

God Gives Us the Victory: Part I

2026-08-23 – Psalm 68:1-18

J. C. Ryle once wrote: “True Christianity is a fight.” The Christian life is one marked by spiritual warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are surrounded by countless enemies, often battered and bruised, fatigued and despairing. We are weak, pitiable, poor, cowardly men and women. If Christianity is a fight, then what hope is there for us? If we were beside ourselves, we would flee in terror before the giants of the land, or we would be slain by the tiniest dart! “Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing!” And yet, what we discover in Psalm 68 is that although we are weak in ourselves—just as Israel was, a fledgling and weak nation—God leads us in our wilderness march and vanquishes our foes. Yes, Christianity is a fight. Yes, Christians are not strong in themselves. But praise be to God that God gives us the victory.

Greetings

Well, good morning, church. It is a joy and a pleasure to be here with you this morning. As we begin our worship service, we will begin with our call to worship, a reading from Psalm 10. So if you'd please rise to the reading of God's word as our faith. To Psalm 10 verses 12 through 18. To remind you, last week we began our first 11 verses of Psalm 10, describing the boasts of the wicked man. Hear now the word of the Lord.

“Arise, O Lord. O God, lift up your hand. Do not forget the afflicted. Why has the wicked spurned to God? He has said to himself, you will not require it. You have seen it, for you have beheld mischief and vexation to take it into your hand. The unfortunate commits itself to you. You have been the helper of the orphan. Break through arm of the wicked and the evildoer. Seek out his wickedness until you find none. The Lord is king forever and ever. Nations have perished from his land. O Lord, you have heard the desire of the humble, you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear, to vindicate the orphan and the oppressed, so that man who is on the earth will no longer cause terror.” (Psalm 10:12–18)

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

The Sermon

Grace and peace to you from God our Father through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. My name is Stephen. It is my joy to preach through the Psalms this morning. Would you please rise with your Bibles in hand? I'll be reading from the NASB 95. As we look this morning at the first half of Psalm 68, Psalm 68 verses 1 to 18, this is a lengthier Psalm, so we thought it wise to cut it in half there at a good appropriate spot. So we'll be looking at the first half in verses 1 to 18 in the book of Psalms, chapter 68, starting in verse 1 to 18. Hear now the word of the living God.

For the choir director, a Psalm of David, a song.

Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered, And let those who hate Him flee before Him.

2 As smoke is driven away, so drive them away; As wax melts before the fire, So let the wicked perish before God.

3 But let the righteous be glad; let them exult before God; Yes, let them rejoice with gladness.

4 Sing to God, sing praises to His name; Lift up a song for Him who rides through the deserts,

Whose name is the Lord, and exult before Him.

5 A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, Is God in His holy habitation.

6 God [g]makes a home for the lonely; He leads out the prisoners into prosperity, Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land.

7 O God, when You went forth before Your people, When You marched through the wilderness, Selah.

8 The earth quaked; The heavens also dropped rain at the presence of God; Sinai itself quaked at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

9 You shed abroad a plentiful rain, O God; You confirmed Your inheritance when it was parched.

10 Your creatures settled in it; You provided in Your goodness for the poor, O God.

11 The Lord gives the command; The women who proclaim the good tidings are a great host:

12 "Kings of armies flee, they flee, And she who remains at home will divide the spoil!"

13 When you lie down among the sheepfolds, You are like the wings of a dove covered with silver, And its pinions with glistening gold.

14 When the Almighty scattered the kings there, It was snowing in Zalmon.

15 A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan; A mountain of many peaks is the mountain of Bashan.

16 Why do you look with envy, O mountains with many peaks, At the mountain which God has desired for His abode? Surely the Lord will dwell there forever.

17 The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands; The Lord is among them as at Sinai, in holiness.

18 You have ascended on high, You have led captive Your captives; You have received gifts among men, Even among the rebellious also, that the Lord God may dwell there. (Psalm 68:1–18)

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated.

Join me now in a word of prayer.

