

Sermon: Protecting Your Life

October 25, 2025

Opening Monologue

Welcome AVC Family and new APP Downloaders to our church app. You will find valuable commentary, spiritual reflections, and devotional questions associated with this week's sermon as you scroll down.

This week's Sermon Title is: "Protecting Your Life." It's a pretty in your face title I know; but truth be told, Satan is always in our face trying to raze havoc on our lives. Scripture is clear: "for our struggle is not against flesh and blood... But against spiritual forces of evil" (Ephesians 6:12)

The Enemies goal is to hijack our lives and take us backwards. He literally has a hit out on our lives and families- kill, steal, destroy. (John 10:10) The counterfeit kingdom of darkness loves to rub our face in the past so we stop moving forward. He wants our pasts to haunt us and scream- WHY DID YOU DO THAT! His goal is to take us backwards and make us play the blame game... which has a potential of swallowing our whole lives.

Jesus doesn't rub our pasts in our face. The Good News of Jesus says: It's not about what you have done in the past, but what you're going to do in the future! Come Sunday as we dive into this subject so you can be better equipped to- "Protect Your Life."

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)

In Christ,
Rev. Brad Standfest

To Listen to this week's Sermon: "Protecting Your Life" Go

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Web: <https://www.almontvineyardchurch.org/media>

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Key Sermon Texts

Ephesians 6:12-13

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%206%3A12-13&version=NIV>

2 Corinthians 11:14

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%2011%3A14&version=NIV>

Galatians 2:20

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians%202%3A20&version=NIV>

Philippians 3:13-14

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%203%3A13-14&version=NIV>

Biblical Reflection on “Protecting Your Life”

The sermon theme & title , “Protecting Your Life,” resonates deeply with the spiritual battle believers face, as outlined in the Scriptures referenced. This reflection will weave together the biblical passages that have been cited—John 10:10, Ephesians 6:12-14, 2 Corinthians 11:14, Galatians 2:20, and Philippians 3:13-14. Christians must protect their lives from the enemy’s schemes by standing firm in Christ.

The Reality of the Battle (John 10:10, Ephesians 6:12-14)

The Scriptures make it clear that we are in a spiritual war. John 10:10 starkly contrasts the intentions of the enemy with the purpose of Christ: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” Satan’s agenda is destruction—targeting our joy, peace, and ultimately our eternal life. Ephesians 6:12-14 elaborates that “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.” This is no mere metaphor; it’s a cosmic conflict for our souls.

To protect our lives, we must, as Ephesians 6:13-14 urges, “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. Stand firm then.” The armor—truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, the Spirit, and the Word of God—is our divine defense. It’s not passive; it requires active engagement, standing firm in the identity and authority we have in Christ.

Satan’s Tactics: The Deception of the Past (2 Corinthians 11:14)

One of Satan’s most insidious strategies is to keep us tethered to our past. Scripture says, he “masquerades as an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14), disguising his lies as truth to deceive us. He whispers reminders of past sins, failures, or shame, attempting to convince us that we are unworthy of God’s grace or incapable of change. This is a direct assault on the transformative power of the gospel. Satan wants us to believe we’re still defined by who we were, not who we are in Christ.

Yet, the good news is that Christ’s sacrifice has rewritten our story. As the Sermon mentions, “It’s not about what you’ve done in the past but what you’re going to do in the future.” This aligns with the truth of 2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” Satan’s reminders of our past are powerless unless we give them authority by dwelling there. Protecting our life means rejecting these lies and embracing our new identity in Christ.

Living in Christ’s Victory (Galatians 2:20)

Galatians 2:20 is a powerful declaration for every believer: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” This verse is the cornerstone of protecting our lives. Our old self—bound by sin and vulnerable to Satan’s accusations—has been crucified. Christ now lives in us, and His presence empowers us to live victoriously.

This truth calls us to a radical shift in perspective: our life is no longer our own. Every decision, thought, and action can be surrendered to Christ, who equips us to resist the enemy's pull toward the past. By living "by faith in the Son of God," we protect our life by anchoring it in His strength, not our own.

Pressing Forward, Not Backward (Philippians 3:13-14)

The Apostle Paul's words in Philippians 3:13-14 provide a forward-looking blueprint for protecting our lives: "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." Paul's life before Christ was marked by violence and pride, yet he refused to let his past define his future. Instead, he focused on the upward call of God.

