

02-09-01b Revelation

That was called the Healer of Broken Hearts, a song that Dan just played. That's a beautiful tune. Did you say that was by Georgia Stifle? Stifler.

Stifler? That was beautiful. Healer of Broken Hearts. The thing I need to mention for those who follow along on tape with us is that we got well into our second lesson and I discovered that our tape had broken.

So what I'm going to do is recap the things that we've covered in a shorter fashion so that our service this morning doesn't run inordinately long. I did mention, and I want to mention for everyone's benefit, that in our discussion of Judas earlier in the upper room, it's a controversial thing to say that Judas is a believer. Everybody in the world thinks he was an unbeliever, and I respect that view.

But if you think about the content of the Word of God, nothing is there by accident. Let me just offer you a quick thought that as Jesus moves down the row from disciple to disciple, and with the teaching that he gives in John 13 relative to the need for cleansing, and yet not full cleansing, that the full washing, he who is bathed in verse 10 needs only to wash his feet, and then he is completely clean. And Jesus says, and you all are clean, but not all of you.

And he's talking to the group when he says not all of you. He doesn't mean not all of your body. He means in the group, not all of you are completely clean.

But he has washed each of their feet. And if he was going to use this as a teaching tool, when he got to Judas, it wouldn't have made much sense to wash Judas' feet, because if Judas still needed the bath, he could have made a different teaching point and said, Judas, I'm not going to wash your feet because you need a bath. And someone who has had a bath then only needs their feet cleaned, but you, Judas, haven't had the bath, so there's no point in washing your feet.

You wouldn't want to come in like Pigpen and have somebody just wash your feet and the rest of you be filthy. It wouldn't do much good. But the clear picture is that everyone has had the cleansing that is analogous to salvation, but everyone needs the cleansing from daily transgressions, daily contact with sin, and so forth.

So the idea here, he knew who would betray him, therefore he said, you are not all clean. He has just said in verse 10 that when someone is bathed completely, all they have to do is wash their feet to be completely clean. And he says, there's one of you that is not completely clean, and the inference is, even though I've washed your physical feet, spiritually speaking, your sin remains because you will not acknowledge it, you will not purge it from your conscience, you do not have the humility to recognize the plan of God here.

So I wanted to try to be sure and point that out. Back in Revelation chapter 2, and again I'm going

to summarize what we covered in more depth here, but in Revelation chapter 2 we have Jesus presenting himself to the church at Pergamos, writing to them through their pastor, identifying himself as the one who has the sharp two-edged sword. And this sword imagery alludes, it would call up in the minds of people who knew their Bible, their Old Testament, Isaiah chapter 11 verse 4, that talks about the servant of the Lord who comes will have the rod of his mouth by which he will discipline and rule the nations, and so on.

And in particular when you get to Isaiah 49 verse 2, you have the sharp sword. And this is a picture of the word of God. Hebrews 4.12, the word of God, sharper than a two-edged sword.

There it is, the mechaira, the short sword that was used for close fighting. It was quick, it could cut in both directions. But the word used here is romphia, which is the long sword.

It's the heavy sword, it could be sharpened either on one side or both, but it has a greater reach and sweep. You can do more damage with a romphia than you can with a mechaira, because you're swinging it, usually with both hands. This is probably what Samuel used to hew Agag in pieces.

This is probably what David used in battle. Remember they had the mighty men, and there was one battle they had where they had to pry the man's hand off of his sword because he'd been fighting with it for so long. So the idea here is, especially when you look at these verses along with Malachi 4.6, God says either your heart will turn or I will smite the earth with a curse.

A curse is a pronouncement of bad news upon someone. It is a verbal statement of dire consequences. And it comes from the mouth.

This sword is pictured in Revelation 1 as issuing from the mouth of the Lord Jesus, and we find it that way again in Revelation 19, verse 15 and verse 21. In Revelation 19.15, it says, Out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it he should strike the nations. He himself will rule them with a rod of iron.

