

Proverbs 23-02-08b

We resume now looking at Proverbs chapter seven and our summary of the ploys, the exploits, the various kinds of machinations that the crafty harlot uses to seduce this young man who is unwary. He's not alert, experience doesn't warn him, and we have done the first seven of these, which takes us up through chapter seven, verse 11. She is loud and rebellious and will not stay home.

Interestingly, the Proverbs are replete with references to people being loud, loud and proud, you might say, and people, there is a tendency, one of the many fallacies you can perpetrate in presenting a point of view in contention with others, in debate, argument, conflict, opposition of various kinds, is to just crank up the volume and you see people who will just start screaming in other people's faces or just be so loud and vociferous that they drown out rational thought. And for filling a vacuum with sound and fury, as Shakespeare said, and I often quote, really signifying nothing. It isn't the quality of the argument, it is the decibel level of the argument that just makes people tired and they just throw up their hands and walk away and say, do what you want to do.

It's just not worth it to sit here and be yelled at. And to very obviously flout propriety and convention and moral standards, they're for a reason. We embrace and we respect moral standards because even when they're detached from the Bible, they echo and are a reflection of truths about righteousness and sin and evil that are communicated in the Bible.

And to be rebellious, as it says here in verse 11, she is loud and rebellious. Her feet will not stay at home. And you hear many arguments in the modern day that, well, the domestic life is shameful and oppressive and women shouldn't have to stay at home.

They shouldn't be able to do everything men can do and make their way in the world. And well, okay, but you've got to move beyond the one-ply argument that wouldn't it be good if can do anything they want by way of work and upward mobility and organizations and so on. Okay, but let's dig a little deeper.

Why is there a domestic assignment in scripture for wives and mothers and there is work assignment for husbands and fathers? Why is that? It is a division of labor that does a couple of things at once. It is symbolic and representative. It is metaphorical in terms of the father being the provider and those who remain at home and receive that provide support and encouragement.

And it is mutually beneficial, not the least benefit being that there is someone at home to train up children in the way that they should go and to nurture them in the early stages so that by the time they approach adulthood, the father can take over. And we've seen this in Proverbs in the, my son appeals, my son, listen to the teaching of your mother, listen to the advice from your father. And in general, it is the father who is giving

this launching point advice to an older child where the mother has provided the foundational teaching that inculcates self-control, respect, being quiet and listening when you're spoken to by someone who knows more than you do.

Not granting blanket freedom and we'll do what you want to do, go what you want to go. You're a wild vine growing out of the ground. I don't want to give you any sort of structure that you can cling to and grow up straight and with access to the sunshine.

We're going to provide no structure. This is the current ethos in child training and child development and education is we want to remove walls and they're called barriers. Well, structure is a barrier to free expression of your inner self.

Yes, it is. That's the point because the hardest deceitful above all things and desperately wicked and little children are just the incarnation of selfishness and disobedience and they need training. Anybody that's grown tomatoes knows that you need something to support the tomato plant so that when it grows and gets ready to bear its fruit, it can support the weight of the fruit and there are many plants that need to be staked.

They need to be supported. They need to be trained especially when they are young to be true and straight. Fruit trees at the beginning can bend and branch and do all kinds of things and so they are tended so that when they are young, they are encouraged and even forced to grow straight.

This benefits the tree later on when wind blows and insects come and so on. They don't have vulnerabilities and they don't have inclinations that make them unproductive and unfruitful. They grow straight and tall because they were trained to do so when they were young and somebody has to be there to do that.

The notion that it takes a village is foreign to God's guidance to Israel in the Old Testament where He is explicit about the role of parents in training their children in the way that they should go when they rise up and when they sit down. When they walk along the way, they are to review history of God's grace, provision, and deliverance and inculcate their children with who they are and why they are here, the covenant relationship that the nation has with God and their part in it. In the New Testament, children obey your parents.

Fathers don't provoke your children. There is training that is essential. But if you do not stay at home, if your feet are prone to wander, and particularly in the evening, this woman is out and about and she will not stay at home.