This is a clarion call for believers to let go of regret, shame, or nostalgia for a sinful past. Protecting our life means intentionally moving forward—straining, as Paul says, with effort and purpose. It's a daily choice to reject Satan's temptation to "go back and live that life again" and instead pursue the abundant life Christ promises (John 10:10). We press on by fixing our eyes on Jesus, "the pioneer and perfecter of faith" (Hebrews 12:2), trusting that He is leading us toward a future filled with hope.

Application: Standing Strong in Christ

The sermon's theme challenges believers to actively protect their lives by standing firm in Christ. Here are a few practical reflections to share with your congregation:

1. Wear the Armor Daily: Put on the armor of God through prayer, Scripture, and faith. Each piece of the armor equips us to counter Satan's attacks, whether they come as temptation, doubt, or accusations about our past.

2. Reject the Enemy's Lies: When thoughts of the past arise, remind yourself of 2 Corinthians 5:17—you are a new creation. Speak God's truth over your life, declaring that your past has no power over your present or future.

3. Live by Faith in Christ: Galatians 2:20 invites us to surrender daily to Christ's life within us. Protect your life by trusting in His love and sacrifice, which have already overcome the enemy.

4. Keep Moving Forward: Like Paul, make a conscious choice to forget what is behind. Set your sights on God's call for your life—whether it's serving others, growing in faith, or sharing the gospel. The enemy cannot steal what is surrendered to God's purpose.

Commentary on Main Scriptures

Ephesians 6:10-13/ WEARING THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD / 6:10-13

In the Christian life, we battle against rulers and authorities (the powerful evil forces of fallen angels headed by Satan, who is a vicious fighter, see 1 Peter 5:8). To withstand their attacks, we must depend on God's strength and use every piece of his armor. Paul was not only giving this counsel to the church, the body of Christ, but to all individuals within the church. The whole body needs to be armed. As you battle against "the powers of this dark world," fight in the strength of the church, whose power comes from the Holy Spirit. What can your church do to be a Christian armory?

6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. The word "finally" signals the beginning of Paul's conclusion to his letter, where he will give words of vital importance for his readers. In this letter, Paul explained the need for unity in the body of believers; here he further explained the need for that unity—there will be inevitable clashes with evil, and the church must be ready to stand and fight.

"Be strong in the Lord" refers to strength derived from God, not strength we humans have to somehow obtain. The words "be strong" describe continual empowering of the Christian community. God's strength and his mighty power are part of the kingdom blessings available to God's people. At the beginning of this letter, Paul prayed for believers to know God's "incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms" (1:19-20 NIV). The power that

raised Christ from the dead empowers God's people as they prepare for the spiritual battle they must face on this earth. They will need it, for, as the text continues, the struggle occurs in the spiritual realm and must be won with spiritual weapons. While the victory is certain, the battle still must be waged. Paul's words are all in the plural, addressed to the church, who, like a warrior, needs to put on the complete armor of God. Of course, this combined effort calls for each member's fullest participation.

TRAINING

If you want to complete a marathon, you have to run hundreds of training miles. If you want to learn a foreign language, you have to spend some hours memorizing declensions and conjugations. If you want to play the piano, you have to learn the scales and how to read music. And if you want to accomplish anything for God, you have to spend time with the spiritual disciplines: Bible study, prayer, church involvement, fasting, serving. Being a Christian is not a learned skill or discipline; it's a living relationship with our living Lord Jesus. But like any other relationship, if you want it to be deep and meaningful—beyond the superficial and empty formalities—it takes time and commitment. Do you set aside time for spiritual training?

6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. God empowers his people, but he does not send them into battle unarmed. God's people must put on the whole armor of God (see also Romans 13:12). The panoplia, or full armor, means complete equipment, head-to-toe protection, both defensively and offensively. This gear was for hand-to-hand combat, not for appearances. This "armor of God" was mentioned in the Old Testament. Isaiah 59:17 describes God as wearing the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation. Paul wrote this letter while chained to a Roman soldier. Certainly the soldier's armor must have brought this metaphor to mind. Paul described a divine and complete "outfit" that God gives believers in order to provide all we need to be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. The devil rules the world of darkness, the kingdom opposed to God. "Stand against" was a military term meaning to resist the enemy, hold the position, and offer no surrender. (For more on "stand," see 6:13–14; 1 Corinthians 16:13; Colossians 4:12; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8–9.) Also called Satan, the devil will not fight fair; his "wiles"

will often include subtle tricks and schemes. Our “ability to stand” in battle depends on our use of “the whole armor of God.”