Gracious God, as Elder Richard just prayed, we cannot manufacture conversion or spiritual life or encouragement. God, it does rely entirely upon you, Lord. So Father, we confess this morning that we are weak, yet you are strong. And though we are oftentimes not receptive and we're dull of hearing, God, you are the one who can pierce the heart and can open the ears. So God, I pray this morning, believing in the Holy Spirit, that you would work mightily in our midst. We pray this in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

We have seen many wars in recent years. Russia and Ukraine are locked in warfare, and Palestine and Israel are in the ceaseless war. On February 28th of this year, America launched Operation Epic Fury against Iran. And yet we understand here that even in the midst of all these battles, there is another war going on. There is another war that is happening in our midst. And this war does not just involve a few nations, it involves every human soul in existence. And this war is not confined to 1 historical period. This war involves all men of all history throughout all ages. that even though here in Glenview we sit peacefully in our pews and we feel safe and outside the reach of immediate threats what scripture tells us that invisible to the human eye there is a conflict happening that is so consequential and threatening that if we saw it we would tremble in terror. That's how Abraham Kuyper described it he said. *"If once the curtain were pulled back and the spiritual world behind it came to view, it would expose to our spiritual vision a struggle so intense, so convulsive, sweeping everything within its range that the fiercest battle ever fought on earth would seem by comparison a mere game."*

We are all caught up and the ancient conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. And if you are a true Christian here this morning, you are Satan's enemy. And Satan will do everything he can to destroy your faith. And if you are a true Christian, you still have indwelling sin. And there is this perpetual conflict between the spirit and the flesh. And we even see in this world, this kingdom of this world that deploys tyranny and seduction and deception to stop the spread of the gospel. We have to understand that we are in the midst of a conflict between the world, the flesh and the devil.

So then the most critical question that arises is this. What keeps us marching forward? This battle is no easy one. There is this constant friction and fog of war. We are surrounded by countless enemies and they never sleep and our foes never retreat. And once we let up our guard, they are ready to attack. There is no possibility of a ceasefire agreement. There is no peace treaty with our flesh. We are forever locked into this lifelong trench warfare with the world, the flesh, the devil and death.

We can be so battered and bruised, we can be so drained and fatigued, you backslide into habitual sin. You see a child walk away from the faith. You experience hurt and division in the church. You see diseases ravage the body of someone you love. You see the culture in America decay into this God neglecting death-loving secularism. You see countries like Nigeria neglect Christians being slaughtered and being persecuted. Whatever many things you face that make you wonder, why should I keep fighting? We are in the midst of this ceaseless, lifelong war where we are so weak and frail, where our hope is so easily sapped, and where we feel we want to just give up all the time. The question is, what keeps us fighting with strength and with might? What keeps your energy going in this battle? That's a question I have this morning.

And while Psalm 68, we discover is this, what we discover is that although we are like Israel, this fledgling, tiny and weak nation, and although we stand before our towering foes, we are emboldened to fight. not because of our own strength, but because God leads us and he fights for us. And that's the main point I have this morning, the main idea. *Although we are weak in ourselves, God gives us the victory.* Although we are weak in ourselves, God gives us the victory.

So I like to look at this text. What we'll do first is exegete the Psalm, just go through the text, and then look at it in its original context. And after that, we'll apply it and see what does this mean for us. So those are the two main points here.

So here's the first point, the exegetical point. **God gave Israel the victory.** So God gave Israel the victory.

And how did he do that? Well, here's the first way that he did it. **God went ahead of the weak Israelite nation** here in verses 1 to 4. Look at verse 1 with me. It says, ***"Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered, and let those who hate him flee before him."*** (Psalm 68:1) Now what is absolutely crucial to understand about this first verse is that David, these words are not original to David. David is quoting almost verbatim from a different text in Numbers chapter 10 verse 35. So he's going back to the point where Moses was still around. And in that context, in Numbers chapter 10 verse 35, if you recall, Moses and the people of Israel were encamped at Mount Sinai. And there, what do they do? They construct what's called the Ark of the Covenant. If you remember what that is, it's this gold plated chest and there's two cherubim, cherubim on the top of it. And they placed it in the holy of holies in the midst of the tabernacle. And that Ark of the Covenant was a visible symbol of God's presence. So whenever the people of Israel would march onward to the promised land, they would lift up that Ark of the Covenant and they would cry out, "Rise up, O Lord!" It was their battle cry that God himself, as visibly symbolized in the Ark of the Covenant, would go forth before them and fight their battles.