He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And even the Lord Jesus, the gentle Jesus with the child on his lap, is in fact the God of the Old Testament who told the Israelites to go in and slay. He is the one who will cause the blood to run as high as the horse's bridles.

People who only want a partial truth and who only want to see Jesus as gentle and walking through the field of daisies hand in hand with a misty watercolor sun in the background are sticking their head in the sand. There is wonderful blessing. God is compassionate, long-suffering, reserving mercy for thousands, but he is also the God of judgment.

And we choose. We choose what we're going to recognize as the truth. And whether we recognize it or not, it is the truth.

I told this story because I thought it was humorous about the boxer who got in the ring and looked across at his opponent and he thought, this guy is going to murder me. Look, this priest has come in and he's blessing him and sprinkling holy water on him and wringing him around with incense and all. And he saw him make the sign of the cross over him and he'd never seen that before.

And he turned to his coach and he said, What is the reason for all this? What's he doing? What does that mean? And his coach said, Well, it doesn't mean anything if he doesn't know how to box. And the truth of knowledge, there's only one truth. And I spent some time, which I'm not going to repeat, talking about post-modernism in our modern day and in our culture.

We have a lot of people who say, Well, everybody's truth is their own. This is Oprah. If you watch Oprah Winfrey on television, she will happily embrace anybody who comes from any religion if they find contentment and peace because it's their truth.

Dr. Phil has a truth and some Buddhists will have a truth and some Confucian will have a truth and some Hindu after 9-11, after a while, she had some Islamic people talking about their truth. It's true if it works for you, is the post-modern idea. And that's just not so.

And there's going to be an awful realization that comes over many believers who have chosen to believe something that is not the truth. Judas had a truth. He thought by betraying Christ he could bring in the kingdom, I think.

And it was a false truth. And he was very regretful and remorseful when he realized his error. Well, that is the sharp sword issuing from the mouth.

It's the word kerev in the Old Testament. C-H-E-R-E-V. And you find that same sword, the sword of the word of God in Ephesians 6-17 and also down in verse 21 of Revelation 19.

And that's where we were headed when I looked over and saw that the tape had broken. But the beast was captured, the false prophet worked signs in the presence, deceived everybody. Notice a big part of what happens in the tribulation is deception.

Jeremiah 17-9, how many times have we quoted it? The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. We deceive ourselves so often. But the beast and false prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone, and the rest were killed with the sword which proceeds from the mouth of him who sat on the horse.

This is a word from the Lord is all that it will take. All of these armies and all of these swarms of Gog Magog rebels are going to surround the camp of the saints and the holy city and Jesus is going to speak one word and they're going to be slain. One word is all it will take.

Martin Luther recognized that truth in A Mighty Fortress. One little word shall fell him. And that's exactly right.

This is one of the passages that brings that out. So why would Jesus tell the people in Pergamos, why would he identify himself as the one with the sharp sword issuing forth from his mouth? Well, if you'll pardon me for saying so, this is an image that cuts both ways. On the one hand, it reminds them that their opposition and their enemies can be eliminated at any point with just a word from the Lord.

But it is also a reminder that that same sword can issue forth toward a believer who is apathetic, indifferent, disobedient, rebellious. So it is a picture of power in judgment. That's what the sword represents, power in judgment.

The greatest power anyone has in physical terms is taking your life. You can't do more to someone than take their life in terms of depriving them or punishing them in some way. You take their life, you've taken everything.

So power in judgment, that's what the sword represents. Now we continue in Revelation 2, verse 13, and he says, I know your works. Well, your works, just like in the last letter, was added by later copyists who thought every church ought to be told that Jesus knows their works.

And it's not in the earlier and better manuscripts. Jesus says, I know where you dwell. You dwell where Satan's throne is.

Well, why would he say this? Well, he says, you hold fast to my name, you did not deny my faith, even in the days in which Antipas was my faithful martyr and was killed among you where Satan dwells. So two times now we've had mention of Satan, just like we had the devil mentioned in Smyrna twice. Here Satan, Satanos, is mentioned.

