

97-12-07a

This is an interesting day, historically. This is December 7th, 1997. You may recall that in 1941, December 7th also fell on a Sunday.

We remember it as Pearl Harbor Day. Our circumstances this morning are far better than the events allowed for in that year. For our scripture reading this morning, turn with me to Psalm 32, the 32nd Psalm.

To put this in the context of our study, you will recall last time that we saw the significance of the serpent, not only in the Garden, but also in scripture, and his representation of our enemy, Satan. The conflict that we face, the warfare in which we are engaged, began in the Garden of Eden. It began in Genesis chapter 3, and is resolved at the cross.

As with any great conflict, whether it's World War II, or World War III, the first world war ought to be World War II, and our spiritual conflict ought to be World War I. It began at the beginning of human history, and has continued, and will continue, even though the strategic victory has been won, the mopping up and exploitation of that victory, the seizing of territory, the redrawing of the lines of government, and so forth, is still taking place, and is taking place in our lives. It will be ultimately resolved more than 1,000 years hence. But Psalm 32 addresses one of the keys to our participation, and our success, in this conflict with that old serpent, the devil.

This is the Psalm of David, a maskil, which many believe to signify a contemplation, a song especially designed for meditation and reflection. David says in Psalm 32, Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me. My vitality was turned into the drought of summer.

Selah. I acknowledged my sin to you, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

Selah. For this cause, everyone who is godly shall pray to you in a time when you may be found. Surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him.

You are my hiding place. You shall preserve me from trouble. You shall surround me with songs of deliverance.

Selah. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will guide you with my eye.

Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be

harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked, but he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

You can see the close connection that this passage has to Genesis chapter 3, the object of our study. The idea of transgression, the idea of covering sin. There is a way of covering sin that is inadequate.

There is a way of covering sin that is completely adequate. The fig leaf solution, the human effort solution doesn't work, even in the eyes of those who perform it. When the voice of the Lord God is heard in the garden in the cool of the day, Adam in his fig leaf outfit hides.

And he tells the Lord, I hid because I knew I was naked in my little fig leaf outfit. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

Now, if God looks at us and does not impute iniquity and sees no deceit in our spirit, what then is our standing before God? Look at verse 11. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous. It doesn't matter what we have done.

It doesn't matter how we have transgressed or how we have failed. It is possible for us to be in this category. The Lord does not impute iniquity and there is no deceit in our spirit.

We are not deceiving ourselves. We are not making a futile attempt to deceive God or deceive others. We try that by remaining silent.

We don't stop and acknowledge even to ourselves that we may be in the wrong. We don't admit the possibility. We don't examine ourselves.

We don't judge ourselves to see if we are in the faith. The consequence of that, David details in verse 3. When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. What is the indicator that should tell us that we have failed to acknowledge our iniquity? That we have failed to confess our sin? The fruit of the spirit shrivels and disappears in our soul.

If we find ourselves without love, without joy, without peace, short of patience, short of long suffering, lacking gentleness, lacking faith, lacking humility and so forth, it's a sure sign that we have been deflected. We have been diverted from our calling and from our fruitful standing before God into operational death. Our spirit is deceived.

And we will know it by our lack of joy. My bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me.

My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Unfruitfulness. But after meditating

on that, the word *sila* causes us to pause and reflect.

Then in verse 5, I acknowledged my sin to you and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. And in verse 6, this is the cause for which everyone who is godly shall pray to you, David says to God, in a time when you may be found.

There is a limited window of opportunity to do this. What happened to the people who heard the preaching of Noah, something we will come upon in the not too distant future in our study of Genesis. Call upon God while he may be found.

Seek him while he is near. Repeated failure to take advantage of that opportunity eventuates in the opportunity disappearing. And that's what David talks about here.

Everyone who is godly needs to pray to God in a time when he may be found. Why? Because in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him. Once the declaration is made by God that your time has passed and your time is up in this life, there is no going back and acknowledging sin.

You can't go back and relive your life. You can't go back and say, well, now that I'm in the flood of waters which is ending my physical life, I'm going to go back and confess my iniquity. We have a limited time and that's what David refers to.

In a flood of great waters they shall not come near him. You shall preserve me from trouble. You shall surround me with songs of deliverance.

Why? Because of verse 5. I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will guide you with my eye. Do not be like the horse or like the mule which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you.

Do we want to be responding to God voluntarily or do we want to be driven to God through discipline and through external constraints? Many sorrows shall be to the wicked. Who are the wicked in this context? Those who don't acknowledge their sin. Those who allow themselves to live with deceit of soul.

