

2 Timothy 1:13-18 – November 22nd, 2020

Be on Guard

JD Farag

Good morning and welcome to our second Sunday morning service. We have two services on Sunday morning, and the first one is our Bible Prophecy Update. This second service is our verse-by-verse study through the Word of God. We're making our way through the Bible, and we are currently in 2 Timothy. Our text today is going to be chapter 1:13-18. We'd encourage you online to join with us there in 2 Timothy.

As you do, just a quick reminder that we have launched our new website at JDFarag.org. It is just Phase 1. We're still working on it. It's a work in progress. We very much appreciate your patience with us but, more importantly, your prayers for us, especially with respect to the Forum, which is very active. We really want the Forum to be a place where people could go to be encouraged and edified and a safe place. So, we would really encourage you to pray for us concerning this. We're still working on this, trying to navigate our way through this.

With that, let's get into the Word. 2 Timothy Chapter one, we're going to begin in verse 13. We left off last week in verse 12. I'll ask those of you who are here if you're able you can stand and follow along with me as I read. If not, where you're seated is fine. As I read the text, I just want to, by way of a reminder of sorts, just let you know that Timothy is receiving this letter from Paul, who knows that it's just a matter of time before he will die a martyr's death for Jesus. These are his final parting words.

As he writes them, he is in a prison and never imagine it as the prisons we understand today. He is in a dungeon of a prison left there to die. ... He knows he's going to die. He just doesn't know how he's going to die, but he's about to be beheaded, and he knows it. So, as we read the text just through the lens of this mightily used man of God, the Apostle Paul. He's penning this letter to Timothy, whom he loves so much. This is the final letter that he'll write, and it's to this young man who is a pastor. He loves him so much like a son as he's referred to him earlier in the letter.

Verse 13, "What you heard from me keep as the pattern of sound teaching with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard [verse 14] the good deposit that was entrusted to you. Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit, who lives in us. You know [verse 15] that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including, Phygelus and Hermongenes.

May the Lord [verse 16] show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day. You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus."

Let's pray if you would join with me, please. Loving heavenly Father, we are with a trembling of sorts as Isaiah says the one that you look upon is the one who walks humbly and trembles at your Word. Lord, there is a holy trembling as we read these words here in your Word.

Lord, we do so knowing that you have a word for us today. Would that we would have ears to hear what the Spirit would say to us your church today. Lord, would you speak as only you can very clearly into our lives. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen and Amen. You can be seated. Thank you.

What I want to talk with you about today is the paramount importance of being on guard and never letting your guard down, especially in the times in which we are living today. In the text that we have before us, the Apostle Paul is warning Timothy concerning his guarding of that which he's been given. That which has been deposited into him, invested in him, given to him. He is to guard it.

I sort of saved these last verses here in Chapter 1 for a teaching unto itself for a reason. I think you'll see why here in a moment. If you'll kindly allow me to, I want to answer three questions from the text as it relates to what it is that we're to guard, how we are to guard it, and why it is that we are to guard it.

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Let's start with the first one. What is it that we are to guard? The answer is in verse 13. Here Paul tells Timothy he is to keep the word that he heard from Paul. He's to keep it as the pattern of sound teaching with faith and love in Christ Jesus. It's important to understand that they didn't have a Bible yet. They didn't have the written word of God yet. This letter that Timothy is on the receiving end from the Apostle Paul would eventually be included in the canon of Scripture as inspired Scripture. But at this time, there was no written word, and so Paul warns Timothy to keep the word you heard from me.

The strength with which Paul writes this can be easily missed at first read. You read it, you understand it, you appreciate it. I would venture to say that there's probably not a one of us that has any of these verses as wallpaper or framed up on our walls. Right? Can you imagine what your life's verse? Oh! Where Paul calls by name two men that deserted him. Abandoned him, were ashamed of him. That's your life's verse, really? You're a sick man. I know. Pray for me. But wait a minute.

It's here in God's word for a reason. Right? Because all Scripture is given, God-breathed. Instruction, rebuke, we hate that part. Encouragement, I'll take that one. So, the question is, why is this in our Bibles? Why did God deem it necessary to include this passage in Scripture? Why would this rise to the level of being that important for us all of these years later to have it in our Bibles?

There must be a reason, and that reason is that we are to guard with our lives the Word of God! The Word of God. Question. Think this through with me. What is the most valuable possession you have? What is the most valuable possession that you possess? Is it not your salvation? Is it not the Word of God? Think about that valuable possession that you have. Don't you guard it? Secure it? Treasure it? Lock it up? Put 14 security cameras on it? I do. It's not a material thing. It's my family, my church family.

