selves up to the enemy's swords in that thing. Our security, pleasures, repose, and affections are the enemy's shield against us. Our ignorance in this battle is his hope in our death. That is why God commands us to stand perfectly in all diligence, labors, integrity of heart, actions, and long-suffering, because longsuffering has a perfect work and the greatest blamelessness is necessary. It comes to people in affliction and their insufficiency, because long-suffering beyond our corrupt strength comes about in us by the power and strength of the Holy Spirit Himself. Nothing is perfect in us according to flesh and blood but according to faith and spiritual power, because that has the power to uphold the truth in violence.

But the apostle insists that we stand perfectly in everything because we immediately begin to lose the battle in whatever we ease up in and do not stand perfectly in. Or, we are already overcome in the battle when we forsake something we should be doing because we do that which is forbidden, or we do those things slothfully, insincerely, impatiently, or unfaithfully. We have either already lost the battle there or are close to losing it. That is why the apostle commands us to stand perfectly in everything, knowing the ways of this battle, because we assure ourselves a little bit, slacken off a little through insincerity, ease off a little through idleness, pile up a little through immodesty, and think things through very little. We glance behind us or to the side very little until the enemy comes near, opposes us from a distance, and harms us. It is not possible to make things right again for a long time because his power is in us. He clothes himself in us and goes up against us. And when he stands up against us just a little bit he takes many in.

And the apostle further says:

"Stand firm then, tucking up your loins in truth, and clothe yourself in the breastplate of righteousness, shoeing your feet in the readiness of the gospel of peace." The apostle already clearly names that armor which is fitting for this battle in this discourse and teaches people how they should clothe themselves in it. He commands us first of all to stand and to tuck up our loins because

On The Spiritual Battle

Petr Chelčický

1421

the understanding so that a person dreams as if he saw something that is not perilous.

The day is evil when the heart becomes puffed up because of good in the face of evil, experiencing the good things given by God's grace, overflowing in boasting because of it, and looking at itself evilly because of God's gift. Such a person keeps glancing back in the mirror, is pleased with himself for the adornment of God's gift, and fails to notice his filth and sin, fixing his eyes on God's gift. Who will stand in that evil day and who has the armor of God and great humility so that he does not rob God, boasting in His gift?

The day is also evil when evil interpretations are seen in scripture through Satan's brilliance and it seems the day of truth would have dawned. Death and destruction dominate then in everything because we do not have the armor of God. That is why we are put to death today by those injuries, forsaken and naked without God's armor.

That is why the apostle urges and says, "Therefore, put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand perfectly in the evil day.[5]" Therefore, he commands us to put on the armor of God so that, standing, we are able to stand perfectly in everything because we cannot stand perfectly according to God unless we resist and wage the battle against the devil's hatred. Some are defeated in this battle because they do not have strength and God's faculties within them and they do not understand the battle. Others wobble shakily here and there standing cowardly in the battle; sometimes they stand and then they buckle again. And that is why it is necessary to stand perfectly in this battle so that we do not heap up strength against us for the enemy through cowardly standing. In this battle our cowardice, laziness, neglect, and foolishness are his strength against us. When we abandon ourselves to the pleasure of something, or weaken in and fear something, we give our-

[5] The World English Bible does not include the word "perfectly."

the apostle commands us to clothe ourselves in the armor of God so that we are able to stand against our enemy in the day of evil when such violence and distress will come, because the devil overcomes people through the lack of long-suffering in distresses. The devil works grievous things against us, knowing that we are cowardly and impatient and that he will easily overpower us when he finds us in grave difficulties without the armor of God. A fearful, corrupt, and ungrounded person does not have any power to overcome violence unless he has spiritual strength to bear violent things humbly and patiently. The apostle is concerned here that Christians have God's armor so that they do not lose their salvation in the day of distresses when they are inadequate to stand up against evil and overcome it with their own goodness.

Sometimes a day is called particularly evil when abominations and many heresies are multiplied. In such an evil day the armor of God is always necessary so that people are able to stand, overcoming heresies with faith and wickedness with a good life. When these heretics wax impressively with the approval of this world, the devil makes bright light out of them like at noon so that many carelessly follow them because of that light, unafraid of anything. And that is the heresy of the popes, loftily lifted up with the praises of God and great offices. But who is such a hero who would have the armor of God's wisdom and faith so that he defies those heresies in that evil day? That day of evil comes precisely because many go blind from the flash of the devil's light and do not gain their sight again right up to their deaths.

Another day is evil when this world glitters with praise, honor, fortune, peace, and riches so that it makes a pleasant impression on everyone who dwells on the earth. That day satiates many of them with its benefits and brilliance. A person does not easily resist and defy what goes on so grandly and ubiquitously.

Fleshly pleasures are also the day of evil when they charmingly lay hold of the heart. Who stands in that day and has the armor of God so that he frees himself from the enemy? Those pleasures blind

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That wisdom is also God's light in the inner man through which a person can know his peril in the face of the devil's cunning hatred. It penetrates or sees through him and his cunning appearance and a person is guarded through that and will be safe against his cunning.

Then the apostle says:

The apostle further says, "Therefore, put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand." He demonstrates a special reason why they should put on the armor of God when he says, "that you may be able to withstand in the evil day," because without the armor of God no one can stand in the face of evil. When he calls the day evil, he does not mean that God would have created some evil day such that people must brace themselves for it; God has created all days good. But for some reason, sometimes a day is called evil and sometimes it is called good. The day is evil when evil things take place; it is called a good day when good things occur. Sometimes a lot of time or an epoch is called a day, and the apostle also means here that we should stand in the evil day of our whole lives because the devil's hatefulness never stops being against us. Though we stop being careful and prepared to meet up with him, he always shows up, prepared to deceive us. Though we sometimes nod off, he never does. Though we have some cares or are occupied with something, he is not idle and is diligent to find us self-assured in something. If he sometimes eases up on us, he does not do it because he has mercy on us or is turning his back on us, afraid of us for our steadfastness. When he eases up with his cruel provocation, seduction, and roaring, prowling about deceptively like a lion, he does it all so that we become self-assured. Then he strikes at us, seeing us defenseless in something pleasant to us. Having taken off our armor and weapons, we fall into his hand where we did not expect it.

Sometimes a day can also be called evil because of grievous things, serious trials from persecutors of the faith, or other things that God particularly allows to happen to a person. That is why

will not be effective if there are not spiritual defenses so that they can oppose the devil in his cunning temptation.

Just as the devil clothes himself in various garments and prepares fatal blows (although not painful to the body) for us under their cover, and because those who want to save their lives in this arduous battle must have on the armor of God, he commands that we should put on the armor of God to hold back serious wounds. The one who wants to enter into the battle with the devil must be well clothed because he is a strong armored warrior and has unfamiliar armor. That is why Saint Paul says, "Put on the full armor of God," as if he would say, "Other clothing will not be good enough–he will despise an ironclad jacket." Whoever is dressed in that armor will conquer more easily than the person who is in a tunic. But God's wisdom and strength is sufficient clothing in this battle–God's wisdom, and not the wisdom of this world. That wisdom does not suffice in this battle against the devil. It is sufficient for worldly profit so that others will not cheat you, and so that you are able to acquire possessions from others cleverly but honestly. That worldly wisdom can also gain praise, prestige, offices, a great name, success in carnal battles, escape from danger and physical difficulties, and victory over the injustices of this world. I do not say that all this would be helpful in the battle against the devil, but that it is harmful and that making use of the wisdom of this world in those things is the loss of the battle in itself. God's wisdom is sufficient for this battle because it conducts itself contrary to that wisdom. It consciously forsakes carnal profit so that the devil does not have points of access to a person through it. That wisdom subjects the body to peril, disparagement, and difficulties so that a person does not lose the truth. That wisdom leads people through the freedom of the body so that they always forfeit the good of the flesh for the good of the soul. That same wisdom of God has knowledge of God's ways and about secret spiritual things. That is why the apostle commands such people to take the armor of God so that the devil cannot afflict the soul and rob it of its spiritual clothing.

Translator's Preface

Petr Chelčický wrote *On the Spiritual Battle* circa 1421 in response to the position of Jakoubek ze Stříbra and the Táborite Hussites, an early Christian reformation community. In it, he explained his opposition to the Hussite use of physical force and violence to advance their legitimate spiritual aims in the face of the papal crusade declared against them. His first work, it is an extensive treatise on Christian spiritual battle. He expounds primarily from Paul's teaching on spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6: 10–20 and clearly develops the basic idea that a Christian's responsibility, above all, is the battle against the devil, the most cunning enemy of man, and against the flesh within man himself.

On the Spiritual Battle stands as an instructive clarion call at a significant point in history. Instead of heeding Chelčický's call, the Táborite Hussites became renowned for having waged increasingly violent and widespread carnal war in the five papal crusades issued against them. Following their four previous victories, they lost the fifth and returned to their city in defeat. They are remembered in history for violent carnal warfare; their spiritual values and first, pure purposes remain largely forgotten and unfulfilled. To this day, Tábor's annual festival continues to glorify its militaristic Hussite history.

Chelčický himself took a different path, always appealing to scripture in the face of perverted human traditions, and became the founding influence of the church known most commonly today as the Moravians. To this day the Moravians' moving history of advancing God's kingdom through prayer, missions, and sacrificial living is inspiring untold millions of young believers. Much

more could be said, but it is clear that the eternal fruit for God's kingdom of these two legacies could not stand in starker contrast. On the Spiritual Battle and its historical lessons sound the precious and timeless call to every generation to fully engage in the spiritual battle such that God's kingdom comes in fullness on the earth.

Petr wrote like a common man. Largely self-taught, his spelling was not always correct, and when he used the word kopyto (hoof) instead of kapitola (chapter), his enemies did not miss their chance. "Doctor Kopytarum" (hoof doctor) they called him, and they made fun of his largest and most significant work, The Net of Faith, which he wrote between 1440 and 1443.[1]

By way of introduction, the first segment of the treatise addresses the true nature of the battle, with Satan and the flesh as the real enemies. The remaining text is divided into smaller sections in which Chelčický painstakingly explains Ephesians chapter 6 and its application to the circumstances facing the Hussites. Like the rest of his early writing, On the Spiritual Battle is stylistically sermonic prose. The source text for this translation is Eduard Petrů's Little Writings (Drobné Spisy), published in 1966. I have used the World English Bible except where the translation was closer in the King James (KJV). A few quotations that do not agree with either translation have been marked with footnotes. It has been a privilege to translate On the Spiritual Battle, and with his heart and passion for this battle, justice, and truth, the "hoof doctor" has become a friend.

I must give special thanks to Jakub Smrčka at the Hussite Museum in Tábor and to Mirka Horecká for her help and collaboration.

<right Charis Enns

Tábor, Czech Republic

[1] https://web.archive.org/web/20171116212706/http://allgodsword.com/Btl/Btl05.htm

his faith. When a person learns of that, it is sufficient for his protection against the devil. A simple person can also stand against the devil more easily than the very intelligent, because that kind of thing cannot find a place in a simple person like in a very intelligent person. The simple person will not be needed on a council or in a position of authority, nor is he able to figure out many things–in scripture or other cleverness–or make excuses when he is disciplined for something. And being without those things, when such a person would learn of God's commandment, he is safer against the devil than the very intelligent person who has these things, which are the devil's inroads to him. If a person does not have great faith and God's wisdom, he will soon be deceived.

That is why the apostle talks about Satan's immense cunning. He does not say about his cunning that no one could be saved because of it or overcome it through God's gift, but a simple person without God's gift does not stand up against the devil, nor can he oppose him. And of course I say with the gift that is worthy against the power of the devil, and the apostle now calls that the armor of God. But that is why I said earlier that Satan spreads gold out under his feet like mud. Gold is good people of good and pure lives, devout and otherwise honorable. The devil can spread them out under his feet like mud nevertheless, just like those who are soiled with great sins. This is said because they do not have another more ample gift beyond that which the apostle calls the armor of God–God's wisdom and strength so that a person has the knowledge for understanding those things in which he could be deceived by the devil, and he ought to have God's strength in order to be able to bear violent things. While many people work to attain virtue, not many take care that they not lose what they have attained. But the devil does not quickly allow a person to attain to virtue and is always vigilant to lead the person who has it away from the side he is not expecting. That is why the apostle first of all leads people in faith and truth and then gives them these teachings about the spiritual battle and the devil's great cunning, knowing that their faith

grandiosity. They rejoice that their daughters marry rich sons-in-law so that their honor is great, and the sons gather heirs of great wealth around themselves so that their praise does not wane. For that reason, the darkness is not odious and they do not hear that it is called darkness; among all those who live that way it is unhampered and uncorrupted vision. But who is it dark to? Only to the one who sees rightly and remembers that it was said, "You foolish one, tonight your soul is required of you. The things which you have prepared—whose will they be?" (Luke 12: 20) The one who is attentive to things such as ignorant negligence and backsliding into evil deems Satan's brightness to be great darkness, but in the parable the rich man's eyes were shut by the praises of the world and were only opened by the torment and agony of hell. And the ruler of the darkness does all of that. He lulls people to sleep, and in their sleep they dream of the enticement of the flesh, heaping up its profits, and disregard all understanding and awareness of their Creator. Therefore, when we are familiar with such great evil, when people are so blinded by the devil and we cannot remedy that, then let us have in mind to escape the ruler of much cunning darkness ourselves so that our own eyes are not darkened and he does not deprive us of the good God has promised to give us.

And the apostle further says:

"Therefore, put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having the utility belt of truth buckled around your waist …" When the apostle spoke about such great spiritual peril that righteous people have from the malicious devil, he therefore gave counsel and admonished them to put on the armor of God. Though it is unlike a weak person to defy such cruel and cunning things, nevertheless it is possible for a very simple person because he will be kept from such things when he has a willing heart for the fulfillment of God's will. He can inquire of the will of God in faith, and the power of the devil is powerless to move a person further to the breaking of God's commandments and corruption of

Editor's Notes

Why have I bothered to do this? I became interested in Petr Chelčický when I read Tolstoy's The Kingdom of God is Within You, in which he laments Chelčický's obscurity and exposes the "conspiracy of silence" that surrounds the Gospel's message of non-violence. I found and transcribed all of the previous works that Tolstoy referred to in his book, including Chelčický's The Net of Faith, the only English translation of which was made by Rev. Erico Molnár as a divinity school thesis. In his introduction, Rev. Molnár wrote, "[In O boji duchovním], for the first time as far as we know, Chelčický expounded the fundamental pacifist thesis[1] that a Christian must abstain from physical war and violence, since his main duty is 'spiritual warfare' against the evils of this world, violence being one of those evils." It was in reliance on that recommendation that I commissioned Ms. Enns to make this translation, which

[1] "Though a person would want to stand up against the devil and destroy him with the great power of this world, he will not be able to; the devil's strength is above the strength of this world. People today, who outfit themselves with the power of this world and its weapons, wanting to destroy the devil, think futilely. When they lay siege with sling stones, wanting to tear down the fortifications in which evil people hide–people filled with the devil–the devil ignores it. Instead, the devil also enters into those who are laying siege and lives in their cruel and loveless hearts, regardless of the destruction of the fortifications and the hateful evil people inside. Sling stones do as much harm to the devil's wily purposes as chaff that is carried along by the wind. All physical power and strength cannot destroy him because it is him who gives rise to it with his cunning. In this way, everyone who wants or presumes to destroy his dominion through the strength and power of this world is on his side by it, serves him, and exalts him more than he was exalted in his dominion before."

is a part of my continuing small effort to break the "conspiracy of silence."

Ms. Enns crafted an admirable but somewhat literal translation, which I have edited for readability and clarity of meaning. Unfortunately, I do not know Czech and had to use my best guess on some of the more cryptic passages. I hope and pray that I have nonetheless been faithful to the author's original intentions.

It is worth noting that in Petr Chelčický I have not only a kindred-spirit, but a fellow countryman as well. My father's family comes from the region around Chelčice–from an area extending 20 miles to the east and 45 miles to the northwest, to be exact–and has been traced back there to the late 1600s. Being serfs who were tied to the land, it is entirely possible that my ancestors were personally inspired by Chelčický during his lifetime.

Of Chelčický's fifty-six known works, I know of only four that have been translated into English:

O boji duchovním	On the Spiritual Battle
O církvi svaté	On the Holy Church[a]
O trojiem lidu řeč	On the Triple Division of Society[b]
Sieť viery	The Net of Faith

[a] Bowsky, William. Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History, Vol. 1. University of Nebraska Press, 1964. Translation by Howard Kaminsky.

[b] Ibid.

Please let me know of any others. Also, please bring any mistakes in this document to my attention so that I can correct them. This translation is under no copyright protection. It is my gift to you. You may freely copy, print, and transmit it.

Tom Lock
Oberlin, Ohio

looking out for their good like shepherds over their flock; but the common people are for them, serving their stomachs and laboring for their pride. It is written, "Wild asses in the wilderness are the prey of lions; likewise the poor are pastures for the rich." (Sirach 13: 19) In the same way, the poor are rich people's pasture. The rich possess their fortunes in them and recline on them with their idleness. That is why the devil could lead everyone far astray into fleshly sins and taking pride in such things as fanciful garments, costly drapery, extravagant dwellings, and showing off with food and artisanship. Pride is exceedingly multiplied in everything by the devil as the king and worker of all pride.

He also works avariciousness, fornication, and gluttony deeply into those people and leads them into other wickedness, malevolence, and hatred as a ruler and governor. He has infused these into such people to so darken them that they cannot see each other for the thickness of the darkness. That is why the apostle now calls him the ruler, because he is the ruler of darkness and has introduced offence and invisible heresy on the wide path that people walk on so that everyone everywhere unconsciously falls and errs.

