



September 18, 2011 – 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:5; Ephesians 6:10-20

Facing the Enemy – Part 2

Pastor Larry Adams

. . . we're also going to be looking at 1 Thessalonians Chapter 2 verse 17 through Chapter 3 through verse 5 as we're going through this continuing series of "Staying Strong and Living Ready."

You know, we're taking two weeks on this because some things are not readily obvious, and there's too much you can leave out in one message. This is very important, so we are gonna do part 2, "Facing the Enemy: Part 2." I could have called it "Facing the Enemy: The Sequel," but most sequels aren't very good. That's especially true maybe when the first movie wasn't that good, so we don't take anything for granted.

It's kinda like this guy I was reading about. He visits his doctor. He's getting older in life. He's probably in his late 50s, around my age, and so he says to his doctor, "How do you determine whether or not an older person should be put into old-age home care, a care, or assisted living home"?

The doctor said, "Well, we have a little test. We fill up a bathtub and then we offer them a teaspoon, a teacup, and a bucket to the person to watch them empty the bathtub."

He says, "Oh, I understand. A normal person would use the bucket because it's bigger than the spoon or the teacup."

The doctor says, "No, a normal person would pull the plug. Do you want a bed by the window or the door?"

Things are not always as apparent as we would like them to be. I want you to know today that last week when we were talking about our primary defense against the evil one is resisting him, we didn't have a lot of time to explain what that resisting looks like. But the Apostle Paul, in this tremendous letter in the book of Ephesians, went into more detail, writing to them specifically how they can be strong and live ready to face the enemy.

In Ephesians Chapter 6, in one of the more famous passages in all the Scripture on this subject, here's the way the Apostle Paul wrote it in verse 10:

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the

authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, and with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. ¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Let's pray for a moment.

Father, these are definitely words that Satan does not want us to hear, and he certainly does not want us to believe them. He is a defeated power, but he is a real power, and we need to know today how to stand strong to live ready and resistant. Life is filled with so many issues, any one of which our adversary would be willing to use to discourage, deceive, distort, or defeat. I pray today, God, you will help us to see even more clearly how we can stay strong and live ready to face the enemy. And we will thank you. In your precious name, Amen.

Circumstances can come in waves. Attacks, things that discourage, things that get us down, things that overwhelm us, things that seek to steal our faith can come without warning; they can strike at any time. Jay Rathman is a man who would testify to that. In his book *The Quest for Character*, Chuck Swindoll was writing about an experience Jay Rathman had while he was deer hunting in the Tehema Wildlife Area near Red Bluff right here in Northern California:

As he climbed the ledge on the slope of a rocky gorge, he raised his head to look over the ledge above, and he sensed movement to the right of his face. A coiled rattlesnake struck him with lightning speed, just missing Rathman's right ear. The four-foot snake's fangs got snagged in the neck of Rathman's wool turtleneck sweater, and the force of the strike caused it to land on his left shoulder and it then coiled around his neck. He grabbed it behind the head with his left hand and could feel the warm venom running down the skin of his neck and the rattles making a furious racket. He fell backward and slid headfirst down the steep slope through brush and lava rocks, his rifle and binoculars bouncing at his side.

As he would later describe the incident to a Department of Fish and Game official, he said, "I ended up wedged between some rocks with my feet caught uphill from my head. I could barely move." He got his right hand on his rifle and used it to disengage the fangs from his sweater, but the snake had enough leverage to strike again.

“He made about eight attempts and managed to hit me with his nose just below my eye about four times. I kept my face turned so he couldn’t get a good angle with his fangs, but it was very close. This chap and I were eyeball to eyeball, and I found out that snakes don’t blink. He had fangs like darning needles. I had to choke him to death. It was the only way out. I was afraid that with all the blood rushing to my head I might pass out.”

When he tried to toss the dead snake aside, he couldn’t let go. He had squeezed it so hard he said, “I had to pry my fingers from its neck.” Rathman at the time was 45 years old, worked for the Defense Department in San Jose, and he estimated his encounter with the snake lasted about 20 minutes.