ARMED AND READY

Why would Christians not want to use the full armor? What keeps them from using God’s power?

- 1. They don’t sense danger or recognize the power of the enemy.**
- 2. They don’t have all the weapons. They have never been taught the significance and importance of those weapons.**
- 3. They are untrained in the use of those weapons. Without practice, no soldier can be ready for battle.**
- 4. They may be in a comfort zone. Perhaps they are nowhere near the battle or they are somehow compromising with the enemy.**

6:12 For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. The Christians face a struggle against evil—describing hand-to-hand combat. But we are not in an earthly military campaign—our battle is not against enemies of blood and flesh. Instead, we battle the demons over whom Satan has control. Demons work to tempt people to sin. They were not created by Satan because God is the Creator of all. Rather, the demons are fallen angels who joined Satan in his rebellion and thus became perverted and evil. The descriptive words “rulers,” “authorities,” “cosmic powers,” and “spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” reveal the characteristics of these enemies as well as their sphere of operations. “Rulers and authorities” are cosmic powers, or demons, mentioned in 1:21. These spiritual beings have limited power. “Cosmic powers of this present darkness” refers to those spiritual powers who aspire to world control. The “spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” refers to the demons’ dwelling, planets

and stars, from which the demons control the lives of people. Paul used the names of groups of evil powers not so much to establish classes or distinguish demonic powers as to show the full extent of Satan's warfare.

Here is a host of spiritual forces arrayed against us, requiring us to use God's full armor. These are real and powerful beings, not mere fantasies. Believers must not underestimate them. The Ephesians had practiced magic and witchcraft (Acts 19:19), so they were well aware of the power of the darkness. As the Bible explains the kingdom of light, the kingdom of darkness is exposed. These powers are "cosmic" and "spiritual"; thus, we fight the battle in that realm. (For discussion on "in the heavenly places," see 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10.)

We face a powerful army whose goal is to defeat Christ's church. When we believe in Christ, the satanic beings become our enemies, and they try every device to turn us away from him and back to sin. Although believers are assured of victory, we must engage in the struggle until Christ returns because Satan constantly battles against all who are on God's side. Although Satan and his demons rule the world, they do not rule the universe; the stolen kingdom will be regained by Christ, the rightful ruler, when he appears. In the meantime, believers need supernatural power to defeat Satan, and God has provided this power by giving us his Holy Spirit within us and his armor surrounding us. (See also 1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12.)

KNOW THE ENEMY

We fight a spiritual battle, but we might well ask, who is the enemy? It's not the nonbeliever, although occasionally you will meet a person so full of evil and rebellion against God that he or she actually declares himself or herself the enemy of Christianity. The secular media or world systems work relentlessly to undermine God's truth, but they are not the enemy either, although they are often tools in his hands. Our enemy is Satan and the spiritual "forces of evil." Satan, the deceiver (Genesis 3), the accuser (Zechariah 3), the destroyer (1 Peter 5), is the adversary of our souls and of the souls of our friends and loved ones. As Paul sounded this battle call, he wanted us to know whom we're fighting. Our enemy is powerful, but he is also a defeated foe. As you prepare to engage him in spiritual warfare, don't be intimidated by his influence. Use the full armor of God and stand together with other

believers.

6:13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Therefore, the believers' response to the reality of this warfare should be to take up the whole armor of God. The armor is ready for us; we merely need to take it. This changes the clothing metaphor slightly from 4:24, where Paul had instructed the believers to "put on" the new self. "Take up" is a technical military term describing preparation for battle. The armor is available, but the believer-soldier must "take it up" in order to be ready. We would be neglectful to do otherwise, for the battle is real, and we are Satan's targets. Only with the armor will believers be able to withstand, a word describing standing against great opposition; indeed, it would be impossible to stand on our strength alone. Christian soldiers must be able to hold their ground and not flee or surrender under Satan's attacks. The evil day refers to the hours of trial that have within themselves the seeds of the last and greatest trial. Christians must be prepared for every day's conflicts with the forces of evil.

