

The Temptation

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[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! Mark chapter 1, verses 12 and 13. The Spirit immediately drove Him, that is Jesus, out into the wilderness.

And He was in the wilderness 40 days being tempted by Satan. And He was with the wild animals. And the angels were ministering to Him. Jesus said, heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

So may God help us as we give attention to His Word this morning. You know, it's a wonderful thing to see a man or woman who knows what they're fighting for.

[1 : 08] In a world where everyone is so aimless, it's a wonderful thing to see that. You know, the movie Cinderella Man captures just that kind of man. If you've ever seen the movie, it's based on the true story of James J. Braddock.

Mr. Braddock is a successful boxer who loses his reason to fight. So he's a boxer who loses his reason to fight. He has to find, or in so many ways, he becomes rich, he becomes famous, but he loses the edge and begins to lose.

But the movie chronicles his astonishing comeback. When the Great Depression hits the world, and particularly New York City in 1929, he nearly loses everything.

He has to fight for a day's work. You've seen the movies pushing up against this gate, trying to be one of the men picked to work that day on the shipyard.

He has to fight for a place to sleep, fight to keep the power on. He has to fight for food. He has to fight to hold his marriage and family together under the pressures of poverty. And as he does, he comes alive again.

[2 : 19] That's when the movie just gets good. Before long, he gets another shot in the ring. He begins to make a shocking comeback. He's older than him, but he begins knocking down men older and stronger than him.

His manager is stunned at one of the points in the corner, or in his corner, and just says, Whoa, where did that come from? It came from within.

It came from finally knowing what he was fighting for. And in a press conference, a reporter asked a similar question. She says, What are you fighting for, Mr. Braddock?

And he says, Milk. Milk. Milk. You know, it's hard to really fight unless you know what you're fighting for. With his family on the ropes, Mr. Braddock comes alive and fights.

In our verses this morning, Jesus leaves the waters of baptism for a fight. In the final section, this is the final section of Mark's introduction to the gospel.

[3 : 22] In so many ways, the action really starts in the next verses. But it's clear in these verses that Jesus knows exactly what he's fighting for as he comes face to face with his greatest enemy and endures his temptations.

In scenes that are some of the most familiar scenes in the story of Jesus Christ, Mark unveils a central reason why Jesus has come. In a word, one of the reasons he has come.

But Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, setting free one ransom sinner at a time. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, setting free one ransom sinner at a time.

And we're going to break this out. Three points. The first is the enemy is not flesh and blood, but the devil. The enemy is not flesh and blood, but the devil. Jesus is driven into the wilderness to fight the devil.

There's a saying that says that what we really believe comes out in what we pray. Prayer has a way of drawing out what we care about, what we really long to see.

[4 : 28] We can talk about a lot of things, but prayer, it narrows them in a wonderful way into the mind of the spirit. We begin to see what we really care about.

And that's definitely the case with Jesus Christ. Again and again, we get these looks into his prayer life, and his prayer life is revolved around his animosity towards the evil one.

If you remember that vivid scene in Luke 22 when he says to Peter, Simon, Simon, that's that double address that he said to Jacob back in Genesis. Remember, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded have you so they could sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you.

I'd like to say, wouldn't it be amazing if you prayed for by the Lord, but he prays for you right now. Satan demanded to have you like wheat.

So Jesus prays about and against the devil because Jesus really believes in him. And he really believes he's the greatest enemy. So, too, in the Lord's prayer, when he taught us how to pray like him.

[5 : 31] Lead us not in temptation, but deliver us from the evil one is the way that should be interpreted. And so Jesus's prayers reveal a concentrated focus on the enemy, the prince of darkness.

And so it's not surprising that after his baptism, Jesus hits the ground running to Satan to confront this enemy. But it is a bit jarring. If you look down there with me, it says the spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.

And he was in the wilderness for 40 days being tempted by Satan. And, you know, now when it says he was driven into the wilderness, Matthew and Mark, Luke, Matthew and Luke say Jesus was led into the wilderness.

But Mark says the spirit drove him into the wilderness. And what the heck is that supposed to mean? I think the idea is not that the spirit forced Jesus to do something he didn't want to do. We know last week we learned God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one team. They work together. I think the idea is the vivid wording being driven underlines the purposeful plan of God unfolding in Jesus going first into the wilderness to face down the evil one.

[6 : 43] It's meant to underline the clarity Jesus has about his mission to take down the evil one.