He is also the ruler of many kinds of darkness and of those on whom the way is brightly lit like the way of salvation, so that the person walking on it walks freely as in the day, not concerning himself and saying, "If the way of salvation is here." But going in a wagon to Saint Prokop and not constraining himself with the fear of heresy, such a person merrily and unreservedly calls others after himself, having hope that great salvation is there and that the pilgrimage will be profitable–but it is a curse. That is why it does not become dark to him and he does not even suppose that his eye would make it dark to him. Instead, he believes that the sun of righteousness has risen upon him. The devil also has other kinds of darkness that are unknown to people and are not onerous to them when they are clothed in the glory of this world. People do not judge this with mournful sorrow as if they were walking in the dark, but instead celebrate the glitter of the acclaim of this world's

will fall into wickedness for the negligence of those hypocrites when they do not know God's pure ways through true instruction. Worldly authorities too, who heathenishly lord it over people, do not do anything for the common people out of selfimportance and for their own gain. When the devil has both these great powers on his side, he easily ushers all his subjects into great darkness. For, being in great positions, spiritual hypocrites make their own laws for themselves–laws that are hateful to God's law and pleasant for themselves. They lead people in them and, because of that, they repudiate God's law and put Him who is like light in the world's darkness out of their minds. And they remain in darkness themselves when they put Him out of mind and do not understand Him. Worldly people in high positions also establish their own laws for the people, judging all the incidents and disagreements that go on between them, and deciding them according to their own conclusions. These earthly laws are also against the commandments of God. That is why they repel people from God and from His law: the end of all quarrels and incidents are their laws and judgments, instead of God's commandments. They also regard the laws and regulations of spiritual and worldly hypocrites as truth among themselves and deem laws, judgments, and practices to be the truth. This all goes against God's commandments and promotes their acquisition of worldly and spiritual power until the devil darkens everything and leads them away from the knowledge of God through it. That evil can be easily recognized today–how the devil's great and cunning wickedness, powerful rule in everything, and the unrecognized darkening of the whole world has overflowed.

This is all through the lofty thinking of Satan, who is the priest and ruler of all darkness because his lordship on the earth is so powerfully consolidated. He forcefully and powerfully took up his lordship in the world most of all through powerful people, establishing his pawns in authority with his wicked cunning–proud, avaricious, fleshly, and blind people who do not fear God and do not care at all about others. Therefore, they are not for the common people,

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"Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world's rulers of the darkness of this age, and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Stand firm then, buckling your loins in truth, and clothe yourself in the breastplate of righteousness, shoeing your feet in the readiness of the gospel of peace;[1] above all, taking up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; with all prayer and requests, praying at all times in the Spirit, and being watchful to this end in all perseverance and requests for all the saints: on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the Good News, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." (Ephesians 6: 10–20)

Christ's faithful ambassador and lover of human souls, Saint Paul, showed God's people about the spiritual battle into which they were called in this discourse of faithful and direct instruction, and foretold that they would overcome in it and receive the crown

[1] World English Bible: Stand therefore, having the utility belt of truth buckled around your waist, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having fitted your feet with the preparation of the Good News of peace.

of eternal life. According to scripture, they are called and bound to the battle. So it is written, "The life of a person on the earth is a battle." Again, another scripture spurs all the sons of God on to it, saying, "My son, if you come forward to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for temptation." (Sirach 2: 1) And the reward of God's promises is, as Saint James says, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation, for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to those who love him." (James 1: 12)

The apostle spurs them on to such battle. And first of all, he admonishes them to strengthen themselves in God and in the power of His might, because a person is feeble, weak, and foolish in the truth according to God's will in this kind of battle and in the incessant, violent, and unrecognized hatred that the devil has against him. Man's power within himself to observe God's will is insufficient for the kind of violent injustice that closes in on him everywhere. For that reason, he cannot overcome it by himself if he will not have God's empowering from above. That is why Christ's apostle urges Christians who are called into such a hard battle to strengthen themselves in God and in the power of His might, because His power and His strength are above all power and strength that are in heaven as well as on earth, and no power can stand up against His power. The grace that He has for man is unfathomable above all His works; it takes pity on a person so subjugated and fraught with such injustice. Therefore, the apostle commands such people to strengthen themselves in Him, to trust in Him, and to place all hope in His grace and unconquered strength. In so doing, each person, seeing his powerlessness and the violence of difficult temptations, does not hesitate to fight against them, but places his or her strength in Him, trusting His mercy. He does not forsake the person in adversity who trusts in Him, hopes in His strength, and calls to the One who wants to and can bring about good. Such a person should strengthen himself in God that much more, looking to the first saints who were in difficult temptations from the incep-

against the devil's wickedness when we have the knowledge of faith and God's commandments within us, but he deceives many people because they do not have the knowledge of faith or God's law. That is why they do not know about where those things or the heart's promptings come from, cannot recognize where the devil is going with those desires, and fall into wickedness because of them. Other people, even though they understand faith and God's commandment, neglect to guard themselves carefully in all things before the devil. Instead, they become entangled in harmful things and practices that are helpful to him, and they fall into sins when they do not take heed at the beginning of his cunning approaches. Though the devil is a spiritual enemy and works against us because of spiritual hatred, we are not spiritual but physical, and that is why he leads us into the desire of our flesh or heresy contrary to faith and God's words. A person can know all of this when he pays attention, because the devil's work is not far away from a person. Evil desire lies within man himself, and he should beware of it when he uses discernment through faith and God's commandment.

The apostle further says:

The apostle also says that we should fight against the powers of this dark world because they are the devil's works in all the people in the world. First of all, if they are pagans or Jews, he blinds them so that they don't have the knowledge of God. He easily blinds pagans and Jews when they are blind in themselves, living without the law. That is why he leads them to visible wooden idols and to other overt wickedness like foolish beasts. He also blinds and darkens those people who are in the faith so that they err differently. Speaking grandly to God to impress people, they do not know Him and reject Him abominably like pagans. The devil will have rule on the earth when he blinds people in this way. He occupies many spiritual and worldly positions with spiritual hypocrites, who help him drive many people to hell through spiritual things such as plotting the devil's works, leading them astray with spiritual teaching, and neglecting necessary instruction. Everyone

ure out what kinds of approaches that unseen and cruel spirit has to us, being of incalculable understanding beyond us. Like sinful beasts, we still do not understand physical and visible things and how we would live life today for good. We discern that cunning and unseen spirit very little–how he carries out spiritual malevolence against us, watches us from a distance, and has access to us from far away for a long time in an unsuspecting manner. He does not approach from the side we would expect or watch for him from, but instead when we are looking for peace and presume to be safe before him. He approaches, has a way to us, and plans his spiritual hatred against us where we think there are beneficial things, seek salvation, and expect God–and therefore spiritually. He establishes his wickedness in us most of all through spiritual goodness according to how he sees a person–what his marital status is, what generation he is from, if it is a woman or a man, what a person is inclined towards, what appeals to a person's mind, what a person is good at, and what kind of habits a person has for good or evil. He approaches according to such things and has his origins in our lives from a distance, seeing how he should move our adulterous hearts according to how he knows us in these things. Because of that, he braids like with a rope, leading us into something and from that into something else until a habit takes hold in us in something helpful to him. Because of that bondage into more serious things, and because of that entrance to grounds for license and becoming entangled, he always brings about his intentions. The devil carries these things out so sanctimoniously that we will not see or suspect anything evil in it until he prospers by it further in what matters to him.

However, it holds true for us that we can learn faith from God's commandments. When we understand that, then we can be careful of our hearts and observe its promptings, desires, and ideas and what they lead to. If it will lead against faith or God's commandment, or urge us into some dangerous thing, then we will know that such promptings in our hearts are from the devil. We can guard

tion of the world, and observing how these ones depended on His grace and mighty power. In whatever they were tested, they overcame everything in His strength so that the strength of this world, the devil's strength, or some other enticement could not overcome them. They had the power and strength of God in them, hoped in Him, and sought help from Him in everything.

Therefore, the prophet says, "Though an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should rise against me, even then I will be confident." (Psalm 27: 3) And again, elsewhere it says, "He is a shield to all those who take refuge in him." (Psalm 18: 30) That is, we will be able to overcome great difficulties and to stand in all things. The apostle says, "All things are possible to him who believes." (Mark 9: 23) The apostle admonishes feeble people to strengthen themselves in the God of all mercy, the mightiest warrior, because of the diminishing of people's hope in God. But lazy people, neglecting to take spiritual strength from Him, would rather perish in temptation like the person who perishes because of hunger, not wanting to open his mouth wide to strengthen himself by receiving nourishment. The reason God graciously gave Himself to us as food and drink was so that we would take spiritual strength from Him. That is why He said, "I am the life," so that we who are dead might take our strength and sufficiency from Him by the Spirit–if we do not hesitate, if unbelief does not bind us and diminish Him in our hearts, if we do not think more highly of strength in mortal man than in God, if we do not believe more in our money than in His power, and if we do not believe more in our own false presumptions that are devoid of truth than in His promises. Because of such unbelief, His power, grace, and promises are diminished in our hearts so that we cannot take any of His strength for ourselves. For that reason we are blown here and there like a reed in the wind with temptations and fears of many things. We are full of insecurity and perplexity and cannot stand in anything faithfully. The slightest word bows us down, grieves us, and quashes us like a hollow reed because, for a long time, our

clouded and bloody hearts do not set themselves at rest in such small adversity.

This is all because we do not take spiritual strength from Him through prayer, the recollection of His benevolence, and the expectation of the future reward that is promised to us. Strength from God comes to us in this way, when we think much about His grace, works, promises, and the reward that we should receive through faith. His fathomless strength comes to us so that we will gladly bear the affliction and the labors we will have together with a rich reward in heaven. But if we do not strengthen ourselves in God like this, temptations will always drive us and we will only care about which way we would escape. The more we depart from temptations so half-heartedly, the more of them we always have; the more temptations come at us like this, the more we are destroyed by them. If we knew nothing of goodness and were dead, we would not feel many temptations and would not sorrow through them either. But we no longer run away from many difficult temptations like this because we have already gotten to know them through faith. And if we will not have strength from God in order to stand against them, we will wretchedly destroy our lives in bitterness, without all hope, in the disbelief that is not recognized by people and that is displeasing to God.

The apostle commands us here to not only strengthen ourselves in God, but also to take on the armor of God so that we would be secure in it from our violent battles. It is fitting to appreciate that the apostle says "the armor of God" and not the armor of this world, because physical armor is not suitable in the spiritual battle. He says to spiritual people, "I beg you that I may not, when present, show courage with the confidence with which I intend to be bold against some, who consider us to be walking according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we don't wage war according to the flesh; for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the throwing down of strongholds, throwing down imaginations and every high thing that is exalted

were humility. We should truly humble ourselves in our hearts as the Son of God teaches us and diligently remember what He says, "Even so you also, when you have done all the things that are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants. We have done our duty.'" (Luke 17: 10) And therefore, doing everything that is commanded of us, we still do not have grounds to boast according to these words of the Son of God, thinking much of ourselves. In this same way the Son of God says, "Be careful that you don't do your charitable giving before men, to be seen by them." (Matthew 6: 1) If we were to observe this teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, we would not boast or praise one another so much in everything, inciting one another's proud and evil hearts to boasting, since they themselves do not hesitate to pride themselves in everything and think highly of themselves.

How could a person exalt himself, considering the Lord's words when He says that He looks down on all that are haughty? He knows everything. The devil also knows the praise of boastful people and understands that there are proud hearts in them. When they praise others they also want to be praised themselves, and when they put others down they think more of themselves than of others. The devil sees all that. He destroys them with pride so that everything comes out of the evil heart through pride and boasting, always lifting itself up and putting others down. The devil, king over all who are proud, begets everything in pride. In whatever way they are proud (whether through some holiness or infamy), he pays attention to everything so that he begets those who love themselves, think much of themselves, and do not protect themselves from his cunning, being at peace before him. When he is king over all who are proud, he will be over us too if we do not guard ourselves diligently according to the apostle's teaching about his kind of wickedness.

And then the apostle says here about the battle:

The apostle shows Christians when there is spiritual wickedness and hatred in that battle, since we cannot see it or easily fig-

boastful hearts, robs them of everything, and allows them to do everything–to go about simply, seldom socialize, eat simply, make great efforts in everything, not sleep, and not easily serve themselves in many things–while working his desires and intentions secretly all the while. If the devil can use someone in pride, it is enough for him that that person compares himself with the world, dressing up prettily for the eyes of people, wanting to appeal to them in this way.

If a person does not like outward pride but fancies going about in simple clothing, eating bread, drinking water, and lying on boards and stones, the devil is also able to deceive a person and employ his heart in that so that he does not have praise as a worldly person but as a good, long-suffering, and moderate person. And he can also evilly boast with a smelly sheet like a person with a colorful skirt, with water like someone with wine, with stones like someone with a canopy bed, with dry bread like someone with venison, with imprisonment in jail like someone fox hunting, and with hardship like someone dancing. That is why he understands both our humbling and exalting ourselves. He is able to clothe our proud hearts in everything so that they act arrogantly and do not seek rewards from God, but instead do everything for worthless approval or vain praises.

When such depravity is in the human heart and such cunning is in the devil, it is no wonder that Satan spreads gold people under himself like mud and tramples rays of sunshine under foot. There are few unpretentious people and hearts with God's gifts such that they do everything sincerely for God, look to Him in everything, do everything for His praise, anticipate rewards from Him, intentionally avoid boasting in everything, and therefore eschew the affections of proud people, positions, and flatterers. Too few of those people are found who avoid the devil in this, live in simplicity of heart in all things (whether that be more pitiably or grandly), and look to God in everything and fear Him, not thinking many great things of themselves or blindly condemning themselves as if that

against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ;" (2 Corinthians 10: 2–6) In this discourse, the apostle clearly demonstrates that Christians can have spiritual battles and armor, because it can be said in truth that people are clothed in physical armor when they are not given spiritual armor. When they lose the truth and the devil has power over them, they do not have peace, fall into strife and conflict against one another, and seek to overcome one another through carnal armor and weapons. They are goaded on with their physical armor, and David professes that God is not the avenger of those who He sent to fight in the Old Testament with the sword or the spear. Instead, He is the avenger of those who do battle by praying, overcoming with faith and prayer. The apostle clearly says to us Christians that the armor of our battle is not physical like that of others. Instead, we have power from the riches and wisdom of God and the strength of the Holy Spirit so that we discern Satan's awfulness, the way he seduces people with his cleverness, and how he provokes the faithful everywhere to violence. We should have God's armor on so that we overcome in this battle with the strength of the Holy Spirit, with His wisdom, and with other spiritual armor, which he clearly names next. That is why he commands us to take that spiritual armor, so that we are able to stand against a person. Even if someone overcame a person like himself in fleshly armor and killed him, he would not be righteous or blameless for it or enjoy peace for his victory. But whoever dresses in the armor of God and stands against the devil's cunning will be the victor to salvation. Such a man conducts himself blamelessly, and the Son of God will grant him to sit on His throne with Him and give him spiritual pleasure.

Therefore, it is most important to be clothed in the armor of God and to stand against the devil's cunning. The apostle commands us to have peace with people since we are subject to people, but he commands us to be clothed in spiritual armor against the cunning devil and to stand against him, keeping up the fight powerfully because, although we might be defeated physically by men, the en-

emy of mankind harms us for eternal life. But whoever neglects the battle with and the victory over the devil has already lost the truth and eternal life. That is why the apostle does not give instruction for the physical battles that bloody people are able to conduct themselves, battles that sow discord and consign human souls to damnation. Instead, he gives instruction for those battles in which souls, in truth, keep themselves from damnation. He does not care for a lot of physical defenses and security that preserve temporal life, because such life always ends in death. No one will avoid it or put a distance between himself and death with battle, but instead falls into death through it. That is why the apostle diligently cares for the health of faithful souls and commands them to put on the armor of God and to stand against their mortal enemy, so that they may not put precious souls redeemed by the blood of Christ to death.

Showing the difficulty of this battle further, the apostle says, "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world's rulers of the darkness of this age." It is worth understanding this discourse correctly because of the evil understanding of some people, who tempt others in this when he says, "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood." They liberate themselves in this way so that they do not have to fight against flesh and blood, living licentiously and employing their bodies in lust as they demand. Saint Paul would judge this sort of living as an overt lie, because it would contradict the rest of the whole gospel.

Other people maintain that, due to the sanctification of new life, some people will be or already are without struggle here in the body, and that they will not have passions and inclinations in the flesh towards lustful desires, anger, pride, and other sins. These are also great liars, because as yet none of those who claim it can profess such a thing of themselves. Their lie will be exposed in the judgment of Christ, where it will be shown that all of those who will stand at the judgment fell under Adam's curse and died

us, the devil sees both that and the evil heart since he looks down on all that are haughty. And he is able to move that proud heart so cleverly that he clothes it in those gifts. When it is dressed in the gifts of God, it comes along with them according to its own evilness and proud disposition and seeks its own affairs through those gifts so that it profits from the world with praise, favor, a reputation, and fleshly gain. And it seeks to enter into license, idleness, and satiety because of that.