Warden Dave Smith said of meeting Rathman, “He walked toward me holding this string of rattles with a sort of a grin on his face, and all he said was, ‘I’d like to register a complaint about your wildlife here.’”

Swindoll went on to say:

When I first read that hair-raising account, I thought about how closely Rathman’s struggle resembles life on a daily basis. At the most unsuspecting moment we are pounced upon. With treacherous strength, these snake-like assaults have a way of knocking us off balance as they wrap themselves around us. Exposed and vulnerable, we can easily succumb to the attacks. They are frequent, and they are varied. Physical pain, emotional trauma, relational stress, spiritual doubts, marital conflicts, carnal temptations, financial reversals, occupational disappointments, they come so fast we can feel overwhelmed and under attack. Life can at times seem pretty overwhelming.

You know, theologically scripturally we go through things like that for a variety of reasons. Number one, we live in a fallen world that is still very affected by sin, and God does not spare us from every consequence of life. Sometimes we struggle because we make bad choices, and there are consequences that come with our choices. Sometimes we go through these things because God is scheduling these trials. As we saw last week, he uses them to strengthen us spiritually and deepen our faith. Our faith is like a muscle. If it isn’t worked it won’t grow, so God has to allow some things -- in the absence of real persecution – he has to allow some things to help strengthen our faith. And sometimes they are an attack orchestrated by Satan himself, the enemy of God. Whether he’s orchestrating these attacks or not, Satan will use every one he can get his hands on to try to defeat God’s people.

As we saw last week, Satan is a real enemy. He is not imaginary. He is not just some symbol of evil. He’s a real, living creature created by God. He is a created angel who in pride rebelled against God and was cast from heaven to earth along with thousands of angels who followed him. Today they are Satan and the demonic world who oppose God, God’s people, God’s work, and all of humanity made in the image of God. And as we’ve been learning from this great letter to the Thessalonians, if we are to stay strong and live ready then our faith must remain strong. That is the point of Satan’s attacks, to try to oppose us at every turn and derail our faith.

Paul knew that. He had faced the enemy many times himself. So when he was forced to leave the people of Thessalonica rather suddenly after only maybe as little as three weeks of time, he was deeply concerned for how well they were doing knowing Satan's strategy to try to deceive and destroy. Concerned that they too would be attacked and overwhelmed by the evil one, he sends Timothy who comes back saying, "They're standing strong. They're living ready." So he writes this letter back to them to be on their guard, to be ready to face the evil one continually so that they can be prepared to stay strong and to live ready just like we need to be. Later, when Paul would write to the Ephesian church, he instructed them very specifically on how to stay strong and live ready in the face of the enemy, because anyone who seeks to stay strong and live ready for God must be ready to face the enemy.

How do we live ready? Paul tells the Ephesians by staying strong in the Lord and by putting on the full armor of God. We live ready to face the enemy by staying strong in the Lord. Here's how Paul put it in verse 10, "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power."

Last month, my family and I were gone for a couple of weeks of vacation. We took a trip north. Drove through Seattle and then on our way to Montana. And on our way through Seattle, we had opportunity to tour the new Seattle Seahawk football training facility in Renton, Washington. You can't normally get in behind the scenes on a place like that, but I feel very fortunate that my friend and former roommate and best man at my wedding, Sherman Smith, is the running back coach for the Seattle Seahawks. I wanted to stop and be able to see him anyway, and he offered to give us a tour of this new facility.

It was quite a place. The facility is beautiful from the complete indoor practice field right down to the dining room for the players. But what really caught my attention was the weight and fitness room. It's huge. Two floors of weights, workout machines, treadmills, and about every kind of strength and conditioning device known to man.

You see, football is a physically demanding sport. It requires great strength and conditioning for each of the players. They all have coaches whose job is to help each player become as strong and fit and ready as they can possibly be because no player wants to take the field against that kind of punishing opposition without knowing they have the strength to do it.

It's no different when it comes to facing the opposition from Satan. He is a powerful foe, and he is very skilled at what he does. Satan loves it when any of us thinks we can take him on by ourself because we will lose that battle every single time. You don't want to take the field against him unless you know you have the strength to do it, and that strength must come from God himself. That's why Paul told the Ephesians to "Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power."

