there a ground beneath your feet and a sky above our heads, above this building? Why are there stars in the heavens and the sun and the moon and the great expanse of the cosmos? For by the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. He spoke, and it was done. He commanded, and it stood fast. The voice of God. And I believe the Bible begins with creation out of nothing, by words. God could have thought the universe into existence, but he spoke the universe into existence, why? So that you and I would know when you have this book in your hand, you're dealing with the most powerful, creative force in existence. God speaks to nothing. Everything lurches into existence. It is powerful. Not just to create the universe, but to sustain it. We're told about Jesus, the word of God in Hebrews 1, that it was by the word of his power that he upholds all things. The picture I think of is when you pick up sand at the seashore, and it's dry sand, and it's all kind of prone to fall apart. But you hold it in your hands, and it's your hands hold it together. And if you take your hands away, like powdery snow, it just falls into almost nothing, puffs. And the universe, what holds the universe together? It's not the atomic bonds. It's not subatomic particles. It's not the gravitational pull of the planets and the black holes. It's the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is something and not nothing, because he spoke in the beginning, and there is still something and not nothing. It's like when the tenor's holding that last note, and Dr. Kuhl is holding his hand up, and the tenor's holding the note, and the conductor's holding the hand up, and the note's gotta go as long as the conductor's hand is held up, and then he puts his hand down, and the tenor can breathe again. Well, Christ is holding the universe together by his word. And this is the word, this is the power of the weapon God has given you. Not the word of man, but the very word of God. Secondly, it is true. It is true. For the word of the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. It reflects his amen-like character. As for God, his way is blameless. The word of the Lord is tried, tried, tested. He's a shield to all who take refuge in him. Psalm 119, 160, the sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous ordinances is everlasting. Psalm 119, 142, your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness and your law is truth. Psalm 30, verse five, Proverbs 30, verse five, every word of God is tested. He's a shield to those who take refuge in him. Or as Jesus says, sanctify them by your truth for your word is truth. Of course it's the word of truth. It comes from the God of truth. The God who never lies. The God

who keeps all of his promises. And because he is such a God, his word is such a book. It'll never deceive you. It's inerrant. Never wrong. It's infallible. It's always right. You can trust it. It's established forever in the heavens, the psalmist says. Is there a better weapon to use against the father of lies than the sword of the spirit? That is true from beginning to end. It's true. It's powerful. It's also light. It's light. We stand against a world that lies in the power of the evil one, a world of darkness. but thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. The unfolding of your words gives light, the Bible says. It gives understanding to the simple. As I, 820, to the law and the testimony, if anyone does not speak according to thee, it is because they have no light in them, no light. Is there a better weapon to use against the darkness of the world, but also the darkness of our own heart? It's hard to know ourselves. Our hearts are complicated, twisted, perverted things. But the word of God is living and active. It is sharper than any two-edged sword. It pierces to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow. It discerns the thoughts and the intentions of the heart. that all things are naked and laid bare before the eyes of him with whom we have to do. How do we get that searching of the spirit? We come to his word. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my anxious thoughts, and see if there be any hurtful, grievous way in me, a way that brings grief to me, grief to others, grief to God. And where does that searching happen? It happens as we're in the Word. We open the Bible, the lights come on, we close it, and we're in the world of darkness. It's strong, it's true, it's light, it's pure. Your word is very pure. Therefore your servant loves it. Or this evening, the sermon on Sunday evening, the words of the Lord are pure words like silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times. Your Lord will keep them. You will preserve him from this generation forever. Remember the beautiful kind of ambiguity. Is he keeping his word or keeping his people? And the idea is both. Because God has wrapped his people up in his word and his promises and his covenant. Is there a better word and a better weapon to use against filthiness, the devil's lies, than the light of God's word? It is also sufficient. It is sufficient. All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for doctrine, teaching you truth. Reproof, no, don't go that way. Correction, this is a better way to walk. Training in righteousness, literally pediatric instruction, taking a child from infancy and immaturity all the way to solid maturity and growth in grace. And it's because it's inspired by God that it has such wonderful effects. And you remember the rich man

and Lazarus. The main thrust of that story was the Bible is not enough. Whenever the rich man is in hell and he cries out and begs that Lazarus would come and give him a drop of water and Abraham says no. And then he says, I beg you, Father, that you send him then, Abraham, if he can't come to me, send him to my father's house. For I have five brothers, in order that he may warn them so that they will not also come to this place of torment. But Abraham said, they have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them. But he said, no, Father Abraham. But if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent. And Abraham says, but he said

