

Life Group Notes 1/12/2025
Life Group Notes Pastor Mark Warren—

[No doctrine is a given unless it has been found in the Word given by the Holy Spirit and received by you. If you have observations or questions, feel free to send me an email with your comment or observations at tbeachhead@comcast.net. Thank you for taking the time—Pete Mehegan, the Scribe.]

Remember: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP.** BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! **Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study.**

Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions that Pastor Mark has raised this week, 1/12. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **The purpose is to minister to one another.** I include each of the passages mentioned in full, to facilitate the enjoyment of these notes. Footnotes are not meant to distract. This week's footnotes include:

1. [On temptation.](#)
2. [On His "steadfast love" that is new every morning.](#)
3. [On Luke's account of the temptation, and what he adds.](#)
4. [On Paul's "thorn in the flesh."](#)

*****Important:** At the very [end of these notes](#), I've included passages that were mentioned in this week's message for deeper study using SOAP journaling to help further your study during the week. ***

Pastor Mark opened his message today speaking of the 21 days of fasting that the church has committed to. His remarks were directed toward those who have achieved a week of impacted lifestyles, and toward those who have struggled. His words were particularly important: "Some of you have already fallen to temptation, felling like you couldn't 'do it,' ...I was talking with Pastor Bill, who works with Operation Recovery, and he stressed that it is not as if you have failed one time. It matters that you start the next day knowing that His mercies are new every morning." Look up Lamentations 3: [19](#)*Remember my affliction and wandering, the wormwood and the gall.* [20](#)*Surely my soul remembers and is humbled within me.* [21](#)*Yet I call this to mind, and therefore I have hope:* [22](#)*Because the steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, for His mercies never fail.* [23](#)*They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness!* [24](#)*"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in Him."*

1. How are you doing?
2. What do you see?
3. Have you felt the degree of success? ...faced setback?
4. Look closely at the Jeremiah passage. Are you ever alone?
5. Who else sees what you're going through?

Read Psalm 42: *1 As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul longs after You, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, the living God. When shall I come and appear in God's presence? 3 My tears have been my food both day and night, while men ask me all day long, "Where is your God?" 4 These things come to mind as I pour out my soul: How I walked with the multitude, leading the festive procession to the house of God with shouts of joy and praise. 5 Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why the unease within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him for the salvation of His presence.* Notice how the song writer faces trials.

1. How does your own method compare?
2. Were David's trials real or imagined? Difficult or light? Do you have a testimony that compares?
3. To whom does David turn? Why?
4. Look at verse 5: To whom is David talking? To whom is David giving instruction?
5. Are you crazy if you're talking to yourself?
6. (Scribe's note: This is one of the key passages that illustrates how one's spirit gives instruction to one's soul. Notice how distinct they are.) From whom does the soul receive instruction in this passage?
7. From whom does the spirit receive instruction. Explain.

Pastor continued, "We wake up the next day saying, 'I messed up. I said I was going to fast, and I gave in. I'm just going to scrap the whole thing.'" He said, "No. You can keep going. If you didn't make twenty-one days, you get twenty days. Anything is better than scrapping 'the whole thing.'"

1. What are your thoughts?
2. If you end up "scrapping the whole thing," what are you scrapping?
3. Remind yourself: what are you going to overcome in these days? Is that still a worthwhile endeavor?
4. Is there any good reason to quit? (See [the footnote on temptation, below.](#))

He reminded us, "The purpose of this is not to 'go on a diet,' or simply to remove things from your life, but it is to get closer to God. It's about removing the distractions. We remove those things that will allow us to get closer to Him."

1. Now answer the question, "Do you really want to give up?"
2. Describe what closeness to Him, to His Spirit, means.
3. Do you know a better way?
4. Read again Psalm 42, above. How does David respond to trials?
5. Now look at Psalm 40. Read it together. Look at "*1 I waited patiently for the LORD; He inclined to me and heard my cry. 2 He lifted me up from the pit of despair, out of the miry clay; He set my feet upon a rock, and made my footsteps firm.*" What do you see?
6. Describe how one "waits **patiently**." What is the promise of patience?