But he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him. And confession of sin, acknowledging of sin, is an act of faith. That's why David quotes himself in verse 5. He doesn't say, I went and confessed my sin.

He points out the moment of faith. I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord. That is the point of faith, trusting in the promise of God.

Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart. None of us by nature and none of us by experience are righteous and upright of heart,

but we are declared such and we become such through the cleansing work of God in our hearts. And this is the key.

This is the way that the battle is won. This is the way that the victory that Jesus Christ won on the cross is exploited. Old Testament saints exploited that victory in an anticipatory way, looking forward to the redemption that was pictured in the sacrificial system.

We look at it historically and exploit it after the fact. And we still await the ultimate consummation of that victory in the future. But this Psalm, Psalm 32, encapsulates many of the central truths that we see in Genesis chapter 3. And if you turn there now, we will continue our study.

After the great fall, after the victory of Satan in the garden, in the person of the serpent, a victory he continues to try to win and to exploit in this life, God appears walking in the garden in the breeze of the day, in the cool of the day. And Adam hears his sound, hears his voice and hides himself until the Lord God calls to Adam and says to him, where are you? And at the sound of the voice of God, Adam pipes up. He had a choice.

He could have remained silent like David. When I kept silent, I was like the drought of summer in my groaning and in my iniquity. But Adam does the proper thing.

Adam responds to the call of God and acknowledges his iniquity. Verse 12, the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I ate. Eve does the same thing when God addresses her.

The serpent deceived me and I ate. And that is the key. It's amazing that so many of the central truths of life and our lives as believers are right here in this episode.

Because Adam and Eve, with the knowledge of good and evil, having eaten of the fruit, are in the same boat that we are and immediately exercise the same option that we have. Faced with the issue of God's standard and God's presence, they acknowledge their transgression. And that makes it possible for God to dispense grace.

God addresses the serpent, the cause, source, and father of this deceit and of this sin that has corrupted the human race. Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all cattle, more than every beast of the field. On your belly you shall go.

You shall eat dust all the days of your life. This is a curse on Satan in the person of the serpent. And there is far more going on than the removal of the serpent's legs and his new method of locomotion on the planet.

Satan had access to the heavenly realms until God cast him out and more or less chained him to the earth. He can pay occasional visits and he can occasionally leave the ground. But he is basically called the God of this world because this is where he dwells.

Satan walks up and down and to and fro in the earth. He roams the earth seeking whom he may devour, as Peter tells us, like a lion. And why is that? Because in the spiritual realm, in his existence as a heavenly being, he has lost his access.

He goes about in the dust, as it were. He is earthbound. That is symbolized in the earthbound nature of the serpent's life.

They occasionally slither up a tree or up some object, but their basic life is in the ground. They live in holes in the ground. They eat dust.

And this is Satan's fate as a heavenly creature throughout human history. We know from passages like Job that he does occasionally go before God and make accusations. But this is his dwelling place.

Verse 15, I will put enmity between you and the woman, enemyship between your seed and her seed. He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. We see the classic statement of conflict and the resolution of that conflict in this verse.

To the woman he said, I will multiply your sorrow and your conception. In pain you shall bring forth children, or sorrow. Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you.

Then to Adam he said, because you have heeded the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying you shall not eat of it, curse it as the ground for your sake. The human race is not cursed anywhere in this declaration. The serpent is cursed.

The ground is cursed. Adam and Eve are not cursed. Why? They have acknowledged their transgression.

There is no such acknowledgement by the serpent. But the ground is cursed. There is a consequence.

And others are going to suffer because of this transgression. And there is going to be suffering on the part of the woman. There is going to be suffering on the part of the man.

And this goes beyond, in the same way that it's more than locomotion for the serpent, it's more than childbearing and it's more than tilling the soil for man. These are consequences in the soul. These are consequences in spiritual life.

In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you. You shall eat the herb of the field.

In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground. For out of it you were taken, dust you are, and to dust you shall return. The central point we want to draw from this, before we go forward and see the expulsion from the garden and the

beginning of life as we know it more or less on the human race on planet earth, is to see that this enemyship that has been placed between the serpent and the seed of the woman is central.

It is the definition of our life. Satan is the enemy of our soul, not our works. He is our enemy in the spiritual realm.

Now when you listen today, when you hear talk about Satan, what do we hear in the Christian media? What do we hear in churches and so forth? What kind of activity does Satan engage in? How is he our enemy? Well, we often say this bad circumstance came up, Satan put this in our path. Satan thwarted us, the devil's after me type of thing. And normally we hear this, or we often hear it, in the context of frustration of our plans.