The words "having done all, to stand" probably summarize the believers' victory after the battle. In ancient times, those still standing after the battle were the victors. The whole context implies that we have the victory. We must participate in Christ's victory over Satan. We know the outcome of the war, but individual battles can be lost if any believers have not done all in order to stand (see also James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9).

THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD — YOUR DAILY BATTLE GEAR

(Ephesians 6:14-18 summarized from the Life Application Bible Commentary)

Belt of Truth — Stand Firm in God's Reality

What it means: Truth holds everything together, just like a soldier's belt. God's truth—His Word and the truth of who we are in Christ—is our foundation.

How to apply: Start your day declaring God's truth. Be honest, live

with integrity, and refuse to believe the enemy's lies.

"I stand on the truth of God's Word. I will not be deceived."

Breastplate of Righteousness — Guard Your Heart

What it means: Righteousness protects our heart and soul from guilt, shame, and attacks on our worth. It's not our goodness—it's Christ's righteousness covering us.

How to apply: Live with a clean heart. Confess sin quickly and remember: your identity is secure in Jesus.

**** "I am made righteous through Christ, and my heart is protected."****

Shoes of Peace — Walk Ready and Steady

What it means: Roman soldiers' sandals gave stability and readiness. The "Gospel of Peace" gives us inner calm and readiness to bring peace to others.

How to apply: Stand firm in God's peace, even when life feels chaotic. Look for ways to bring peace and hope to others.

"I walk in the peace of Jesus and share His Good News wherever I go."

Shield of Faith — Deflect Every Attack

What it means: Faith is trust in God that blocks the devil's fiery arrows—doubt, fear, temptation, and discouragement.

How to apply: When problems arise, lift your "shield" by declaring your trust in God's promises instead of reacting in fear.

"My faith in God extinguishes every attack from the enemy."

Helmet of Salvation — Protect Your Mind

What it means: The helmet guards the head—our thoughts and assurance of salvation. It gives confidence that we belong to God and are safe in Him.

How to apply: Keep your thoughts focused on Christ. When doubts come, remind yourself: you are saved, secure, and loved.

“My mind is protected by the certainty of my salvation in Christ.”

Sword of the Spirit — Fight with God’s Word

What it means: This is the only offensive weapon: the Word of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Scripture cuts through lies and temptation.

How to apply: Memorize and speak Scripture when attacked. Use God’s Word to silence fear, temptation, and accusation.

“I fight with the power of God’s Word—alive and active in me.”

Prayer — Stay Alert and Connected

What it means: Prayer isn’t another piece of armor—it’s what activates and empowers all of it. Prayer keeps us aware, connected, and strong.

How to apply: Pray continually throughout your day— thanking, asking, interceding, and listening. Let the Holy Spirit guide your prayers.

“I stay in constant connection with God through prayer in the Spirit.”

DAILY DECLARATION:

“Today I put on the full armor of God.

I stand firm in truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God.

I am strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.

I will not fear—the battle belongs to the Lord!

Galatians 2:20

2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. In several short phrases the apostle captured the breathless wonder believers experience as the realization dawns that we are no longer living “our” lives, but have surrendered to the author of life, who now lives his life in and through us.

Paul continued his thought from verse 19. The perfect tense of the verbs indicates something that happened in the past but influences the present. Paul “died to the law” by being crucified with Christ. Christ completely fulfilled the law (past tense); this act influenced Paul in the present (who, as an imperfect human, could not keep the law). Yet because of Christ’s death, the law no longer had a hold on either of them. What profound relief Paul must have felt! He no longer needed to fear that, after spending his entire life studying and trying to keep the law, somehow he might still miss God. The Cross of Christ shows that although the law had to be kept, it was fulfilled by a perfect human. Christ paid sin’s penalty for imperfect humans.

Being crucified with Christ refers to the conversion experience, a once-for-all transaction that has ongoing results. We do not have to be crucified with Christ again each day. As Christians, we must daily take up our cross to follow him, but this refers to the responsibilities of discipleship. We are required to daily withstand our sinful human desires. (This will be discussed in detail in 5:16–25.)