We guard, we protect, we treasure, value what we deem to be valuable in terms of what we possess, and that's what Paul is saying here to Timothy, guard it with your life because your life depends on it. This is a matter of life and death, eternally, and that's how you are to guard it. We have a problem, though.

The problem is we're all prone to let our guard down, especially in those areas in our Christian lives that we think I'm doing good in that area. I stand strong in that area. I'm standing firm in that area. We tend to kind of let our guard down because we don't see that as a vulnerability, and then we try to instead shore up those other areas in our lives that we know we don't quite stand as strong in.

Listen to what the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians Chapter 10:12. He says, "So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall." Did you catch that? Here's what I'm thinking. We fall in those areas of our greatest strength. Ask Peter.

Think about this. I mean, because this is Peter we're talking about, man. This is Peter who had the courage when he realized it was the Lord walking on the water in that perilous storm. He had the courage to say, bid me, come. Then when Jesus said, come! He had the courage to step out of the boat and walk on water. That's faith. That's courage. How about when they came to arrest Jesus there in the garden that night? Here's Peter.

You got to love Peter. I love this man. I can't wait to meet him. I think a lot of people are going to owe him an apology in heaven because he's been the subject of many sermon illustrations. I have to confess that I've done it.

But think about this: He had the courage that night to take on the entire Roman army for Jesus. That's courage. Takes his sword out, cuts off the ear of this Malchus, and Jesus is like Peter, I love you, man... I think that Malchus, I think we're going to see him in heaven. If I'm Malchus, I'm getting saved. Peter cuts my ear off. Jesus heals my ear. I'm like this is the Savior. This is God incarnate. I would have gotten saved right there on the spot. That's courage, though, isn't it?

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How about when He takes the disciples to Caesarea Philippi. Those of you that have gone to Israel with us, one of the most, I mean, "chicken skin" places. Oh, sorry, it's goosebumps on the mainland, but we call it chicken skin here. It's where they worshiped the god Pan, where we get the English word and expression, panic, fear. This is a feared false god that they worshiped, and this place was known as the gates of hell. Jesus takes His disciples to Caesarea Philippi, and he asked them the question, who do you say that I am? And then, Peter right there...

You got to hand it to him. None of the other disciples said bid me come. None of the other disciples, though wrong, a spiritual battle fought with carnal weapons. None of the other disciples took their sword out to cut off Malchus' ear. At Caesarea Philippi, when Jesus poses this question to them, who is it that has the courage to speak up? Peter. "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

And Jesus says, Peter, I'm sorry, I'm going to use this, but I'm going to make you Pope. No, that's not what He said. I told you I was sorry. Anyway, I digress.

Peter means rock, little rock. Jesus says to him, Peter, upon that rock of your confession, that I am the Christ the Son of the living God, I'm going to build my church, and the Bill Gates of hell will not... I mean the gates of hell. That was totally intentional. The gates of hell, which is where they were, will not prevail against it.

I know it's not in the text, and I know that it's pure conjecture as they say, but I just got to believe that Peter was like, do you hear that? It's kind of like when he's walking on water? We know that he took his eyes off the Lord. They all say, and it's in the narrative, it says that he looked at the storm, but I just wonder if the temptation wasn't there to look back at the disciples in the boat going... Boom! Down he goes. I don't know. Again, it's pure speculation. That's courage, isn't it?

Even when Jesus said to Peter, "Peter, Satan has asked for permission to sift you as wheat." If I'm Peter, I'm like you didn't give permission, did you, Lord? ... I did. You did? Why would you do that? Because. Afterward, this is important, by the way, because Satan cannot do anything to us unless God gives him permission to do it first. God will never give the devil permission to do anything to us unless it's for His glory and our good.

Ask Job about that. Satan could not touch even a hair on Job's head unless God allowed it, and God only allowed it because, in the end, it would be for His glory and Job's good.

Same thing with Peter. Satan had to ask for permission, and so Jesus says I gave him permission. Why? Because after he sifted you as wheat, you're going to minister to the brethren. He says to Peter, you're going to deny me. Peter's response, no, I'm not. Jesus, yes, you are. Peter, no, I'm not! Jesus actually, Peter, you're going to deny me three times - [before] the rooster crows.