We wanted to go somewhere and Satan broke the car. We wanted to accomplish something and Satan kept it from happening. And we tend to think that he is our enemy in the progress of our lives.

He creates circumstances that frustrate us. He keeps us from doing something that we had as a goal or as an objective. But this first encounter and God's words afterward tell us that Satan is the enemy of our soul.

And the warfare from first to last is an unseen conflict. If it is an unseen conflict, then it is not our circumstances that Satan is in which he is attacking. His victory is in a different and much more important arena.

Look at Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, Paul says, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, as it says in the New King James. Against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies.

Spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. Therefore, bind Satan. Is that what he says? Satan, I bind you, you and your demons.

I hinder you in the name of Jesus. I tell you to stop hindering our efforts and so forth. That's not the conclusion.

Paul says in verse 13, therefore, take up the whole armor of God. This is a spiritual conflict. Now, what does this mean to us in actual daily life? Obviously, our life is defined by circumstances.

It's expressed in circumstances. We live in a material world. So, what is the nature of this conflict and what is our role in it? How do we conduct ourselves in the light of this? That's what we're going to look at this morning.

But the key here is, this is a spiritual conflict. Satan is a spiritual enemy, not a physical enemy. And it is not physical resistance that we're trying to overcome.

We're not trying to hammer our way through circumstances. Circumstances come and go. And the way they turn out is not the definition of success or failure.

Because it's an unseen conflict. It is a spiritual conflict and it is in the soul that victory is won or lost. So, what is the nature of this? How do we come to grips with this conflict? We have to understand something about Satan.

We saw the presence of the serpent last week throughout Scripture and what it represents. We've seen that it represents Satan, the opposition of Satan, what he stands for. The evil side of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

He's got that half of the problem. So, we need to take a look at Satan. First of all, because he does go about on his belly in the dust, he is confined to this world.

He is the god of this world. The principalities and powers and rulers of darkness of this age and the spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies is operating on this planet, in our environment. This is where it gets expressed.

So, what is the nature of that? Well, what is the nature of Satan's authority? Turn back to Luke chapter 4, verses 5 and 6. We want to see exactly what it is we're up against here as the seed of the woman. Jesus, during the temptations, engages in conversation with Satan, who tempts him to command stones to become bread. In Luke 4, verse 4, Jesus answers him saying, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

Notice that Jesus sees through the issue of should he turn a physical rock into physical bread to the spiritual issue of why does he do what he does? What is it that guides his actions? What goes on in his soul? That is defined by the word of God. That's what life truly is. It's in the unseen realm, not the seen realm.

But look at verse 5. Then the devil, taking him up on a high mountain, showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to him, All this authority I will give you and their glory, for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Satan claims authority over the kingdoms of this world.

Is that valid? Yes, it is. This is another one of his twisted truths. He does have authority over this world which has been given to him.

He is called the God of this world and he has that authority. And he does give it to whomever he wishes, in a sense. But there is a service that transcends this world.

Our service isn't confined to this world. We don't live in the physical world. And to acknowledge Satan's rulership over the world is to function under his authority.

We recognize that our life transcends this world because it's unseen, it's spiritual. And

that is the means of our deliverance. If you live in the world and if you define your life by circumstances, you place yourself under Satan's rulership because he is the God of this world.

But there is an authority that transcends it. There is more to life than just this world. And he has a subset of authority.

That greater authority that transcends and overrules his is God's, which has been delivered to Christ. And that's how Jesus answers in verse 8. Get behind me, Satan, for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only you shall serve. That is an acknowledgment of higher and greater authority in a higher and greater realm.

We are not confined to the dust of which we are made. We're not confined to the world in which Satan wields authority. But our means of escape is spiritual, not physical.

And Jesus points that out here in Luke chapter 4. And you may also notice, by turning back a few pages to Matthew 28, the quote-unquote Great Commission passage in 28.19 is preceded by a statement that Jesus makes in 28.18. And unfortunately, Matthew 28.18 doesn't get near the airplay that the following verse does. Matthew 28.18. His disciples see him when he appears to them in Galilee. Jesus came and spoke to them saying what? All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.

Satan's authority is only on earth. The Lord Jesus Christ has been given all authority in heaven and on earth. And the post-positive-conjunctive-particle-gar that you see there in verse 19 in the Greek that says, therefore, go and make disciples, that therefore refers back to verse 18.

Why is it that the eleven are to go forth baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit, making disciples, teaching them to observe everything? Why is that? Because all authority has been given to the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven and on earth. And his authority transcends that of Satan. Now, this seems like sort of a theological concept.