And so if you take note after being baptized and ordained for ministry, Jesus does not first confront the political leaders bullying the people.

He doesn't confront Rome, nor does he first challenge the tax collectors praying on his people, nor does he even square up with the religious leaders misleading his people.

The first person the Son of God confronts at the outset of his earthly ministry is the devil, because the devil is the greatest enemy of all.

Now right here it says the evil one is called Satan. Scripture is called the devil. He's called the evil one. He's called Satan here. Satan is just the personal name for him.

He's the father of lies. Scripture says he's the prince of darkness. The Bible presents evil as coming at us in three forms, the world, the flesh and the devil.

[7 : 45] But it is the devil who is the ringleader of them all. He's the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. He's the greatest enemy.

He's been the greatest enemy since the beginning. Now, you remember the story, right? When the serpent slithered into the garden and tempted Adam and Eve astray, tempted them to doubt God's goodness and led them astray in rebellion against God.

And the Lord came to the serpent. He cursed Adam and Eve, too. He brought judgment on them. But he came to the serpent. Look at me. This is what he said. I'll put enmity, that is hatred, hostility between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring.

He shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. Now, there's a lot in this verse, if we're quite honest. With paradise lost, these words offered tremendous hope to Adam and Eve because it said someone would come from the woman who would crush the head of the serpent.

That's why I love the passion when Jesus is praying in the garden and he just stamps down on that snake's head because he's the snake crusher. But these words also said something very provocative.

[8 : 59] Said, I'll put in between you and the woman between your offspring and her offspring. Much like dark clouds gather before the coming storm.

This these words announce that there would be hatred, hostility and conflict between God's people and those whom the evil one turns against the Lord. He's saying saying essentially that the story of history is a story of two people.

Those who come from the woman, those who are in the line of the Lord, those who fear the Lord and those who are the serpent. That's why they got so mad at Jesus when he said, you are of your father, Satan.

You remember that in John 8, I think. So what he's saying is that there's kind of two people in the world. After the fall, the evil one possesses great power over this world.

He is the God of this world. He's the prince of the power of the air. He's behind so much of the evil being worked out in this world among a people globally in false religions and untrue worldview like communism, nationalism, materialism, and the new definition of tolerance.

[10:03] If you don't know what that is, let's talk afterwards. But more particularly, he's against or he is behind abuse, oppression, addiction, ruthless anger, loveless marriages, and so much more.

The story of history isn't merely the story of bad men doing bad things. According to these verses, the story of history is a story of the evil one leading many to reject, rebel, and revolt against the Lord in any possible way.

But wonderfully, Jesus announces, he arrives on the scene determined to do what he came to do. And so the spirit comes on him, much like the spirit came upon Samson, who beat up a bunch of people with a jawbone, much like it came on David, who took out gobs of Philistine, much like it came on Gideon.

And so it drives him into the wilderness to face down his greatest foe, because he is the man who will crush the head of the serpent. That's amazing, isn't it? 1 John 3, 8 says, the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil, lest we be misunderstood.

[11:12] So the implication for us is our enemy is not flesh and blood, but the devil. Now, I think people tend to make two mistakes, or one of two errors when it comes to the demonic.

They either talk about him too much or too little. There's either a devil behind every bush, or there's no devil at all. I remember reading a story about one lady who concluded the devil was haunting her from her toaster because of a strange sound that she heard when it was toasting, when it was turned on.

One time, the toaster even said, I am the devil. And some of the toast came out reading, Satan lives.

She tried to get out the writing with no success. I don't know, with butter or jelly or something. The article continued. She held on to her toaster, though, because when all is said and done, it makes good toast.

I think I'd throw it out. Now, I think she's taken a little too far. But Mark's concern is that we would not go far enough.

[12:28] Paul is very clear. We don't wrestle against flesh and blood, 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.

We don't wrestle against flesh and blood. We wrestle against these things. We wrestle against the prince of darkness who is trying to seek to destroy the works of God anywhere and everywhere.

Mark's concern is that we think too little of him. In so many ways, these verses are the declaration of war. Now, they are more than that, but they are a declaration of war.

And throughout Mark's gospel, he just launches offensive after offensive after offensive against the evil one, mopping up those demonic spirits, inhabiting people all throughout the gospel.

But there's a there's meant to be there should be a very clarifying effect that you'd have on us.

There's a lot of troubling things going on in our country. I am very concerned about the passions and positions of many Americans.