In this intro, Pastor reminds us of the theme, deserts to destiny, and says, "In the middle of a desert experience, we remember that God is always preparing and equipping us for what's ahead." He says, "When it feels like you're in a desert, where everything is a difficult trial, you are really in a beautiful place. If you allow it, it will complete something transformatively in your life. You will emerge out of that desert experience saying, 'Yes, thank you.'"

1. Respond.
2. What have you learned so far?
3. What has been the most encouraging change? What has been discouraging?
4. What have you learned of weakness? Strength?

Today we look at Jesus' desert experience. Mark begins, "There's something about the desert that brings out a weakness in us of which the enemy will seek to take advantage. If you've been there, you know this is true. You've been in a place where your body has felt weak, and as you felt weakened, temptation came along. The enemy seeks to take advantage of those times in your life."

1. Have you been there?
2. Describe what you learned of weakness.
3. Do you have a testimony?

Pastor continues, "But, Jesus shows us that in the middle of the wilderness, temptation can be overcome, and you can actually be strengthened in your spirit, and not be crushed."

Look up Matthew 3: [17](#) And a voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!" and Matthew 4: [1](#) Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. [2](#) After fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. [3](#) The tempter came to Him and said, "If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." [4](#) But Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" [5](#) Then the devil took Him to the holy city and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple. [6](#) "If You are the Son of God," he said, "throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command His angels concerning You, and they will lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.'" [7](#) Jesus replied, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" [8](#) Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. [9](#) "All this I will give You," he said, "if You will fall down and worship me." [10](#) "Away from Me, Satan!" Jesus told him. "For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'" [11](#) Then the devil left Him, and angels came and ministered to Him.

1. Do you notice anything new?
2. What thoughts come to mind.
3. In Mark's account, Jesus is "thrust into the desert" by the Spirit. Why do you think the Spirit compels Jesus into a place of temptation? How important is this moment to Jesus' ministry? What is established? (Look at [footnote 3](#) below, and see what Luke brings into the account.)

Mark says, "For those of us who have been there, we can relate. And, by the way," he adds, "temptation is not sin. The tempter will always be there to tempt you to sin, because he knows if he can lead you into sin, it separates you from God and he can bring destruction into your life and your relationships."

1. How important is this reminder? Have you ever forgotten?
2. Have you ever felt weak and undermined simply because the temptation still exists?
3. Describe the feeling.

"Here we find that Jesus willingly goes into the desert, and his deliberately weakened condition, hungry in his flesh, and Satan comes toward the end of his fast and tempts him in three places."

1. Is it only three? Look again at Matthew 3:17 from above. What were the last words Jesus heard before He went into the wilderness?

2. What are the tempter's very first words? What is the first, primary aspect that gets tested? Does Jesus believe that Word He heard from heaven? Does He know that what He heard from heaven is absolutely true, despite the desert, the hunger and the hardship? How do we know that?
3. Answer this question: If God is really Jesus' Father, why did He allow Jesus to be put to the test?
4. Did Jesus pass the first test, moving from theory to faith?
5. How important is this? How are you doing?
6. Could Jesus cause stones to become bread? How do you know?
7. Is it possible to live off the Word of God alone? Do you of know any who have?
8. What did Jesus live off of for forty days in the wilderness? What did Moses live off of twice on Mt. Sinai?
9. Were they physically stronger or weaker after? Spiritually? Morally?