And we think, well, that's fine. And I had a pretty good idea of that. This has a practical application that goes beyond just our knowledge of who is more powerful than whom.

We acknowledge and recognize in a pretty straightforward manner that Jesus has authority over Satan. But there's a reason why we want to see this in Scripture. And there's a reason why Scripture continues to emphasize it.

Look at Acts 26, verse 18. This is Paul recounting his conversion experience. He does this several times.

It's recorded, I think, three different places in Acts. But in Acts 26, before Agrippa, Paul is telling this story about the Damascus Road. And in verse 14, he says, When we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language,

Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.

So I said, Who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose. Notice that Saul is on his face in the dust.

Right? When this voice speaks out of heaven and the blinding light appears, Saul is in the dust. And that means something. Paul repeats this each time he tells this story.

He says, We had all fallen to the ground, in verse 14. And what does the authority of Jesus instruct him to do? Arise and stand on your feet. Stand up out of the dust.

Now this is something that big strands of our Christian theology has failed to do. We've talked many times about the emphasis in Reformed theology on depravity and on the hopeless, helpless, useless condition of man, unable to so much as turn and look at God. The Lord Jesus Christ has authority over sin.

And he has commanded us to arise and stand up out of the dust, to stand up on our feet. I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the people as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you.

And here's the purpose in verse 18. If you want another statement of Matthew 28, 19, another statement of the Apostles' Commission, this is Paul's commission, to open their eyes in order to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me. That's what the communication of God's Word, the ministry of the Apostles, is designed to do.

To turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. You see that in the first chapter of many of Paul's epistles, like Colossians, the transference from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of the Son, of his love. There is a transcending authority.

Even though Satan has been given authority, Christ has been given greater authority. Look at John 12, verse 31. Now is the judgment of this world.

Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to myself. This is on the occasion of the voice of God speaking from heaven.

This happens three times, I believe, during Jesus' ministry. Once at his baptism, once at the transfiguration, and once here. When Jesus prays in verse 28 of John 12, Father, glorify your name, a voice came from heaven saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.

And much like the Damascus road, the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus says this voice did not come because of me, but for your sake.

Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. A few pages over in John 14, verse 30.

I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. And he has nothing in me, or he has no hold over me. But in order that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do, arise and let us go from here.

What is the point of this? The last thing that Jesus says here after leaving peace with his disciples, he says I'm not going to be teaching you in person much longer, for the ruler of this world is coming. He's about to be betrayed. Judas is about to bring the high priests and soldiers and so forth to Gethsemane.

Jesus says he has no hold over me, but in order that the world may know that I love the Father, and that as the Father gave me commandment, so I do, I obey. So there is a message of love and obedience that is brought out and communicated in the interaction between the God of this world and the Lord Jesus Christ, whose authority transcends. And that's what we're getting to here.

This is where we're aiming as we look at all of these scriptures. Why does God let Satan and his philosophies and his deceptions and his forces roam the world, seeking whom they may devour? Why does God permit that? Why does God allow Satan to be the God of this world? And why does he put us here as sheep among the wolves? Why are we here? Why do we come into this conflict? Why does God put enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between his seed and her seed, of which we are a part? Why is that? What's the point? People ask this question all the time. Why does God allow evil in the world? Why does God leave believers here to suffer the slings and arrows of Satan's wiles? Why is it? Well, here's an example from the earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

His power has been broken. Jesus says, He has no hold over me. His authority does not apply to me.

He's already demonstrated that in the temptations. But why are there temptations? For that very reason, to demonstrate love for the Father and obedience. There's no trick to obedience when there's no pressure.

There's no resistance. There's no reason not to. It is easy to love those who love us.

It's easy to love when there's no pressure and no resistance. But the power of God is demonstrated. The power and the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ is demonstrated in the face of adversity, in the face of challenge.

Why is there enmity, and why are we participating in it? So that the world may know what it is to love the Father, and what it is to obey the Father, and to see the outcome of that love and that obedience. There is an outcome. There's a result.

It's demonstrated in the life of Jesus, and it is demonstrated in our lives. And again, that is a spiritual outcome. The world may not see in our circumstances the difference between the love and obedience that we have for the Father and people who disregard.

The wicked prosper, and the righteous are often laboring on in obscurity. But the world is ultimately going to see it. Every knee will bow.

Every eye will see. Every tongue will confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ. And there is coming a day when all of the world will see the vindication of those who pursue God by faith.

And whether we like it or not, whether we fully understand it or not, that is why we are here. Not to achieve results in circumstances. What did the world see when the conflict arose between Jesus Christ and Satan? What did the world see when the ruler of this world came? Defeat.