[13:39] I'm reading lots of articles. But this week I was convicted. For reading and thinking and talking about politics without reference to the evil one.

I was spending too much time, too much passion. Maybe you're there to do too much social media on politics and on what's going there. I don't want to forget. I want us to forget that we're not wrestling against Fush of Bud, but against the rulers and authorities, all these things.

We're wrestling against the enemy who prowls around like a roaring lion, luring people into sin slavery. So let us be alert. Not so much the movements of the opposing political party, but to our

greatest enemy.

He prowls around. Peter tells us he accuses. Revelation tells us he discourages and harasses. He separates friends and mangles marriages. And he would love for us to think politics is our greatest problem.

Point two, the battle is for freedom and life. The battle is for freedom and life. You know, Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil for 40 days.

[14:57] And you probably noticed very quickly, Mark's description of the temptation is very different than Matthew and Luke. Matthew unpacks it in 11 verses. Luke 13 and Mark 2.

Yeah. He leaves out many of the details that Matthew and Luke include. So those three temptations that Matthew and Luke include, Mark leaves out. It would be tempting for us to pull them back in today, but I don't think that's our job.

I want to preach Mark faithfully. But what he leaves in, leaves us without any doubt as to the meaning of the temptation. Twice he emphasizes. Look at verse 12 and 13 again.

Twice he emphasizes that all this happened in the wilderness. The Spirit drove him into the wilderness. And verse 13, he was in the wilderness. The wilderness is just a place. I mean, it's been the place where we've been for 12 verses.

It's just the place where no one lives. It's a place uninhabited and uncultivated. The whole scene takes place in the wilderness. But Mark emphasizes that this temptation took place in the wilderness twice to remind us of someone who was tempted in the wilderness before.

[16:06] The people of Israel. Remember when they were delivered out from Egypt, they were tested and tempted in the wilderness. Look in Deuteronomy 8. And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these 40 years in the wilderness that he might humble you, testing you.

That's the same word. In the Greek rendering of the Old Testament, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.

Now, lest we be confused. What does it mean that the Lord tests them? Does this mean that the Lord does mean things to them just for the fun of it?

No. No. There are things you cannot know about your faith when everything's going well. There are things you cannot learn about your commitment to following Jesus Christ until the crutches are removed.

Till mom and dad are no longer over your shoulder. Till the job is withdrawn. Much like metal is fired to burn away impurities and determine how true it is, the Lord arranges hard circumstances to test his people to see if they will turn from him when things get hard.

[17:18] And so they hungered and thirsted and they failed the test. You know this from scripture. They grumbled. They complained. They rebelled in unbelief and they died in the wilderness.

First generation. In the same way, Mark is telling us, Jesus Christ was driven into the wilderness for 40 days. Numbers in scripture have a very important meaning.

Number 40 is very common. 40 days of rain. 40 days Moses was up on the mountain receiving the law. 40 days they spied out the land. 40 years they wandered in the wilderness as we just talked about.

So the idea seems to me, or seems not just me, but other people too. It seems to be that 40 marks a time of fullness and completeness. So 40 equals this complete time, this full time.

And so Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days because he wanted to endure the full and complete temptation of the evil one. And so like Israel, he hungered and thirsted.

[18:23] And yet he was never satisfied with manna or with quail or with water from a rock. But you should ask, why was Jesus tested?

God the Father knows his part is pure. Who always does the will of God. He knows his commitment to the Lord. After all, he incarnated himself.

To understand the temptation of Jesus, we must see something else in the idea of wilderness. If you remember, Adam and Eve were tested in a perfect setting.

Remember? I remember one speaker said, there was only, well, the Garden of Eden was just a land of yes, and there was one no. They were in paradise.

paradise. But they failed. They turned from the Lord and get this. They never took up responsibility to turn the wilderness into a garden.

[19 : 29] They failed to subdue the earth. Remember? That was the command in Genesis 127, to be fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth, make dominion. So Jesus comes to a very different setting.

Jesus comes to a wilderness. Do you see? Inherited from Adam's failure to keep the land, Jesus came into a world that was completely unkept.

Completely barren. Now, sure, we grew crops and different things like that, but not a garden. A world turned against the Lord after Adam's fall.

And so Mark is helping us see Jesus came to be not just a man or not just another person like Israel, but Jesus came to be the man that Adam should have been, to pass where Adam failed, to obey where Adam rebelled.