So you see this in Numbers chapter 10. Let me read this to you in the context. It says, verse 33, ***"Thus they set out from the mount of the Lord, three days journey."*** The very first time they set out from Mount Sinai. ***"Thus they set out from the mount of the Lord three days journey with the ark of the covenant of the Lord, journeying in front of them for the three days to seek out a resting place for them. The cloud of the Lord was over them by day when they set out from the camp."*** (Numbers 10:33–34) And here's verse 35 where David is citing. ***"Then it came about when the ark set out that Moses said, Rise up, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered and let those who hate you flee before you."*** (Numbers 10:35) So Moses knew that without the ark, without God's presence with them, there is no hope of success. The Israelites were not this battle-hardened Delta Force operators. They were a fledgling weak nation composed of former slaves. Who are they to conquer the land of Canaan before them? How would they accomplish that? That's an impossible feat. Well, if they did it, how? by having God go before them as symbolized in the Ark of the Covenant.

So in verse one, David is saying that God was the one who went ahead of them. So whenever they set out, the Ark of the Covenant was literally in the front of the tribes. The Ark of the Covenant was a spearhead of Israel. So instead of God hiding behind the Israelite warriors, God was their war leader. God was a commander in chief. God was this military general. And unlike generals today who stay behind the lines of defense, God is in the very front lines. He is in the infantry. He's right there in the front. So then when God goes and God goes ahead of them, what happens? Well, verse 2, the mighty enemies that feel so threatening, they become as threatening as a wax candle in a gas oven. Look what David says. He says, ***"as smoke is driven away, So drive them away as wax melts before the fire. So let the wicked perish before God."*** (Psalm 68:2) And when God goes in front of them, not only do they perish, but then the people have every reason to rejoice because victory is at hand. Look at verse three to four. He says, ***"but let the righteous be glad. Let them exult before God. Yes, let them rejoice with gladness. Sing to God, sing praises to his name, lift up a song for him who rides through the deserts, whose name is the Lord, and exults before him."*** (Psalm 68:3–4) So although Israel was this weak nation, God goes ahead of them and fights their battles.

So here's a second point then. God not only goes ahead of them, **God provided for their long wilderness march.** God provided for their long wilderness march.

Israel was not this rich, well-resourced, prosperous country when they were in the wilderness. They didn't have these large silos of grain. They didn't have this lush agricultural farms. They didn't have factories where they can stitch new clothes together. They were an impoverished nation and they were absolutely helpless in the wilderness. They could be attacked on all sides. They were completely vulnerable. But God provides for them. Why? Because God owes them a favor? No. Because they're so attractive to God? No. Because really, it's because God in His character is compassionate to the weak and the needy. So you see that in verses 5 to 6. It says ***"a father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows is God in His holy habitation."*** (Psalm 68:5) Verse 6, ***"God makes a home for the lonely. He leads out the prisoners into prosperity. Only the rebellious dwell in the parched land."*** (Psalm 68:6) And to be clear here, the prisoners here are not referring to criminal prisoners that we think of today. In the Old Testament, there was no concept of criminal incarceration, really. The prisoners here refer more to prisoners of war. And in particular, it's referring to the people of Israel who were in prison or were in bondage to slavery to Egypt. So he's saying that although Israel was lonely like orphans and widows, although they were prisoners, God would lead them to become a prosperous nation.

And how does he do that? Look at your text again, verses 7 to 10. It says, ***"O God, when you went forth before your people, when you marched through the wilderness, Selah, the earth quaked. The heavens also dropped rain at the presence of God. Sinai itself quaked at the presence of God, the God of Israel."*** (Psalm 68:7–8) Verse 9, ***"You shed abroad a plentiful rain, O God. You confirmed your inheritance when it was parched. Your creatures settled in it. You provided in your goodness for the poor, O God."*** (Psalm 68:9–10)

The idea is that God provides them in their wilderness march by sending rain, by making manna fall down from heaven by making water gush from the rock. And what it says there in verse 10, your creatures settled in it, this most likely refers to the quail that God provides for them. The quail that God's creatures settles in the land and provides them meat for them to eat. And again, the whole idea is that the hungry, afflicted, wandering group of vagabonds is right here and God provides for them every step of the way. So when they slept, God was awake. When they were tired and grew weary, God was never tired. When they were ready to faint, God carried them through. God provided in their long wilderness march.