He's been crucified. He's been killed. That's the end of that movement.

Just like John the Baptist. People could look and say, well, you know, it's a failed movement. It's a failed mission.

He came. He ran up against the authorities. They got ticked off, and now he's dead.

That's what the world saw. You hear this today, even. People say, well, Christians, you're following a raggedy Jewish rabbi who got killed for his trouble.

He was peace and light and goodwill toward men, and he got executed for his trouble. People who claim to be atheists and claim to be agnostics say, you know, you're following a failure. But the world is going to know, ultimately, at the return of Christ.

And this is communicated in Scripture. Look at 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 8. These are passages that ought to condition our thinking. It is easy for us when we hit resistance and when we are fighting that warfare against principalities and powers and rulers of darkness, whether it's the forces in our society or those who are not living under the authority of God and are being used by Satan to create conflict and persecution and suffering for us.

It's easy to get caught up in the circumstances and say, how is this circumstance going to be resolved? How is this conflict going to be resolved? How am I going to win and be vindicated in this conflict? These are the passages we need to think about. What is the nature of the battle? Is it going to be resolved in circumstances? Are we going to be

vindicated in time? Maybe and maybe not. We are certainly going to be vindicated at the end.

2 Thessalonians 2, verse 8. Is that what I said? Yes. I'm just looking at 1 Thessalonians, which is why it makes no sense to me. 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 8. The lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy, how? With the brightness of His coming.

It is at the second coming that the lawless one is destroyed. He has been defeated. His authority has been broken, but he is destroyed with the brightness of the Lord's coming.

Verse 9, the coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish. Why? Because they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be delivered. And because they refused to receive it for this reason, verse 11, God will send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

This is the choice that we make. We can live in the world, or we can live in the heavenly citizenship that has been granted to us through Christ. And if we look for our vindication in the world, if we look for our victory, if we look for our vindication, if we look for our overcoming strictly in the realm of circumstances, our impact, our success, our acknowledgement, we have refused to receive the love of the truth because the truth is that this is operating at a much higher level.

And the victory is the Lord's, not ours. And He is vindicated by our faith. His plan and His redemption of us is justified and demonstrated in our faith.

Look at Hebrews 2, verse 14. How was this achieved, this victory that will be consummated at the Lord's return? Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same. Why did Jesus come and release the equality with God that He did not consider a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself and took on the form of a servant and became like us? Why did He do that? He Himself likewise shared in the same that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death.

That is the devil. And release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Why do we fear death? Well, because if we're living in this world and looking for fulfillment and meaning in this life, that's the end of it.

If we are hoping in this life only, we are of all men most miserable, Paul says over in Corinthians. If we're looking for everything in this life, we are hopeless. But Jesus came that through His death He might destroy him who had the power of death and release those who through fear of death were subjected to bondage.

Look at 1 John 3, verse 8. 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. We are no longer in bondage to sin and we are no longer in bondage to circumstance and it's because of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, that's something that we have to bring down into our daily function. We have to remember as we face whatever it is that we face. As we struggle through the circumstances that form our daily lives that this isn't really the game.

This isn't the thing we're trying to win. We're not trying to achieve success in circumstances. We're not trying to achieve recognition or victory or whatever it is that we're looking for.

The warfare is in our souls and it is lifting ourselves out of the dust in which the serpent dwells and functioning under the authority and power of the Lord Jesus Christ which transcends that by continuing to bear the fruit of the Spirit. If we maintain love and we maintain joy and we maintain peace whatever the circumstances are we have won a greater, higher and eternal victory. It doesn't really matter how circumstances turn out.

It doesn't matter if our physical life ends the way John the Baptist ended, the way the prophets ended. You read the roster of the faithful in Hebrews chapter 11 and from a human point of view that could be a roster of failure. They were slain.

They were sawed asunder. They were fed to the lions. They lived in caves and holes in the ground.

By any human standard of measure they were not successful. But they won the victory because their life transcends this life. Well, how does that take place? No matter how hard we try when we address a subject like this it always seems to be kind of in the ethereal realm and tomorrow and the next day when we think back, well, yes, I know God is in His heaven and Jesus has overcome and so forth but I'm still stuck here in my circumstances.

How do we in a practical way seize hold of that victory? How do we live as those who in the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent claim and exploit the victory and the lordship of Jesus Christ? Well, we're going to pause and take our break and when we come back we're going to get down to brass tacks. What is the meaning of all of this in practical terms? And how do we seize hold of it? It's always important not only to sketch out the way things really are but to find out the answer to the question so what? We'll do that when we come back. Let's pause and take a break.