And Peter, I mean, it would be the furthest thing from his mind. It would be inconceivable, unthinkable, no way! Way. So where did Peter fall? He fell in the area of his greatest strength - courage. He let his guard down. So, there they are. His first mistake was warming himself by the enemy's fire. When we get too comfortable, close in proximity to the world's fire, we're asking for trouble.

And he's asked, hey, weren't you with Him? You have to understand that everybody abandoned Jesus, just like here with the Apostle Paul. They all deserted him. Why? Because are you kidding me? They're going to crucify Him, and if I'm associated with Him, that means they're going to crucify me too. So, I'm going to be run, run away, and lay low.

No, you were with Him. No, I wasn't. I know you were with Him. No, I wasn't. What are you talking about? I don't even know this guy. I've never seen this guy before in my life. No, I can tell by your Galilean accent. No, you were with him, and then he swears - not vulgarities. He swears an oath. I swear, I never knew this man, and then the rooster crows.

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When you read the text... I think it requires the Holy Spirit to be able to really capture the intensity of that moment because they made eye contact. Jesus looked at Peter, and Peter looked at Jesus, and he was devastated and wept bitterly. Never imagine that when they made eye contact that Jesus had this disdain or this disgust like I told you that you would deny me. Not all. That wouldn't be the final word.

This isn't a teaching on the life of Peter, although that would be a great teaching. Jesus would restore him three times. Do you love me, Peter? Yes, I love you, Jesus. Feed my sheep. The second time, do you love me, Peter? Yes, I love you, Jesus, Feed my sheep. The third time we're told that Peter just broke down and cried because he knew what Jesus was doing. I don't think it was tears of bitterness or regret or sorrow. I think it was tears of joy because he was being restored that third time.

Maybe that's the word for somebody here today. You've denied the Lord. You blew it bad - big time and the enemy has been right there to rub your face in it- Like oh my, I'd run as far away as I could if I were you. No, don't let the enemy do that to you. Don't let the enemy do that to you. There's nothing you can do that is going to make God love you less.

Here's another thing I know. This might be a firm grasp of the obvious, but do you actually think that when we blow it and mess up? That God is in heaven going, what did he just do? When did this happen? Are you kidding me? I have told him till I am blue in the face. He even vowed to me and told me and made a promise to me. I'll never do that again, Lord, and he did it. That's it! I've had it up to here with him.

No, I mean, I know that's silly and funny, but that's true, isn't it? Do you know why that's true? Because we see our heavenly Father through the lens of our earthly father. Don't do that! Man, early on in my Christian life, I did that, and it just killed me. It wasn't until many years walking with Lord that the Lord ministered to me to stop looking at Him through the lens of my earthly father because my earthly father was mad at me all the time. I gave him good reason to be, but he was always angry. I never wanted to be around him because I was always in trouble. God's not angry with me. He loves me, or if you prefer, He still likes me. He actually likes me. He's not mad at me.

So, when you read a verse like this in God's Word, and you read this warning, the strength of it? It's from a loving, heavenly Father that says don't let your guard down. Because I love you, and I can't stand to watch you needlessly, unnecessarily, suffer the consequences.

So, that's what we are to guard. How? This is what I love about the Word of God. It's the "how" of the Holy Spirit to do the "what" of the Holy Word. If you don't hear anything that I say or yell today, hear this, please. God will never call you or command you to do anything without also enabling you by the power of the Holy Spirit to do it. He can't not. I know that's not proper English. Don't email me.

It's inconsistent with who He is because if let's just say hypothetically for the purpose of discussion that He did that? He'd be setting you up for a fall, and God can tempt no man with evil. In fact, it's the opposite that's true. God will always create an environment in our lives that is conducive to our obedience. He'll always set us up for obedience, never for a fall or failure. He'll always orchestrate the circumstances, choreograph the steps in our lives as He guides us so that it's conducive to obedience. I mean, you might almost say that, for lack of a better way to say it, that the odds are stacked for us - not against us.

This is perhaps amongst the most profound truths in all of Scripture. I don't know if it's possible to overstate it, and I know that sounds, wow, dramatic, and big, but the only way for us to live a holy life is by the power of the Holy Spirit. That's what Paul says. He says you need the Holy Spirit, the help of the Holy Spirit. Don't even think about it. Don't even try unless you have the Holy Spirit. How

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am I going to guard the truth, guard the Word, never let my guard down? By the power of the Holy Spirit.