It says this is where his throne is and this is where he dwells. Well, a little bit of background on the city of Pergamos, or Pergamum, depending on which language you're working out of. Pergamos was historically a great capital in Asia, a capital city.

And it was a capital of a number of different things. It was a great religious capital. In the region of Asia, for a few hundred years even before the time of John, Zeus was the deity for the area.

He was the big Greek god for the area, was Zeus. And, of course, lots of different people would talk about Zeus, whether you're talking about the Greeks or the Romans, either way you have the same deity that's identified by this name. And in Pergamos he was known as Zeus Soter.

He had a big temple, the biggest temple to Zeus in all of the empire was in Pergamos. It sat up on a rocky prominence, up on a terrace or a pinnacle. And his huge temple sat up on this lofty height and had a big inscription on it that said Zeus Soter.

Well, Soter is the Greek word from which we get Soteriology, which is the study of salvation. This means Zeus the savior, Zeus the deliverer, Zeus Soter. The center of Zeus worship was in Pergamos.

They also had the cult of Asklepios, A-S-K-L-E-P-I-O-S. Asklepios was the serpent god. Coins from Pergamos and temple artifacts and all these other things associated with Asklepios and also to a lesser extent with Zeus have serpents on them.

But Asklepios was a serpent god and he was also known in Pergamos as Asklepios Soter, the savior serpent god, the serpent savior, Asklepios Soter. And a third great worship, of course their consorts were also worshipped here, Athena, there was a big Athena cult associated with Zeus worship. And you had Dionysus who is the bull god and there was a big center of those.

So in the religious pagan god worship, Pergamos was a three-fold capital for Zeus, Asklepios and Dionysus and several lesser deities associated with them. Pergamos was also a center of emperor worship. Back in 29 B.C. they established a temple to the Caesar.

And deified him. They didn't do this so much for Romans and Roman citizens as they did for conquered areas and regions like Asia. And they would say, our emperor is a god and you will worship him like a god.

So Pergamos was a center of emperor worship as well as being the religious capital of Asia. They had these huge temples. So naturally if you have Christians growing as a community in that area, there is going to be great pressure on them to acknowledge the emperor as a deity.

Pressure to accept Zeus Soter or Asklepios Soter. And to conform and to go along with everybody else in the city, who not only in the current age but historically for decades and for centuries has worshipped these other gods. And can tell you anecdotes about how by worshipping that god they created a large family and their business prospered and their crops came in well.

Oh, we have always made it a point to go down to the temple of Zeus or to the Asklepios temple and offer a sacrifice and look at our historic success. Look how we have grown. Look at the industries that have cropped up around that with idols and idol worship.

And meat offered to idols. The whole economy, the whole city system works around being this religious center. It would be like being in Mecca or any other town that has a great claim to fame as a religious center.

So, Jesus says, I am the one who has the two edged sword. The sword of judgment. It will pierce and divide us under and show what is right and what is wrong.

I know where you dwell. You dwell where Satan's throne is. I would guess that this is probably primarily a reference to Asklepios, the serpent god, and also Zeus, these pagan gods who claim to be Soter.

He goes on to say you did not deny my faith even in the days in which Antipas was my faithful

martyr who was killed among you where Satan dwells. We don't have any other information about Antipas or this episode, but it would appear from context that in order to pressure conformity, they took this man Antipas and made an example of him. Some kind of big public execution.

Thus shall it be done to the man who does not conform. Does not go along and say the words. And we know later on that there were many more martyrs in Asia.

I told you the story last time about Polycarp. There were many, many such who were pressured because of the emperor cult, the deification of the emperor. Well, the people in Pergamos, the Christian community there, the church, has remained faithful.

They have not said kurios kaisar. And he says I know you are right there where Satan dwells, where Satan has his throne. Interesting thing about throne is throne is also used, thronas in Greek is also used as a seat of judgment.

And there was a Roman procurator stationed in Pergamos. He was the procurator for that whole region, his office. So the seat of Roman justice for the region was in Pergamos.