Do you see those things coming together in a powerful way? And the idea is, and you know this, Adam was the firstborn of our race. We're all sons of Adam and sons of Eve.

[20 : 37] As the Chronicles of Narnia tell us, he is our father. He is our representative. When he sins, the guilt of him falls upon all humanity.

All humanity is therefore implicated and sinful because of him. 1 Corinthians 15 says, For in Adam all die. So in Christ all shall be made alive.

And you think, in Adam all die? And yes, the Bible says all humankind is guilty, will have to answer for this guilt, and will be condemned for this guilt. And so our problem, therefore, is not most deeply that we sin, but that we are sinners and have inherited the guilt of Adam.

And so, yes, the whole world is a wilderness, and every person has rottenness in his bones.

After helping her husband with the murders of Duncan and Banco, Lady Macbeth's mind breaks under the guilt and shame of what she has done.

[21 : 50] She sees the spots of blood on her hands in the vivid story of Shakespeare. And she says, Out, damned spot.

Out! Who would have thought that old man would have had so much blood? Nothing could remove her stain. No amount of washing like Pilate tried to do.

No amount of washing could erase her being implicated in this guilt. None of it could remove the stain. And the whole human race stands with her. The stain and guilt of Adam's sin marks us all.

We're all born in sin. Guilty because of sin. Captive to sin. And unable to free ourselves from sin.

But Jesus came to be the man who would undo the curse of sin and death to be the second Adam, our new representative.

And he came to succeed where Adam failed. So the Bible says Jesus was tempted in every way, yet never failed to completely obey God. Look in Hebrews 4.

[22 : 55] It says, For we do not have a high priest who is unable to be sympathized with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

That doesn't mean Jesus experienced literally everything you experience, but he experienced temptation in full and total. In every way.

Tempted by the evil one. But it also says, do you see that? And he was with the wild animals. That's not in Matthew and Luke's gospel.

What in the world does that mean? Lots of guys disagree on this. I think Paul is pulling out one of the temptations that he knew his followers would endure.

If you remember, we told you how in Rome, Nero had cracked down on Christians in about 64 AD.

[23 : 59] One of the wicked things Nero did was wrap Christians with the hides of wild animals so that dogs would eat them.

Jesus went out to them too. So that those Christians would know. When they're eaten by wild dogs, they will rise again.

Now, all this is meant to teach us something called the active obedience of Christ. In order to destroy the work of the devil and set his people free from slavery to sin and death, Jesus must perfectly and completely obey God.

Jesus passively, that means he's inactively, obeys God on the cross where he bears the punishment for our sins. He's literally nailed, unable to move, although he could move.

He called down legions of anger to move him. But he passively obeys by not being active and enduring the wrath of God that came for sinners. Right. But the Bible also teaches us.

[25 : 18] Not necessarily in word, but in truth, that he actively obeys to. He never he always does the will of God. He never disobeys God in word and thought. And he said, my my food is to do the

will of God, the will of him who sent me.

And so these two aspects of Jesus's obedience begin with his birth, continue with his temptation throughout the rest of his life, even on the cross. And the idea is that he fully obeys God.

And the idea is that in the same way that Adam's disobedience stains us and leaves us guilty for God, making certain our condemnation. So Jesus's obedience sets us free and raises us to new life, making certain our justification.

So so these passive and active come together in the work of Christ. Passively, he endures a penalty for sin so that we might never fear the right wrath of God again, but actively he obeys perfectly obeying the obeying the Lord and gives to us, transfers to us a righteousness.

We need the passive work of Jesus Christ. We need to be forgiven. We need to be all of our we need our debts to be clear, but we need the active righteousness of God. Like Paul said in crossings, one to qualify us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

[26 : 37] And so in December 1936, one of my favorite stories in the history of the church, because they're some of my favorite authors, seminary professor J. Gresham Machen was on a ministry trip to North Dakota, and he became sick with pneumonia.

Mr. Machen was known for his work, Christianity and Liberalism. They wrote in like 32. And for helping found Westminster Theological Seminary, they left Princeton.

When it got liberal. And so he was in North Dakota and became sick with pneumonia and was near death.

Story has it that he was fading in and out of consciousness. His mind cleared and he telegraphed his fellow professor and dear friend, John Murray, one last time.

Murray also left Princeton with him and started Westminster with him, who happens to be one of my favorite authors. He simply wrote these words.

[27 : 51] I'm so thankful for the active obedience of Christ. No hope without it. That's a man who understands God's word.