You know that phrase "Strong in the Lord" is the phrase "be made strong" or "increase in your strength." In other words, "Have a regular spiritual workout room where you are daily preparing for the battle in which you are engaged because you don't want to face this unprepared. Grow stronger, not in yourself, but grow stronger in the Lord. Grow stronger in the enabling power of the Lord. Grow strong in the Lord and in his mighty

power.” It could read like this: “So be strong in the Lord and the power of his might. Don’t fight these spiritual battles on your own strength, fight them in God’s strength,” which is why Paul prayed for the Ephesians the way he did, because people will not normally do this on their own. We are disillusioned and uninformed about the nature of this spiritual battle in which we are engaged, which is why we often get beat up so bad in our faith.

In Ephesians 1 verse 18, Paul said:

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength ²⁰ which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Paul said, “I’m praying for you that you would know, experience, rely on this power that comes from God. It’s the same power that raised Jesus from the grave. It is the same power that brought you from death to life when you trusted in Christ. Satan couldn’t keep Jesus in the grave. Satan can’t keep you in your sin if you believe Jesus, and Satan can’t defeat you if you live strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.” Not to do that, not to grow, not to get closer to God, not to be in that spiritual fitness workout room every day, not to be filled with his strength is the surest way to defeat.

The question is, “How you do it? How do you stay strong in the Lord and in his mighty power? What is the workout regimen?” Well, first of all, it’s very important that you know you are a Christian. I’m not talking about “I’m a Christian” as opposed to “I’m not Buddhist. I’m not Jewish. I’m not Muslim.” But “I am a born-again follower of Jesus Christ. I am the real deal.” You remember, in the book of Ephesians, this is the book of real, applied Christianity. The first three chapters essentially talk about what a real Christian is, and the last three chapters about how a real Christian lives.

Well, what a real Christian is is a person who has the living Christ living in them because they have acknowledged their sins to God, and they have recognize that Jesus’ death on the cross is their payment. He rose from the dead and is alive today, and he’s their only hope. They have confessed their sins to God, they have asked Christ to come and live in their lives, and now they give themselves to living for God because they saw what sin did when they were without Christ. They don’t want sin to reign in them any longer, so they live a life for Jesus. You cannot be strong in the Lord if you are not a Christian. Paul said in Ephesians 2 verse 22, “You are a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.” Then if you are a Christian you stay strong in the Lord by living dependently.

Howard Hendricks used to tell us, in some of the meetings when he was addressing pastors, "Our need for God is not partial, it is total." Now don't take this wrong, but I'm gonna tell you the truth: I can't trust myself to live for God 60 seconds in my own strength. I can't do it. I have to rely on God constantly for my thoughts, for my words, and for my deeds constantly.

I remember sharing this once with a group of college kids up in Oregon. I will never forget, one of them said, "Well, I don't need God for everything."

I said, "You don't?"

He said, "No."

I said, "Name one thing you don't need God for."

He said, "Well, like this morning. I got up. I got out of bed. I ate breakfast. I got dressed."

I said, "Whoa, back that all the way up. What was the first thing you said?"

He said, "I got out of bed."

I said, "Do you realize without God's help you couldn't even draw your first breath. Now, tell me one thing you can do without God's help.

"There isn't anything."

If we're dependent on God for every breath -- and by the way he can take that next breath away anytime he chooses -- if we're dependent on God for every breath, is it any wonder that when Paul was in Athens wondering what was going on with the Thessalonians and dispatching Timothy, waiting for that return he addressed the think tank of Athens of that day called the Aeropagus. In Acts Chapter 17, this is what he tells in them in verse 24:

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. ²⁶ From one man he made every nation of men that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the time set for them and the exact places where they should live. ²⁷ God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ "For in him we live and move and have our being."

You remember Satan's downfall was he believed he didn't need God for some things. Then he believed he didn't need God for anything. Then he believed he could be God himself. That's what got him booted out of heaven. And by the way, that is the progression of the lie he tries to work on every human being. "You don't need God for

everything.” Then, “You don’t need God at all.” Then, “You can be your own God calling the shots for your life.” It’s a very effective strategy. There’s a lot of people who believe it.