And so he says where Satan's throne is, you can see the combination of emperor worship and Roman justice, the same justice that put Jesus on the cross and beheaded John was well represented in Pergamos. He says you have been faithful, you have not denied my name. But I have a few things against you because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality.

The word here translated sexual immorality is pornousai. It's from our old friend Pornia. And this is the aorist active infinitive pornousai.

It means to engage in Pornia. And this is obviously going to be manifested in sexual immorality, but in spiritual terms it is any form of covenant breaking, breach of contract, breach of promise, disloyalty, betrayal. That's what Pornia is.

And if you think about acts of sexual immorality, that's really what they are. They are always a betrayal, they are always a breaking of promise, particularly when it comes to believers. And this gives us some illumination about the doctrine of Balaam.

It tells us he taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit pornia, to be disloyal, to be faithless, to go back on their commitment and on their word. And to act that out in physical terms. Well, we need to look just a little bit at the doctrine of Balaam.

What on earth is the doctrine of Balaam? Well, we find the story of Balaam back in Numbers chapter 31, and in Numbers 24 and 25. We can start in Numbers 24. Numbers chapter 24.

You remember that as the Israelites were passing through the land, Balak decides that he's got to try to stop them in some fashion. And we can actually start back in chapter 23. Well, I guess actually in 22, come to look at it.

You have the whole thing where he sends the messengers, you have Balaam's donkey speaking and so on. But he wants him to curse Israel. So by the time you get to chapter 23, at the end of 22, Balaam took Balaam and brought him to the high places of Baal, that from there he might observe the extent of the people.

23.1 of Numbers. Balaam said to Balaam, Build seven altars for me here, prepare seven rams, seven bulls. Balaam did just as Balaam had spoken.

Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar. Stand by the burnt offering. Perhaps the Lord will come to meet me.

Whatever he shows me, I will tell you. He went to a desolate height. God met Balaam and said to him, I have prepared the seven altars and have offered on each a bull and a ram.

The Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth. Return to Balak and thus you shall speak. So he takes up this oracle that starts in verse 7. He says, I can't curse whom God has not cursed.

I can't denounce those whom the Lord has not denounced. And he goes on to give this thing. We're not going to have time to go through this in detail, but in verse 13 they try again.

They go to a different hill. Now you can only see the outer part of them. You won't see them all.

Curse them from there. He brought him to Pisgah. We have some hymns that talk about from Pisgah's lofty heights or whatever.

He builds the altars, offers the sacrifices, delivers the oracle. He still blesses and does not curse. He says in verse 21, He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, nor has he seen wickedness in Israel.

The Lord his God is with him. Now, make a circle or make a note of verse 21. Because this is the first clue to the doctrine of Balaam.

All he does is pronounce blessing. The first oracle is nothing but blessing. The second oracle is nothing but blessing.

But there is a condition here in verse 21. He has not observed iniquity in Jacob. He has not seen wickedness in Israel.

The Lord is with him. The shout of a king is among them. God brings them out of Egypt.

He has strength like a wild ox. There is no sorcery or divination that can prevail against Jacob.

The only thing you can say is, Look what God has done.

They rise like a lioness, lift up like a lion. They won't lie down until they devour the prey and drink the blood of the slain. Numbers 23-27, you have the third oracle.

He takes them to yet another hill. Maybe just changing locations will change the prophecy. So, he offers the sacrifices, takes up his oracle in chapter 24, and delivers his third oracle.

How lovely are your tents, and so on. He will be higher than Agag. His kingdom will be exalted.

His strength like a wild ox, pierces them with arrows, bows down like a lion, and so on. Balak gets angry in verse 10 of Numbers 24, because three times now, all they have done is get the blessing. So he claps his hands.

Balaam says, Did I not tell you that this might happen? Then he delivers a fourth oracle in verse 15 and following. Now listen to this. Utterance of Balaam, the son of Beor.

The utterance of the man whose eyes are wide open. The utterance of him who hears the words of God, has knowledge of the Most High, sees the vision of the Almighty, who falls down with the eyes wide open. I see him, but not now.