The heart is lifted up in pride most of all so that a person is celebrated before people through those gifts. And the devil works this out cleverly. He does not introduce pride obviously or immediately to people so that they are exposed right away. That is why the devil disguises it at a distance, secretly, until he lures the heart far away in the pride that comes with a person's usefulness to others. The devil takes pains to stir things up with people so that they are inclined towards a person and expect something spiritual from him, because they see that he is useful in a position due to his wisdom and goodness. When he is sought after by others, then the devil will move so that he does not take God's gifts for nothing, but benefits others with them. And when he is already engaged in a position and favored by people, then the crooked heart that is not easily guarded will glorify itself in boasting and will gladly listen when many people praise and expect great things from it. However, it will not easily discern from that that it will be moved with hidden pride and its usefulness will not be for God's praise, but for itself. And other such people will fall into pride, too. When they are useful to others with those gifts, then people will love them for their good things, want to be in favor with them, speak about good things, consult together, and ask prayer from others. The devil blinds with that and will move the proud heart so that it loves itself and others with the good it does. When the devil looks down on everything and all that are haughty, he is able to corrupt such goodness in a person in this way, having that evil and unexamined heart to help him. And if people are boastful, the devil sees those

secrets and wickedness and how everything except Him is corrupted. The devil sees that in both good and evil people; he sees that the adulterous heart is not any more pure in good people. Although spiritual people have an adulterous and corrupted heart of flesh, it is not purified by the goodness of a saint-like person. The devil also knows the spiritual riches in such people according to that adulterous heart that the Lord God spoke about, because some are wise and aim to do everything that is good deliberately, like marksmen. Then there are others of firm resolutions and unwavering in difficult things like a sling stone in its blow. Others are valiant, of a stout heart for goodness without idleness and aware of the devil's malevolence from afar off. These are against him like with a lance. Others shine with God's wisdom like rays of sunshine. Others are like tried gold in purity and other virtues. Therefore, we can understand that the cruel and cunning devil, looking down on all that are haughty, is able to corrupt such aforementioned goodness in those people with pride and is helped by his hateful cunning and the evil hearts in people, deformed to such an extent that they always do everything for themselves. Love of each person for himself arises from that heart, because he pleases himself in all things and seeks to please others in all that is honorable and salvific according to God and in front of people.

Because of such an evil thing. God's gifts in us are as infallible as is chastity between a young woman and man in one bed. That cunning devil, looking down on all who are haughty, also sees their adulterous hearts, which lead them to love themselves and care about being praised in everything. They demand that everything be reckoned to them as goodness and that that which would be to their disgrace be brushed off and hidden so that no one knows about it. They avenge themselves on anyone who is not kind to them, and spurn anyone who does not think highly of them. This is because their hearts are so wrapped up in themselves that they are not friends with anyone who does not make them better, give way to them, and promote them. Therefore, when God's gifts are in

in it, and those who did not fight against flesh and blood will be destroyed. Whoever erroneously thinks against the truth of such things has fallen from the truth, and so has the one who believes him in that lie. To establish an idea contrary to the truth is always delusion, even though it may be disguised as something honorable. Nonetheless, no truth ceases to be true just because someone thinks about it erroneously. In the same way, spiritual struggle will also not pass away from Adam's sons or Eve's daughters. They will continue to have temptations and the evil adversities of sin in their flesh. Their flesh has its inception in sin and has a strong foundation and impetus of sin within itself. Evil will not pass anyone by. A person will not attain something just because he would think of it, and whoever thinks that God will give us immortality in the body in exchange for temptation in the flesh thinks it heretically. (The true promise of God to faithful people is not that they should await the resurrection from the dead of this already uncorrupted and immortal body in exchange for temptation in the flesh. God does not promise that they are born without sin and that they dwell here without temptations, but knowing that everyone is born in sin. He had mercy on us and sent His son to purge our sins and to wash us from our sins in His blood). Whoever has such presumptions and sows them among people is always a liar and destroys the hope of the resurrection from the dead, saying and promising that people will sometimes have great holiness here in the world and that they will not have temptations and struggles in the flesh.

It is important for us to faithfully interpret Saint Paul when he says that "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood" because, he does not say that people should not fight against flesh and blood. In speaking that way, he wants to expose another more difficult battle than that which is against flesh and blood, because afterwards he introduces battle against the cunning devil. And that he takes exception to battles against flesh and blood with this discourse is obvious elsewhere when he says, "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you won't fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against

the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." (Galatians 5: 16–17) In this discourse it is obvious that he neither affirms nor rejects battles against flesh and blood, but instead the apostle teaches and admonishes that they conduct themselves in accordance with the Holy Spirit so that they do not set out to conquer with fleshly ambition, which continually struggles against God and wages war in our members. Because he says here, "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood," he demonstrates the more difficult battle with unseen and cruel spirits. The battle against flesh and blood would be too much for us cowardly and corrupted people, because it is difficult and horrible beyond our strength and God will bless whoever will be found faithful and persistent in it. The devil's depraved desires are measureless, having their ruthless roots entangled in our flesh and hearts and always engaging in their restless depravity, entering into the heart from the flesh and from the heart into the flesh again. When a recollection brings something into the heart, the will immediately grabs hold of it and contemplates it with delight until the flesh is driven by it and catches fire in its improper desires. Then, if the flesh is driven to pleasure, it does not fail to fill the heart with those unbecoming desires.

That is why the most difficult battle is with the flesh, because its desires cling to the heart and grip it forcefully and delightfully in its wickedness. It latches onto the heart with its falsehood so that power and the judgment of truth depart from a person because he is caught and carried away from himself. His gravest enemy has reached inside of him and snatched his heart. And the flesh too, driven by its depravity and indulgences, snatches the heart again and again if the special graces and the strength of the Holy Spirit are not present. The devil has many of those vile roots that remain in the flesh and heart so powerfully that some of them always shoot up and grow through desires. A lustful desire is contemplated in the heart, the flesh is enflamed, and anger or pride is awakened; or avarice leads to hoarding and fear of future scarcity. Cares, unbelief, stinginess, and wariness are born out of that, as well as laziness and

heart for God fade away. Hypocrisy is strengthened from such beginnings because the entire person sours in goodness with the passing of time. Then only superficial observances remain, while all love for people dies. Then the flesh is according to the old man in its works, decency departs from a person, and a person begins to have fleshly and profane pleasures and other unrest in the flesh. The devil is able to introduce all of this to these kinds of people bit by bit.

Love of women is also a grave snare with which the devil trips such people up. Although it is difficult for all people, it is not so perceptible or well known in some because they widely permit themselves in it. Because a dear woman is a very attractive thing, the devil brings many prominent people down through women. And women through men too, because people are not careful from the beginning, but instead trust themselves that they have good intentions, meeting and speaking about good things and, in the meantime, not watching themselves. The devil, the craftsman of a thousand handicrafts a day, does not fail to harass them in their hearts and flesh and to continually bind their hearts in their affections further until he accomplishes his long stored-up intentions.

The devil corrupts and destroys people of enlightened and good lives the most through the temptation of pride. Therefore the Lord God says here, "He sees all haughtiness and he is the king over all proud sons." He looks down on all that are haughty, that is, he knows all the ways of pride in each person. The devil knows the sort of person each one is and how he would set them up in pride according to a man's abilities or makeup–what he is able to do and what he is and does. He sees and knows to establish everything in pride a thousand times beyond what he is able to do, is, and does according to those aforementioned things.

Just as I said earlier, the Lord God likewise testifies about how the heart in man is crooked and muddied, saying, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17: 9) For that reason only God knows its deep

their repentance will mean a bigger fall and abomination than their sin.

He speaks about those who already live according to true goodness and wisdom–those who are like rays of sunshine and those tried like gold. Because the devil can also deceive such people if God does not preserve them and if they themselves are not cautious and thankful, and because they have grand intellects, he deceives them with heresies the most. An evil and dishonest heart is in man and the devil deceives it better than a person himself. He is able to stir up that filth which lies deeply in the crooked heart, so that it is not enough for it to come to know God's narrow way and go along it to eternal life, but it inquires after the width and depth of God endlessly. It walks broadly in that which is beyond its strength, pointing the way to every scripture and prescribing laws for all things, but not submitting to the law of truth. And because the devil knows all about people, and that they think things through so little, he is therefore able to serve their hearts with the scriptures they are inclined towards with the kind of deceptions that pertain to him–the pleasing interpretation of their hearts, or an interpretation according to the letter of the law. They make use of both according to their purposes to lift something spiritual out of scripture, to invent something new by it, to taint and destroy truths of the faith, or to make an understanding of something without scripture. That is Satan's great awfulness, and he prospers by it. Those who he could not deceive with debauchery, he deceives with heresy.

The devil has yet another temptation for such people, being hypocrisy, which has its roots in evil insincerity–in other words, straying according to the freedom of God in the license of the flesh, acquiescing to one's will, slackening in good things, and losing the heart's integrity. Because a person does not easily speak about the ends of hypocrisy, I say here that the devil is diligent to approach and corrupt with it gradually and imperceptibly, as with evil leaven, so that ardent love and endeavoring for good works with a whole

greed, having various branches and demanding to eat delightful things without limit. (The heart always fears hard things, exertions, and trials. Because of that, it always makes judgments incorrectly, straying from the truth in insincerity, bondage, and the satisfaction of the flesh. As a result, many good things are abandoned.) Then unjust gain takes place because of greed. It never agrees to put up with hunger and, for that reason, rejection of many truths will come to the one who has such desires. All these desires have their roots in the flesh and are always born through one another. The heart afflicted by desires has pleasure in them according to their nature, or is sorrowful because it cannot have license in them or because they are lost for some reason. And for that reason the heart is sorrowful, not being able to benefit in them.

Such desires are helped by almost the whole world, which tantalizes them and eggs them on in our flesh. They are dear and beautiful things, colors, costumes, robes, scents, tastes, masterly works, the softness of a gown, good lodging, and the beauty of people–women to men and men to women. The difficult battle with such bloody and corrupt flesh is limitless and beyond our strength, and there is never peace in it either, because everything is apart from God. That is why great faith must be in the person who wants to engage truly in this battle against the flesh.

But when he says, "against flesh and blood," he speaks of this matter knowledgeably. We have little understanding about that here, even though there can be a distinction in it because some things pertain to the flesh and other things to blood. Anger, sexual sin, and pride are mostly born from the blood of desire, but the rough flesh of the earth, with its plight and nature, is inclined towards the earth and towards idleness. And because it is kept alive by the things of the earth, it sets great store on them laboriously, excessively, and endlessly there, where it is possible to have the things it needs without sin. That is why one must fight against it wisely and not destroy it, because it is necessary so that it serves a person while he pilgrims here. For that reason, he must gratify

it in appropriate things but should kill and crucify those he knows through faith to be poisonous and deadly desires, as the apostle says, "Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts." (Galatians 5: 24) Of course, not everyone will internalize the holy apostle's teaching, and only a few people consent to crucify their desires. If we do not like it when others stand in the way of our desires, then of course a person who loves himself with evil love will not like it as well and will not quickly destroy his desires. He will only crucify his desires when he would love the reward of this life and have living faith in God.

Because the apostle regards this battle against flesh and blood to be against the principalities, powers, and world's rulers of the darkness of this age, and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places, of course such things are not befitting of the person bound and fallen like this. It is exceedingly hard here where the battle is against flesh and blood; it is not easy to abolish those desires since they charm the heart so much. Nonetheless, they are familiar to a person because he feels them in the flesh and in the heart when they torment him and lead him astray. He comprehends that, because they badger him into sexual sin, anger, or envy. Or, the beauty of something or some appetite for evil may drive him. Therefore, if there will be living faith in him, he will stand and defend himself against it, seeing that those desires lead him to evil. But this battle here, against that sly diabolism that was thrown out of heaven with knowledge and wit above all people on earth, is difficult because it is a spiritual, unseen, cunning, and exceedingly cruel and hateful attack against a person. Death came into the earthly sphere through the enmity of the devil. And, when he is so cunning and hateful against such a foolish and darkened person, of course it is difficult to fight here and it is no wonder that so few people are saved when each person attains to salvation in this way, being found victorious in those battles. Oh Lord God, where is the understanding in us of such cunning hatred of the devil, when we cannot easily understand even the small seen things

We can understand about rays of sunshine, then, that learned people are being spoken of. There are various learned people–learned in pagan literature, in the humanities, in the laws of man, and in the laws of God. Others are learned in the very truth of God because it is studied in order to know God and His truth. But when the Lord God says here about the devil that nothing on earth is his equal that could resist him, a creature without fear, such a cunning devil comes to those academics learned in pagan literature or the humanities and can easily deceive them. And the devil does not only deceive with that pagan learning, but also with God's teaching–if God Himself does not guard that person. If that person does not attend to it with diligence, no capability will be sufficient and he will be deceived by the devil.

We should also understand about gold, which shines for the eyes of people according to established human learning. It is not hard for the devil to cover himself with that gold like with mud. Because people also clothe themselves with superficial good things, not repenting of sins and not really being founded on the truth, they also do not stand the test against him. When God sees such faithlessness in them, it is His righteous retribution that He permits them to fall into great sins. They have wrought so much evil and have not repented in the same proportion as they previously submitted to wickedness. They have not only done those evil things, but have also carried out other evil things, not repenting of old sins, adorning themselves like good people with virtuous works, and unworthily accepting praise from people. But the devil stamps out that which shone like gold in the eyes of people like mud under his feet. And the last things will be worse than the first for those people. The first sins were overt and the last will be hidden in hypocritical delusion. The first wickedness was wrought through ignorance and the last through veiled cunning. The last repentance will be worse than the first transgression because they cast God aside and accepted his many mercies thanklessly and in vain. Therefore,

expressed some sense of these words of God. By sling stones, rattling lances and rays of sunshine, the Lord God means wise, strong, earnest, pure, blameless, and devout people of a courageous heart and great understanding, which are like gold. And because all such people do not stand their ground against Satan's incalculable cunning and great strength, here again we can understand that God names gold and rays of sunshine differently. Some are gold according to testing and others are radiant according to appearances, attractive to look at like gold that shines. Many good things are only established and carried out by people, and they shine in those people the way that gold looks pleasing to the eye. Other good things are established and ordered by God, and these good things can follow outward or spiritual works. But not all people have the sufficiency within themselves to follow after spiritual works as well as the outward ones. Many pursue those that are outward works, but neglect the spiritual ones. They are powerless to pursue them perfectly because of the wickedness of their hearts, and they come to God having a very depraved life, wicked with great sins. When they come to God, they immediately go for those good outward things and are bountiful in them, but they do not attain the spiritual ones–merely those which are external and befitting of Christians. They clothe themselves with the externals and cover up that first abhorrent life so that people do not notice anything repugnant, even though they are never sorry, repentant, or really humbled before God. Nonetheless, they shine like gold in the eyes of people with those superficial good things. But having already long put old sins out of mind, they have strange presumptions about themselves and love themselves in that which is externally virtuous and visible to people. People praise them for those good superficial things and they do not refuse to accept the praise. Others are different in that they do good things in the body and spirit from a sincere heart of understanding, having living faith within them, rectified by the words of God. This is according to the gift of God, more or less as God has allocated to a person.

that are well known to us? It is truly written, "For the corruptible body is a load upon the soul, and the earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things. And hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth: and with labour do we find the things that are before us. But the things that are in heaven, who shall search out? And who shall know thy thought, except thou give wisdom, and send thy Holy Spirit from above." (Wisdom of Solomon 9: 15–17) The great dispossession and poverty of man is clearly demonstrated in this scripture. When the corrupted flesh oppresses the soul and the earthly dwelling limits or darkens reason so that we do not easily learn of and understand those things that are visible on the earth, how then will we be able to grasp with our senses those things that are in heaven? The apostle now shows us the battle against those devils that fell from heaven and have great cunning above our understanding, but they are spiritual and unseen. Therefore, like a blind person with the seeing, if we cannot see further than that which the physical eyes are able to see, we will not be able to engage with them in the battle. The blind do not see which direction the seeing strike at them from–only when they feel the blow.

We ascertain from God's words that such is the battle that people have with the devil because the Lord God speaks these things about the devil, saying, "A marksman cannot repel him; sling stones will turn into chaff to him. A club seems to him but a piece of straw; he laughs at the rattling of the lance. Under him are rays of sunshine and he spreads gold under his feet like mud. He makes the depths churn like a boiling caldron and stirs up the sea like a pot of ointment. The path will have shone behind him and it will seem that the abyss grew old or was done away with. There is no power on earth that stands against him who is made so that he is not afraid of anyone. He sees all haughtiness and he is the

king over all proud sons.[2]" (Job 41: 28–34) These words of God are all about the devil. The Lord God announces his great power and cunning in them, speaks dreadful things here, and announces how all people are fallible before the devil.

First of all we have to consider his power, where he says, "There is no power on earth that stands against him who is made so that he is not afraid of anyone." Therefore "A marksman cannot repel him; sling stones will turn into chaff to him … he laughs at the rattling of the lance." These are all great things by which powerful people conduct the battles of this world to overcome and destroy one another, demonstrating their power through the weapon. But as the Lord God says, "There is no power on earth that stands against him." Therefore, though a person would want to stand up against the devil and destroy him with the great power of this world, he will not be able to according to these words of God; the devil's strength is above the strength of this world. People today, who outfit themselves with the power of this world and its weapons, wanting to destroy the devil, think futilely. When they lay siege with sling stones, wanting to tear down the fortifications in which evil people hide–people filled with the devil–the devil ignores it. Instead, the devil also enters into those who are laying siege and lives in their cruel and loveless hearts, regardless of the destruction of the fortifications and the hateful evil people inside. They do not easily lay siege to the heart with sling stones because they do not discern that he would be there. That is why the Lord God also says that sling stones are like chaff to him, because sling stones do as much harm to the devil's wily purposes as chaff that is carried along by

[2] World English Bible: The arrow can't make him flee. Sling stones are like chaff to him. Clubs are counted as stubble. He laughs at the rushing of the javelin. His undersides are like sharp potsherds, leaving a trail in the mud like a threshing sledge. He makes the deep to boil like a pot. He makes the sea like a pot of ointment. He makes a path shine after him. One would think the deep had white hair. On earth there is not his equal, that is made without fear. He sees everything that is high. He is king over all the sons of pride.

garment?" who is there among the people who discovers his deceitful hypocrisies, approaches, and covert purposes? And when the Lord God says, "Who is that one?" then I answer that we are not able to discover his garment and clearly unveil his purposes and the way that he secretly approaches people from a distance. But I slightly suspect his clothing is black.