A third of the angels in heaven who lived in the presence of God got taken in by that lie. What does that say for you and me if we don’t understand the truth of how much we need God? That’s why Peter reminded his readers in 1 Peter 5 verse 5, quoting from Proverbs 3 verse 34, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble,” people humble enough to sense their constant need for God.

You ever hear that phrase, “God helps those who help themselves”? God helps those most who acknowledge their total need for him is the way it really works.

How else do you stand strong? You have to stay engaged in God’s service. You have to be a Christian. You have to make sure that you are believing God and trusting God and living dependently on God, and you need to stay engaged in God’s service. You remember what Paul wrote to the Romans? Romans 1 verse 11, “I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong.”

Now God gives these spiritual gifts, divine abilities for us to use in the body of Christ to strengthen the body, but you use that gift and grow stronger yourself in it. God wants us to be engaged in serving him, so he gives us gifts and abilities to use in that service. People who are engaged in using their gifts to serve God are going to be stronger in their faith and connection to Christ’s body than those who don’t. In fact, people don’t stay engaged can be easily led to adopt a self-focus Christianity and isolated Christianity that causes them to be the sum total of their assessment of their Christian walk. And they are easily led astray. When God is not your top priority, someone else will be which is usually yourself. And when we become isolated and not engaged in God’s work, we are easy to deceive.

So we need to be sure we are a Christian, we need to be certain that we are dependent upon God, we need to be engaged using the gifts God has given us and not isolating from the body, and we need to give the enemy no opportunity. Remember Peter said in 1 Peter 5 verse 8 that “Satan is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.” You don’t ever have to go looking to take on the evil one. He will more than willingly find you. And when live in sin and compromise, when we aren’t obeying God and worshiping and serving him, when we are living in darkness instead of the light, we are opening the door for Satan’s attack.

It’s interesting what the Scripture says you need to be careful of that you let linger too long in your life: anger, unforgiveness, bitterness, immorality, laziness, lying, greed. That’s just a partial list. If those things remain in your life, you don’t give those over to God and deal with them appropriately, Satan will use them as an open door to gain a foothold. It’s why Paul told the Ephesians in Ephesians 4 verse 27, “Do not give the devil a foothold.” “Don’t give him a place to gain entrance. Be confessing things to God. Be living close to him. Don’t toy around with sin. That’s his area.”

God is our strength. Stay close and dependent and clean and engaged with God and his people. As the Lord’s brother, James, once wrote in James 4 verse 4, “You

adulterous people.”

You know, that term can either make you angry or it will wake you up to realize, “You know what? I’m either wholly loyal to God or I’m not.”

You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? ⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

“God opposes the proud
but gives grace to the humble.”

⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

⁸ Come near to God, he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

God will give his people the strength to face the enemy when they choose to stand strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

You had many days lately when you’ve taken the field without being in the weight room? You don’t ever want to face a day without knowing you’re walking out strong in the Lord and his mighty power. And not only staying strong in the Lord, but we live ready to face the enemy by putting on the full armor of God. Verse 11:

Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

One of the other favorite stops at that Seahawk Training Center was the team’s equipment and locker room. They obviously wouldn’t let the girls with us into the locker room for obvious reasons. It’s where the players go to change from their street clothes to put on the equipment they need to take the field.

You know, walking around that locker room, seeing each player’s box and the stuff that’s hanging in there and their equipment ready go for whatever was going to be their next outing, you can tell a lot about the battle ahead by the equipment that they’re wearing: helmets; teeth guards; back, chest, shoulder, thigh kneepads. They have guards for their kidneys, their neck, their eyes, their face, and their shoes are especially designed for whatever surface they are gonna be running on.