Scholars have looked at Paul’s phrase “I have been crucified with Christ” in different ways. This could mean that

- all believers participate in the benefits of Christ’s death and resurrection;
- all believers experience death and new life because Christ did so on their behalf;
- all believers will have experiences like those Christ endured (Romans 8:17; Philippians 3:10); or
- all believers actually participate in Christ’s death and resurrection

because of the mystical union that believers have with the Lord (see also Romans 6:4–8; Colossians 2:12–14, 20; 3:1–4).

This statement holds in its simplicity the incomprehensible depth of each believer's union with Christ. Each of the above suggestions actually emphasizes an aspect of the workings and benefits of Christ's death on our behalf. Our biggest danger is in trivializing Christ's death. Being a part of the "body of Christ" means more than just church membership. Union with Christ means that believers share his death, burial, and resurrection. Believers are so united with Christ that Christ's experiences become their experiences. Paul would later write to the Romans:

- Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. (Romans 6:3–5 NIV)

Paul claimed he had been "crucified," but he found himself still alive. Paul had died with Christ, but it was his "old self" that had died: it is no longer I who live. The self-centered, Jewish Pharisee, Christian-persecuting, law-abiding, violent, and evil Paul "no longer" lived. That person's sinful life had been crucified with Christ on the cross when Paul was saved. This is the "I" of the flesh (see 5:13–24), of sinful human desires, of works and pride. Paul was released, not only from the tyranny of the Mosaic law, but also from the tyranny of self. Thus, this verse could read, "I no longer live I myself" or "I no longer I the old self in the flesh live."

Instead, Paul was a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17) because, he explained, Christ lives in me. In other words, Paul had turned over his life to Christ. Each of the phrases is a crucial aspect of the sequence of salvation: We relinquish our old life and turn to Christ for his life. The self-centered self now becomes the Christ-centered self. It is as if Paul was saying, "My old life, my old goals and plans, even old relationships were nailed to the cross with Christ. Now I have a new life because Christ came in and filled the empty spaces all those old pursuits could

not fill. Now he lives in me and is the focus of my life.” To accomplish this, there must be a radical cleansing of our old selfish nature. But there must also be a turning to the empowering of Christ. Just as in repentance we turn away from sin and toward Christ, we must turn from the self in the flesh to the self hidden in Christ.

Mystical? Yes. Difficult to understand? Certainly. True? Beyond a doubt—ask any Christian. And that is precisely Paul’s point in the following section. Although mystical, this resurrection life is not beyond anyone’s reach, for the key to living it is by faith.

Paul no longer focused his life on trying to please God by obeying laws; instead, with Christ in him, the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Believers’ lives are still lived “in the flesh” (in their bodies prone to sin) while they remain on earth. But with Christ in charge, they are new creations, living life “by faith.” This faith is not a one-shot deal—have faith, be saved, end of story. Rather, it is an attitude, a lifestyle. This new life is lived every day, every moment, through every situation “by faith.” (For more on “gave Himself,” see the notes on 1:4. See also Mark 10:45; Romans 5:6; and 1 John 4:10.)

What is the object of that faith? Our Lord Jesus Christ. We have faith in his act of loving us and giving himself (dying) for us. In other words, “Because he loved me and died for me, he can live in and through me.”

DYING TO LIVE

How have we been crucified with Christ? Legally, God looks at us as if we had died with Christ. Because our sins died with him, we are no longer condemned (Colossians 2:13–15). Relationally, we have become one with Christ and identified ourselves with him, and his experiences are ours. Our Christian life began when, in unity with him, we died to our old life (see Romans 6:5–11). In our daily life, we must regularly crucify the sinful desires that keep us from following Christ. This too is a kind of dying with him (Luke 9:23–25).

And yet the focus of Christianity is, not dying, but living. Because we have been crucified with Christ, we have also been raised with him (Romans 6:5). Legally, we have been reconciled with God (2 Corinthians 5:19) and are free to grow into Christ’s likeness (Romans 8:29). And in our daily life, we have Christ’s resurrection power as we

continue to fight sin (Ephesians 1:19–20). Relationally, we are no longer alone, for Christ lives in us—he is our power for living and our hope for the future (Colossians 1:27).