to him, if they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead. The logic of hell, the Bible's not enough. Send them a ghost from heaven to witness to them, then they'll believe. And Abraham says, no, if they won't listen to Abraham and the prophets, they'll not listen even if a man rises from the dead. I'm sure a man has risen from the dead, the Lord Jesus, and they still don't believe him. So the Bible, this wonderful book, is from God. It's strong, it's true, it's light, it's pure, it's sufficient, and it's able. It's able to make you wise unto salvation. is able to convert the soul, the psalmist says, the law of the Lord is perfect, restoring. And the word restore literally means turning around. You're going the wrong way. We've all had that experience. We've been going the wrong way, speaking the wrong way, acting the wrong way, and we come to the Bible and it speaks to us. And it doesn't just speak to us, it actually turns us around and sends us in the right direction. It's got the power to create faith. Are you struggling to believe God this morning? This afternoon now, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ. The Bible actually creates faith in our hearts. It can take a fool and make him wise. The testimonies of the Lord are sure making wise this simple. The word simple carries the idea of a stupid person who has the habit of making one wrong decision after another. And suddenly he's wise. What made the difference? The word of God. It can change you from the inside out. The Bible says, or Paul says, we constantly thank God that when you receive the word which you heard from us, you received it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in the hearts of those who believe. It gets under our skin. It works in our hearts. Are you dismayed about your heart? I'm dismayed about my heart. The dark thoughts that rise up within it. The evil suggestions that come from my own heart. Doubt, despair, despondency, depravity all bubbling up like carrots in a soup boiling on the stove. And we've got a Bible that will work in our hearts, Paul says. can build you up as a Christian,

Acts 20, 32. I commend you, Paul says, to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. It's able to build you up and to give you the inheritance, to bring you home to heaven is the idea, and help you stop sinning. How can a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed according to your word. Thy word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against you. How do you kill sin before it kills you? By taking this word and hiding it in your heart, and it does something. You gotta think a way you've never thought before if you want to live a way you've never lived before. You think about the golfers, the golf swing, or any complicated action, how does that happen? It happens, neurons that fire together go together. Ask Dr. Alexander. When you train, when you're firing neurons, swinging in a golf swing, eventually the neurons thinking, we're doing this all together all the time, let's make a team. And so you just have to think, golf swing, and all those neurons will fire. It's exactly the same when it comes to responding to life, when people provoke you. You have to learn to think whenever you feel provoked, whenever you feel tested, whenever you feel discouraged, whenever you feel negativity grabbing hold of you, or joy being sapped out of you. At that moment, you've got to learn to trigger a cascade of neurons. And how do you do that? By memorizing and meditating upon God's word in private, and as you think through God's word, and the kind of situations it might apply to, something happens deep in you. your heart. It's like what Joshua says in Joshua 1 verse 8, the book of the law shall not depart from your mouth but you shall meditate on it day and night. Why? So that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. It's when you think about the Word of God that you become careful to live according to the Word of God. And if you don't do the one, don't be surprised if you don't end up doing the other. Gotta train those neurons in your brain to fire together. Memorize the scriptures. Sanctify them by your truth, Jesus says, for your word is truth. That's this morning. The character of this weapon, the source of this weapon, it comes from God. And the wonderful character of this weapon. God has only given you one weapon to fight back against the devil. Because one weapon is the only weapon you need when it's the word of God himself. Every day, read the Bible. Meditate upon it. Expose yourself to preaching. Something happens in preaching. We don't get a better Bible in the sermon, but we do get the Bible better. Paul says God has manifested his word in the preached message. Titus 1 verse 3, I think. And the idea is the word becomes visible, tangible in the sermon. You know that, you feel that.

When the word's being preached, it comes home to you. Read it, memorize it, make every opportunity you can to hear it. And you'll find the voice of God will start filling your heart. And his mind will start controlling your thoughts. And his heart, his affections will start commanding your affections. And you'll start having the wonderful strength to love people not out of your own love, but as Paul said, I love you with the affection of Christ Jesus. How do you get the affections of Christ Jesus? You get it by exposing yourself to his mind and his word. And you'll have the wonderful privilege of resisting him in God's strength. and resisting him with God's armor, and resisting him with God's word. And when you do, you'll watch him flee like the whipped cur that he is. Resist the devil, God's way, and he will flee from you. And that's a promise. Let's pray together. Father in heaven, we thank you for this wonderful book that you've given us. And every word of it in the original manuscripts is inspired by God. And it's profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. We thank you for a church, O God, where we can preach your word honestly and boldly and not be frightened of people reacting with anger and bitterness. For people who want to hear what you say and only what you say, I pray you'd grant me and the other ministers of this church and the elders of this church and of our denomination, oh God, to be active preaching this word. That the gates of hell will not prevail and that the church of Christ will, in this place and as far as the sun shines, for the glory of your name and the growth of your kingdom and the good of your people in Christ. Amen.