If you didn’t know anything about football and you just saw the equipment hanging in their locker you would say, “Whatever this is, it’s a battle. Whatever this is, is brutal.” Each player’s equipment is especially suited for the role he plays and the type of opponent he is gonna face. The truth is you can’t win against the well-equipped foe unless you are equipped to face them yourself. That’s why NFL teams don’t let players go out unprotected. They invest a lot in equipment. That’s why God doesn’t want his

kids going out unprotected either, so he has given us an armor especially suited to the war in which we are engaged. That's why he starts by saying, "Be sure you put it on." "Put on the full armor of God."

You see, we have a spiritual enemy; therefore, we need spiritual armors. "Put on" means "to be clothed in," "to take it up," or "use it." It doesn't do you any good, in other words, hanging in your locker. You got to put it on. "So that when the day of evil comes," he said. Interesting phrase, "When the day of evil comes." In other words, it's not if, it's when. And it implies by it, "When things are at their worst you need to make sure you have all of God's armor on so you can stand," a military term that means "holding your ground and not falling back."

So what is the armor of God? I wish we had time today to do all of this. We'll do it quickly, but you can study a lot of this on your own, and you will if you're serious about getting dressed in it. "Put on the belt of truth buckled around your waist." Satan is a liar and the father of lies. He lies in order to discourage, deceive, and defeat us. So have the truth of God, the truth of his person, and the truth of his word guarding your behind, on every side, and in the front. Let truth encompass you like a belt that holds all your armor together because without truth you will never stand against the lies.

"With the breastplate of righteousness in place." The breastplate covers the vitals. It covers the heart. Guard your heart from a lethal strike by living in righteousness. There is a twofold righteousness implied here. One is positional righteousness. What that means is we stand in the righteousness of Christ cleansed by his blood and living in right relationship with God. We are real Christians saved by his grace and covered in his righteous. We are declared righteous in Christ, and he stands with us. That's why it's important to know that you are in Christ and Christ is in you. That's positional righteousness. You have his righteousness covering, but there is a practical righteousness. Positional righteousness. Practical righteousness: daily practice of living right before God; confessing sin, living right with no hidden deeds of darkness.

When Paul addressed it with the Roman church, he put it like this in Romans 13 verse 12:

The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Don't even think about it.

As Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."

The belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet fitted with a readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. This is the most tricky one to understand, and I'm not sure I've got it right all either, but I can tell you the best that I can understand so far is it sounds something like this, "You need a firm footing and a level place to stand if you're gonna fight this battle. So have your feet firm and ready by covering them with the gospel, the good news of life and salvation in Christ alone that has become and always will be the foundation on which your life and all those who are ready to share it with will stand. And as you share the gospel with others -- the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace -- as you share the gospel with others, you become stronger yourself, stronger in a message of good news that becomes an unshakable foundation for your faith on which you stand.

"Take up the shield of faith," he said in verse 16. "In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith." Satan shoots fiery arrows of lies and doubts and overwhelming circumstances, hoping to embed them in your life and have them burn and spread to erode your faith. His circumstances aren't just one at a time. Ever notice that? If it were one at a time, we might be able to fight it off, but he shoots one and it sticks. That one's still burning; he'll shoot you with another one that sticks. That one's still burning; he shoots you with another that sticks. That one's still burning, and pretty soon you got so many fires going on against your faith you're overwhelmed. You don't even know which one to take first. But the shield of faith, your faith rooted in the word of God and the reality of a God who is, is something we hold up every day to absorb those strikes. The Scripture says it will extinguish those arrows. It may not make them go away, but they're not to harm you or burn anymore because you know God's in charge. I can trust him. I don't have to worry about that; it's in God's hands. I'm clean. I'm ready for the next one. And wham, wham, wham that shield of faith absorbs those and extinguishes them before they can start burning and eroding away your faith. That faith comes from a firm belief and understanding of the word of God.

Put on the helmet of salvation. Your head is not exposed to a lethal strike; you're saved. You belong to Jesus. You cannot die. You cannot be lost. Your salvation covers your mind, your head, it covers you. You are wrapped in a salvation that is yours, so no matter how intense the battle, you belong Christ and you know it. It's your helmet.