And then thirdly, this last point of or third point of exegesis, **God conquered their enemies in the land of Canaan**. This is longest portion of the text. Look at verse 11. It says ***"the Lord gives a command."*** (Psalm 68:11) So here they are standing before the land of Canaan. The Lord gives a command to advance and the victory is so swift that David completely skips the battle scenes here and he goes directly to the aftermath and reports how the women respond and proclaim the good news. It says, ***"the Lord gives a command, skips the battle scenes, the women who proclaim the good tidings are a great host. Kings of armies flee, they flee, and she who remains at home will divide the spoil."*** (Psalm 68:11–12) And what does that mean for Israel? On the one hand, that meant prosperity. Look at verse 13. ***"When you lie down among the sheepfolds, you are like the wings of a dove covered with silver and its pinions with glistening gold."*** (Psalm 68:13) Now this text is very hard to decipher is very puzzling, but it most likely means that the women would lie down in their domestic homes in a state of peace. They lie down in their sheepfolds and they become this image of peace, like wings or pinions of a dove. And not just peace, but they are covered with silver and gold. So both peace and prosperity is being conveyed here. So not only are the people of Israel enjoying unprecedented peace and prosperity, But in verse 14, it also means that their enemies are completely destroyed. Look at verse 14, it says, ***"when the Almighty scattered the kings there, it was snowing in Zalmon."*** (Psalm 68:14) Now again, this is another very difficult verse to decipher. We don't know exactly what it

means. Zalmon could mean, or literally means, dark one. So against his dark mountain, his enemies become white like snow. That could mean perhaps that all their bones that were left there and all the weaponry was left there from all the battles and it peppered the mountain like scattered snowflakes on the mountain. That's what it could mean. The basic picture is that there's this absolute annihilation of their enemies. And whatever the case, God so defeats their enemies that the war is essentially finished and Israel's victory is achieved.

If you look in verse 15 to 16, God finishes his military campaign. And it's as if he returns home and he sets up his dwelling place in the land of Canaan, the capital there of Israel and Jerusalem. And of all the places God chooses, God chooses the lowly mountain, the lowly hill of Mount Zion. Look at verse 15 and 16. ***"A mountain of God is a mountain of Bashan."*** (Psalm 68:15) So Mount Zion is about 2,500 feet above sea level. The highest peak in the mountain range of Bashan is about 9,200 feet above sea level. And what David is saying here is that instead of choosing Bashan as his dwelling place, God chooses Zion. So then physically Bashan towers Mount Zion, but spiritually it's as if Bashan looks up at Mount Zion in envy because God dwells there. So he says, ***"a mountain of many peaks is a mountain of Bashan. Why do you look with envy, O mountains with many peaks, at the mountain which God has desired for his abode, as Mount Zion? Surely the Lord will dwell there forever."*** (Psalm 68:15–16)

So God wins a victory, and then finally in verses 17 to 18, This is how the text finishes, this half. It's as if God returns home after a great military victory in a foreign land and there is this grand military parade for the conquering king. There is peace established throughout the land. There is this triumphal procession to celebrate God's victory. In fact, the most likely background, historical background of this Psalm is Second Samuel chapter 6. If you remember that, that's when David brings the Ark of the Covenant for the very first time into Jerusalem. Remember David, he dances before the Ark and Michal, Saul's daughter, she despises David. But there's this great procession where the Ark of the Covenant is brought into Jerusalem and goes and ascends Mount Zion. So the Psalm then starts at Mount Sinai with the Ark of the Covenant with Moses, and it ends at Mount Zion with the Ark of the Covenant with David. So about 440 years have elapsed between Moses and David, and after the wanderings in the wilderness, after the conquest of Canaan, after the turbulent period of Judges, the Ark finally settles in Jerusalem with David as a theocratic monarch of Jerusalem.

So now you see this in verse 17 and 18, God is victorious over his enemies and God, visibly symbolized by the Ark of the Covenant, he ascends, as it were, to his throne and Mount Zion in Jerusalem. And he comes with an entourage of spiritual forces. He comes with a train of captives behind him. And he comes with those who are paying tribute to him. So look at verses 17 and 18. It says, ***"the chariots of God, the coming in, are myriads, thousands upon thousands. The Lord is a among them as at Sinai in holiness"*** (Psalm 68:17) verse 18 ***"you have ascended on high you have led captive your captives you have received gifts among men even among the rebellious also that the Lord God may dwell there"*** (Psalm 68:18) so then what's the whole point of this song that's a lot to cover there's a lot here a lot of history the whole point is that Israel went from this weak, sojourning nation in the wilderness to this great theocratic kingdom with David as their powerful king. And how did they do that? Well, it wasn't because they relied on advanced military technology like chariots and horses. It wasn't because they were this Spartan-like fighting force. It was because God fought for them.