Because these words speak about people of understanding who can see very far in truth and faith, which of those people discern his deceitful cunning, cleverly embellished with many beautiful and sacrosanct things? I do not know how many extremely wise people are on earth if I cannot find five people who would escape unharmed by standing up to him. But those people who are blinded by the world outside do not know anything about him. Therefore, if he is clothed in a handsome garment and saunters in front of them, dressing up beautifully, they bow down to him blindly like to God. The devil clothes himself the most in the powerful people of this world, and he is celebrated through the pride of great people in this way so that many submit to those lords in evil things out of fear. The devil also leads many simple people into heresies through hypocrites. The devil takes advantage of all kinds of other things as clothing in order to keep those blind and fleshly people in distress, even though it is evident that he walks ignobly enough among those people today that he could already be recognized rather easily–that not God but the devil walks among them. Therefore, he has so divested those people of truth and encumbered them with profuse wickedness without any excuse that pagans could reprove the evil practices of today's Christians.

We must examine and understand these words of God still more diligently, where he speaks such awful things about the devil, because he has such great power over lofty people. He speaks of it in these words, saying, "A marksman cannot repel him; sling stones will turn into chaff to him. A club seems to him but a piece of straw; he laughs at the rattling of the lance. Under him are rays of sunshine and he spreads gold under his feet like mud." I have already

cannot do because of weakness." But in the meantime, looking at that which we cannot do, we forsake doing or observing what we can.

The devil also clothes himself in the parts of our and our neighbors' entire bodies in order to tantalize and provoke our flesh and hearts to wickedness, clothing himself in our hearing and sight so that we see our neighbors' and our own bodies and are driven by nasty thoughts and desires. The handling of our or our neighbors' bodies is also the sin of the heart. That is why the devil employs almost all the parts of the body as a garment, to harm our hearts by it. The devil's garment and access to a person also manifest themselves in what we are inclined towards, what we take pleasure in, what we are diligent in, the habits we have, what we are able to do, what concerns we have for good or evil, the time or place we find ourselves in, and what our circumstances and needs are. He clothes himself in each of them very carefully and approaches us so cunningly that we do not catch on that he would approach us through that thing. And then sometimes he exposes his approaches after several years because someone recognizes how they began to be lured away in a place–perhaps somewhere in the castle, the city, a beautiful house, at the market, in a church, or in the field. He is able to take advantage of each place differently, seeing how people live in them, how they are conditioned, and what sorts of concerns they have in that place. The devil approaches according to how he sees someone and that person does not recognize it until he is pulled into a snare someday through it.

He sometimes takes advantage of seasons–Christmas, Carnival, fasts, Easter, a procession, or summer. They are all his garments and he clothes himself in such times with varied cunning. In whatever way he sees vain people changing according to those seasons in which they want to be saintly and in which they do not, all of that is helpful to him as a garment so that he is not recognized until he pulls a person into a snare, misfortune, or death. But because the Lord God says here, "Who can discover the face of his

the wind. All physical power and strength cannot destroy him because it is him who gives rise to it with his cunning. In this way, everyone who wants or presumes to destroy his dominion through the strength and power of this world is on his side by it, serves him, and exalts him more than he was exalted in his dominion before.

We have to understand these words in still greater measure when He says that there is not any power on earth that would be able to stand up against him. We can thus understand that no power that a person can receive and have from God is all-powerful against the devil, being on the earth. But we say that with reason, because there is no such power or gift given by God that a person could not lose it if he does not guard it carefully and gratefully and, moreover, particularly if the supreme help of God itself does not keep that person's gift secure. The devil's power corrupts and overpowers everything, and nothing stands before him. Therefore, no one in himself is put at ease or secured before the devil's power, whatever great gifts he has from God. But from these words it would seem that there is no reason to rely on spiritual power, virtues, and other gifts, when such spiritual powers and gifts do not stand up against the devil's power. Faithful people should not understand it in this way, but it is true that without spiritual power there is no opposing the devil. It is also true that no gift in a holy person is so secure and certain that it could not be lost if God and man do not carefully and thankfully guard it. Otherwise, no person's spiritual power could stand against the devil's power here on the earth. That is why, for a person's further understanding, the Lord God names these physical weapons here. Even though a person has them, and because God's help is not in them, a man will not stand up against the devil's power with such weapons.

The Lord God also says, "A marksman cannot repel him," because the work and activity of a marksman is well known, how far and precisely he aims and shoots. And in that is understood the wise ingenuity of a person to be able to precisely find the right mark for everything, to get to the heart of things in everything he

does so that it is not too much or too little, and to sort out the true from the false in everything so that it is not mingled together and everything is in order. Whoever aims at and hits the truth in such necessary and profitable things is a good and accurate marksman. Nevertheless, he does not make the devil flee with such marksmanship if he does not have God's supreme power to keep him in that marksmanship.

Then He says that "sling stones will turn into chaff to him." The sling stone crushes and destroys strong things, and by that are understood people of firm resolve in long-suffering, such that they labor for good things and in great difficulties right up to destruction of life by a violent death. They do not destroy others with their strength, but suffer intensely in the destruction of their own lives. The devil could be defeated with that long-suffering as with a sling stone, but it all turns back into chaff when vain praises blow in with the wind; it lifts that heart up like meaningless chaff. That is why that longsuffering will not harm the devil, because it turns into chaff when such trifling praises destroy it.

"He laughs at the rattling of the lance," because those who take lances and shake them are like fearless heroes standing against enemies. By that are understood people of a fearless heart wanting to go in among enemies wisely with a lance that keeps them at a distance, sparring with it and not like with a club that can hardly protect their heads. These people are diligent and fearless in goodness and do not rue laying their lives down in various labors and painstakingly going far down into the devil's secret den as with a lance. But the devil laughs at that lance, having more cunning beyond all the understanding of those people. Therefore, the devil will not fear the effect of their efforts. It is all hilarity before him.

Then He says, "Under him are rays of sunshine." These are the dazzling rays that come from the sun and illuminate the darkness on the earth. By that are understood people bright with learning

son acquires them, and then so that he uses them evilly. He leads a man's heart into great unrest, many cares, anger, impatience, and pride because of possessions. He then makes light of license in some things, telling himself in his heart that those things are necessary, that he should watch over them so that they do not disappear, and so that something may be given to the poor for God. Therefore, the devil dresses himself in possessions and leads a person into faithlessness, anger, and restlessness of the heart because of them. His heart will deceive him when he does not keep watch over them, and will lead him to think that he would lose out on a good thing because of neglect. A person can watch over the things necessary to life without anger and disbelief, but the devil is able to corrupt our hearts through them, thereby putting them to use himself first instead of us. He is able to bring spiritual harm to us because of our temporal necessities. He clothes himself in our bodily needs and leads us away from the truth of life and a good conscience.

The devil clothes himself in our lives, shortcomings, many frailties, idleness, greed, anger, and other vices because we are weak and feeble. Even if a person acts rashly, overeats, titters, makes merry, sleeps for a long time, and squanders a lot of time uselessly and in wanton living, he reassures himself in it all. His conscience does not affect him because of his feebleness. He is not grieved by it, does not repent of those things, and never strives to resist or fight against that evil because his feebleness takes away selfcontrol and the fear of God from such things. The devil is happy to see complacency in us because of that feebleness instead of the unwavering decisiveness of Saint Peter because he has many inroads in and to us by clothing himself in it. We do not readily discover that garment because, when we are reprimanded or chastened by others for such shortcomings because they are bad and dangerous for a Christian, we secretly excuse our frailties and weakness or say, "These things must be in us. We will not be punished for that which is weak in us, nor will God count as sin against us what we

things in disguise. And that is all due to our great imprudence, because we look at that which is good in and of itself instead of at its conclusion. We immediately grasp at outward appearance, not considering the end it leads to and what peril there is with it. The devil does not sleep, but makes clothing for himself out of our goodness, approaches us, and engages us in his wickedness, getting close to us in this way since he could not first get close so plainly and boldly. Spiritual people would not permit him to come and simply hand them fornication. But he clothes himself in something spiritual, piles it on for several years, and introduces it gradually and at a distance. He uses this kind of cunning, hiding his movements beneath other things, introducing some affection between two people and working with them for a long time until they fall in love, and then, following those affections, into fornication. The devil clothes himself in scriptures, too, and deceives many. I say he clothes himself in scriptures since, although they are faithful and true, they evidently do not lead a person to virtues in the restraint of the flesh. Instead, they set up virtuous things and those to which the flesh is inclined, such as some offices and walks of life or the licentious use of some things. Even scripture can serve the devil's purposes when he sees that a person is weak and can be seduced by a misinterpretation of scripture. He also leads many such people into marriage because they take license for themselves from scripture, saying that they should marry and that it is a holy status. The devil is glad to see that they call it holy, because many would avoid it if someone called it cursed. But when it is holy they go into it freely, and, behind that sanctity in those people, the devil accomplishes what has interested him for a long time.

The devil makes good use of scriptures concerning foods, too. They come in handy, because evil people take license from them–arriving, not at what the scripture intends, but at what the will demands. Therefore, the devil exploits the scriptures for evil.

The devil also disguises himself from a person in the things he has and corrupts the heart through them–first of all so that a per-

and wisdom, like the rays from the sun that can illuminate others with their wisdom. And these will also fall beneath the devil, being subject to him.

And He says, "He spreads gold under his feet like mud," that is, underfoot so that he walks on them. Spiritual people are gold–tested, devout, and pure in many things. The devil spreads these people out under his feet like mud.

"He makes the depths churn like a boiling caldron and stirs up the sea like a pot of ointment." The fleshly, blind, contentious, and proud people of this world are like a deep and bitter sea, which the devil easily afflicts like the restless sea, and makes them churn like boiling oil. The devil incites these kinds of evil people to great unrest in the same way through quarrels, battles, and murder; just as such revolts and fomenting with great rage against one other are plainly seen today. In this discourse, the Lord God shows how easily the devil brings such unwise, contentious, and impure people into great wickedness. When he spreads peaceable people out under his feet like gold, of course that sea full of pus (love of evil desires) comes back out and everyone who sees them will smell their stench. But it is awful and grievous when such fair and noble people do not stand up against him, and because of that it does not seem that anyone could be saved. If he can deceive such people, then he can deceive everyone. Nevertheless, we should not suppose that no one could be saved because the devil can deceive such fair and noble people. Of course he can and has deceived from the inception of the world, and deceives today, and there is no person here in the world so established in goodness that he or she could not be lost if not guarded. That is why the Lord God speaks of the devil's great and cunning wickedness. He deceives even great people and, knowing that, both the small and the great should be careful and give themselves to God Himself for safe-keeping. But while many people strive to attain, increase, and prosper in different kinds of

goodness, achieving such goodness through faith and diligent efforts, few are equipped for how they would be able to maintain those good things. Few labor for goodness, and not every person who labors for goodness labors for it according to true sincerity. They look elsewhere for it and not to God. When such people are insincere, without humility and discretion, they can be deceived, even though they are otherwise lofty and noble. Insincere, careless, and inattentive things are done by the devil's deception.

Therefore, that exceeding cleverness of the devil that knows each person so ingeniously in his motivations is also able to deceive him in his life. He approaches a person charmingly and virtuously because that person does not fear him or perceive his approach as evil; he neither knows the devil's deceitful approach nor supposes that it would be him coming in that moment. That is why the Lord God speaks about the devil and his profuse cunning again, saying, "Who can discover the face of his garment? Or who can come to him with his double bridle?" (Job 41: 13 KJV) To say it another way, it seldom happens that a person understands what the devil is clothed with and what kind of clothing he has. Who discovers the face of his garment so that, looking at him, he would say, "That is the devil, because I know him by his face"? It does not happen quickly that someone knows what covering he has disguised his face with. His cunning ingenuity is able to dress himself in this way so that, bumping into him, people do not say, "Here comes the devil, our enemy," but "Here comes God or his angel," or "Here comes our friend so that he can do good for us." Because of that disguise, a person does not easily discover the garment of his face and to know him in the way that he is deceitfully covered up.

The garment of his face is honorable and seems too nice. That is why people catching sight of him will not be afraid of him and why the Lord God says about him, "The path will have shone behind him." His path is not dark in the eyes of people but is bright. The apostle says that the devil is transformed into an angel of light.

so that they are enamored with those good things, observing them without a pure and whole heart for God and without the certainty of a good conscience?

God's words, counsel, confessions, discourses of spiritual things, and diligent inquiries about good things are also virtuous clothing. The devil can clothe himself in anything. He has destroyed many virgins, widows, wives, priests, preachers, and other devout people–who were of golden splendid lives–with adultery, fleshly loves, greed, and stinginess. The devil stamped them down like mud under his feet by such falsehood so that others then rubbed their feet on them as on street mud, causing difficult wounds in them. Even though God's word, counsel, and discourses about good and spiritual things are very necessary, people will get used to them as habit when they speak of them often, and although they speak about goodness, fleshly love will not hesitate to grow up among them. A woman is always attentive to feed a preacher and cater to him for his work. Seeing her good will toward him, he also starts to advise and instruct her diligently about spiritual things. And when they are looking at each other being good and conscientious, a man's heart cannot abandon the law of Adam but starts to be enamored with a woman–at first for good works. Consequently, he does not understand himself or why that woman will be dear to him, merely because he does not perceive within himself that he will have a desire for her. Because of that, he will want to speak about and praise her for being a noble, wise, devout, and virtuous young lady or widow, and will go there more frequently and without shame. They will keep company with each other and speak of spiritual things like this until they are wound up so tightly with love that they will then only go to church to see each other and talk a lot together under the guise of confession or another necessity. And because of that they will soon fall into adultery.

The devil's great cunning–and our peril–is evident in that, because he is clothed with a good thing, he can bring about very evil

as he wishes, seeing us so infantile and unwise in God's things. He even clothes himself in scripture and in faith and uses that to his benefit, in whatever way he sees a person. He will give some great audacity, license, and hope in those things, and that without the truth of life. They fearlessly go wherever they want with scripture and manipulate it to help with their plans as if they know God, and it seems to them that they are complying well with scripture. The devil oppresses others through true scriptures and faith. Those with no faith or hope he torments, terrifies, oppresses, and deceives, even though they diligently strive for goodness. Everything is corrupted by the devil. For that reason their good works do not afford them a clear conscience or real hope. This all takes place because of the devil's cruel wickedness. He will turn that clothing right side out in front of a person and there will not be anyone who is able to discover that garment and recognize the devil there–neither this one without hope nor that one with audacious hope, because the devil deceives both. In both cases he leads them into his purposes.

It is also an honorable and praiseworthy thing to live in virginity, widowhood, purity, spiritual repose, devotion, and freedom–in that which is given to those people by God. But when they will not have God's wisdom and fear, the devil clothes himself in those gifts and deceives them under that honorable clothing with great cruelty–in idleness, lust, and license with their bodies. He blinds them in that, because some people do not discern themselves in it right up to their deaths. If someone would give them correction for idleness or fleshly freedom, they say with anger that they are being pressed by Satan, saying, "Here he is opposing the spiritual life." Therefore, the devil deceitfully accommodates such people in their hearts with the good words "spiritual life." But he covers up whatever insincerity lurks beneath that life with that virtuous goodness. He does not establish idleness in those people's hearts, but "spiritual repose," and does not establish his will in their hearts, but "lordship." Who discovers the face of his garment in such honorable and salvific things, when he clothes himself and blinds people

God rightly says, "Who can discover the face of his garment? Or who can come to him with his double bridle?" God knows his cunning deception–how he covers up with great goodness, salvation, virtues, good intentions, scripture, truth, necessity, and usefulness–concealing his face with those things and deceiving with them.

We can recognize his virtuous clothing in the one who is called the man of sin, the son of perdition, and how the devil clothed himself in him and also dressed him in his vestments. Looking at him, we did not suppose that the ultimate Antichrist would be on the Roman throne![3] But when he is discovered and someone takes the honorable hat off of him, then we recognize that he is not an earthly god but the hidden Antichrist. It is strange and awful how long he has existed, how grandly he has been raised up, how virtuously clothed with seeming holiness and spiritual power he has been, and with such an office and power that he could give forgiveness of all sins, free a person from hellish torment, give the power to be a priest to whoever will give enough money, and divest someone of the priesthood with whom he is dissatisfied. He has also multiplied the lofty praises of God, consecrated many priests, confirmed many teachers of the law, thought up many traditions and sacrosanct things, and sanctified them with his power so that Christians accept them by faith. Who would not like his office and power, when he can easily receive salvation because of it? But speaking according to truth, we spot that most awful deception. It is the most cunning devil dressed up so that, not being known, he has deceived many nations with such a hidden lie so that, in ignorance, they repeat that lie to many people, grandly glorifying God with their falsehood. That strange clothing is here–bright like the sun before the face of man and delightful to the eyes, but actually an undreamed of darkness in which people fumble.