It's the heart of the good news in so many ways. God has done in Christ what Adam failed to do, forgiving our sins and freeing us and justifying us before God.

William Tyndall said when he was defining evangelion, which just means gospel in the New Testament, evangelion is a Greek word and signifies good, merry, glad and joyful tidings that makes a man's heart glad and makes him sing, dance and leap for joy.

And that's what J. Gresham made to do. That's what you should know. You know. Point three, the victory is secure. The victory is secure.

So what happens after the temptation? Did Jesus win? At first glance, Mark doesn't even tell us.

[29 : 10] He concludes by saying the angels were ministering to him. I guess we know angels are on the good team, demons on the bad team, so maybe Jesus won. But beyond that, guys disagree.

And they say Mark leaves it unanswered. I think he did win. Cheers for Jesus. But for several reasons.

The first one is, look at this word drove him out again. Spirit immediately drove him out. This is, this is a word, uh, that I think helps us see what happened to Satan during the temptation or after the temptation.

This word is used 11 times in Mark's gospel to refer to how he faces down and cast out demons. So every time in Mark's gospel after this, it's used in a way to cast out demons.

So he, he, he drove the demon out. That's the idea. And I think Mark intentionally uses the same word here to refer not to the casting out of a demon, but to the casting out of Satan himself from his position as ruler of the world.

[30 : 30] So he cast him out. And then he goes to the rest of Mark's gospel, cleaning up the aftershocks, mopping up the leftover demons.

And it seems to align with what Jesus says in Mark three, when the scribes saw him casting out demons, you remember that encounter, they assumed that you must be the prince of demons because who can cast out Satan unless they are Satan.

So you must be the prince of Satan, the prince of demons. So you cast out demons and listen to what Jesus answers them. He says, how can Satan cast out Satan? That doesn't make any sense. If a kingdom is divided against himself, that kingdom cannot stand as Abraham Lincoln made popular.

No one can enter a strong man's house and plunder it unless he first finds a strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house. The idea is Satan is the strong man here. By not failing in his temptation, Jesus referring in past tense, Jesus conquers Satan and binds him. Now it's a metaphor, but you see the meaning.
[31 : 32] The house is this world. The house is this world. Satan is the ruler of this world. He keeps people in bondage to sin and darkness. He's a prince of the power of the air, but Jesus came to bind him and to plunder his house.

I love that. Jesus came to bind him in such a way that he might pillage and loot and ransack and ravage the house of the one who has haunted the people of God for so long. And if you remember, this should bring up images of the Israelites. When he led them out of Egypt, you remember not only the Lord freed them from slavery, but on the way out, he pillaged the Egyptians. They brought gold and silver and jewelry and clothing and loaded it on them. And the same thing is happening now. That's what Jesus is saying. Now Jesus is plundering the house of the evil one and ransoming sinners from lifelong bondage to sin. That's why Jesus said, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Gates are not an offensive weapon. So Jesus is not saying, you will not be conquered by Satan.
[32 : 40] Now that's a wonderful thing. Well, he is saying that, but he's not just saying that. Jesus said, not only will you not be conquered by Satan, but I'm building a church that conquers Satan. That plucks people from Satan's grass.

So you see I'm storming the gates. That's what Jesus is doing in the church. He's, he's storming the gates for, for as Mark said in Mark 10, even the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. First, first Timothy two says, for there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all. And so he's come to ransom sinners one at a time to plunder Satan. His defenses one at a time to pluck them from the fire while they're still burning. And so the church is a place they heal years ago. When I attended pastor's college, where Taylor is now, my wife, Kim was a nanny for a family in the community there.
[33 : 47] They had five children. One of their children was named ransom. I love it.

Because there's no explanation for their lives than that. They were ransomed by God. That's the power of the gospel. Jesus came to free those who are bound in lifelong slavery to God. Jesus came to righteous for the unrighteous that he might bring them to God. Jesus came to be sin so that in him, we might become the righteousness of God. And so I invite you, the wages of sin is death.

The wages of sin is death from Adam. You have a guilt that is over your life. Jesus Christ has said, the wrath of God remains on you. But the good word of the gospel is better because it announces that Christ himself plucks you from Satan's grass. And those who are in his grass, in his hand, will never be let go. So come unto Jesus Christ. I don't know who you are in relation to Jesus Christ this morning.
[34 : 57] You may be dipping your toe in these sorts of things. And I pray that you would move further down the road. You may hate these things and are just here at the invitation of someone else today.