Pastor brought us to 2 Corinthians 10: *"⁷So to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger (Greek: angelos: angel/messenger) of Satan, to torment me.⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it (him) away from me. ⁹But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest on me. ¹⁰That is why, for the sake of Christ, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

1. What do you know of the context of this passage?
2. Does God's "power" (Greek: *dunamis*, i.e. miracle/wonder working, dynamic power), perfected in weakness, mean MORE power, or less, rather invisible power?
3. Did Paul see more or less miraculous working power?
4. Review what Paul had already told the Corinthians in his previous letter. 1 Corinthians 2:¹*When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. ²For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. ⁴My message and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, ⁵so that your faith would not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.* What did the Corinthians witness for the first three years that Paul was among them?
5. What was the basis of their faith? Paul's weakness...or God's strength?
6. What is your faith in? The wisdom of men or the power of God? How do you know?
7. Which do you look for first: a smart answer or a manifestation of God's power?
8. Pastor says, "Weakness is not something to be afraid of." Explain why in the context of what Paul taught the Corinthians.
9. Pastor says, "When we are weak, as we are purposely in these 21 days of prayer and fasting, His power can be made perfect in our life." What will that look like?
10. "I am very well aware that during these 21 days you are going to experience temptation...not only in the areas of what you're giving up, but in other areas, you are going to experience other temptation. So it is great for us to learn from Jesus how to overcome temptation." Do you have a testimony? What have you discovered so far?

11. What does it look like when you have overcome temptation? Do you have a long past memory of a temptation you have overcome? Have you ever quit smoking, and not gone back?

Mark says, "The tempter will come, and he will test you in three ways. He will tempt you with provision, with pride and with power." See 1 John 2:15 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world is passing away, along with its desires; but whoever does the will of God remains forever.*

1. Look at verse sixteen and match Mark's observation with John's teaching. Which matches "provision"?
2. Which matches "pride"?
3. Which matches "power"? Explain how the desires of the eyes relate to power. What is one seeking to control?

⊕ **Provision**

Now look above at Matthew's account of the tempter's first volley, in verses 2-4. Mark paraphrases, "You don't have enough. God is not sufficient to provide for your needs. You need to take matters into your own hands and make these stones into loaves of bread. You know you have the power to do that.' See, the enemy will come in and say, 'God is not sufficient. He is not a good provider.'" Pastor then brought back the principle of tithing, saying the tithe is where we directly proclaim, "He is our provider." He says, "He's only asking for ten percent. But He is our provider, and when we can't even give back to Him that ten percent, what are we saying: 'We trust in ourselves. I have to trust in my way to make my way happen.'"

1. Respond. Is this apt?
2. How else can demonstrate tangibly where our real trust lies?

He continues, "The enemy will always come, and he will speak those lies. You're not unique. The enemy comes to kill, steal and destroy. He is like a lion seeking whom he will devour. You have an enemy, and we need to understand that."

1. To what degree do you trust God to provide?
2. To what degree have you already trusted God to provide? What has that trust led to?
3. Have you ever been disappointed? Can you share?

⊕ **Pride**

Now look at the devil's next attempt, verses 5, 6 and 7 above.

1. What do you see?
2. How is leaping from a precipice an expression of pride?
3. Look at Psalm 91:9 *Because you have made the LORD your dwelling—my refuge, the Most High—10 no evil will befall you, no plague will approach your tent. 11 For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. 12 They will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.* What do you see?
4. Did the devil quote the promise accurately?
5. Do you take this psalm literally? Does God mean what He says here?