"Who can discover the face of his garment? Or who can come to him with his double bridle?" How can we know the devil's con-

[3] Transcriber's note–Chelčický is referring to the pope.

cealed thoughts and what he intends with people when disguised by such things? When it is not easy to discover the garment that is over his face and to know him beneath it–that he is the devil–then who recognizes his secret intentions, getting inside his mouth? Who discovers that garment when many holy masses, beautiful singing, grand churches, immaculate decorations, and many other honorable things are seen where service to God occurs? Therefore, seeing such things, who can judge it in any other way than being man's salvation and the great praise of God? People with darkened understanding scarcely believe that it is sin to kill a person, scarcely agree that ugly murder is evil, and only look for salvation in sublime but superficial religion. They fail to consider such things to be evil or to recognize the devil in them.

The devil also clothed the teachers of the law[4] with much falsehood, fashioned well-fitting clothing for himself out of them, freely approached defenseless people and worked his wickedness through them beneath that clothing, and seized these teachers of the law in his snare themselves. Their honorable name is his honorable robe. They follow Christ in poverty, are separate from the world, and are already at rest with God Himself in theology. They sing and say the holy offices, take care of desolate souls, and keep many psalters and vigils. They get up after midnight, ring the bells, and play the organs. Such honorable and spiritual things are the devil's most fastidious clothing, with which his face is virtuously disguised. People do not consider in their hearts that hell is shut up in those monastery walls, but suppose that the doorway and ladder to the kingdom of heaven is there. Therefore, beneath that clothing they will willingly walk into his throat, believing that there is great salvation there.

Not only should we already be familiar with that clothing which is unfamiliar to most people, but also to our great reproach and sorrow we must admit how our brothers are cunningly

[4] Transcriber's note–Chelčický is referring to the priests.

deceived by Satan and have departed from the holy gospel in peculiar and unheard-of thoughts and actions. When Satan first approached them, he did not come with an uncovered face, identifying himself as the devil, but in the splendid clothing of voluntary poverty that Christ commanded priests to observe, in the work of diligent preaching, in serving people, and in giving the Lord's body and His holy blood. His charade has flourished for so long that great people cling to him. And then, clothing himself in yet another way, the devil approached them in the prophets and Old Testament, and because of that they have wanted to execute the judgment day in haste, it having been said that they are angels who should remove all offences from Christ's kingdom and that they should judge the world. They killed and impoverished many people as a result, and many years passed in which they greatly terrorized many people, telling them strange news and misleading many so-called prophets. Wanting to cause great calamity to many people, the devil is not dressed plainly but in the poor priesthood, the holiness of God, many scriptures, and grandiose intentions. Who comes along today, discovers the devil's garment, and gets inside his mouth to recognize those people's and the devil's secret motivations, what he engages in, and the end it leads to? It is clear that the devil has spread gold out under his feet like mud–gold lives soiled in blood, thievery, and other heinousness by those people who have abominably marred the sacrifice of the body and blood of the Son of God beneath beautiful and glorious speeches about great faith and a good life, but all of it done deceitfully.

That is why a person does not easily discover the devil's garment. When someone wants to destroy it on one hand, saying that it is heresy, the devil wears still other more honorable clothing instead. That is why inordinate heresy poured into the Czech lands, clothing itself in innocent lives, honorable actions, and many grand interpretations of the scriptures, as well as in the simple thoughts of the words themselves. Therefore, just as he has cunning without limit, the evil devil is able to figure out our weaknesses and use us

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a person cannot lie down or sit in battle, except someone on a horse. Instead, we should walk here. That is why he commands us to stand on the feet of good desires and on an unflinching heart for God. We also ought to stand on the true foundation, Christ, so that we do not get weary in battle or forget what leads us in such a demanding battle. We ought to stand on the firm foundation of Christ, knowing that He is a Savior and eternal life to us after the completion of this battle. We ought to stand on such a firm foundation, not becoming weary in battle like those who sorrow, not anticipating the promises of the future life!

The apostle encourages us to stand, tucking up our loins, but because that is an unfamiliar physical thing, I will describe the act. When there is mud where people run or fight, they tuck up long clothing so that they are more agile. But the apostle is speaking about spiritual things here, and we can say something similar about spiritual tucking up. When he says here, "Tuck up your loins in truth," the Savior says with different words, "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning." (Luke 12: 35) They can both be taken in the same sense–"to tuck up" and "to be buckled up"–because no one can be tucked up except that his clothing must first be buckled up and rolled up by hand. And, while rolling it up, that person cannot fight. By commanding us to tuck up our loins, he means that we are confronted by the sin of fornication and that it is necessary for this battle to guard ourselves against it. The tucking up he speaks of is abstinence in purity and the restraining of depraved desires so that the battle is not lost through them. Few people are found who stand their ground against this iniquity so that fornication does not find some way in, because it is a forceful iniquity. Other sins will be worked up in a person through various things, but this sin does not wait for anything from anywhere else–it has a strong footing in our bodies themselves. For that reason, our bodies have enormous incitement and passion towards fornication within themselves and are always ready to do its treacherous work in us. A person is strongly driven to the con-

summation of sin by his own nature, and what help that sin has around it then! Men and women are the basis of that sin toward each other and there are many reasons for that. That is why the person who is clothed and stands his ground in the face of that sin is blessed. And who is so tucked up that he stands in it and perseveres? That is why, when some people take great pains, wanting to wring it out of themselves, they still bow to it through its slipperiness. It has an immense and powerful drive and delightful desires are there, cunningly seizing the heart and sometimes stripping a person's defenses.

I am not saying that it would always be like this for everyone, but it sometimes pertains to people. Some people do not know anything about suffering violence from this sin, because God gave them a great gift in this regard. But those who do not fear God do not endure very much before they commit these abominations; evil people do not easily control themselves in this area. For that reason, a great reward will be kept in heaven for the person who has a good heart and who labors against what he is tempted in, whether he is with a virgin or a whether good will is found in him when he is wronged. That is why it is good advice that those who want to engage in the battle tuck up their belts and constrain such desires with the help of God. If those desires are tested in a man through the company of some individual, he should tuck up his clothing again properly that so that he is not overcome. Grave thoughts fall into people's hearts because of such associations, and the heart is enflamed with desires in the flesh. A person may endanger himself with his foolishness because he lies like a wolf on a scythe, not protecting himself from death. In the same way, this kind of powerless person does not run away from some illicit love. It is necessary here to tuck one's clothing up properly to protect it from harmful mud.

We can understand this tucking up another way according to the words of Saint Peter, who teaches faithful people saying, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope

to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1: 13 KJV) He not only commands us to tuck up the physical loins, but also the loins of the mind, taking the first interpretation that I spoke of about tucking up–how people tuck up a robe so that they are not muddied or hampered in battle. Whoever has a long robe in battle has already long lost the battle far from the battlefield, because his enemies do not allow him to tuck up his clothing before they defeat him, catching him by his long robe. But we have an even more cunning swordsman in the spiritual battle, the devil. He grabs hold of that which he sees dragging on the ground around us and overcomes us through it. The robe of this discourse represents those things around us that cling to us or that we cling to. They are necessary and helpful to us like clothing, because a person would be naked here in the world if he did not have some help from earthly things and people. But they are helpful only when a person is able to make use of them without attachment. The many things a foolish person acquires are unnecessary, and so are the way he uses them and the way he behaves towards them. They are only necessary when used and regarded according to God's will, modestly and appropriately.

That is why one must tuck the loins of one's mind up–so that one's mind does not stray far from his immediate circumstances and needs. That a person can be entangled by concerns far from himself can be clearly demonstrated by the people of this world and how their thoughts are far from themselves. They are most conflicted whenever their thoughts are furthest from themselves. When the lord of Rožmberk sits in Krumlov, he is responsible to defend both Mýto and Krumlov. If what he has is burned for a distance of 15 miles, he has two sorrows. He wants to defend at home and send troops to Mýto, and he cannot accomplish both. That is why he has grief and great indignation for that which is far away, just as much as for that which is near. And the more he spreads out further across the Czech lands, the further he is from himself.

Wherever he has something, he has his heart in it according to the words of the Savior, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6: 21) When people have their hearts in such far-flung things, their hearts rise and fall with the things. If the things increase and prosper, the heart lifts itself up in them with boasting, delight, and hopefulness. If the things perish and are destroyed, the heart also languishes with sorrow and humiliation. These things are temporal and subject to change, and the more a person spreads himself further out in them, the more he goes further away from himself and heaps up greater change and instability for himself.

Therefore, when the apostle teaches faithful people about spiritual battle against the cunning devil, he commands them to have their loins tucked up so that their clothing does not drag along far from them. When the devil sees that a person has many earthly things around himself and that he has his heart in them all, the devil approaches the person's heart from anywhere he wants according to his cunning connivance. He approaches from a distance and wherever he sees rot from those things in which his heart is entangled, and he takes hold of his heart in depravity with those things. The devil is able to deceive and ensnare a person because his access and power is in what the heart is attached to. He binds it to himself and has it for his profit. Seeing that a person is attached to something for its usefulness, the devil corrupts his heart through it, leading him into other snares. A person does not establish those things for life as desired, but the devil sets a person up for death through those things. They will not be his wealth; they will be his poverty because he made a fishing hook out of them for his enemy so that he is trapped by them. The enemy finds a person's heart distracted by them, and if he spreads them out widely, the heart cannot find anything at home, and that is a charge against him because he does not keep the commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart …" (Matthew 22: 37), and so on.

For that reason the apostle commands a person to tuck up the loins of his mind in the spiritual battle so that it does not trail about around him like clothing and the enemy does not ensnare, overthrow, and kill him because he is strewn out far from himself. When he is tucked up spiritually so that he is temperate and has everything together in his heart, the devil does not have access to it through those things. In Písek, preparing for the battle, they first of all singed the entire outskirts of the city so that their besieging enemies could not defend and cover themselves behind it. They could defend themselves with the walls better this way, decimating the strength of their enemies. Here too, when a person does not make a garrison against himself out of those earthly things, shutting himself up in his heart, he has the greatest power against the devil and does not give him access to himself in anything through those things. That is why the Savior says, "So therefore whoever of you who doesn't renounce all that he has, he can't be my disciple." (Luke 14: 33) A person, if he does not deny himself, cannot learn these things that the Lord Jesus teaches. He divests himself of Christ's teaching and will not be His disciple if he would only learn but not continue in them, because the devil approaches through those earthly things and he will readily and willingly free himself from the faith of Christ and love for others. He will have sunk into stinginess, greed, laziness, debauchery, and many other wrongs. It is certain that people cannot go into God's battle with those things, because the devil ruins everything and blinds through them, seeing that people are bound to them and love the fleshly life they provide. Therefore, he also takes hold of them in many iniquities and sees that we are liars and that our hearts are not with God. He quickly inflicts wickedness on us through those things, seeing that our hearts do not seek God but those things, and he renders us powerless. The more we set about multiplying those things, the less spiritual power we have within us. But the more we break free of those things, the stronger and more secure we are.

That is why the apostle says in another place, "Every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they [do it] to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." (1 Corinthians 9: 25 KJV) The apostle clearly calls the physical battle to mind as an example of how those people are temperate in all things, wanting to strive in the battle such that they do not have anything they do not need. Such baggage would weigh them down, keep them occupied, or hinder them. Instead, they only have armor and a weapon, since they are useful to them in the battle. He says that they undergo such labors and distresses of life in order to obtain a corruptible reward that will pass away and decay–money, a robe, horses, and apparel. That is their corruptible reward. But we have a spiritual battle and an eternal reward in heaven. How much more should we watch over ourselves in those things that would hinder us in this more painstaking battle, and for such a precious reward! Where is that kind of ready and fearless heart in us that would so readily risk all things for eternal life, just like vain people risk all things and run in those physical battles, wanting to preserve and defend the petty goods of life? They will divest themselves of life for such worthless things. And who is assured with salvation when they fight each other so bloodily for wealth?

The apostle also says to Timothy, his disciple, "No man who makes war entangles himself with the affairs of [this] life; that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strives for masteries, [yet] is he not crowned, unless he strives lawfully." (2 Timothy 2: 4–5 KJV) Here again the apostle teaches and urges Christ's faithful servant and spiritual soldier that he should labor in God's battle. He says that no person fighting for God in His spiritual battle entangles himself in worldly things. It is necessary to emphasize this for those who want to go into this battle. He says not to entangle themselves, because whoever wants to have worldly things with tranquility and manage them must give them care and diligence. In the same way that they will be careful for worldly possessions, they will be entangled in them. They will

not rule over them; they will be ruled by them. They will tangle their hearts and lives up in them so that they will not have any peace or freedom of conscience. Those things will hold them like knitting between knitting needles. The apostle says why such people should not entangle themselves in worldly things, and that is so that they may please Him who has chosen them–that is, that they please God whom they are fighting for. People entangled in the world cannot please God, because they do not have their hearts with them but in those things in which they are entangled.

And then he states:

"And if a man also strives for masteries, [yet] is he not crowned, unless he strives lawfully." (2 Timothy 2: 5 KJV) That is, he will not receive rewards if he is not courageous and wise in battle, fighting earnestly, not running away, not making others afraid, and not causing them confusion in the battle. A person must throw off fleshly fear and put to death everything that falls into his hands that much more here in the spiritual battle. Otherwise, the battle against spiritual enemies will not be proper, leading him to make peace with his spiritual enemies instead of killing them. Such spiritual enemies are worldly and fleshly desires, and the devil makes them sweet to the heart so that one will not want to put them to death for their pleasantness but to be at peace with them. When a man does not put them to death due to his pleasure in them, they, being alive in the flesh and in the heart, have no mercy on him but immediately torment him in the soul. His fighting will not be proper if he does not want to put them to death. Again, he fights improperly when he is entangled and encumbered with worldly things and does not comprehend the spiritual battle. That is why he sometimes puts up resistance and then weakens. Not understanding the battle, he falls into the enemies' hands or runs away whimpering and, because of that, he will not receive rewards.

That is why the apostle speaks of all the important things about the spiritual battle here. The beginning of the discourse is about us tucking up our loins, and it is necessary to tuck up the loins of

one's thoughts in the aforementioned things. It is also necessary to be tucked up from the love of worldly people, because the adulterous heart clings there perniciously and is led away from God. The devil leads into grave snares through the love of camaraderie and fleshly friends, but a person does not easily recognize that because it is a pleasurable thing to have the favor of many friends. The devil seizes a person in much evil because he wants to be pleasing to others. Such friends lead one another into evil things for pleasure and look for praise from one another. Not only is it evil because of things that can be explicitly seen, but also because the devil has a footing in the love of friends and camaraderie. He ruthlessly approaches people from a distance so that iron wills are broken and they deviate from faith through those affections. It is certainly made clear to us that many have turned away from faith for the love of fleshly friends and friendships and permit those things that are clearly against God's commandments. They are entangled in serious things because they do not easily get out of them. What grave falls have occurred for the affections that are evident in some spiritual people–loss of virginity, widowhood, spiritual peace, many virtues, a good conscience, and the introduction of serious offenses in people–and that all for the love of illustrious friends and friendships!

The devil works all of this immodestly–and not only through affection itself. He also has other devious and unassuming inroads to people through it. Because his cunning stands behind that affection for a long time until he gets what he wants and turns a person away from a good beginning, intention, and peace of heart, the Savior, knowing that it is not possible for people to remain close to God, also says, "If anyone comes to me, and does not hate his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he can't be my disciple." (Luke 14: 26) Those are dreadful words to the one who would fear them, when he cannot be His disciple. That matter is not altered for any selfjustification. Though someone would say, "I cannot leave that love behind," or,

will not be preachers who have a determination like the apostle's within them. The priests are able to speak a lot about long-suffering and give simple people hard penance, but those big-nosed prelates do not want to touch it with a finger themselves.

Amen.

"They are very dear"–in other words, "That love is not hurting me, so I can serve God and have that love"–the truth is more unyielding than these justifications. When He says that he cannot, that ought to be believed and not the excuses of fleshly people. As Saint James declares, "You adulterers and adulteresses, don't you know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." (James 4: 4) The apostle also says, "For if I were still pleasing men. I wouldn't be a servant of Christ." (Galatians 1: 10)

It is clearly stated in those scriptures that, when a person does not reject the love of friends and other worldly people, he is always the enemy of God. However, a person would uselessly carry on with many other endeavors, wanting to serve God that way, for that affection snatches a person's heart and gives it to the world and the devil. The devil also gets at a person through such affection, since he would not have inroads to him so easily otherwise. For that reason, the apostle commands one to be tucked up so that he himself does not send his heart away from itself through such affection. He has it at home and does not lose battles by having his heart in many people. Those people who have their hearts in the world drag them around in the world and the devil through affections. When the devil cannot approach a heart himself, he approaches it through a friend and destroys it. That is why it is necessary to be tucked up in such affections so that the mind does not err and is not deceived.

We can also understand about some walks of life and positions in which the heart sorely takes leave of itself. A woman clings tenaciously to a man with love–and a man to a woman–and later both to the children and to the household so that the heart is not easily with itself when it is always taking care of something and expending itself, wanting everything to be done properly. There is much unrest and anger when things do not go as planned. The devil easily approaches that heart through those things and conquers it. It also happens to those who are officials. They must be busy for others,

too, somewhere else, outside of themselves and not at all at home with their hearts. And this all is like long clothing, dragging on the ground far behind a person. Whoever would want to kill such a person captures him by that immodest gown, since it drags on the ground and gets the better of him. An unrestrained mind is also not effective in God's battle, having let its desires loose in many things and being undressed in this way.