So then what does that have to do with us here today? God brought Israel into the land of Canaan and he succeeded. What does that have to do with us today? Well here's the 4th exegetical point where we move to the New Testament very briefly.

Psalm 68 is about Jesus Christ. Like where do I get that from? Ephesians 4:8. We have to read Psalm 68 from the perspective of the New Testament. And by God's grace, there is inspired commentary that we have in Ephesians chapter 4, because the Apostle Paul himself cites Psalm 68 in Ephesians. Listen to what he says about Psalm 68 foreshadowing Jesus Christ, verse 7 of Ephesians chapter 4. ***"But to each one of us, grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift."*** (Ephesians 4:7) Verse 8, ***"Therefore it says, When he ascended on high, that is Jesus Christ, he led captive a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."*** (Ephesians 4:8) That's the citation, right? Now this expression, he ascended, what does it mean except that he also had descended into the lower parts of the earth, his incarnation? ***"He who descended is himself also he who ascended far above all the heavens so that he might fill all things."*** (Ephesians 4:9–10) Now we can't get into all the details here in Ephesians 4, but the basic idea is this. Paul views the ascension of the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament, that triumphal entry, as pointing forward to Jesus Christ and his ascension to his throne and heaven after his victory through his death and resurrection. So it's pointing forward to that. As Henry Law says, he says, ***"The moving ark is a type of Jesus going forth to cast down rebel foes."***

Psalm 68 is ultimately about Jesus Christ's victory.

So then what do we do with that? Here's a second point of application. This is what it means. It means we fight in this spiritual warfare, ***we fight by continual trust in Jesus Christ to give us the victory.*** That's how we fight. When we think about fighting in wars, what do we tend to do? We tend to think about our own strength. We tend to ask the question, what can I do in my personal activity to fight in this spiritual war? We tend to ask, what practical steps can I implement? And that's not a bad impulse at all. We ought to be self-disciplined. There needs to be this strenuous effort and this active willpower. The Bible has no concept of this passivity or let go and let God mentality. That's absolutely true, right?

But the problem is that we begin to think that fighting is primarily about our strength. As if we can just strong arm our way to victory. As if we can summon enough willpower and then the battle will be won. But the problem is in this Psalm, the Psalm highlights nothing about what the Israelites do. The Israelites do nothing. What they needed most of all was not trust in their own power and ability. What they needed most was trust that God was with them and was fighting with them. In fact, the one time they went to battle that Israelites They try to go to battle without the Ark of the Covenant. And what happened? Well, they presumed upon their own strength and they were easily defeated. Listen to what happens in Numbers chapter 14, verses 44 to 45. It says, ***"but they presumed to go up to the height of the hill country, although neither the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord nor Moses departed out of the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and defeated them and pursued them even to Hormah."*** (Numbers 14:44–45)

So the question to Israel was not, do you have enough courage? The question to Israel was not, have you fought hard enough? The question was not, are you strong enough? The question is rather, although you are weak, although you are tiny and frail, the question is, do you believe that God is with you? Do you believe that God goes to war for you? As in the point is the spiritual battle is fought, yes with spiritual

discipline, yes with active personal effort, but above all that the battle is fought by continually looking at the Ark of the Covenant in Jesus Christ. That although your sin can easily overpower you, although Satan is a mighty lion that can devour your faith in a minute, although your strength indeed is small, God's solution is not to remove your weakness. God's solution is to make you so weak that you cast yourself upon the Lord to fight for you.

What we desperately need in our spiritual warfare is simply to look to Jesus Christ, to truly know Him, to truly know that he is a real living person, to truly know that he is really, really there for you and he fights for you. You don't always just need more practical advice. You simply need to trust that Jesus Christ fights on your behalf.