I behold him, but not near. A star shall come out of Jacob. A scepter shall rise out of Israel and batter the brow of Moab.

You know Balak is the king of Moab. Destroy all the sons of Tumult. Edom shall be a possession.

Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession. While Israel does valiantly. That's the second thing to circle.

That is another condition. All of this possessing and conquering is conditioned on finding no iniquity and doing valiantly. The word translated valiantly here is Chayil, C-H-A-Y-I-L.

Chayil, if you look it up in a Hebrew lexicon, is the word for strength. And it's used quite commonly in the scripture for strength. But it is strength in a particular sense.

It is often used with a connotation of valor or being valiant. If you look at the Brown Driver and Briggs lexicon, you find that it is often used in the sense of being worthy. For example, Psalm 60 and verse 12.

Psalm 60, verse 12. Through God we will do valiantly, for it is He who shall tread down our enemies. Those who are with God, who are blessed by God, who are like-minded with God, are going to do valiantly, because God is going to tread down their enemies.

These are going to be God's victories. They're going to be righteous victories. They're going to be victories of those who have integrity and character.

That's how they're going to happen. And you have that very same verse, that very same idea repeated in Psalm 108.13. In 2 Samuel 23.20, you remember Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. He was a worthy man.

He was a man of valor. Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man from Cabziel, who had done many deeds, killed two lion-like heroes of Moab. He killed these Moabites in the days of David.

So he is the son of a valiant man, a Chael man from Cabziel. 1 Kings 1.42, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest comes, and Adonijah the king says, Come in, for you are a Chael man. You are an Ischael, and you will bring good news.

You're a worthy man. You're a man that is honorable and valiant, and a man of valor. It's not just you can bench press a lot of weight.

You're a worthy man, and so good news is going to come from you, is the idea. He's going to be a bringer of good news. In Genesis 47.6, the pharaoh says, Find men of Chael, and let them watch my flocks.

You're trustworthy men. It's not are they the biggest, and the meanest, and the strongest, but are they trustworthy, are they skillful, are they competent, is the idea. But now look especially at Exodus 18.21. This gets more to our point.

He says, Moreover you shall select from all the people, able men such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness, and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. This you'll remember is Moses' father-in-law telling him you can't bear the weight of the people and do all the judging on your own.

Find men who are Chael, men of integrity, men of worth and valor, men who fear God, men of truth, men who can't be bribed, and place them in positions of leadership. 1 Chronicles 5.24 has a similar idea. Find this type of man and make them the heads of clans.

They are going to be the leaders among the people. This is one you should put a star by. Isaiah 5.22 Woe to mighty men at drinking wine! Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink, who justify the wicked for a bribe and take away justice from the righteous man.

These are mighty men. They are heroes of what is fake and what is foolish. Instead of having mighty men of valor and men of integrity, I used to have a sweatshirt that said Olympic drinking team on it.

This is what we have on television today. You have these faked up competitions where people are on an island and they have to run through all kinds of hoops and solve puzzles and do

obstacles and compete with each other to see if they stay on the island and get the money or if they don't. Heroes and celebrities of falsehood and of vanity and emptiness.

Woe if you are valiant at mixing wine. You are the best bartender instead of the best father. You are the best at drinking wine instead of the best at persevering under pressure.

You are a false hero. And God goes on to say in Isaiah 5, I am going to send some genuinely valiant people and they are going to trot you under their horse's hooves because you have reduced your admiration and your hero worship to people who can hold their liquor and people who are good bartenders instead of those who have genuine *chayil*, genuine integrity. In Proverbs 12, verse 4, An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who causes shame is like rotteness in his bones.

I always hesitate to bring up husband and wife passages, but the word here translated excellent wife is *chayil*. This doesn't mean do you have a wife with big biceps. An excellent wife is the crown of her husband.

What is the opposite? Many times when you are in doubt about a word, you look at the, if it is an antithetical distic as what we have here, you can see from the antithesis what the connotation of the word is. It is the opposite of causing shame. She does not cause shame because she is honorable.