We should tuck the loins of our minds up in yet another way: that is, having diligent vigilance within us, keeping in mind and judging everything according to truth, discerning and looking all around us with our internal eyes to see what is happening around us. The devil has many entrances to our hearts through our faculties and senses. Those entrances are the beginnings of evil thinking, the desires and drives in our hearts; they are unrest and divided hearts. Therefore, whoever tucks his mind up so that it does not wander everywhere weighs everything that enters it with understanding and immediately takes up the battle against evil things, and will easily overcome them. A person has temptations conceived in the heart through some pride or delusion entering the mind, commences the battle against them, and immediately overcomes them when they are conceived. But that can only take place in those who stand attentively, watching over what enters their hearts. Above all, clear understanding awakens in the person who has the fear of God within him. Such a person sees this entire world full of all evil like an instrument of sin and delusion.

The parts of our bodies that are the clothing of sin are not evil by themselves, for it is not evil to see or hear or speak. It is the heart and the vain world, which are there in the midst of those parts, that corrupt them. The devil is the craftsman of all wickedness and leads and governs the whole world so that it heads his way in all things. Everyone follows after him such that they exist and live their lives to make others fall. When many evil people consort together so awfully, the person who needs salvation sees and hears all that and has friendship with it, dwelling in the midst of that evil. That person

But out of humility, this holy person admonishes others that they ask God for him to give him that gift, so that by it he could make manifest the mystery of the gospel, which is hidden in the prophetic scriptures, the Old Testament, and the words of the mystics. The gospel is every truth in the scriptures that testifies of Christ and His ways. That is why the apostle asked for that gift from the Lord God. He wanted to make the truth from those scriptures manifest to people in order to confirm the Lord Jesus Christ fully in them. That way, he would not be moved by any temptations, sins, errors, clever lies about the Lord Christ, or some disbelief. He asked for that gift so that he could speak fearlessly, not fearing any dismay or doubts, because a special gift is necessary to be able to establish Christ in bewildered people through the truth of the gospel. But whoever does not understand the gospel himself prospers in it like the person who learned to embroider with silk on rags.

The apostle also asked to proclaim the pure gospel, for which he sat in chains while speaking the message. But dear Saint Paul, this will damage the charade our priests are playing. Sitting on their cushions, they do not suppose that they should bear the apostle's message in the apostle's manner, instead proclaiming the gospel for 40 kopa per year. They speak the gospel message in the in the castle in Prague and in other cities, but this poor man (the apostle) was in chains, not in safety behind the moat or the city walls. The priests went to the village of Vavák, where there is desolation today because they led the people into error. They plundered and fought, and the priests–those evil tenants–fled to cities protected by walls and moats, where they conducted wars against one another using the people with whom they are shut up there. But the apostle speaks the message of the gospel in chains, not on beds of down, not over roast turkey, and not in other pleasures. He preached the gospel better in chains than what the priests accomplish in long gowns today. He benefited those people in chains and led them–many people–in the gospel. The gospel will not do any good or reveal the Lord Jesus Christ and His ways to people if there

because there are many blind teachers. When these kinds of spiritual people do not operate with faith according to God's gifts and the revelation of spiritual light, but simply according to literary writings, they cannot comprehend any written words–even though there will be many such writings and it is not possible for them to grasp the true meaning of faith without the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We see it clearly in such leaders today, that they only work on collecting many books written by various intellectuals. Whenever they find out about something new, they immediately buy it and pay a lot of money for it because it is written for people like them. They are lifted up in pride when they collect many of these scholarly books, as if they were already very competent. But they do not exercise anything of faith in collecting those many books–first because they cannot understand them, and second because those many intellectuals do not agree with each other. Some interpret the scriptures directly according to faith, and others slacken off and incompetently record and interpret things erroneously because they themselves have led evil lives. That is why these kinds of immature people, reading in many of those books, do not grow up in faith. What one intellectual strictly admonishes about priestly poverty (that they should not have riches) the next one eases up on again (that they can have riches). And so they conduct themselves in opposition about many aspects of faith.

Therefore, a priesthood that is founded on books is never put in order, but becomes more confused in understanding. For that reason, they cannot speak about anything true by faith and do not follow the way of the apostles. They pray to God themselves, or relying on others praying for them, to give them His gift so that they can show forth the secret understandings of the written gospel. But they still do not know the truths of the gospel, having relied on many books and thinking that, through them, they would know everything. Because of that they err like blind people groping around next to a cliff.

has an evil heart within himself. It lays hold of everything it sees, hears, or touches, occupying itself with everything and engaging itself in that strange deviant depravity. It will be destroyed with that depravity and wrapped up in the wickedness around it through its senses. That is why the person who fears God must watch over it, watching himself and considering everything through the true light of understanding. That person recognizes where some harm could come to him from afar and does not engage his heart in that evil which is around him. The exceedingly evil and crooked heart stands in the midst of the senses and, because of all that the eyes see that please or tickle the heart, or because of what the hands touch, grievous thinking gets into the evil heart and it falls. Women take a hard fall for men in their affections by sight most of all, and men again too, because by touching women's bodies they will immediately be bombarded with evil thoughts. Therefore, the very parts or senses of our bodies are the clothing of sin, the evil heart's messengers and its gateways, so that the whole world moves into the heart through those senses.

For this reason, the person who wants to fight in battle must tuck this all up, watch over it prudently, and guard the parts of his body with fear so that he does not look about, listen all over the place, and attach himself to everything, but instead turn away from detrimental things. He must also be alert, minding everything in understanding (most of all that evil heart) so that he does not fall asleep, watching out for what is beginning to be dreamt up in it. He must also be alert and assess the devil's approaches–from whom or when some such danger would be–since the heart could fall into such depravity through sight, hearing, speaking, touching, or enormous attachment to something. That must all be tucked up, placing emphasis on being awake and taking everything into consideration with forethought (which things proceed from where and what they are born from). One then immediately resists them so that, growing stronger, those destructive things do not ensnare the heart and create unrest or some evil root in temptation, because it would not

be so easily remedied later, even with remorse. That is why he commands us to tuck up the loins of our minds in truth, watching over and carrying everything out in truth–so that we are not careless, evilly negligent, unrestrained and spread out in this way, involving ourselves in, fraternizing with, and getting our noses stuck in everything, forgetting ourselves and falling into harm. Otherwise we will not make it in this battle when we let our minds loose everywhere.

Then the apostle commands:

"Having put on the breastplate of righteousness," which is necessary in battle, the whole body is protected from the blows of the enemy. That must be the righteousness that surrounds the entire body with good works and protects every empty place. However, there is not enough time to talk at length now about that because the apostle includes all virtues in that word righteousness. Even though the fulfillment of the law is love, it is easier for us to understand it when he distinctly explains that sometimes we speak about patience, humility, mercy, silence, being peaceable, exertion, carefulness, faithfulness, restraint, and purity. We also call it righteousness when such things are in people, because a person is righteous through those virtues. Wherever there are such virtues, they cover a person from all sides so that the enemy is unable to strike, for the devil has a place to strike at a person wherever righteousness does not cover. But I cannot explain those virtues in this discourse because they are sparse in me according to my works.

Nevertheless, I will touch on righteousness a little bit. It is said that righteousness is given to each person as is fitting for him, and also to one's neighbor. Though it would be fitting to give a lot to God, a poor person cannot give much when he himself needs to be comforted by His wealth and take nourishment from His hand. But still, the righteousness that is fitting is when He receives what we have, because it is righteous when we meditate on all of the goodness we have received from Him, give Him praise and thanks, and return it all to Him again. We are created by Him and redeemed

debt. The devil understands how he has access to us, because we betray ourselves to him through laziness and doing God's works abominably. He understands what things he can accomplish in a person who he finds so half-hearted in battle. The devil afflicts him as soon as he catches sight of the nearest cause for evil.

Then the apostle insists that they pray for him and for the saints who labor here in good works and trials. The reason they should pray for the saints is so that they stand firm in goodness, because God's commandment is that they love one another. Therefore, because of that commanded love, they should pray for one another that they might be saved, remaining in goodness. But the apostle commands them to pray for him with good reason. He points out the particular need for which he requests that they pray for him, saying, "…that utterance may be given to me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the Good News." In those words the apostle demonstrates that there is no sufficiency in him to be able to learn these kinds of things and make the mystery of the gospel known. Such ability must be a particular gift of God. And I say particular because not every gift is sufficient for that. The apostle had God's gift for preaching the gospel, but did not have the complete gift at that moment to know the mystery and wisdom of God and make them manifest to others for their good. Such secrets were not revealed to the apostles so plainly without their own and other saints' prayers for them.

Spiritual battle is too awful for us unsafe people unless we pray to God that He would give us His gifts to make the mystery of the gospel manifest. That is why we are useless, powerless, and insincere and exhibit many heresies through the gospel–not only because of the limits of unfamiliar words and understandings, but we ourselves are dead and desolate. For that reason, we do not make the mystery of the gospel's hidden truth plain. Instead, we sow the heresies that were hidden by the devil a long time ago under the pretext of the gospel, just as great evil and perilous things are renowned in the Czech lands in these days, which came about

Saint Peter says, "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment." (2 Peter 2: 9) Therefore, since the Lord God wants to deliver us from temptation, we should place great hope in Him and always pray to Him that He would watch over and deliver us from Satan's wickedness.

Then the apostle commands us to be alert in Him with all diligence. It is all-important to be diligently alert in the battle, to look to Him, and to remain in Him properly in every aspect of faith and love so that we understand the faith and His commandments correctly. We ought to be alert so that we understand Him correctly. We should also be alert in Him, watching out that we are not snatched away from Him. For that reason, we should always have a strict watch over ourselves in everything we do and in everything that is around us, so that the devil does not wickedly approach our hearts at close range, see us self-assured and carefree, and wound us with a mortal blow where we would not get healthy again.

The apostle says further, "with all diligence." These are all important things for the battle that this discourse is about, because lazy people are not suitable for it and laziness is the devil's clothing against a person. Even though the devil would not have access to us any other way, he has it very easily through laziness because he gets at the whole person by being clothed in it. But diligence accumulates much goodness and compels God to do good to us, as He Himself says, "He who seeks finds." (Luke 11: 10) Again He says, "For whoever has, to him will be given, and he will have abundance" (Matthew 13: 12), that is, to the one who has desire, diligence, and faith. That is why diligence is necessary for us in everything, because this life is given to us so that we reach eternal life through painstaking labors and many temptations. Diligence is also necessary in everything because of the devil, so that we do not give him any grounds against us by forsaking goodness and doing good things abominably. That way, he will not identify insincere halfheartedness in us, or see that we are doing God's works as a

by the precious blood of his dear Son so that we are His peculiar people for His honor. We are redeemed by His holy blood from the falsehood of life so that we no longer serve sin but the living God with a pure conscience, being washed from our evil consciences in the blood of His Son. We therefore abolish that mortality within us which defames God, exalts itself, and corrupts the power of the Holy Spirit in us and the spiritual life in the inner man. We ought to lean on that righteousness most of all, so that we do not despise the purchase of His Son's blood because of the corruption of our flesh, properly identifying the ways of the flesh so that we take all care to put that corruption to death within us. But, because we often speak about it, the ways of the corrupted flesh should already be familiar to us. Because its ways are lewd and shameless, the ways of the flesh are obvious. They are seeking pleasure, ease, promotion, liberties, and vengeance, crookedness, evasiveness, disregard for goodness, lying down in laziness, pouring oneself into worthless things, caring and laboring for food, evil fear and shame, love of gain, incessant unrest because of the world, comparison with the world, great faithlessness toward God, and that which can be called hateful and loveless. Therefore, understanding that, we ought to put them to death in ourselves through the grace of God so that we do not corrupt God's work with the multifaceted death within us, disgracing Him in this way. We should give ourselves to Him from our whole hearts in obedience with all of our lives and works.

It is also righteousness when we profess that God's Son gave His life up in a cruel death for the love of our souls so that we are also bound by that debt to lay our lives down for him in all difficulties and distresses–and, if it is His will, that we lay our lives down in death for Him. It is also righteousness that we do not accept the gifts we have received from God in vain but that we tend them, seeking His praise and the multiplication of good works through them. Then, nothing in us is in vain–the strength of our lives, the abilities we have, and our vocations–and all is sacrificed in truth and in actuality. We should likewise always show gratitude to Him

that He condescended to do such great good for us, who are so undeserving. Returning to Him again with what we have taken from Him will be righteousness. When we are created by Him and are His redeemed, it is righteous that we keep ourselves for Him and are alive to Him in everything as He commands us. We should give ourselves to Him as much as our strength is sufficient, being subject to Him, hoping in Him, and requesting help from Him so that we are His people and He our God. It is also righteous, when we fall into something unrighteous, that we make ourselves righteous again in the blood of His Son, making repentance and humbling ourselves before Him for that evil. He makes righteousness from the sinful in His Son's blood.

When people have such righteousness towards God, giving Him that which belongs to Him according to that which is spoken in the discourses, such people have the entire and sufficiently strong breastplate, shielding the entire body so that the devil will not be able to strike a mortal blow. It is not only the righteousness of man but it is God's righteousness when He makes the sinful man righteous in His Son's blood and He keeps him with His power and grace so that the devil does not reach him and touch him with his cruel wickedness.

Then the Savior showed us the righteousness that is toward our neighbors and with which we are debtors to them in that discourse where he says, "Therefore whatever you desire for men to do to you, you shall also do to them; for this is the law and the prophets." (Matthew 7: 12) Here the Lord Christ clearly shows us righteousness that we can perceive and judge in ourselves–if it is great or small or what it consists of. We always want good for ourselves from people without ever considering it, wanting no evil from others. Therefore, the Lord Jesus serves us with this law and wants us to behave towards other people in the same way that we want good for ourselves. I am saying that according to the truth, as mundane good things matter to the most insignificant person. But evil, avaricious, and unloving people behave differently. When they grieve

that utterance may be given to me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the Good News, for which I am an ambassador in chains…" Prayer is also very necessary for this spiritual battle and for that reason he speaks about prayer after the sword. The Savior also said, "Pray, that you don't enter into temptation." (Matthew 26: 41) This entire spiritual battle hinges on temptation and those who want to enter into this battle should pray, because all the armor he named earlier is not enough for this battle against the devil. I am saying that God's armor does not always suffice against such cruel and cunning hatred. It does not suffice because of our inadequacy in that we are not completely clothed in that armor at all times. It also cannot suffice because no person's goodness here on earth has the power to stand against the devil's cruel power, but God's highest power itself guards a person against the devil's cruel wickedness.

Therefore, neither understanding nor being able to enter into the battle by ourselves, we should pray to God, always asking for wisdom, strength, and help. And not only help, but that He would condescend to keep us from the devil's great cunning, since it is beyond our strength and perception, and that He would complete what He began to do in us according to His own work and infinite grace. He has redeemed us from the hand of that cruel devil without our deserving it and will likewise perfect us in His mercy. We should diligently clothe ourselves in this armor of God, on which we rely to cut off our enemy the devil and his great wickedness, so that that which is within our strength and vigilance is not lacking. We should pray to God for what we do not have enough of and that He would strengthen and deliver us from the devil's hands. It is certain that, when a person understands this peril and calls to God, asking help from Him, the devil does not have the power to tempt a person above that which he is able to resist. God has infinite pity on a person, does not allow him to be tempted beyond what he can bear, and will bring good about through the temptation of the person who prays for deliverance from the strength of the enemy. As

devil deceives him, injuring him while his sword is sheathed. The devil pulls that out of the word, injures him, and leads him to violate scripture by it. That which should be have been life to him leads him into death, approaching him through scripture with the cherished things of his heart. That is why the sword of God's word must be sharpened with God's wisdom and spiritual understanding. Then it can penetrate through the devil's cunning sheathing, lift the hood off him that conceals his eyes, discern his cunning shroud through the wisdom of God, recognize that it is the devil beneath it, and stand on the path of God's wisdom.

That is why the apostle says, "Take … the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." It is not the sword of the flesh but of the Spirit. Therefore, the one who is alive according to the Spirit understands that sword and can fight with it against the cunning and spiritual devil. But blind and fleshly people cannot defend themselves against the devil in that battle because they do not see him, being in his darkness. The apostle is not preparing people here for physical battle. That is why he does not command them to take a physical sword. The apostle teaches the Romans that they should be subject to the pagan government, and the apostle says about Caesar's sword that "he doesn't bear the sword in vain." (Romans 13: 4) Sometimes government fells many holy people's heads with that sword, just as the Caesar's sword cut off Saint Paul's head. But it is not completely in vain, because God sometimes uses it in avenging those who opposed Him. That word where it is said, "he doesn't bear the sword in vain," is not the word of eternal life. The word, "Take the sword of the Spirit," is the word of eternal life. Whoever has that sword of the Spirit can beat all mortal and spiritual enemies with it. But God can also put the living to death and send them to hell with the one that Caesar does not wield in vain.

And the apostle further says:

"Take the helmet of salvation … with all prayer and requests, praying at all times in the Spirit, and being watchful to this end in all perseverance and requests for all the saints: on my behalf,

and hurt others, they also say they want the same from others, but they are liars in that. It cannot be that people would fulfill those words the other way around, doing despicable things to others and saying that they also want that for themselves from others. A person will hardly find even enough goodness within them such that, when they do evil, they allow themselves to be punished for it. Instead, they do not stand for being punished themselves or tolerate unpleasantness from others. That is why it should not be believed that, doing unpleasant things to others, people would say that they themselves also want to receive the same unpleasantness from others.