In the 1930s, there's a theologian named J. Gresham Machen He's one of the founders of Westminster Theological Seminary and he was talking at a local radio station about this threat of what's called Christian liberalism. And the Christian liberals at that time, well, they said, "well, it doesn't matter if the Bible is historical or not. What really matters is the nice ethical lessons you can draw from the Bible. That's the main thing that we want to get." The Bible is almost like Aesop's fables. It could be mythical, who cares? What matters is you get nice little lessons you can learn from that. What matters is not for them, Jesus' work of salvation on our behalf, what matters to them was simply his example of self-sacrifice and love. And again, that's not a bad thing, but they reduced it to that. What mattered for them was not Christ saving us, but for them, Christianity is entirely about moral improvement and societal renovation. And listen to how J. Gresham Mason responded to that. He said, *"You are mocking me when you talk to me like that. What I need, first of all, is not moral exhortation, but a gospel. Not directions for saving myself, but knowledge of the way God has saved me. Have you any good news for me?"* Do you see our tendency is to ask what do I do? Our tendency is to ask what practical advice can you give to me? What moral lessons can you give me? But my dear friends, I don't need more of my own strength. I don't need more of my own self-improvement. I don't need myself. I need a savior. Have you any good news for me? I don't need more moral lessons. I need a liberator. I don't need more practical advice. I need the person of Jesus Christ. That's what we need. Stop looking at yourself. Look to Jesus Christ and trust in His power. Do you ever just trust Him?

Robert Murray McShane, he said it famously this way. He says, *Learn much of the Lord Jesus. For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ. Stop looking at yourself in this battle and look to the Ark of the Covenant. Look to the commander of the army. Look to Jesus Christ. He goes before you.*

Listen to J.C. Ryle, how he describes how this works in the Christian life. He says, *seeing the Savior and trusting in him, he feels peace and hope and willingly does battle against the foes of his soul. He sees his own many sins, his weak heart, a tempting world, a busy devil. And if he looked only at them, he might well despair. But he sees also a mighty Savior. Seeing him, he cheerfully fights on with a full confidence that he will prove more than conquerors through him that loved him. Habitual, lively faith in Christ's presence and readiness to help is the secret of the Christian soldier fighting successfully.* Do you look in faith to Jesus Christ to fight on your behalf.

Well then how does he do that? I want us to look at Christ, the last three points, and consider and contemplate what he does.

How does Christ give us the victory? First, **believe that Christ goes ahead of you**. Just as the Ark of the Covenant went ahead of the people of Israel, so too does Jesus Christ go ahead of you. Hebrews 2:10 says: *“Jesus is the captain of salvation.”* Hebrews 6:20 says: *“Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf.”* Jesus does not tell you go forward and fight the battle. Jesus says, come follow closely behind me. Just as Israelites followed behind the Ark of the Covenant, we follow behind Jesus Christ. And although the people of Israel did not know the terrain they would traverse, yet whether through deserts or through hills or through canyons or through rivers or through army encampments or through droughts and storms, although they may enter great darkness, they always had the Ark of the Covenant leading them.

And so too, my dear friends, Jesus Christ will always lead you. He will always lead his church through all the hills and the valleys. He will make sure that you will pass through whatever valley you are in. He will lead you through. Satan may bring you to the valley of despair. Doubt may cloud the sunlight of God’s grace. You may cross the icy river of death, but in all of life, Christ himself is leading you so that you will never finally fail in the end. You will make it safely to the promised land. Satan and sin can never thwart Jesus Christ. Listen to how John Calvin put it. He said, *“whenever we hear of Christ as armed with eternal power, let us remember that the perpetuity of the church is secure in this protection. Hence, amid the violent agitation with which it is continually troubled, amid the grievous and frightful storms that threaten it with unnumbered calamities, it still remains safe.* You are safe when Christ leads you through the wilderness.

Believe that Christ provides for you in your long wilderness march. Believe that Christ provides for your long wilderness march. Just as the people of Israel wander through this barren wasteland with no resources, we too wander through the barren wasteland of this life. And we feel oftentimes weak and tired and exhausted and there’s enemies constantly battering us. What happens is we grow tired and we feel like we are ready to give up. But the great encouragement is that although we grow weary, Christ never grows weary. Although we are unfaithful, Christ remains steadfast. Although we are hungry and malnourished, Christ will supply manna from heaven. He will supply you water from the rock. He will give you fresh joy in the midst of your suffering. Christ will strengthen you in your wandering through the desert. Again, let me quote John Calvin one more time. I love this quote. He says, *“We may patiently pass through this life with his misery, hunger, cold, contempt, reproaches and other troubles, content with this one thing that our King will never leave us destitute, but will provide for our needs until our warfare ended, we are called to triumph. Now he arms and equips us with his power, adorns us with his beauty and magnificence, enriches us with his wealth. These benefits then give us a most fruitful occasion to glory and also provides us with confidence to struggle fearlessly against the devil, sin, and death.* Christ provides for you so that you can struggle fearlessly against the enemy.