Here's the truth. It's actually the 3-steps: Step #1. Know that I can't; Step #2. Know that He can; Step #3. Let Him. The Christian I feel the most sorry for and believe you me, I have tasted from this cup. I have so much compassion for the Christian who is trying to live the Christian life in the energy of their own strength. It is a recipe for condemnation, and make no mistake about it, the enemy will be right there condemning you. You fell again. You failed again.

It's the power of the Holy Spirit. I think about what Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Who has bewitched you? Who has cast a spell on you? Are you now trying to perfect in the flesh the work that God began in the Spirit? What's up with that? Here you are born-again of the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit indwells you, empowers you, and you get to this point you say, okay, God, I'll take it from here. I got it. I got this. No, you don't. No, I've got it. Where is that stop-clock? That's an old metaphor - now they have an app for that. Where is that stop-clock - I'm going to push start now because it's just a matter of time.

When Paul writes to the Romans in chapter 8... I love this chapter, I love this chapter, I love this chapter. Did I tell you that I love this chapter? I often say, and I hope you don't tire of me saying it. If you ever doubt the love that God has for you, you need to spend some time in this chapter because it will be a reassurance, a much-needed reassurance, that there is absolutely no-thing that can separate you from the love that God has for you.

Verse 26, "In the same way, the Spirit [the Holy Spirit] helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans." Oh, my goodness. Thank you, Jesus.

You know how it is when you're trying to pray, and you don't know how to pray? The Holy Spirit says I need to edit that prayer. I'm going to tweak it, and I'm going to intercede for you instead of you. Verse 27, "He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God." Did you catch that? Oh, this is really good news because do you know what this means? If I'm praying, if I'm seeking God, the Holy Spirit indwelling me, interceding for me takes what I pray, and he tweaks it so that it's presented according to God's will.

I pray every day, the Lord knows my heart, that He would do that with my sermons. The sermon you hear is not necessarily the sermon I preached because sometimes, when I leave this pulpit, I think, oh, God! You've got a lot of work to do on that one because you see the Holy Spirit goes right to the heart. Man looks only at the outward appearance, but God knows the heart, sees the heart, and that's why it is that God can take His Word that doesn't return void when it leaves here.

The Holy Spirit is very busy, especially with my sermons, tweaking and editing it and fine-tuning it to that need of your heart. I love it when God does that. Somebody will say to me, Pastor, how did you know? I'm like what are you talking about? Did somebody call you? What are you talking about? No, when you said such and thus? That was for me! I'm like, thank you, Lord, that was the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8, You're going to have to bear with me on this just for a moment, okay? "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..." Hang on to that word "upon" for just a moment. "... and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

This word "power" in the Greek New Testament's original language is *dunamis*, where we get our English word for - you'll forgive me for saying it like this, DY-NO-MITE! That was an old sitcom which you, young people, have no idea. Dynamite, power, that's the Holy Spirit's power.

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Let's talk about this word, upon. Why is that important? Because there are three different Greek prepositions in the original language that describe the work of the Holy Spirit. One of those prepositions is "para" in the Greek, alongside. It's where we get our English words for things like paralegal, parachute, parallel. The Holy Spirit is para, the Paraclete, comes alongside, and then there's the Greek pronoun, en, e-n, where we get, in, i-n. That's the Holy Spirit in you, indwelling you.

But then there's a third, and it's the Greek pronoun "epi," our English word, upon. That's a whole different ball game. I've got the Holy Spirit alongside of me as a helper. I got the Holy Spirit indwelling me as a believer, and now I've got the Holy Spirit upon me? Yeah. Empowering me? Yeah. So much so that your life will become like torrents of living water. You know when there's a flood, you see those floodwaters how powerful they are? They bring the whole house, it's like a toothpick-downstream. That's how powerful they are.

The best illustration I ever heard was that of a canoe. I'm going to make it local, a canoe on the beach. You want to get it into the water, but it's on the beach in the sand. So, you're trying to push the thing, and it's not moving, and then all of a sudden, here comes the tide - the water. I mean, you can just take your pinky because of the power of the water and the tide to take that into the water.

That's the Holy Spirit. It's the power of the Holy Spirit when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. What are you saying, Pastor? Are you going to get Pentecostal on me? Just hang in there. This is known as the baptism with the Holy Spirit.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and empowers you - that's the epi, the upon. Wait a minute, Pastor, I thought I had the Holy Spirit when I got saved. Absolutely. The Holy Spirit indwells you, in you, but the Holy Spirit can be upon you. That's different than in you. That's upon you.