And I invite you to come and consider. Jesus Christ is laid before you this morning as the one who perfectly obeyed God in word, thought, and deed. The one who did everything you should have done. Never got angry. Never lusted in his heart. Never said a cross word. And yet he was the one who was raised up on the cross where you should have been raised up, that he might endure the furious wrath of God in judgment against sin and death. In your place condemned he stands, says the hymn writer. So come unto Jesus Christ. There is freedom. And life. I've seen it happen again and again where life opens up. So what's your ransom story? If you know these things, what have you been freed from?
[36 : 09] I was telling guys yesterday, just a few months ago, two months ago, one month ago, it's been 19 years since the last time I got drunk.

And I was a Christian when that happened. It was while I was so convicted. Two months before that, 19 years since I'd smoked marijuana.

That's the things I was ransomed from, plucked from a fire. Pillaged. From the house of Satan into the kingdom of his beloved son.

What's your story? You know, there's people that join this church today where you need to hear their story. You say, how are you ransomed?

How did he come for you? Why you and not someone else? So ask him over a donut. So what do we do now?

[37 : 20] Lest anybody be confused, Jesus has bound Satan, but this doesn't mean Satan is completely done. It means Satan is restrained now.

He's on a chain. He's not able to deceive the whole world. He's not able to lead a worldwide rebellion against God any longer. Revelation 12 and 20 present this in a picture that I think what happens in the life and death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

At the end of his days, Satan will be released one final time. So, two applications.

First is resist the devil. James tells us, resist the devil firm in your faith. Resist him. Hold up the shield of faith with which it can extinguish the flaming darts of the evil one.

I love the vividness of that extinguish. It is faith that we fight with, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The second is to preach the gospel. We, like Christians have gone before us, will only overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by proclaiming the word of his gospel.

[38 : 37] D.A. Carson writes this in 2010, so nearly 11 years ago, wrote, what do Christians do when they try to overcome the devil and all his tricks in this wicked world?

The devil is working through politics, corruption, the media, the state, declining morals, secularism, pluralism, educational systems, and so on.

How do Christians fight back? Do they form a political party? Do they picket the White House? Do they send a lot of letters to the president?

Can you imagine Paul setting up a circuit of letters to send off to Caesar? That's meant to be funny. Don't misunderstand me, he continues.

We live in a democracy, which is a different form of government than Paul's, which was a dictatorship, and our Christian responsibilities in this kind of context, is what that should say, may mean that we should give a lot of thought as to how to be salt and light in this corrupt and corroding society.

[39 : 44] We dare not withdraw into a holy huddle, but we must recognize with every ounce of our being that what finally transforms a society is the gospel.

It's only the gospel that Jesus came in His life and death and resurrection. It's only the gospel that sets sinners free from slavery to sin and death.

It's only the gospel that ransoms sinners for God. It's only the gospel that is our hope. This morning, we're going to conclude by singing an old favorite, an old favorite of the church called A Mighty Fortress is Our God, written by Martin Luther, 1500s.

He said, A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing. Our helper, He amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing. He just prevails over everything that would kill you.

For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe. His craft and power are great and armed with cruel hate on earth is not as equal.

[40 : 51] He is the ruler of this world, prince of the power, the air, the spirit that's now at work, and sons of disobedience. If we in our own strength confide, our striving will be losing. We're not the right man on our side, the man of God's own choosing.

You ask who that may be? Christ Jesus. It is He. The Lord of hosts is His name from age to age the same, and He must win the battle. For though this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us, we will not fear.

For God hath willed His truth to triumph through us. The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for Him. His rage we can endure, for lo, His doom is sure.

One little word shall fell Him. The word of Jesus Christ. A mighty fortress of our God. His kingdom is forever. Let us pray.

Father in heaven, we exalt You and we worship You. We praise You that we have been invited to draw near to see the one who came to destroy the works of the devil.

[41 : 58] We pray, I pray that we would stand in the full strength of Jesus Christ this morning and this day, boasting, not in the strength of our might, but in the strength of Your might which is able to keep us, which is able to hold us, which is able to mold us and sustain us.

Your kingdom, O Lord, is forever. And so we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved in the heart of our sea. For the God of Jacob is our fortress.

The Lord of hosts is with us. We praise You and worship You. In Jesus' name. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com. Thank you, Thank you.