She wants to go out and yak and rebel and be loud and vociferous and do things that appeal to her. If she were in her proper place, she would be at home with a husband who provides and protects and nurtures his family. She would be there to provide for, protect, nurture, and train young children so that they can then move into the second phase of

their training, which is the father's exhortation, preparing young men to be husbands and fathers themselves.

This is the biblical model. People don't like it. They think it's somehow foreign to something they embrace and something they believe.

Fine, go do that. The problem is that when you have a majority of people in a nation, in a culture, in a community who embrace that, the community becomes dangerous, crime-ridden, unpredictable, unsafe, unstable. Young people who do not find a sense of community in their family and in their church go out and find it in a gang and with nefarious associations and ill-conceived and evil activities that are adrenaline hooking instead of fruitful and contributing and laying a foundation for the future.

It is always destructive. It always takes from others who have done hard work. It involves theft.

It involves defacing what has been built, tearing down what has been made over time. And it can only thrive where there has previously been solidity and construction and beneficial community. It grows up as a parasite on that which was formerly good.

And if that which was formerly good doesn't remain good and doesn't scrape off the parasites and chop these vines off at their root, they will grow and eventually tear down a formerly healthy community and society, family, and so on. God knows these things. God is smarter than us.

This is the way God lined it up. People think they are smarter than God. I will be my own God.

I will write my own rules. I will go out and be loud and rebellious. And I'm not going to stay at home where the word of God says I should be.

Children should be at home. Mothers and wives should be at home. Fathers go out and work and then come home.

This is the biblical model. And you abandon this at your own peril and at the detriment of the community. Nothing else works.

It has been proven all down through history. Well, that brings us to number eight where we pick up now in verse 12. At times she is outside, at times in the open square, lurking at every corner.

I saw somebody talking about this. Well, she can't lurk at every corner. She can only lurk at one corner at a time.

What does it mean that she's lurking at every corner? It means you never know which corner you're going to turn and there she is. There is an element of unexpectedness, if

not surprise. You turn a corner and suddenly she's there.

It catches people unawares who are not watching and praying. How many times do we see Gregoreo in Greek? Be alert. Be watchful.

Don't be caught out. Jesus warns the disciples. We're seeing it in Matthew.

Satan has asked for you that he may sift you like wheat. I have prayed for you that your faith will not fail. We maintain our alertness by trusting that God knows what he's talking about when he says, don't be seduced.

Let no one deceive you. Let no one disarm you. You need the full armor of God.

Don't let somebody knock the sword out of your hand. Don't let somebody bat your shield away, knock off your helmet, hit you so hard you come out of your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Your waist girded with truth, truth holding your whole outfit together with that belt.

Be alert. Be on guard. Don't be smacked out of your protective armor.

And it requires watchfulness. And part of it is recognizing scriptures like this as an exhortation and a warning to all of us. You can't wave this away and say, well, you know, I was a young man of 16 once, but those days are long behind me.

I don't have to pay any attention to these three chapters in Proverbs. Not the case. So dangerously overlooked.

Every single believer in the Lord Jesus Christ drawing breath today ought to be steeped in this, ought to be thinking about the contrast of the seductive woman who wants to ply her skills at distracting and deflecting us from proper priorities, from being where we should be, being at home mentally and spiritually, being at rest and thinking about who we are and why we're here, drawing on the strength of the Holy Spirit and the guidance and light from the Word of God all the time. We can be at home all the time. We can be preparing to dwell in, function, and rule with Christ over the kingdom.

Now it's kingdom skills. We're in training. We're in school.

This is practice. If you think things are difficult now, just remember this, this is the training ground. These are the practice dummies.

None of this stuff can really hurt us unless we foolishly, you know, pull the pin out of a grenade, let the spoon fly and then stand there staring at it. That happened in my training at Quantico. A guy froze, pulled the pin, so I see the spoon fly, supposed to heave it with a straight elbow in the direction of the, you know, downrange where these things go off and there's embankments and berms to protect you and everybody gets down.