6. Have you made the LORD your refuge? Has He given His angels charge concerning you, too?
7. Have you ever stubbed your toe? Explain. Did you lose faith?
8. Did you remember the promise, and carry on, knowing you are safe? Explain.
9. What is the difference between pride and presumption? Is it sin to be proud?
10. How is misplaced pride the danger?
11. What is the devil pushing Jesus to do? Why?
12. How is this temptation, "...putting the LORD God to the test?" What is being tested?
13. Can there be doubt that God speaks truth? (Is truth debatable?) Then why test the promise? How is testing God in this way sin?
14. Pastor says, "The devil is saying, 'Go ahead, man. You know who you are. You've got the greatest faith. Show it off. You deserve this.'" Paraphrase Jesus' response.
15. Look at the context of Jesus' response which was drawn from Deuteronomy 6:[16](#)*Do not test the LORD your God as you tested Him at Massah [waters of testing, where there was no water, and the people complained and rebelled, and spoke of returning to Egypt].*[17](#)*You are to diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God and the testimonies and statutes He has given you.* [18](#)*Do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, so that it may be well with you and that you may enter and possess the good land that the LORD your God swore to give your fathers,* [19](#)*driving out all your enemies before you, as the LORD has said.* Explain how this the best response?
16. According to this passage, what do you do when being tested? How did Jesus respond? Did He diligently keep the commandments of the LORD?

⊕ **POWER**

Now look at the last of the three tests, verses 8-10 in Matthew 4 above.

1. What do you see?
2. What power is Satan offering Jesus?
3. How can Satan offer to Jesus whole kingdoms? Is this temptation even real?

Mark relates, "We actually hear similar testimonies. We hear of entertainers who sold their souls, and they become extraordinarily famous, and then come to realize that they indeed lost their own souls in the process. He gives them this idea that 'all you have to do is worship me...' and he will give them that power." Look at Matthew [16:25](#)*For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.* [26](#) [What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?](#) [27](#)*For the Son of Man will come in His Father's glory with His angels, and then He will repay each one according to what he has done.*

1. How does this passage fit?
2. How did Jesus avoid this snare? What were His eyes fixed on? (Remember Hebrews 12: "...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross.")
3. (Can our own actions author faith in others? Explain. Have you ever been strengthened by another's success?)
4. Did Jesus need Satan to deliver the glory of the kingdoms that he put on display? Explain. (Look at [footnote 3 below](#), Luke's version of the temptation.)
5. How do we know that these kingdoms were only temporarily under Satan, but they already had been restored to Jesus?

6. Proverbs 20:21 says, "An inheritance gained hastily at the beginning will not be blessed in the end." Have you ever been pushed to take too early what you knew was yours to begin with? Explain.

Pastor Mark warns, "Satan knows how to play on our weakness. And he will speak lies to us. It wasn't as if Jesus was above the feelings we all have. The enemy did not tempt Jesus in areas where He strong at the moment. Jesus was "[tempted in every way that we are, yet was without sin.](#)" (Hebrews 4:15). You hear a voice inside of you, not your own, pointing a way you know is misguided. You say, 'Where did that come from.'" Pastor says, "The enemy lies to you. He targeted legitimate needs and desires in Jesus' life. And he'll do that in your life, when you're feeling weak. When you're going through this desert experience. You will feel weak, and the tempter will come. He'll make you question whether God will provide, or if God's love is sufficient, or if God even has a plan for you."

1. What do you see?
2. Do you have a testimony?
3. What is key for us?

Pastor says, "Jesus' response reveals to us the key to overcoming temptation. Here's the key: It's the Word of God. Jesus ALWAYS responded by the truth of the Word of God." (Emphasis added.) "If you want to know how to overcome temptation when it comes, we need to learn how to apply the Word of God to our life." (See Deuteronomy 6 above.

Pastor points out, "When we speak the Truth of God's Word, there is power in the speaking." He says, "Remember, 'The Word is alive and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, able to divide between bone and marrow, soul and spirit. It judges the thoughts and the intents of the heart.'" (Hebrews 4:12 Remember, nothing is hidden from God's sight, neither from the scope of the Word Himself.) So, when we speak the Truth we wield the power to overcome the lie of the enemy. So how do we live this out?"

1. What do you see?
2. What insights can you share?
3. Answer Pastor's question before reviewing his ideas.

⊕ **When you realize the power in scripture, read the scriptures daily. Be in the Word daily.**

1. See the number of ways that exist to meet this end, by book or by app or by audio version in the car, choose one and do it consistently.
2. Allow the Word to saturate your spirit, so you are able to aptly respond when that voice whispers.
3. Realize how vital it is to discern the difference between the truth and the lie, knowing that even the Word can be abused, misunderstood, and misquoted.

