

# Light for Dark Times

## *You Must be Born Again!*

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### *Promises for the Battle*

#### *January 16, 2022*

**Sermon Text:** Isaiah 54:17; Eph 6:10ff

**Scripture Reading:** Isaiah 54

This morning I would like to call your attention to a subject that we think we know a great deal about, but which in fact we do not. It is the subject of the devil, Satan, and how he is constantly at work to destroy Christ's people and Christ's church. He knows the Lord's promise:

Mat 16:18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

...and yet still he tries. It is not surprising then that the Bible speaks of him and his strategies very often. Here are some examples:

Mat 13:18-19 “Hear then the parable of the sower: (19) When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.

Joh 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

2Co 4:3-4 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. (4) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

2Co 2:11 so that we would not be

outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

Act 5:1-3 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, (2) and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. (3) But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?"

Joh 13:2 During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,

1Co 7:5 Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

As we go through the book of Revelation in the mid-week study

you will find the subject of the devil coming up very, very often.

Now, each of us need to ask ourselves with ruthless honesty – *do I really believe this?* I suggest to you that most professing Christians do not fully appreciate, know, and realize that Satan really is constantly on the prowl, tirelessly at work – *against them, against their church, against everything and everyone that is of Christ.* Most of them see things, events, people, politics – as *natural* phenomena to be understood and explained in *natural terms.*

Listen very carefully to Paul writing to the Corinthians:

1Co 2:12-16 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. (13) And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. (14) The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of

God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. (15) The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. (16) “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

And again:

1Co 3:18 Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.

Jas 3:13-15 Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. (14) But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. (15) This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.

The natural man vs the spiritual man. That is what we need to see.

The natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness to him. He has no capacity to understand them because he is not born again and does not have the Spirit in him. He does not have the mind of Christ. God’s Word is spiritual and is only accepted by those who are spiritual.

The natural man thinks that he is wise, but his wisdom is from below – it is of this “age” as opposed to real wisdom which is from Christ. His “wisdom” in fact is of the earth and is demonic. It comes from the god of this world.

Satan blinds the natural man to the glory of Christ. He loves this present world and he thinks like the worldling that he is. He explains all that he sees in natural, earthly terms.

And therefore, when the Lord tells us all of these things about the devil:

1Pe 5:8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

...the natural man doesn't get it. He doesn't believe it, even if he claims to be a Christian and has read all these verses in the Bible. His mind remains below. Devoid of the Spirit of God, his wisdom is earthly and blind to these things. He will interpret events and people in terms of his earthliness. It is all meat, potatoes, and gravy to him and no more.

And yet, all the while as we know from God's Word, the devil is at work.

What do you suppose the natural man does with this? –

Eph 6:10-18 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (11) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities,

against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

(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 firm.

(14) Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, (15) and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. (16) In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; (17) and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, (18) praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Well, you know the answer. The natural man just blows this off. He may even enjoy the children's

Sunday School class presentation with their cardboard swords and shields and helmets, but it is all a pleasant fiction to him. Something for a Hollywood movie even, but still fiction that has no real application to his own life.

This is the natural man's thinking.

I remember quite a long time ago my parents had begun attending a new church that claimed to be Bible believing. After a very short time, the head of the deacon board asked my father if he would consider being a deacon in the church. The reason? Because they needed a deacon to oversee the cleaning of the building facilities and my dad was a janitorial supply salesman. But my father was not born again. What those church officers were doing was functioning as natural men, not spiritual. They did not even consider what Scripture has to say on these things – they approached matters *naturally*, just like any other human corporation would.

You see the same thing as the natural man perceives the world

and all events in it. If you are in Christ, you have eyes to see (and you need to remember it) that things such as wars, plagues, famines, and good things such as prosperity – all are to be explained in terms of the Lord's graciousness to us. But the natural man only gives his natural, earthly explanations to such things.

And this also has its application to the remedies proposed. Think about it. The natural man believes that because everything has its natural causes, natural remedies are within his grasp. Crime, poverty, racism, even the climate!! – are all solvable by man. He never sees behind the thing. He never sees the reality.

And what is the reality?

Eph 6:11-12 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the

spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

This is one of the chief themes in Revelation:

Rev 16:12-16 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. (13) And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs.

(14) For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. (15) (“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”) (16) And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

### A Wonderful Promise

There is a powerful and encouraging verse in the 54<sup>th</sup> chapter of Isaiah. Here it is:

Isa 54:16-17 Behold, I have created the smith who blows the fire of coals and produces a weapon for its purpose. I have also created the ravager to destroy; (17) no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, declares the LORD.”

The natural man is a pitiable man. The promises of God are not for him. He cannot see them and does not believe them if someone tells them to him. The natural man has his hope in man, in the natural earthly realm – and that is to have no hope at all.

But the spiritual man embraces promises like this, and they are wonderful. Think of it –

- God is absolutely sovereign. So absolute is His rule and

decree, that every sword, every Smith and Wesson firearm that rolls out the factory, is created by people who are created and ruled by God.

- So that, just as a literal sword or firearm that is manufactured is under the sovereign rule of God, so EVERY kind of devilish devise or weapon fashioned for the purpose of destroying God's people is under His absolute rule.
- And this is why He can promise us that *no weapon fashioned against us will succeed, no tongue that rises against us to destroy us, will be able to do so.*

And notice in particular this last phrase:

This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, declares the LORD.”

This promise is the Christian's *right*. It is our inheritance. It is ours now and one day we will have it in

its fullness. When Christ comes again, He will *vindicate* his people from every accusation, every evil scheme that the devil sent our way.

Vindication is a powerful thing. To be pronounced not guilty – and in fact, positively righteous. Ultimately our vindication is found in Christ who took all our guilt upon Himself, washed us clean, and put us right with God. THIS is why no weapon fashioned against us can succeed – because Christ is our righteousness.

We all need to examine ourselves carefully in these matters – are we spiritual men, or natural men? And even if we are born again, how often due we fall into the trap of seeing things naturally, from an earthly rationale – rather than according to the wisdom of God? Be ruthlessly honest in these matters. These are sober, serious issues which nothing is more important than because they concern matters of eternity.