Well, the guy pulled the pin, he was in the thing right next to me, pulled the pin, spoon flies, and he just froze. And his instructor had to grab it and the guy had a death grip on and he managed to wrestle the thing away and it just barely got far enough away that the effective bursting radius of the fragmentation, there were reports written and, you know, people standing on the carpet and higher ups, you know, how did this happen? Didn't you do enough practice with the dummy grenades and all that, but people just don't think their way through pressure. It's easy to seize up under pressure.

It's easy to get self-centered. It's easy to let fear overcome us, to let emotion drive us, to be seduced by our own fallen nature as much as by the outside effects of the world. So when it says here that this woman is at every corner, you don't know where she's going to be.

You've got to assume that danger lurks at every corner, the danger of being flattered, of being seduced, of being fast-talked into something. And this woman's primary weapon is twofold. It's her appearance and it's her words.

She looks delectable and she talks about wonderful pleasures. She looks appealing and she sounds appealing. And that has ever been the ploy of the world, is to make things sound great and make them look great.

That's why they spray food with mist before they film it for commercials. They slow motion, you know, French fries, little strips of death falling through the air, but they look so good because they're high definition. They're moving in slow motion.

I personally have never seen the appeal of filmed food. It always reminds me of Dr. Criswell talking about the monkey who froze to death next to the picture of a fire. If I'm hungry, I'm going to go find some real food.

I don't want to look at pictures of food, but be that as it may. At every corner, verse 12, sometimes she's in the open square, sometimes she's lurking at the corner. Sometimes it is overt, sometimes it is covert.

We have to be alert to the obvious and we have to be alert to the subtle. My constant exhortation to my daughters from the time they were old enough to understand English and understand what an argument is, what somebody putting forth an idea is. Someone will put out a premise, given this observation, given this fact or this particular presented idea, you move from that to its conclusion.

Because this is true, we should do this, or this must also be true. There is the parodicis, what's put forward, and there's the apodicis, that which comes after. There is a premise and then there is a conclusion.

And so often we skip the analysis of the premise. We just sort of unthinkingly accept the premise that someone offers. And then we try to wrestle with the conclusion and say,

well, there's something wrong with this conclusion, but I can't refute it, I can't put my finger on it.

It is because we have not carefully examined the premise and questioned the assumptions of the premise. Sometimes it is obvious, sometimes it is very subtle, but my suggestion is anytime someone starts making an argument, starts pushing an agenda, starts saying, this is what should happen, this is what we should do. I saw an example of this on the news the other night where I believe somebody was talking to a former military person and a Congress person.

I'm not sure what all of her accomplishments are, but there's a woman named Tulsi Gabbard. I think she might be from Hawaii. But anyway, they were saying, what is the benefit of pushing all of these? What gain does the government get from pushing vaccinations and COVID phobia and the rest of it? Why is the government doing this? Well, that question involves a premise.

The government is doing it for the government's benefit. And I respected the way she termed her answer because she didn't answer the question. She gave an answer that addresses a different issue.

She said, I don't know about benefit to the government, but I can tell you who profits from these policies. So analyze the question. And Jesus does this all the time.

Someone will ask him a question. He doesn't necessarily feel restricted to only answering that question. He gets behind it to the premise, sees the falsehood in the premise, and corrects the premise and addresses that.

And that was just a little microcosm of what we need to do, whether it is in the open square or at any given corner. When some loud and self-interested party accosts us and wants us to go down a certain road, stop and analyze, what are you offering me? And here's the thing. As we are transformed by the of our minds, we become a kind of person.

Now let's say that suddenly out of nowhere, as if by magic, in the center of this room appears an attractive and somewhat scantily clad woman. And she says something along the lines of, come with me to the Kasbah and we will make beautiful music together. Or if you're a lady, some hunky man basically makes the same proposition.