⊕ **Pray for strength and guidance, knowing that His Promised Holy Spirit was sent both to strengthen and to guide.**

1. This comes by you asking...and not without, as in a partnership.
2. Scripture says, "Pray without ceasing." This is not an exhibition of impractical religiosity. Mark says, "It speaks of an attitude of humility and an expression of your dependence. You are always in connection with the Lord, saying, 'Lord guide me in all this.'"

⊕ **Identify vulnerabilities.**

1. Mark says that the method is not to memorize verses and to quote scriptures and that's the way to remove the temptations that you have. Understand that the temptations are real, and they can get hardwired into us and become a habit. It takes a process to unwire those things.
2. Reflect on areas where you're most likely to be tempted and prepare to do something about it. Paul puts it this way writing to the Romans, 13:**13***Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. **14**[Instead, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.](#)* Come up with ideas to accomplish this as a goal.
3. At this point, it's time to find more scripture like this one to post in front of your eyes and to see throughout the day.

⊕ **Embrace fasting.**

1. Mark points out that it's not wrong to ask, "Why would I want to do prayer and fasting, if that's where the enemy is going to come get me." He adds, "Guess what. If the enemy doesn't begin to come after you, just because you're praying and fasting. You become more aware of his assault, more prepared and much better armed." (Why did a certain devil "...only come out by prayer and fasting?")
2. Notice the impact prayer and fasting has on the devil and be encouraged. What do you think? Can you do more damage to him than what he tries to do to you?
3. You are more aware of what's happening to you when you're fasting. You actually become a greater threat to him than he can be to you.
4. Mark says, "I know those temptations, from many years of praying and fasting. I know what it's like to have one little cheat, and then say, 'That's it. Everything is lost. I've ruined it.' I would just say 'Start the next day. Take it up again.' The point is not the number of days, but your deliberate determination to grow, and to strengthen you spirit to withstand the attacks that always come, fasting or not."
 - a. React to this. Have you ever "failed" and started again?
 - b. Was this an encouragement to you?
5. Decide, "I need to hear His voice," and know that you will. Look at this promise from Jeremiah 29: **13***You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. **14**[I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore you from captivity and gather you from all the nations and places to which I have banished you, declares the LORD. I will restore you to the place from which I sent you into exile.](#)* The Lord was allowing Jeremiah to echo what God had already promised through Moses in Deuteronomy 4: **29***[But if from there you will seek the LORD your God, you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. **30**When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice.](#)*
 - a. Look very closely at these verses. To what degree do you believe them?
 - b. To what degree do you believe them literally?
 - c. Are you personally ready to listen to His voice?
 - d. Do you understand how important that last question is?
 - e. To what degree do you expect to find God Himself?

⊕ **Find accountability.**

1. When you're being tempted and in a vulnerable place, have a close circle of friends, a life group you do trust.

⊕ **Create healthy boundaries.**

1. Avoid situations or triggers that lead to temptation.
2. Remember Proverbs 4:23, and write it on the mirror. Guard your heart with all diligence, because the heart decides the boundaries/walls/borders of your life. Quoting Chaplain Bill again, he said, "You don't really want freedom if you don't have ALL the windows and the doors latched tight."
 - a. Think about this. How are your windows and doors?
 - b. Do you need to restore walls to return to your innocence?
 - c. If the enemy knows your weakness, how do you prevent his assault?