Here's an illustration. You've got a glass, and you got a pitcher full of water. Okay? You take that pitcher, you put it next to the glass. It's alongside - para. Now you take that pitcher, and you start pouring water in the glass - that's the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

But what if you just kept on pouring that thing upon to where it's overflowing? That's the epi, the filling, the baptism with the Holy Spirit. That's the only way - that's the "how." I read God's Word; better said, God's Word reads me. I search the Scriptures, the Scriptures search me, find me wanting in many areas. Available to me, available to you, is this power of the Holy Spirit to do everything that's in this Holy Word. That's how. That's how.

Why? In verses 15 through 18, Paul is saying that the reason why is because if you let your guard down, you're not on guard. Then you're going to go the way of these two men. I'm not going to try to pronounce their names again. I'm sure I butchered them when I was reading the text, which is interesting if you think about it.

For the better part of 2,000 years, all Christians and even non-Christians who have read this particular passage in God's Word, have read about these two men. How would you like to be these two men and have your name recorded in God's Word for everyone to see that you abandoned and deserted - you are a deserter? Wow. Where's the love?

Again, why do we have this in our Bibles? Why does this rise to the level? [To be included in Holy Writ] Because it serves as a warning to us as to why it is that we have to guard the truth of God's Word with our lives. Because if we don't, then we too have this propensity to desert and abandon the truth.

By the way, for those of you who read ahead to stay ahead, do you know what's ahead in 2 Timothy? Those that have abandoned the truth, why? Why? Why? I want to know why? Because. They were

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what, and you'll forgive me, they are what I call "fair-weather Christians." Oh, Pastor, be careful. Okay. Interesting.

This Onesiphorus, again if I'm pronouncing his name correctly, that Paul would then conversely say, by the way, there was one guy, Timothy, that not only did he not abandon and desert me when I was imprisoned in Rome, he came, and he searched for me, and he found me. He tenaciously searched for me, and he was a tremendous blessing to me.

By the way, in that day, they did not serve you any meals as they do today in prison. You were on your own. The only way you ate is if you had friends and family that brought you food. Otherwise, you starved to death. Apparently, he's like, man, I've got to get to Paul. He tenaciously pursued and found Paul and blessed Paul so much.

Now, think about this in a day when everybody was abandoning him, ashamed of him, disenfranchising themselves from him and the gospel with him. Ashamed of the gospel, ashamed to be a Christian. Then you got this Onesiphorus and Timothy, and they are loyal till death to Paul and the gospel. Wow.

If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the greatest dangers for Christians living in these times in this world that we're living in? I'll tell you this would have to be it. What do you mean? Well, cowering and faltering, deserting at a time in human history, when Christians are being exposed as the fair-weather Christians that they are.

Do you know what I mean by fair-weather Christians? I'm not trying to be mean. I just speak the truth in love here. There's nothing like a crisis that really, as they say, shows one's true colors. You've heard that expression, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." I like those. Those are manly sayings. Right?

Well, for the fair-weather Christian, when the going gets tough, they run. They run at a time when the world needs to see Holy Spirit-filled and empowered, fearless, unflinching, fearlessness in believers.

I'll even take it a step further and say, and again, I'm not trying to beat up on anybody. But this is just the truth, man. I asked the Lord to search my own heart concerning this. I truly do not believe there has ever been a time in human history where Christians have needed to stand strong in the power of His mind, and the world is watching.

They're longing, they're aching, begging, pleading to see a Christian who is the real deal because they're freaking out and rightfully so. What am I going to do? And then along comes you - I don't know! What are we going to do? There's no hope. No, along comes you. You've got joy. What's that like? Something different about you. What is it? Oh, so glad you asked.

Do you know the two questions that every non-Christian is asking the Christian? It's not vocalized, but they're asking it? Would to God that we would give everyone an answer of that hope that lies within us. They want to know two things about you, Christian. Are you real? Are you the real deal, or are you just like all the other Christians I've encountered?

The second question is, does it work? Is it real? Are you real? And does it work? Here is the thing: They want you to be real, and they want it to work. Because if you're real and it works, then there's hope for them, and people are looking for hope. Are you kidding me? Do you see the fear in people's eyes?

My daughter and I walk our dog, and I just look at people. I see a young mom with nobody around pushing the stroller, her infant has a mask on, the mom has a mask on, and the fear in her eyes! I just wanted to go up to her, which wouldn't have worked because she would have run the other way seeing me coming. You've got to be prudent, obviously.