What I'm getting at here is, as soon as you see someone dressed a certain way and proposing a certain course of action, it is a sword that divides people into two categories. Some people are immediately intrigued, immediately interested, immediately willing to at least, well, tell me more that this, wow, this doesn't come along every day. What exactly are you talking about? And want to start down that road a ways and then say, well, I wouldn't go all the way down that road.

I just, just tell me more. There are other people who immediately recognize, wait a minute, this is seduction on a bald faced scale. You're dressed to seduce.

You're talking about seducing. Goodbye. The door is that way.

And don't let it hit you in the rear end, your little fancy rear end on the way out. Right? And this needs to be us where as soon as you see a woman in the attire of a harlot, and as soon as you see that she is loud and rebellious and not at home, I don't need to hear anything you have to say. You are a wrong woman in the wrong place at the wrong time, looking the wrong way, saying the wrong words, get the hints.

I don't want to hear it. I was at the gas station coming back up from Dallas and I was tired and a little bit less patient than usual. And if you, if you spend much time at gas stations, there is a panhandling technique where someone will be walking around saying they've got their credit card in their hand and they say, there's something wrong with my card.

I'm trying to get somewhere and I can't get gas because my card doesn't work. And I wonder if you could help me, you know, just, just a few gallons of gas. Could you do something here to help me? The last time a guy, the second to last time a guy did this, he had his family in the car.

I may have told you about this cute little daughters, really nice wife, broken English, um, drove up and, Oh, you know, can you help me? Do you speaking? I don't speak. Can do you speak French? Do you speak Arabic? And, uh, was trying to get me to, to get in vagal. And next thing I know, he's trying to trade some cheap plated aluminum for my Annapolis classroom.

Like that's going to happen. Uh, I said he, he, and then he pulls out his phone and he says, see, I show you, look here. I'm at the counter.

It's refusing my card. Really? You took your card to the counter. And when it wouldn't work, you had somebody take a picture of you standing there with your card and the decline thing on the, this you really people do this.

I've been declined quick Patty, take a picture. Uh, Oh, I I've, I've much gold. We have, we have much, much gold.

Look, here's my uncle. And he shows me a picture of the uncle. He looks like Mr. T you know, there's just gold chains everywhere.

And, Oh, my family has much gold. I want to trade you. I look here.

I take off my bracelet. I take off my watch. I take off my ring.

I give you all of this for that. And I said, man, you don't know what you're talking about.

There is not enough wealth in the world to take this ring off my finger.

You don't know what I went through to get it. It's never leaving me until I croak. But he's just so anyway, sadly for the next guy that tried this ploy, uh, coming back up a couple of days ago at the gas station, he came up behind me.

He's got his card in his hand and he says, uh, sir, I don't want to bother you. And I said, you already have gotten the car and drove away, uh, to spot the fraud, to spot the fake, to spot the ploy. As soon as you see it, just excuse me, sir.

I don't want to bother you. You already are goodbye. And I didn't even say goodbye.

I just said you already are. And it just took him so much of back. I just got in the car and drove away.

But this is what we need to do when the seductions of the world approach. If God can make us into those people renewed by the mind, doing just what we're doing tonight, soaking ourselves in the word of God, gaining the wisdom, accepting it and taking it on board and looking for ways to apply it. So that when the, when the ambushes of the world are launched, it's like, I've seen this before.

I know what this is. Don't bother me. You're already bothering me.

Switch the channel, turn off the feed, block the poster, get off of that source. If this is what you're doing, I'm not that kind of person. Your stuff doesn't work on me.

I know better. I am committed and dedicated to a higher, more permanent, more divine, more eternal pursuit. I am looking for that eternal weight of glory that is going to be earned for me by my momentary light affliction.

And nobody's going to wrestle that glory away from me. I'm going through the affliction and I'm looking for that glory, not your distraction, your empty ashes in the mouth pleasures for a season. No, this is what God is doing.

This is the appeal of lady wisdom, which you find in chapter eight. So again, our eighth point here from verse 12 of chapter seven of Proverbs, she's unpredictable. She sets an ambush, but what do we do? We're awake.