There are also other people who, contrary to this declaration of the law of Christ, prefer not to receive anything loving from others so that they themselves are not obliged to do anything for anyone out of love. That is why they balk and do not enter into the law of Christ where He says, "whatever you desire for men to do to you, you shall also do to them." They prefer not to receive that which they would want so that they themselves also do not have to do anything for others. They are used to living according to the lovelessness of this world, the intentions of avaricious people, and the obligations of trade and debt in everything. They do not have mercy on whoever they have power over, but bind them with wages while wringing as much as they can out of them. They do not consider strength or life–only their own profit in the work. That is why such unloving things are against these words of the Lord Jesus. Either they do not receive love themselves because of not wanting to give themselves to others in love, or they buy a person for themselves with wages and clutch at his life without love, putting inordinate strain on him. It does not seem to such people that they should show love in that which they hire, agree on for money, and pay for. But those who love God will be recognized in the good, helpful, honorable, and saving things they want people to do to them and they should lay their lives down for others according to their strength in such aforementioned things.

And not only according to their strength–they should give themselves for others in their own needs. When someone would not easily ask a person, he should give of himself in what he can. When he would learn of obvious or hidden need, he should immediately and willingly give what will be of benefit. Because a person wants others to speak well of him and not to defame, dishonor, insult, berate, think evil of, steal from, harm, embarrass, or betray him, he also wants love, help, edification, good advice, faithful instruction, avoidance of evil, and loving co-existence. He also wants people not to hurt or shame him, put temptation before him, mislead him in his salvation, or trickily seduce him from the truth. A person wants this all for himself from other people, and he should likewise give himself to others for their benefit with good intentions in love according to his strength and ability. I say "in love" because it is not valid otherwise. Those who do not have love within themselves but endlessly expend themselves for one another as payback–not according to God's love but their own love–also do similar things. They have fleshly, amicable, earthly love for themselves and they do not bemoan work, money, comfort, or their lives for that love. But such things that come from the desires of a corrupt heart are hideous before God. It is particularly fitting for us to speak of selfless love because it has its root in God, is beneficial for people, and is virtuous. That godly love should not be like when a person would first wait for something good from someone and also want to do him good as well, being moved by that goodness. Instead, he should know that he has the commandment from God that he should love his neighbor and lay his life down according to that commandment so that he does good to everyone, whoever he would see in some need. With that need he could be just as if he himself would thankfully accept it in his own need, for that commandment should not be followed in the receiving of something good from others but in giving of oneself to others for their good. When we receive something good from others it moves us to do them good again. Then a person

take this spiritual sword. They hear its sharpness and how they can wound the devil from a great distance in his secret and cunning work when they would ask for true understanding from God in His word. But if they do not have the knowledge of God's word within themselves, they hardly draw that sword when the devil reveals himself. The Lord God will give the abundance of His wisdom to whoever loves His word from the heart and asks for understanding. He would not give it confined like a sheathed sword but in the fullness of the light of truth. He gives it for the knowledge of all true things according to His riches so that we would have true judgment in everything, just as the light of truth shows us everything. What is more. He gives it so that we truly know ourselves, His ways, and the perils of the world in which we dwell. God's word will be living and more piercing than any two-edged sword here, because it knows all secrets. That is why, when that hateful devil would slink around secretly wanting to ruin our homes as is fitting of a thief at night, the householder has many servants who watch over it (that is, true understanding). He is ready with that spiritual sword against his devilish enemy, who cleverly hands some pleasurable thing clothed with goodness, usefulness, necessity, or something clearly evil, just like the Savior pulled that sword out against him, resisting him with scripture in everything he commanded Him to do against scripture. Such cunning always works against us, allowing what is against scripture into our hearts. That is why it is necessary for us to faithfully understand scripture so that, when the devil cunningly approaches us himself or through his messengers and hands us something against scripture, we immediately oppose him with the wisdom of scripture so that he does not lead us astray. But, because the devil does not approach us in such a way that he is exposed, he does his hateful work secretly. When he sees that a person knows scripture but neglects it or does not understand it, the devil approaches him with it cunningly and hands him some pleasant desire hidden by that scripture. The person then grabs hold of it as if finding some useful truth and the

little of it. Then a lot of disbelief, care, labor, and unrest are covered up behind that thought and desire. Deeply rooted greed will always appear from the heart because someone, eating three times more, will not exhibit such great evidence of greed from it. The devil also approaches us poor people with that greed unnoticeably, but we have a well-sharpened sword that we can use against the devil.

The devil also tempted the Lord Savior with pride and avarice, and He defended Himself against it all with scripture so that the devil did not overpower Him. We can also overcome our fleshly sins with scripture when the devil would approach–and what is more, with the scriptures of the New Testament, which God gives a person to understand because they lead people clearly into humility, long-suffering, love, and faith. People should remember such scriptures and ask God to give them understanding in them in order that they could stand against the devil with them. But when there are temptations they must be diligent to seek refuge in the gospel, to strengthen themselves, and to come back to their hearts. Of what use is scripture when people neglect to read and converse about it, and in temptation most of all? It is like a useful sword left lying at home when its owner is on the battlefield fighting against enemies, having nothing to strike with. He will fall into their hands. Such will also happen to us because of neglect.

God's word is a great thing in those who contemplate it diligently, and such people can get to know and overcome a great deal of the devil's hatefulness with scripture. For that reason Saint Paul says, "For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and is able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Hebrews 4: 12) The apostle means that such clear words of God find everything out that is hidden in a person, such as thoughts and intentions. God's word inquires into all of that–the nature of thoughts and intentions, what desires are born of and where they lead–because it sharply goes through all secrets. These words are fitting for those who want to

does not know if he is doing something because he first received something good or if he is doing it because the love commanded by God leads him to it. Therefore, a person must watch himself in what he does so that he is led in it by the commandment of God and His grace and not by the good thing he received first from his neighbor. When the apostle calls righteousness a breastplate in the spiritual battle, it should not come out of a corrupted fleshly heart or following some goodwill. Instead, it should spring from the love of God, since it would not be conceived for itself but would be moved by God's love in a neighbor's need. In the same way, that spiritual breastplate should be proven as far as love for ones' enemies as it is fitting, and a person can demonstrate love to them in their spiritual or bodily needs. Our love for our neighbor is not certain in those who are dear to us when we cannot have love for those who are not loveable to us.

Therefore, the apostle commands us to put on the breastplate of righteousness in this difficult battle–not the righteousness of this world but God's, because it can stand up in this battle. Human righteousness does not stand up in this battle because the strong devil rips everything open and scrutinizes who loves from a corrupted heart. Purely human love will not be detrimental to him. He is not afraid of it because it will be helpful to him, but love from a true heart is what the apostle calls a breastplate in this battle of spiritual love between neighbors. Just as there should not be holes anywhere in a breastplate, he therefore calls that righteousness towards God and one's fellow man a breastplate. Just like there are many things joined together in a breastplate (one circlet is joined to another and so there must be many of them until a suitable breastplate is made), so also this entire righteousness towards one's fellow man is woven together from many acts of love for one another so that there is not an empty hole left anywhere. It also should not be holey either because of little love, since sometimes a person loves his neighbor when he has a good mood, when there is nothing detrimental to fleshly gain, and when he does not have to expend effort

on it. That is all little love, as is love that is inconsistent. All such love is impure. It is impure, too, when something besides God is loved. The entire and true breastplate is necessary in this battle. That savvy warrior, Žižka[6], cannot shoot at it, but Satan is more cunning in battle than one-eyed Žižka because he sees farther. That is why there must be this kind of righteousness, so that a person weighs everything correctly because of it–what he should do or share in, with whom, and where and what to associate with them about. One should conduct himself towards them like this so that he would choose his own hurt before theirs and be everything to everyone in that which he is able and that which is according to truth. He should not cause anyone to fall, either in an offence or an intentional grievance, which should be as far away as possible from him. He should be a help to everyone in what he can. He should also conduct himself towards enemies in this way as the Lord Jesus commands. In the same way, there should be righteousness towards God so that the entire person and all the parts of his life are engaged in goodness. Then, the devil does not find a place without righteousness in such a person and does not strike at him that way.

The apostle speaks here about the desires they have:

Then the apostle commands us to have our feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace, and he instructs us to have that specific clothing on our feet so that they are not injured or muddied. Everyone interprets and speaks about spiritual feet being desires, so that they are led and mastered according to the gospel in truth, shod with understanding. For that reason, the

[6] Jan Žižka was a Czech general and Hussite leader who led the Bohemian civil wars of the early 15th century. He died of the plague in 1424 and his dying wish was to have his skin used to make drums so that he might continue to lead his troops even after death. He was so well regarded that his soldiers called themselves the Orphans because they felt like they had lost their father, and his enemies said that "The one whom no mortal hand could destroy was extinguished by the finger of God."

peril comes to those people who know scripture but detrimentally, without the Spirit of God. Such people will also fall into the devil's hands with that scripture. That it why it seems to me that the people who fear God employ scripture with humility and gladly listen to God's word wherever it is expounded on by trustworthy teachers so that they use it like a sword against the devil. They listen to what is explained about rejection of the world, the fleshly life, and the vain praise of this world most of all. We have the example from our Savior, how He fought with the devil in those things that pertained to the fleshly life and praise of this world and overcame in everything with God's word. When a person comprehends the futility of this world and its corrupted existence from God's word, he can also defend himself against the devil with the wisdom of the Holy Scripture.

That is why the devil tempted the Savior first of all with greed and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." (Luke 4: 3) And the Lord Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4: 4) It is fitting to consider that the devil tempted the Lord Jesus Christ with greed. We should consider that for our own benefit because the Lord Jesus overcame greed, and we are not unwaveringly safe from the devil. Greed has its roots dug in deep because people know little about it and great disbelief occurs in people because of it. People search for unfailing security because of greediness in what food they obtain, and stinginess and cares grow out of that. But when a person would not be seduced by greed, what would possessions or some cares for fleshly things be to him? Where there are not riches, almost every concern of this world ensnares people in greed. For that reason, the devil has many approaches to a person from a distance through greed. It should not be understood about greed that it is only much eating and drinking of various expensive things. Greed is also in whatever kind of food or drink there is when a person wants to always have it safe and secure, even though it is simple and there is

own sword in a physical battle and cannot rely on that of his friend. The enemies will strike just as cruelly at him as at his friend. His friend, having a sword in hand, will repel them, but the other man will be defeated, not having a sword or anything to defend himself with. That is why everyone must know and understand God's word himself. God Himself will command the one who has that sword so that he readily meets that tyrant, the devil, with God's word in every temptation. One is also without a sword if he knows and remembers God's word, but does not comprehend it. It is a horror when someone knows scripture and does not understand it. The devil has made swords for himself against such a person because of that ignorance of scripture, and wounds him more seriously than if he was completely ignorant, not knowing anything. We see that evil before our eyes, how the devil has cut many people up with that sword much worse than through ignorance.

The apostle says great things here, calling God's word a sword. I believe that those people in Ephesus to whom he wrote these words were attentive to God's wisdom and His light, and could make themselves safe with that sword and cut off the cunning devil's temptations. Otherwise, he would have written in vain to blind and fleshly people. The human mind does not hesitate to take itself far away in scripture and will not stop until it searches the entire Bible and gets to know various scriptures. Some scriptures there appeal to the mind and the heart fearlessly lays hold of them according to its own will without the fear of God. It then goes into dark depths somewhere according to that scripture, not seeing daylight again. The devil does not sleep through that but makes a sword for himself out of that scripture and inflicts a cureless wound on that self-willed person. For that reason, I do not know how to safely expound about that sword here because I see dangers on both sides.

One danger comes when people do not have that sword because they do not know or understand what is written to them for their good. What will they defend themselves with without swords, when God's word is a spiritual sword against the devil? The second

gospel is called the good news or the law of perfect freedom. The good news is the giving of good and faithful promises. Good things were preached in that God sent His dear Son, the Savior of the world, so that we have eternal life through Him. Good things are pronounced through the truth of the gospel so that the truth is upheld, the world is condemned with its fallacies, and the "old man" is crucified. Many of those good things are announced by the truth of the gospel and spiritual feet are shod in it, as the readiness that comes from the gospel intends. When God was here in the flesh–poor, wretched, and hungry–He walked being in need and rejected by people. He suffered for our sins here and was like a pilgrim without a home, not having anywhere to lay His head, being hated by evil people, and shoved aside as unworthy by them right up to His death for us. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8: 20)

The gospel announces such things to us about the Son of God. That is why our desires that love honor, praise, luxury, physical ease, gluttony, vanity, the lust of the flesh, vile promotion above others, and revenge should be shod in this kind of readiness of the gospel. When a person faithfully considers what the gospel proclaims to us about us and our Savior, then we subdue those desires through that footwear, lining up with what we find in that gospel so that we reject the world with its vanity just as our Lord did, being in the flesh. Rejecting the world, he was likewise despised by the world. And just as he was scorned for us, let us also choose to be despised with Him by choosing poverty, humility, defamation, constraints, and unrest in the world with Him. When a person with faith seriously girds himself up and has his desires like virtuous and sound footwear, the world opposes that person in abhorrence and oppression like dung. Such a person sees the meaning of the entire gospel and what it leads to so that his desire is never shown to be without it like an unshod foot, for which a person would be ashamed before others. Therefore, the Lord God says to Jerusalem

through the prophet, "Take warning, O Jerusalem, or I will turn away from you. Keep your feet from being unshod.[7]" (Jeremiah 6: 8) The Lord God chastises Jerusalem for its wickedness, exposes its shamelessly naked feet, and says, "for according to the number of your cities are your gods…" (Jeremiah 2: 28) That was the shameless unshod foot of such pitiful craving for idolatry in the people who professed the one God, the Creator of the whole world. And such knowledgeable people, having intimate fellowship with God, taking many gifts from Him and being established in righteousness through His commandments and prohibitions, also were not ashamed for so many idols, bowing down to them and multiplying them on the mountains, thus maligning God and making their perverted desires naked for disgrace before all of the pagan nations. Therefore, God also says to them, "You have had a harlot's forehead[8]" (Jeremiah 3: 3), because, like a harlot, unashamed to expose her forehead and the figure of her whole body so whorishly, she will be recognized for such shameless lewdness. Her forehead, eyes, and entire sumptuousness bear witness to her debauchery. You have made yourself like that woman because of many idols, Jerusalem, like a forehead exposing its destitution, shamelessness, deviation from God, and the heinous stripping of those spiritual feet.

That is why she has ugly unshod spiritual feed in this discourse of God. Oh, how those spiritual feet are unshod among Christians and exposed to be plainly naked! These Christians are alive in the flesh and shamelessly fulfill its desires. Pride, stinginess, murder, thievery, and all falsehood call out brightly in the streets as shamelessly unshod and bare feet, for when a Christian prides himself in worldly things he exposes a naked foot. There are unshod, naked, and shamelessly displayed spiritual feet there for the eyes of all

[7] World English Bible: Be instructed, Jerusalem, lest my soul be alienated from you; lest I make you a desolation, a land not inhabited.

[8] World English Bible: You have a prostitute's forehead, you refused to be ashamed.

or have an innocent heart. Truth itself gives a person freedom and solace, and if a person does not have works, then he does not have the truth within him.

That is why it is particularly necessary that we should have the good works, that we place our hope in the God of all power and in His fathomless mercy, and that we perfect that hope and demonstrate the truth through the pursuit of good works. When the devil defeats a person in this area and extinguishes hope in him, he does not have it either according to good works or God's mercy. Being suffocated with confusion, evil thoughts and idleness enter and await some betterment that he is not sure will come. He wants to have hope in God even though he has good works, but when he cannot have hope in the infinite God, he will not conceive of laboring for good works. The more he moves away from hope, the more he constantly enters into greater confusion. That is why hope within him does not surround him on that side. Instead, he destroys and smothers it, neglecting good works and faltering in them. Though he had hope at the very beginning he smothers it there. But the good works that we can have enliven us so that hope is greater and stronger. Hope harmonizes with God, lifts our hearts up to Him, and leads us into greater endeavors for good works. Therefore, the devil will not be able to strike the head with a mortal wound if the head is tightly shielded with a helmet.

Then the apostle says:

Then the apostle commands us to take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The apostle commands us to take a weapon for this grievous battle and to hold it in readiness so that, when the devil would want to draw near from some side, we would immediately stretch the sword out towards him. God's word is rejected these days and there are few people who correctly understand it–His sword of the Spirit for this battle–and remember it. That is why it will not be enough that a learned person (a priest or prelate) knows scripture. A simple person in this battle must know and understand it himself, just as a person must have his

turn to God when there is not the true hope and expectation of eternal life. That is why the apostle calls hope a helmet, since it protects heads from mortal blows. The whole body languishes and lies sick when the head has a grave wound.

We should also understand by the Spirit that all works of the flesh are futile and dead when there is not that true hope. Without hope, these works are as delectable as food in vomit. That is why the devil is also painstaking with that blow in the head, knowing that that has a greater payoff than tempting with adultery. The devil knows that when he renders a blow to the head, he can then easily engage that corrupted person in adultery and other sins, for a hard fall into error and other sins is not far away. Hypocrisy, a cold heart, idleness in faith, and other sins are close at hand when he is destroyed like this in wrongdoing. That is why the apostle sings the praises of hope and says elsewhere, "For we are saved in hope" (Romans 8: 24), because everything that pertains to salvation will be brought to life in a person through hope. If a person loves God with pure love, he will attain salvation through true hope.