And here’s his last point: **Believe that Christ conquers your spiritual enemies.** Just as Israel was this weak and fledgling nation compared to the staggering forces of Canaan, so too are we so small and completely outmatched by our towering foes. Who do you think you are to stand before Satan, your own sin, death, and the world? Do you really think your faith is that strong? Martin Luther said it in “A Mighty Fortress Is

Our God.” He said, “Did we in our own strength confide?” Did we in our own strength rely? He said, “Our striving would be losing.” If you relied upon your own self, you would completely lose the fight. But just as God drove away the enemies that stood before the land of Canaan and the promised land, so too Jesus Christ drives away the enemies that stand before the promised land. And when does he do that? When did Jesus Christ do that? Well, he did it at the cross.

We have to have in our understanding that we have to include in our understanding the concept of the cross, the reality that Jesus Christ was victorious over the evil powers. Yes, Christ’s death took away the guilt of sin. Yes, Christ’s death absorbed the wrath of God. Yes, Christ’s death is an act of penal substitutionary atonement. But on top of all these glorious truths, in the great irony of Christ’s redemption, when Jesus Christ dragged his cross up Golgotha with his shredded back and his tortured skull, he was marching triumphantly to Satan’s castle. When Jesus Christ, his hands and his feet were pierced, he was kicking down the bolted doors of death. When his lungs were collapsing and his organs were failing and his side was pierced with a spear, he was putting his boot on the necks of Satan, sin, and death. We have to understand that at the cross, he shattered the shackles of sin. At the cross, he fatally wounded death. At the cross, he crushed the head of the serpent. At the cross, the greatest battle was ever fought, and there the greatest victory was ever won. As Paul says in Colossians 2.14, he says, ***“He has taken our sin out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through him.”*** (Colossians 2:14–15) Jesus Christ has already triumphed. He has conquered. He has conquered all your spiritual foes. You battle defeated foes so that when you follow Christ, you too will tread on Satan’s head.

So then, dear Christian, do not lose hope in the fight. Although you are weak in yourself, Christ will give you the victory. Christ will lead you. Christ will provide in your wilderness wandering. Christ has already conquered and he will conquer all your spiritual foes. So then even in our embattled situation, should we not go forth emboldened? Should we not fight with great courage and joy?

Join me now in a word of prayer.

Our gracious God and Father, we do thank you for Jesus Christ, the captain of our salvation. I pray, God, that we would always look to him and trust that he is fighting for us. God, let us never lose heart in the sight of sin, inside of our world, inside of the mission of the gospel seeming to lose ground, in the sight of death. God, I pray that we would be full of hope knowing that Christ goes before us. God, we pray all of this in Jesus’ holy and precious name. Amen.

Well praise God for the singing of God’s word amen!

Well, go with this word from Deuteronomy chapter 31, verse eight. ***“The Lord is the one who goes ahead of you. He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”*** (Deuteronomy 31:8) Amen.

Scripture References (in order of appearance)

Psalms 10:12–18

Psalms 10:1–11 (referenced)

Psalms 68:1–18

Numbers 10:33–35

Numbers 10:35

Psalms 68:1

Psalms 68:2

Psalms 68:3–4

Psalms 68:5

Psalms 68:6

Psalms 68:7–8

Psalms 68:9–10

Psalms 68:11

Psalms 68:11–12

Psalms 68:13

Psalms 68:14

Psalms 68:15

Psalms 68:15–16

2 Samuel 6 (historical background)

Psalms 68:17

Psalms 68:18

Ephesians 4:7

Ephesians 4:8

Ephesians 4:9–10

Numbers 14:44–45

Hebrews 2:10 (alluded to as “10 says Jesus is the captain of salvation”)

Hebrews 6:20 (alluded to as “20 says Jesus has gone as a forerunner”)

Colossians 2:14–15

Deuteronomy 31:8