We're alert. We're aware. We walk in the light as God is in the light.

And people who are trying to drag us into the darkness have no pull. They've got no sway. It isn't attractive.

I see you coming. I know what you are. I know what you offer.

I know that it's hollow. I know that it's ephemeral. I know that it doesn't last.

I know that it leads to death, not life. No way you're not. I'm not even talking to you.

Get the hints, get the behind me, Satan. You're thinking the thoughts of men, not the thoughts of God. Number nine, which is verse 13, she catches him and kisses him with an impudent face.

She starts talking. She is brazen and she has conquered others with this forceful approach, with this impudence. It kind of fascinates people.

It's like the adder, the hooded Cobra coming up out of the basket. You try to hypnotize it or it hypnotizes you. The word for the brazen face or the impudent face is used in Judges chapter six, verse two, where it is translated to conquer.

It overcomes by its boldness. There are times they say, if you want to infiltrate a place, put on a pair of glasses, grab a clipboard and just walk in like you own the building and like you've got every right to be there. And you don't even have a security badge.

And if somebody questions you, you say, look, there's something wrong with your door. I don't have time for this. I'm heading to the president's office.

And people bold face their way past people who are timid or who take authority and boldness to be automatic keys to entry. And there are people that get away with all kinds of stuff just because they are so brash and bold that they are unquestioned. Not so with us, just because someone flashes a badge, just because somebody supposedly represents authority, shouldn't throw us off our spiritual priorities and our stride to be representatives first and foremost of Jesus Christ.

We are body of Christ. You want to talk about authority? I am permanently and eternally attached to the Lord of the universe. So go on with your pretentious authority.

We choose when and where we will go. We're looking on Sunday at the Lord Jesus, who allows himself to be bound and led to Annas and Caiaphas. And he's the Lord of creation.

He's the God of glory. He's the eternal son of God. He's got authority to call 12 legions of angels.

And he lets himself be led. Why? Because he knows it's a part of the Father's purpose. And for the moment, these people's purposes align with God's purposes.

So fine, I'll go. But it isn't because he has to, and it's not because he respects their authority or feels like he's, you know, somehow scripturally bound to go with them because fear God and honor the King or render to Caesar or whatever. Jesus is doing what he does when he goes with the arresting party, because it is the will of God.

And these people don't even know what they're doing. They don't know with whom they're dealing. They don't know that they are unwittingly going to bring about the

greatest event of all of human history, which is the salvation of mankind at the cross.

And in their efforts to do what they want to do, they unwittingly accomplish what God wants done. These things will come, woe to them by whom they come. The nation that brings this about is going to be destroyed.

The man who brings it about is going to be destroyed. But Jesus complies because he knows the Father's will. Thus it is necessary to fulfill all righteousness.

Only thus can the scriptures be fulfilled. Shall I not drink the cup that the Father has handed me? This is a part of the Father's cup that I submit to these indignities and these heinous atrocities, this horrific and shameful mode of execution, unfair, unjust, unfounded against every tradition, the traditions as well as the letter of the law of Moses, the traditions that they had inculcated where the Sanhedrin should never meet at night, there should never be a death penalty handed down at night. It violates it all.

Jesus opens not his mouth. Why? He could easily put them in their place. He could easily incinerate them.

He could easily walk out unharmed. He could freeze them all in place. He could melt them into puddles of goo.

He goes along. Why? This is the cup my Father has handed me. Thus it has been written by the prophets to have my beard plucked out, to be bruised and stripes delivered and so on.

Jesus knew this from the scriptures. So he doesn't let these people dictate either proactively or in antagonism. Well, I'm going to resist you just because I know you're evil.

So anything you suggest I'm not going to do. Not so. They don't dictate in either direction.

We don't do everything the opposite of them, nor do we do everything they say. Our actions, our priorities, our policies are dictated by the word of God. Sometimes it may align with the world.

Other times not. But it is always what the scriptures say. That's what dictates.