She is wise. She has integrity. She is faithful.

She is consistent. The *chayil* wife is the crown of her husband. She who causes shame is like rotteness in his bones.

And even in verse 5, The thoughts of the righteous are right, but the counsels of the wicked are deceitful. These terms and phrases tell us what *chayil* means. It means you walk in integrity.

If you go down to verse 31 in this same chapter, Proverbs 12.31 Oh, I'm sorry. It is chapter 31, verse 10. I can't read my own notes here.

Proverbs 31. You all know Proverbs 31. That is where the worthy wife is described.

And in verse 10, it talks about the virtuous wife. It says, who can find a virtuous wife? The word virtuous is *chayil*. Who can find the excellent wife? Who can find the one with integrity and honor and loyalty? And all of those admirable, valorous qualities.

And so it's not a surprise that you find it used again in that same chapter in verse 29. Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all. Your *chayil* is beyond all of them.

In Ruth chapter 3, verse 11, this is used to describe her. Now my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you request.

For all the people of my town know that you are a chayil woman. You're a virtuous woman. This is strength in the sense of virtue.

Of valor in the face of adversity. Therefore it's often used of warriors in battle. But it's not limited to that sense.

Why is that important for us to understand? Because when you go back to Numbers, chapter 24, and in the fourth oracle there, he says that while Israel does chayil, all of these things will be true, this is a loophole. They don't think that Balaam said these words. Balak kicked his toe in the dirt and sent Balaam home and everybody forgot what Balaam said.

This was recorded and written down and it was studied and every word was parsed out by the men of Moab. And you know what they figured out from what Balaam said? There's a condition, there's an Achilles heel to these Israelites. Their power and their strength and their victory and their possession of our land that has been predicted these four times hinges upon their being chayil, their being no iniquity in Israel.

So, it's kind of like Adam and Eve who can possess the garden unless they eat of the tree. If that's the area of weakness, let's see if we can induce them to sin. So, the Moabites seize on this.

Go down to chapter 25 verse 1 in Numbers. Israel remained in the Acacia Grove and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. This was no accident.

This was a strategy. It was planned. It was intended.

They invited the people to their sacrifices, the sacrifices to their gods and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. Why? Because this was the... We saw this movie called The Majestic where a guy was accused of being a communist because he attended some meeting when he was in college and he says the reason I went to the meeting is because there was a girl there. I didn't even know what the meeting was about.

I was trying to get friendly with this girl. That's why I was there. And it turned out she's the one that turned him in.

But it's the same thing here. Why will the people compromise and bow down? They don't know or care about these Moabite gods but they figure hey, this hot date is going to end happily for me if I do what this girl wants me to do. So they would go to the sacrifices, eat the food offered to the idols and have a big old time.

The people ate. It's kind of like it says at the foot of Mount Sinai when Moses is up there getting the law. The people sat down to eat and then they rose up to play.

If you listen to Cecil B. DeMille, he elaborates on that theme and adds a whole bunch of King James English to what's not in the Bible. They did carouse and they did play the harlot and they

did this and they did that. Well, Israel was joined to Baal of Peor.

Peor was one of the mountains that Balak took Balaam up on to pronounce the curse. There was a god, Baal of Peor, the lord of Peor, and the anger of the lord was aroused against Israel. They found the weakness.

They found their Achilles heel and they exploited it. This is the doctrine of Balaam. Balaam, in giving this oracle, gave the Moabites and the Amalekites and the other ites in the area, the Sirites and the Kenites and the Midianites, gave them the key.

It's like Samson telling Delilah about the whole Nazarite vow. This is what they used to undo Israel. That's what the doctrine of Balaam is.

What is it? It finds your area of weakness and exploits it. If you are insecure, it's going to play on your insecurity. If you crave wealth, if you covet financial security, it's going to take that and use it against you and it's going to pervert your religion with it.