A person should transcend his own power and works because there is hope in him. Although we need to have good works for the consummation of hope. God effects our salvation without them according to His determination and grace. For that reason, eschewing works, we should have hope in the many graces and riches that He has towards us without measure for hope and salvation. There are no works sufficient for receiving eternal life, but the great treasure of God Himself is sufficient to save us without them. But that hope cannot remain in us without those works which we can have. When those works are not in us there is great imperfection in our souls, primarily because we do not have a whole heart for God. Our works testify about our hearts. Our perfect, sincere, and diligent works demonstrate that our hearts are true and wholly for God, and that we love God with our whole hearts. But spiritual contentment and a joyful spirit die out in a person who does not have such good works, because he cannot delight himself in God

onlookers when a Christian seeks out the lusts of the flesh, people's affections, greed in eating, a profusion of possessions, gratification in vain things, mirth, trickery, degradation, wildness in the freedom of the flesh, shamelessness, obscenity in speech, the mastery of the flesh, and ornate adornment of the body. In the eyes of people his feet stand handsomely, his trunk nice and tight, his arms with immaculate embroidered trims and with great sleeves, his head poised and face well recognized, and the kinds of similar things that can be exhibited. Therefore the Lord God also says, "Keep your feet from being unshod." In other words, do not expose their nakedness through imprudence and lack of the fear of God. That is why, when Bathsheba bared fleshly feet and spiritual David took fleshly slippers off of her feet, she stripped David of truth and blamelessness. David did not avert himself from bare-footedness and have his feet fitted in the way of the gospel. Therefore, he soiled such beautiful feet in adultery.

It also happens to us that our feet are not fitted spiritually. The eyes spot something, the foot of evil desire takes a step there, its iniquitous bare-footedness is plainly exposed, and that which is written is fulfilled in us, "My eye affects my soul…" (Lamentations 3: 51) The apostle, wanting to marshal the troops in the battle against hardships, commands us to fit our feet in the way of the gospel. Then, those feet will not go beyond the bounds of the gospel and show up somewhere besides where the gospel of truth shows them. The gospel marks that all out for them. The enemy we should fight with shoots precisely at what the feet of our desires would make plain, so that he approaches our hearts from that angle and baits those naked and clearly exposed desires with something perilous by which it can clamp down, our hearts not regarding it as evil. He disguises the knowledge of its peril so that the foot is exposed in some ugliness hateful to God, like a person who would put a naked foot outside the walls during an enemy siege. Then everyone takes aim there, wanting to shoot him in his unshod foot. They are vigilant in battle to stab in the foot if he does not have armor so that

he could not stand, run away on foot (being injured in the feet), or hold his feet in his stirrups. And so, falling down, he will be killed. That is why the devil does not quit taking greater pains against us, because he has greater cunning against us than these warriors. But wherever the desire of our bare-footedness is exposed, he immediately shoots at it there to wound it.

Therefore, fit your desires in the readiness of the gospel so that you correctly recognize, assess, and reject them through the gospel. Then, you can first recognize those that are evil, what they are evil in, and discern the ones that are harmful and the ones you must yield to (those demanding necessary things for the body, because we cannot suppress desires that are necessary for the body). But those desires are evil that are not necessary for the body but are, instead, solely for pleasure and the lust of the flesh. Such desires are prohibited by God and should be gotten rid of through the truth of the gospel so that, just as the gospel directs us to reject the world and its vanity, those desires that demand the vanities of this world should likewise also be rejected. That is why the apostle says here that our feet are fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace. He also refers to the gospel of peace because desires that are fitted in the gospel are immediately quieted from the vanity of the world. Those that are not fitted have enormous unrest, not being able to have anything in the world that would appease them. Many possessions do not satiate them and many women do not satiate a man's lustful desires (or men women's). The colors of drapery do not satisfy and neither do the softness of a gown, scents, the taste of expensive foods, praises, or promotions. All of these do not satiate our fleshly desires or placate them, but provoke and drive them more, ushering in restlessness. Because of that, the apostle commands us to fit our feet with the readiness of the gospel of peace, because only in and through the gospel are our desires placated and quelled. Peace on earth is announced to those who yield to the gospel. When evil desires are cast aside through the gospel, new and heavenly spiritual desires are born through it. Just as a person

It later leads a person into good works, many labors for good things, unshakeable long-suffering, forsaking the world, and despising all things in it. Hope expects bountiful rewards because of such long-suffering, knowing that this life is given because of God's promises and not according to the hope of this world. People have some fading hope in the world and in its goods, praises, and affections. They strive for such things painstakingly, wanting their hope to be unshakeable and to save them when all is said and done. However, they do not often find themselves with that hope like they wished, and they will awake as from a dream in the day of their death. But whoever has the hope of God's imperishable life takes much greater pains in goodness, because God established this time for them as a prize and will present it to them when that hope is demonstrated. No one can approach God and serve Him without this hope, for all of a person's aspirations will die when he does.

Someone would probably say, "A person should be able to serve God while not expecting anything from Him. He can serve God for His goodness while doing nothing evil himself." Those words are incorrect because people are unable to do that in the real world. Saint Paul loved God very much, but said, "If I fought with animals at Ephesus for human purposes, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, then "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." (1 Corinthians 15: 32) Holy people of long ago labored for good works and long-suffering because of hope and God's praise, and we should do the same. But, when true hope is not in a person, he shrugs off those works that pertain to salvation as a debt and only does them for the eyes of people. That person is glad to avoid whatever he can that is grievous, arduous, and disdainful, because hope does not incline him to it. He will not hesitate to take pains for that which is necessary for his bodily life, but he will not endure difficulties, disparagement, or other temptations for the hope of a future life. If trials come to him, he rejects them and will not endure them tranquilly and humbly. Instead, he has grumbling and unrest within himself because of those temptations. A person cannot truly

the paralytic, “Son, cheer up! Your sins are forgiven you.” (Matthew 9: 2) The words “cheer up” belong immediately after faith. When a person believes in God’s goodness and that he gives good things, he should believe that God has mercy on him. When he believes like this, he should trust in Him or consummate faith in this way. And, having believed, he should also cheer up and rest himself in God, having great confidence in Him that He will give His love and forgive his sins. If he does not have the expectation that God would forgive his sins, then he still has not believed. If he has believed and does not cheer up, then he does not know what, who, or why he has believed. Faith comes by hearing the word of God, and is that faith which we hear about from God when He says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3: 16) If a person believes that that is true, then he should cheer up, because God forgave his sins through His Son and His blood when He gave Him because of His love. And if, believing that, he does not also expect that God would forgive him because his sins are many, then he does not believe or understand how he should believe. If he does not know how he should believe, then he does not have the shield or the helmet. That is why he cannot stand in this battle against the enemy or keep his soul in health.

When we say “hope,” that is about future eternal things. It refers to salvation or the eternal reward from God that we should expect, having living faith first and foremost. A person cannot be saved without that, too. Whoever does not have faith does not have the foundation of all good things. That is why such a person does not understand a righteous life and the end of their labors. If he knows this through faith and does not have hope that he would obtain salvation, it is as worthless as a night dream and a chat in the morning about it. There is no advantage in irreverently and unfaithfully having dead things within oneself like this, but true hope is the consolation of a person in the sorrow that he has here in various temptations and it springs from the long-suffering of a sincere life.

had desire for earthly things before, he will now desire heavenly things, born again through the gospel, and the dwelling of that person will be in heaven with Christ.

The apostle further says:

“Stand firm […] taking up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is theword of God.” In these words the apostle teaches all Christ’s faithful warriors to gird themselves in the armor of God absolutely everywhere in this difficult battle and he commands them to take up the shield of faith so that enemies shooting at them from far away will not injure them. And there must be that shield of faith. There can be two deceptions in a person: one through pleasure in a desire and the second through lack of consciousness in understanding. Just as the apostle taught how the feet of desire should be shod, he then also teaches that they take faith as a shield. But faith is about unseen spiritual things and the future. It is like light, so that the understanding is enlightened by it. It is like a shield that holds back every fleshly snare and every powerful, spiritual, and unseen blow. That is why it is necessary for this battle that the recognition of all spiritual and unseen malevolence be a light to a person through faith. A person should have faith within him for these things, because the prophet says, “But the righteous will live by faith. If he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” (Hebrews 10: 38) For that reason, knowing that a person does not please God without faith, the devil is vigilant to blind people so that they do not understand anything about faith and, not understanding, are not pleasing to Him. Either such people do not even know that they should please Him (not knowing what faith itself is), or the devil deceives them when, knowing faith, they do not comprehend it correctly and do not have a pure heart towards it.

Many fall into error through the devil’s great cunning because of ignorance of the faith. When the devil sees that some people are restless and do not have pure and spiritual understanding in

faith, he either leads them into heresy or a deceitful understanding of scripture, as are both familiar to us today. Many people have erred for a long time about the blood of Christ[9] and other truths because of the bestowing of priestly wealth. That is all because of the deceitful interpretations of scripture by evil people, both spiritual and carnal. Such defilement occurs today such as has not been heard of since the holy gospel's inception. This all happens through spiritually blind people who have a carnal understanding of faith. Because they are self-willed and proud, the apostle commands as of utmost importance to take the shield of the true faith of Christ, because faith is the foundation of everything good. When the devil sees that he can desecrate that faith with error, he has already won the battle against a person–not only in what he has struck a person down from faith with, but he has corrupted everything that person does. If such a person were of impeccable faith, his works would be great praises. But instead, everything in him will be condemned because of corrupted faith. That is why the blessed person will be among those many witnesses found in the pure faith.

When the devil has employed such multifaceted spirits, who will take the shield of faith in Christ to declare something as true? He will be considered a heretic because he declares that he follows Christ and is founded purely on his faith. That is why only the one to whom pure faith will be given from heaven above will uphold it. I do not say he will profess much about it, but suffer with it. And, because many difficult things are decreed concerning faith, who will inquire into them in these days?

Only the one whom He Himself teaches and to whom He reveals true faith takes his stand against the devil in the spiritual battle so that he takes it like a shield and is not deceived by any error. For that reason the apostle commands us to take the pure faith of

[9] The serving of wine in the sacrament of communion was re-instituted by Jakoubek of Stříbro in 1414. This, more than anything else, led to the separation of the Hussite movement from the Church of Rome and to the establishment of the independent Hussite Church.

good name and is honorable and profitable for our lives, but which conceals death.

That is why the shield of faith is necessary for us, so that we are not led about or lured by some temptation standing in the midst of such delectable, beautiful, and honorable things. Through faith we make use of them for our needs or avoid some of them. May we always employ faith in everything and not be moved in any intention or work without faith, for whatever is not of faith is sin. If we will not be alive through faith, we will slip deeply into darkness and we will not know where we are going. Faith is the boundary line and measure of everything. For that reason, we should walk in everything according to that measure, knowing that death stands on every side beyond that border or measure. Faith discerns good and evil and is an ever present and immovable light to us. It is a shield for us to hold back all the fiery blows of the cruel devil, who the apostle calls an unpitying scoundrel. Shooting with fiery darts, the devil does not think to burn down cottages but to enflame the heart and the entire body with such blows–with debauchery, fury, various delusions, and imperceptible deceptions. He seeks to burn down everything good a person has this way, enflaming a person with wicked desires and wanting him to burn so long that he would come into the eternal flame with him. Let us not follow desires, traditions, rules, or people, and let us not compare ourselves with this world. Faith, be a light to us on the entire path and an immovable shield to hold back the devil's fiery arrows!

Then the apostle teaches us:

We are to take the helmet of salvation. He commands us now to put armor on our heads, because the mortal blow is delivered there. We should have the hope of our salvation and take it like a helmet on the head, and we cannot be saved if it is not there. But though we sometimes say the words "cheering up" and "hope," an understanding of them is not a given. Truly, being of good courage relates to the discourse about the things that we take from God–gifts, forgiveness of sins, and other graces. As the Lord Jesus said to

Eve seeks out that which is pleasing to look at and enjoyable to listen to when those who enjoy those things live in honor, pleasure, and fortune. For that reason, the devil feeds and shoots people in the heart with such things. He gives people a pleasant hope in them and closes in around them in that which is called good, necessary, useful, virtuous, proper, and honorable. The devil intoxicates people so that they do not fear harm in that which is called holy, virtuous, fitting, proper, appealing, and pleasing. Such things are obviously not forbidden by God to enjoy, because all that God created and made is good. But when they are fine to look at and enjoyable to listen to, then the desire for them is enticing so that, having seen them, a person tries everything within his power to feed on desires or make them pleasurable. Even though God does not refrain from preserving his life, that desire is inclined to want to test the power of those things and he right away forsakes God by that. The devil strikes in the heart with that which has a good outer appearance and a virtuous name.

That is why faith is necessary, so that people are not caught by any of these things which are virtuous, useful, and respectable in themselves, but which do not pertain to salvation. Through faith one should avoid some things even though they are virtuous and good, because a violation of God's commandment immediately follows. It is good that God created a beautiful woman, but it is not safe to gaze on her beauty because her beckoning stands close behind it. And so it is, in many things that are beautiful, honorable, good, useful, respectable, and of a good name. Therefore, great faith like a shield is necessary so that a person recognizes that it is fitting to turn away from such things and not to partake of them. We should only enjoy that which is honorable and proper in the measure that our existence is not possible without it, and not clutch at everything that is pleasant and profitable according to improper desires. We should wisely watch ourselves before the devil in such things so that he does not shoot us down with that which has a

Christ like a shield so that we extinguish and hold back the arrows of the malevolent devil. It is like the blows of darts fired from far away when an evil and deceitful idea falls into the heart through evil teachers, who encase the words of God in their lie. A simple person, listening when the words of God are spoken, is not permitted to be opposed to them. Instead, he believes them and takes them to heart, but he does not know where he will be lead by them when there is a lie wrapped up in them. He accepts what he hears in his heart harmlessly because it is God's word, but he will be injured in his soul by that lie, packaged up with the sound of God's word as with a fiery arrow. An arrow is not fired unless it is first mounted in a bow. Likewise, the devil also mounts God's word on his lie and shoots people in the heart through hypocrites. For that reason, a mortal lie will remain in people and not the word of God. That is why he also says here to take the shield of faith when those fiery arrows fly in the sound of God's words, about which the Lord God says, "Isn't my word like fire…" (Jeremiah 23: 29) And elsewhere he also says, "And the tongue is a fire. The world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature…" (James 3: 6) Those words will catch fire just as they are slung when they are believed to be of God. If they are volleyed via the truth, they will immediately demonstrate a work of truth; if they are volleyed via a lie, then they will bear wickedness in an act contradictory to God's word.

Therefore, faith should discern everything like light, including God's word, since it is not written in letters but breathed into a person by the Holy Spirit. That is why it ought to be like a shield, because it understands God's words. It catches the devil's cunning blows and hypocritical people who wrap their lie up in God's word. But when there is not such clear faith in a person, he does not have a shield against the fiery blows of the cruel devil, who employs the sanctimonious like a longbow for carrying out his cruel wickedness. The devil also fires various delusions at people through promptings as with fiery arrows. How will one hold back those

blows when there is not the shield of true faith and when a person is not skilled in faith because it is darkened and confused in him with some heresies? When the devil shoots with despair, he loads a person down with sin and makes his actions and life despicable to him. The devil weighs him down with hopelessness in his heart and, if there is not true faith like a shield, he will not be covered with it against those onslaughts. There must also be living and strong faith when violence and injustice come and the devil fires evil doubts, fear, pride, and impatience into the heart. If there is not lively and loving faith in God and those arrows sink into the heart and incite it with fury as with a flame, what do those arrows get hung up on without faith? They wound and kill the soul when there is not faith, because the devil consumes spiritual rest, love for neighbors, and a good conscience with that violent fury. Sometimes a great inferno of discord among people is lit with one shot.

The arrows also represent the evil promptings of detestable thinking and desires from the devil in people's hearts. The devil strikes the heart with them through the form of a woman as quickly as it hears her voice or catches sight of her body, face, hands, or legs. He suddenly shoots a man with evil desire like this in whatever way she moves or dresses herself. But not every woman is like this or causes such a difficult wound to every man. I am not saying that it would be her own sin that such a quick blow would hit someone. Her nature conveys that by itself apart from her will and a woman's nature is like the nature of fire with respect to the inflaming of a man. That is why it is written that a woman is a man's unrighteousness. But if she does not want to be at fault, it is fitting for her to conduct herself carefully and demurely and not to have grounds for offence such as extravagant and whore-like make-up and clothing, as is the custom of flirts. She also should not expose other parts of the body since harm could come to someone because of that. She will not be at fault when she acts carefully in everything, even though someone will

receive a blow because of her. Everyone should hear this: the devil shoots with fiery arrows and each person should have faith against those arrows so that he catches them, as on a shield. If some woman puts a man in danger, he should not look at or speak much with her; and also a woman with a man! Desire and susceptibility to men also lies within a woman and the devil also strikes through a man and from very far away. She will only hear the name of a man to whom she is attached, and when she hears about him the sound of his name will gravely afflict her heart with unrest, thoughts, and sometimes indecent desires, even though she is among twenty dear people. That is a fiery arrow, since it is wrapped up in the name of a man heard in a woman's heart and coming from far away. It sometimes sets the heart ablaze with longing and the flesh ablaze with fornication. Therefore, they can both be afflicted through one another, for the devil always seeks to shoot with fiery arrows in order to enflame the heart and the flesh with wickedness.

That is why faith like a shield is necessary for everyone, so that they do not perish because of his blows. We are situated just like in paradise, where the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is. That tree from paradise is not here with us today, but good and delectable things are here in the world–nice to look at and delicious to taste. That is why God has given His prohibitions, so that a person does not grab at that which is pleasant and delicious to taste. There are many such things everywhere, and the beauty and pleasure of women are among them. These kinds of things are also endearing in pure spiritual things, where there are many deceptions. Suppose that a person is inclined to a material or spiritual life and desires that which is good for the life he loves. The devil considers that, sees how he esteems those things, and approaches him behind or through those things, whether they are spiritual or material. Because the things that we love for life are clothed with good names, they are called a holy state of being, an honorable position, necessary, useful, appealing, nice, and proper. The desire of