So this conquering face and impudent kiss, the being seized. This is the word that was used when the angels had to drag Lot and his family out of Sodom. She drags him and she's not taking no for an answer because it's already a little bit too late.

Why didn't he recognize the clothing of a harlot and say, no harlots for me, and go the other way? He hung around just a moment too long. Now she has seized him and now she's appealing to his physical senses. You know, attractive woman grabs you and starts

planting kisses on your face.

That's going to start fogging your better judgment. Inevitably so. We've got hormones, we've got instincts, we've got built-in mechanisms that get fired up if you allow things to get this far.

This is why dating is so dangerous. In an unsupervised, unobserved environment, things happen that were never intended or anticipated because engines get revved and paths start being traveled. And it is generally a bad destination where those paths lead.

But this is what she knows and this is what she uses. And so she seizes him the way the angels seized Lot, Mrs. Lot and the two daughters. It is a deceitful kiss.

She doesn't genuinely love him. What does a kiss normally represent? What's it supposed to signify? I love you or in the formal kissing sense, greeting someone with a holy kiss. I respect you.

I appreciate you for who you are and your godly character. This is a deceitful kiss. This is the kiss that misrepresents the kiss of Judas, Luke 22, 48.

Human force is the wrong power. We should not try to exercise it ourselves, and we should not be driven by it or taken into its grasp when it is used against us. You have verses in Matthew that we've already gone over in our study of Matthew, Matthew 11, 12 and 24, 24.

Human affection is the wrong standard. You're not in the right because you are well-received and well-liked, nor are you in the wrong if you are hated and persecuted. Human affection is not the standard.

Proverbs 27, verse six. What is the right standard? It's scripture. What sayeth the scriptures? Is this something with which God is pleased? Let your moderation, let your self-control be known to all, Paul says.

The Lord is near. The Lord is at hand. Kids didn't used to misbehave if adults were in the room.

That's kind of changed in recent years, but used to be everybody's on their best behavior because, hey, mom and dad are here. Mom and dad leave. Now the cat's away, the mice will play.

When we remember that the Lord is near, that the Holy Spirit is present within us, hopefully if we're doing what we're supposed to, the presence of the Father and the Son is in our midst, how much badness do you want to get into when the Father, Son and Spirit are right here, right now? Yes, well, I'm alone physically as a person, but I'm not alone spiritually. The God of my salvation, my Savior and the Holy Spirit they sent to

sustain me, comfort me, encourage me, empower me. People want to be empowered.

Get empowered by the Spirit. That's power. And that's lasting power.

That's permanent power. That's power unto the ages. That's power now and in the kingdom of the Son and in the kingdom of the Father.

To have influence, to have opportunity, to be able to serve, to implement the future will of God as well as the present will of God, that's power. That's significance. That's worth in the absolute sense.

Don't be fooled. Don't be deceived. Don't be taken in by the notion that, well, human affection, human appreciation, human approval, human kisses, oh, this is stimulating.

This is what I'm after, the approbation and approval of the world, of people around me. Not so. So that brings us to verse 14, where she says, I have peace offerings.

I have paid my vows. I am religiously good to go. Nothing wrong.

I've nodded to God. A lot of commentators have thrown up their hands and said, I don't understand this at all. I can't figure out, you know, why is she talking about peace offerings? It doesn't make any sense.

They've tried a few really creative ways to explain it. Like she's saying, you know, if you'll help me out with some cash, I'll go pay my vows. And none of it works.

The reason this is in the parable is to remind us that there is a seductive power in religious acceptance. They love me at church. I'm accepted at church.

That is a wonderful thing when it's a healthy church and it's founded on the rock and God is present in the person of his son and in the person of the Holy Spirit. There is nothing wrong with being accepted at church when the people at church are not superficial, hypocritical. Oh yeah, I paid my vows, but now I'm down here seducing young men.

I'm lurking at every corner. Really? Do you think paying your vows makes it okay for you to do these nefarious things all the rest of the time? You know, paying vows wasn't an occasional thing. You make a vow and pay it.