Philippians 3: 13-14- forgetting what is behind and moving forward to what is ahead

3:13 Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. Paul had not yet attained perfection or complete knowledge of Christ. Unlike the Judaizers, Paul did not consider that he had achieved spiritual maturity; he was not perfect, but he lived in absolute confidence of his ultimate salvation. Christians know they will be saved, yet they must have perfection as their goal (Matthew 5:48) while not pretending that sin does not exist (1 John 1:8). Like Paul, they should not dwell on the past. The past should not be used as a barrier to the future, as an excuse for dropping out, or for avoiding proper spiritual conduct in their relationship with God. Believers should be devoted to God whatever their present circumstances (Luke 9:62; 17:31–32) and should strain forward to what lies ahead. Paul would forget his past with all its credentials and accomplishments (and sins) and, like a runner in a race with his whole body reaching for the finish line, would press on toward the goal (3:14).

LET IT GO

We have all done things for which we are ashamed, and we live in the tension of what we have been and what we want to be. Because our hope is in Christ, however, we can let go of past guilt and look forward to what God will help us become. Don't dwell on your past. Instead, grow in the knowledge of God by concentrating on your relationship with him now. Realize that you are forgiven, and then move on to a life of faith and obedience. Look forward to a fuller and more meaningful life because of your hope in Christ.

3:14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. As a runner straining every effort toward the finish line, Paul pressed on toward the goal. In Greek athletic games, the winner's prize was a garland or palm branch. While Paul didn't identify the prize, it seems from his writing above that the

prize refers to gaining full knowledge of Jesus Christ (see also 1 Corinthians 9:24; 2 Timothy 4:7–8). Paul aimed to win the prize, but all who finish the race win it as well. The full knowledge of Christ is the final prize for which believers gladly lay aside all else.

LONG-DISTANCE RUNNING

Like a dedicated athlete, Paul wanted to run the race and gain full knowledge of Christ. The first-time marathon runner has periodic thoughts about quitting, especially during the last six miles. By then, the novelty of the experience has faded to the dull regularity of the pace; early adrenaline has given way to soreness and fatigue. Others around him or her are limping along, and some have dropped out entirely. But dedicated runners must keep going. Somewhere out there is a finish line.

Ask yourself these questions:

- What kind of race are you running for Christ?
- What prize do you seek?
- What kind of opposition do you face in your struggle to live as a Christian?
- How can Christ help you stay on track and reach the goal?
- What spiritual workout or training this week will help you run your Christian marathon?
- In what way can you renew your commitment to press on toward the goal of being like Christ?

Resources: Rev. Brad Standfest, (1) Logos Bible Program, Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, Guzik, David, Life Application Bible Commentary, Factbook Logos bible, Barton, Bruce B., and Philip Wesley Comfort. 1995. Barton, Bruce B., and Philip Wesley Comfort. 1996. Ephesians. Life Application Bible Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. Barton, Bruce B. 1994. Galatians. Life Application Bible Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House. Barton, Bruce B., and Philip Wesley Comfort. 1995. Philippians, Colossians, Philemon. Life Application Bible Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

Sermon Notes:

Happy Sunday Everyone...How is everyone doing today?

Happy Sunday to those joining us Online...

Speaking of Online let me give you our AVC Connections: YouTube, App, Facebook/ Website

I'm Happy to announce at the End of my Sermon we will be Baptizing 6 More People...

Praise God we are Experiencing an Outpouring of Salvation & Rededications to Jesus Christ...

I want to give a Hand Clap to those being Baptized Today... And for those who recently said Yes to Jesus... (Jesus is Cheering you on & so are WE)

**** [Let's Pray]****

I Titled Today's Sermon: P "Protecting Your Life" You see who Our Shield is... His Name is Jesus... How do we spell Jesus?

If you think for One minute that You can Protect your Life or Your Soul from Satan & His Demons, you're Sadly Mistaken...

Scripture Makes it Clear:

Our Struggle is Not against Flesh & Blood... But against the Spiritual forces of evil... (Eph. 6:12)

To Combat the Spiritual Forces of Evil we are told to:

Put on the Full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes you may be able to stand your ground... (Eph. 6:13)

If I Surveyed the Church Today and asked you this Question... We would have all sorts of Responses...