That's what the doctrine of Balaam is and that's what it means today. Do you think that there is any preaching of the doctrine of Balaam in the church today? Do you think that there are huge churches, there are huge meetings, there are huge followings of people on radio and television, there are huge book sales of people who give people what they want to hear, soothe their consciences, promise them that the windows of heaven will open, promise them that if they agree together, they will receive what they agree on, prophesy prosperity and prophesy great things to one another. That's what we want to hear.

We want confirmation that the desires of our heart are actually in the plan of God and someone will prophesy in the charismatic circles and say, oh, you're going to do this and you're going to do that. And it's tickling the ears. Paul told Timothy in the latter days, people will not endure sound doctrine.

They're going to have itching ears. They're going to be tossed about by all kinds of winds of doctrine that blow. This is the doctrine of Balaam.

It finds our Achilles heel. It finds our area of weakness. It is satanic in its origin.

This comes right out of the throne of Satan, right out of the place where Satan dwells. You're faithful. You're trying to do what you're supposed to, but someone finds your weak area.

If you're insecure, if you are easily led to succumb to guilt complex, if you're easily depressed and made to feel bad, if you are distracted from the good things in your life by bad things that happen, whatever it might be, Satan knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows where the chinks in the armor are. He knows where the weak points are.

The doctrine of Balaam, and believe me, Satan parses the scriptures, doesn't he? He used the

word of God against Eve in the garden, and he's been doing it ever since. Hath God not said? What did he say to Jesus himself in the wilderness? Does the scripture not say? His angels will bear thee up, and thou shalt be blessed at any time. Now dash thy foot against the stone.

Scriptural arguments can be used to inveigle the arrows of Satan into the chinks in our armor, the dagger of Satan. And you've got a war of swords here. You've got the sharp sword, the wine that stings like an adder and bites like a snake.

There are sharp objects coming at us. That's why we need the shields of faith to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one. Sharp objects coming our way.

Which sharp object are we going to rely on? Is it going to be the word of the Lord, the sharp sword in his mouth that defends us and takes care of the enemies? Or is it going to come our direction because we have been inveigled? We have been deceived. We have been led down the path. That is the doctrine of Balaam.

This sword you find mentioned in Psalm 57 and verse 4. My soul is among lions. I lie among the sons of men who are set on fire, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue is a sharp sword. And we can let that sharp sword penetrate us.

And what people say is a greater motivation than what God says. We say, I've got to get out from under this criticism. I've got to get out from under these wrongful accusations.

I've got to respond. I've got to defend myself. And Satan's hook is in our jaw.

And we are carried astray. Whose sword of the mouth is going to be at work for us? It's either the sharp sword of God's word, the rhema, the spoken word, or it's going to be the spoken word of these enemies who are like lions, seeking whom they may devour. Teeth are spears and arrows.

Their tongue is a sharp sword. What is the answer for that? Well, read the rest of Psalm 57. I don't have enough time to cover that.

You can also look at Proverbs 5 and verse 4 in this regard, talking about the sexy woman. The lips of an immoral woman drip honey. Her mouth is smoother than oil.

But in the end, she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death. Her steps lay hold of Gehenna.

Do you want your inheritance to wind up in the lake of fire? Let that other sword go to work instead of the word of the Lord. Believers who do not pay attention to the details of Scripture, believers who accept an alternate truth, who choose to believe a truth that suits their mood and suits their own goals and aspirations, are going to find that the sharp, two-edged sword is going to come into play. Well, it's a warning.

It is an admonition for us. We're going to see as we go forward in this letter to the believers at Pergamos that there is also great hope and there's a great reward in remaining faithful in the midst of this kind of pressure. And that's where we will pick up next time.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, we do thank You for Your grace, Your faithfulness, and the provision that You have made for us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will be able to employ the sharp sword of Your Word in our souls to reveal to us the thoughts and intents of our heart.

We pray that we will be able to acknowledge where we have erred, that we will have the humility to follow Christ with an attitude of service, and in so doing, lay hold of that great eternal inheritance that You have called us to possess. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.