It could be months between vows. So you do this little token expression of righteousness, of a ritual nature, and the rest of the time you're on the prowl, seducing and perpetrating evil. You're loud and proud.

You're rebellious. You're not at home. You're in the dark, fornicating and adulterating all the time.

You think this little casual reference to righteousness is going to fool anybody, and yet it does. Well, I can't be too bad. I go to church.

By the way, there's a statistic for the first time in the history of America, church attendance or religious service attendance by Americans is below 50%. Less than half of Americans attend any kind of organized or disorganized religious observance. And it's a new and significant low that people don't think church is worth attending.

Well, we will pick up here, and we've got three more verses to look at, 15, 16, and 17, and try to find the current social, political, cultural, national implications and applications for ourselves as we are seeking to shine like lights in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation that is doing everything it can to distract us, to deflect us, to undermine us, to flip us, to neutralize us. We are the only thing left. And when the rapture happens and that which restrains is taken out of the way, literally hell breaks loose.

We are a moderating influence, a reflected light that reminds people there's still a God in heaven. And our faithfulness, we may think that we're insignificant, we're unobserved, it doesn't really matter. That is the devil's own lie.

Each one of our decisions matters in eternal terms. We think we're alone, we're not. We think we're unimportant, we're not.

Do you recognize how few believers are left who are actively seeking the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the Word of God to fight in the spiritual conflict against principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age? Most of the army is laying dead, dying, and neutralized on the battlefield. Lost their weapons, don't have their armor, don't know where the line of battle is, don't know the objective, don't know the purpose for the conflict. Ouch, I'm hurt, medic, medic.

That's all you hear. Instead of successfully fending off the fiery darts of the wicked one and standing firm for the gospel, for the good news of Jesus Christ, there are very few of us left and we do not want to be casualties, much less fatalities in the spiritual conflict. This is our calling to be a good soldier.

The military is so unpopular now in Christian circles. Oh my gosh, they just want to embarrass you to ever have had a uniform on, to have ever lifted up a weapon and even used it for target practice. Now this is, oh my gosh, this used to be, oh you've got a dark chapter in your past, we're not sure you're qualified for Christian service.

If you are affiliated in any way with the military, you're anathema. You can't believe the vilification that is coming out against military service. Well, what do you do with the military metaphors in Scripture? Oh well, that's not even Scripture.

You can't listen to Paul, you've got to listen to Jesus. Jesus never talked about swords

and shields and helmets. He put a child on his lap and fed people with bread.

That's the model. Anything else, Joshua in the Old Testament, for whom Jesus was named? Oh no, no, no, no, Joshua conquest, you know, babies heads on rocks. Oh my gosh, I'm shocked.

We are such a minority. We can't afford to be deflected. Your life is important.

Every decision you make, every act of perseverance and faith is important in the conflict. We can't see it. It's invisible.

We know by faith, when God tells us, our daily small execution of tasks is vitally important to the effort. Believe God when He says it. Believe the Lord Jesus when He says it.

Believe the Apostle Paul. Believe Peter. These afflictions that we are facing count.

That's why we have them. And there is no decision too small. There is no effort.

There is no pursuit of the narrow road and the straight gate that is unimportant or doesn't count. There's very few of us left in my view, and this is not breaking our arms, patting ourselves on the back. It is just reality.

Look around. Look at the battlefield. Do you see any fellow soldiers? There are some out there.

We're not the only people doing this, but we are few and far between. We are isolated pockets of resistance. We're not a front.

We're not a mighty army. And those of us that are left have got to fight the good fight. It's called that for a reason.

Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word. Thank You for the encouragement of the Scriptures that gives us hope. Thank You for the presence and power of Your Spirit that enables us to do what we could never do in our own strength and in our own flesh.

We pray that Your Holy Spirit will impress these truths on our hearts, give us the joy of the conflict and the certainty of our future hope so that we can persist and prevail and represent the Lord Jesus Christ in the time that's left to us on this earth. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.