You take up the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. It's interesting that the word for "word" here is not "logos" as it is elsewhere in the Greek meaning "all of Scripture, all of the Bible." It is the word "rhema," which in Greek generally applies most the time to a specific passage of Scripture. In other words, we are to use God's word precisely like a sword. We are not standing here with our Bible waving it in the air as though somehow it's gonna do anything. The image is that like a sword precisely used. We apply specific passages of Scripture to the satanic attack that we are facing just as clearly and powerfully as Jesus did in the wilderness temptations. When Satan hit him, he struck back with a specific verse. When you counter Satan's attacks with the word like a sword, he cannot stand against it. It is an offense weapon with which we fight. Is it any wonder Satan is so successful in getting so many Christians to put their sword down. They have no idea how to use it. And that's why prayer is so essential here too. Prayer is the power that wields the sword. A prayerless Christian is a powerless Christian.

Howard Hendricks once told a group of us, "Satan doesn't mind if you read the Bible, just so long as you don't pray. For then he knows you will develop a head full of knowledge that will fill you with pride rendering you powerless."

That's why Paul said in verse 18, "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints." "Pray and be alert," he said. "Watch with perseverance. Stay alert through continually praying and demonstrating that dependence on God." Don't let prayerlessness become a pattern in your life. Prayer is the power behind the word. Satan cannot overcome a spirit-filled, prayerful, obedient Christian. "That's why we pray not only for ourselves," Paul said, "but always keep on praying for all the saints."

I was reading an article this last week at that website I use, [preaching today.com](http://preachingtoday.com). It originally appeared in a magazine called *Outside Magazine* in an article called "Powder Keg" by Grayson Schaffer. He was telling the story of Shane Maixner. If you remember reading this in the paper a few years ago, in January of 2005 Maixner died in an avalanche in Utah.

The 27-year-old and four of his friends drove to the Canyons Ski Resort outside Park City, Utah, rode the ski lift, hiked up to the backcountry gate outside the Dutch Draw Area, went through the gate posted with warning signs, and started snowboarding.

On the second trip down the same slope, someone in the party shouted "Avalanche!" but Shane could not escape. Two days later, they dug his body out of the snow.

Some of the media severely criticized the "reckless out-of-bounds riders" picturing Shane as a novice unaware of the possible dangers, but that wasn't the truth. Maixner and two others in his party were avalanche certified backcountry guides. They were the ones who took other people into the wilderness to avoid the avalanches. The men own special avalanche gear, but they didn't bring it with them when they went to Dutch Draw that day.

This is not an unusual occurrence. In fact, skiers with the most advanced training are most likely to be seduced into faulty reasoning by factors like tracked slopes and group enthusiasm. Maixner didn't die because he was a fool. Like his friends, he was lulled into letting his guard down.

Satan goes after pastors like crazy. Howard Hendricks used to tell us, "Don't you guys ever forget, you have a target in the middle of your back that is never out of Satan's sight." I want you to understand he's been very successful in getting a lot of Christians lulled into this thing of not knowing that this battle is real, and that staying strong in the Lord and putting on the full armor of God is not an option.

People, we are not to run scared. Jesus is the victor. But as Peter said in 1 Peter 5 verse 8:

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

Stay strong, live ready. Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Don't go out a day without being in that spiritual weight room and by putting on full armor of God with which you can take your stand. God said, **"You do that, you'll be resisting the evil one, and you be able to stay strong and live ready."**

I am horribly overtime today. I'm gonna have to make some adjustments for the next hour, so I'm gonna pray. If you would like to talk to someone about knowing the Lord, or if you would like to talk to someone about anything before you go, I'm gonna invite you to our prayer room. I'm gonna see if next hour I can do little shorter, but anyway let's pray for a moment.

Father, the hour has come for us to release everyone to get their kids and make way for the next group coming in. I hope this extra time today, God, has been well worth it. We don't ever want to run scared. We are more than conquerors through him who loved us, but I pray, God, increasingly you will help us to realize that the battle is real and the enemy too, and that we can face this enemy in the power of God if we'll stay strong in you and put on the armor. Help us, like the Thessalonians, to stay strong and live ready with a faith that is reaching the world for Christ. And we'll thank you, God, for all of your help. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Thank you, God bless you today.