What is the Most Important Decision you have ever made?

Answers: Buying a House, Getting Married, Starting a Job Switching Careers, Retiring

We all have made some Big Decisions... BUT Let's Be Honest... In All of the Decisions we have made... Some of them were BAD...

What was the Most Important Decision you have ever made?

The Most Important Decision you have ever made in your life is Saying Yes to Jesus... Spiritually Speaking... When you said Yes to Jesus... Satan put a Hit out on your life...

Hear me... Satan is trying to Steal you back... Apostle Paul says: "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14) Let me tell you how Satan works... Crafty, Cunning, & Sly... You know those Bad Decisions we have made... The Ones that Hurt you... The Ones that Scream at You- Why did I do that!!...

Here's the Deal... Satan wants to take you Backwards...

Look... You can't go Back and Change a Bad Decision... The Good News of Jesus Christ is this:

"It's not about what you've done in the past, but what you're going to do in the future"

You can spend a lifetime Crying about your Past... But how is that helping your future?...

Satan wants to take you Backwards... Listen... Your past is Gone and Yesterday is History... Jesus is Not Rubbing your Past in your face... Satan is...

It's Time for Change... You're Not Going Back ...Jesus said in John 16:33b: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Listen to this Quote from Pastor Brad Standfest given to him by the Holy Spirit:

"Satan wants you to live in the Past... And he wants your past to become the Reality of which you live. He wants the Old Stuff to Kill the New You. Stand Strong in Jesus... Resist the Devil and he must Flee from you... You must Learn from your past which is going to give you a Bright Future."

I want to close with Two Passages from Gods Word

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live,

but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. • Christ Lives in You- Jesus will protect Your Life

Philippians 3:13-14 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining [Reaching Forward] toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Friends... We must Protect Our Lives... We do so with the Power of Jesus

Devotional Reflections and Questions

“Protecting Your Life,” which focuses on defending against Satan’s attacks and lies, particularly his tactic of pulling us back to our past mistakes instead of moving forward in Christ.

Read the following passages and engage in the questions below. —Ephesians 6:12-14, Galatians 2:20, and Philippians 3:13-14

1. Reflecting on the Battle (Ephesians 6:12-14)

Ephesians 6:12 reminds us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces of evil. What specific lies or attacks from the enemy have you faced recently that try to pull you back to your past mistakes? How can putting on the “full armor of God” (v. 13-14) help you stand firm against these attacks in your daily life?

2. Standing Firm in Truth (Ephesians 6:14)

The “belt of truth” is the first piece of God’s armor mentioned in Ephesians 6:14. How can grounding yourself in God’s truth—through Scripture, prayer, or community—help you combat Satan’s lies about your past and protect your identity in Christ?

3. Living Through Christ (Galatians 2:20)

Galatians 2:20 declares, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” How does knowing that Christ lives in you empower you to resist Satan’s attempts to define you by your past mistakes? What practical steps can you take to live by faith in the Son of God each day?

4. Forgetting What Lies Behind (Philippians 3:13)

Paul writes in Philippians 3:13 about “forgetting what lies behind.” What specific memories or regrets does Satan use to hinder your spiritual progress? How can you actively “forget” these by focusing on God’s forgiveness and grace?

5. Straining Toward the Goal (Philippians 3:13-14)

In Philippians 3:14, Paul speaks of “straining forward to what lies ahead” and pressing on toward the “prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” What are some practical ways you can shift your focus from past failures to the future God has called you to? How does this forward focus protect your life from Satan’s attacks?

6. Resisting the Pull Backward (Galatians 2:20, Philippians 3:13)

Satan often tempts us to return to old habits or mindsets from our past. How do the truths in Galatians 2:20 (Christ living in you) and Philippians 3:13 (forgetting what is behind) encourage you to resist this pull and live in the freedom of your new life in Christ? What specific habit or thought pattern do you need to surrender to move forward?

7. Equipping for Spiritual Victory (Ephesians 6:12-14, Philippians 3:14)

Protecting your life requires both defensive (armor of God, Ephesians 6:12-14) and offensive (pressing toward the goal, Philippians 3:14) strategies. How can you combine standing firm in God’s armor with actively pursuing His call to live victoriously over Satan’s lies? What is one step you can take this week to press forward in faith?