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People are looking for hope. They need hope. Jesus is their only hope. I'm telling you, and this was the gist of the prophecy update. We've got to get Jesus to people and people to Jesus as quickly as we can. We're really running out of time.

I want to close with Revelation Chapter 3, verses 10 and 11. This is part of a letter that Jesus had John write to this church. There were 7 churches in Revelation, Chapters 2 and 3. Two of those 7 churches were not on the receiving end of a rebuke from Jesus, and the other 5 were. The Church of Smyrna, the persecuted church, and then the church of Philadelphia, affectionately referred to as the "evangelical remnant church." No rebuke, only encouragement to hang on.

Listen to what Jesus has John write. He says, verse 10, "Since you have kept My command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. That's the 7-year tribulation.

This is a promise from Jesus to this church, to the church - just keep hanging on. I know you're barely hanging on. I know you have little strength. I know you're hanging on by a thread. I know you're battle-weary. I know you're enduring patiently. But I'm going to keep you from the 7-year tribulation that is coming upon the whole world - just keep hanging on. "I am coming soon."

Verse 11. That's actually an interesting word in the original language. Some of your translations translate it quickly. It's the Greek word tachos, not takos poke, or tacos Mexican. No, tachos where we get our English word for the tachometers in our cars.

It's rpm's, a measurement of revolutions per minute. The time is set: 1 minute. The revolutions are gauged. What Jesus is saying is I'm coming at a time when things are revved up. Redlining for those of you that are car guys. It's redlining.

Then he says this, "Hold on to what you have [guard it with your life], so that no man will take your crown." Is this possible? Oh, sure. Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy. Don't be ignorant, Paul would say, of Satan's devices. I like the King James translation much better, "The wiles of the devil." That preaches, man!

Don't be so naive! Don't be so ignorant. He's not being rude. He's being honest. Don't be so naive. Don't be so ignorant of Satan's strategies. The wiles of the devil. He strategizes. He studies your life like a military strategist studies the maps for warfare, and he's waiting for that optimum time to attack.

He knows when you let your guard down. He is very patient. That's the problem. He's not in any hurry. He says no, no, no, not yet. Not yet. Just wait. A roaring lion... They made a movie about this many years ago. I don't often refer to movies, but this was based on a true story about these man-eating lions in Africa.

That is an apt description and picture of our enemy. These lions would - just wait. Not yet, wait. Then when one of the people there in that village was vulnerable, let their guard down? Now, boom! He attacks. That's what he does. When you're tired - That's when he attacks. When you're discouraged - that's when he attacks. How about this one - when you're isolated? That's when he attacks.

In Ephesians 6, it's very interesting, and this will be the final closing. Ephesians 6, we know it well, right? The spiritual armor: the breastplate of righteousness, shield of faith, sword of the Spirit, shoes of the gospel (peace), the helmet of salvation, the belt of truth which holds everything together by the way. Very interesting. It's a stunning study, by the way.

But he makes this comment. He says, "... above all, taking up the shield of faith..." Now, why would he say that? Does that mean the shield of faith is more important above all the other pieces of the armor? No.

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JD Farag

He's saying this, and they would have understood the analogy. You take that shield, and you put it above all of you, "locked tongue and groove," together to create this impenetrable fortress so that when the enemy fires those fiery arrows, you don't get hit because that shield is "locked tongue and groove above all."

Now here's what happens. Satan waits until you're out from that covering and protection. We got one! And that's it. He attacks. That's why it's so important to not isolate yourself. If you do, you do so to your own peril.

Why don't you stand? We'll pray. Lord, I did my best. But you're going to have to do the rest by the Holy Spirit. Again, I know you've got a lot of work to do on this, one, but you're always so faithful.

Lord, I don't think there's a one of us here in this amazing church and those in our online church, there's not a one of us that doesn't want to be numbered amongst those of whom it can be said, wow, that's an Onesiphorus, loyal, guarding the truth with their life to the end. Holding on, yes with little strength, but holding on nonetheless.

Lord, I am keenly aware that whenever I stand behind this pulpit and preach as is my privilege to do, that I'm preaching and teaching to hurting people with everything that's happening in this world today. So, Lord, I pray that you would encourage and strengthen the brokenhearted, the battle-weary, those that are just barely hanging on by a thread. They really don't know how they're going to get through what they're going through, Lord. A sermon like this today, just "Be on Guard." Are you kidding me? I'm just trying to survive. Lord, I just pray for the "how" of the Holy Spirit to do the "what" of Your Holy Word.

In Jesus' name. Amen.