⊕ **Celebrate victories.**

1. Explain. Why?
2. Do you respond better to affirmation, getting caught in a job well done, or to rebuke?
3. Remember to thank God for His strength, now being perfected in you.
4. Mark says, "Remember this is about your growth. It is becoming aware of successful steps, well taken. It is not about providing another chance to fail. It's about maturing." He says, "The novice in the gym is not going to try to bench the two hundred fifty pounds that the behemoth beside him benches. He begins where he's at."
 - a. Have you ever worked out in a gym?
 - b. Did you have a schedule?
 - c. Explain how that worked.
 - d. How is exercising faith like exercising toward a goal in the gym?
 - e. How does faith actually act the way a mustard seed acts? How great is the seed at the beginning? What does that seed become? Who benefits when it's a tree?

The Follow-up Application

1. Use the [SOAP journal studies](#) below throughout the week.
2. How can you remind yourself that God provides, that His love is sufficient, and that you have a destiny? Write the answer down.
3. List in what way you make provisions for the flesh, and put up a wall against that provision.
4. Look at Deuteronomy 6 in the above study, and write down the practical steps God gave Israel. How can you apply that to your own walk today?

Take the time to pray.

Scribe's Notes:

1. **On temptation**—The Greek word for temptation is *πειρασμός, peirasmos*. Briefly, it means *trial, probation, testing, being tried, (b) temptation, (c)*

calamity, affliction. The word study on Bible Hub outdoes itself again, if you're interested: <https://biblehub.com/greek/3986.htm> Temptation is a primary element in the increase of effective, miracle working faith, based on the maxim that no one repeats enough, "Faith that isn't tested is only theory," knowing that a theory-based life lacks direction, whereas a faith-based life is guided according to His Promise by the Spirit Himself. A faith that hasn't been tested to where the trial was overcome will always end up with the dismissive capitulation, "I tried that 'faith thing,' and it didn't work." If one is able to pronounce those words, one never actually TRIED, i.e. tested/proved, faith. Christian, biblical, overcoming faith is absolute adherence to, reliance on and commitment to the promises of the Word of God, and unwavering faith is therefore discovered in an expectation based on what God Himself has said, despite and sometimes even in contradiction to what the believer sees. That is why a committed believer walks according to what he know by faith in the Promise, and not by what he sees, has seen...or what his skeptic friends have suggested. Psalm 42 gives us David's response to trials: *1 As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul longs after You, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, the living God. When shall I come and appear in God's presence? 3 My tears have been my food both day and night, while men ask me all day long, "Where is your God?" 4 These things come to mind as I pour out my soul: How I walked with the multitude, leading the festive procession to the house of God with shouts of joy and praise. 5 Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why the unease within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him for the salvation of His presence.* David does not let up, does not lie down. He tells his soul how to behave. He does that twice in the psalm. In the next psalm, he does it again.

2. **On His "steadfast love" that is new every morning**—If you remember the Scribe's note from a few weeks back on the Greek vocabulary of "love." This steadfast love that is new every morning is that Hebrew word, *chesed*, for which *agape* is the Greek equivalent. It is that love that comes by promise as a covenant, and is expressed in what the old testament calls the "sure mercies of David," where God swore to David and for all time that He would not remove His anointing from him as he removed it from Saul.
3. **On Luke's account of the temptation in the desert**—The temptation in the desert begins the three synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke. We read Matthews. Mark merely mentions the fact without the account. Luke's account adds a twist that should not be controversial, and so, of course, it is. When offering Jesus kingdoms and glory, the devil puts his offer in these words in Luke 4: *6 'I will give You authority over all these kingdoms and all their glory,' he said. 'For it has been relinquished to me, and I can give it to anyone I wish. 7 So if You worship me, it will all be Yours.'* Teachers often suggest that Satan was lying here, and that these kingdoms had never been "relinquished over to him." They seem to be unaware of the cosmic consequences of the fall, when Adam bowed the knee to the devil and thereby gave over the authority that had

been delegated to him. That historic event is the key to understanding why Jesus had to come to earth as the son of Adam/Man. He wrested back for all time the kingdom that the “Prince of this world” had usurped. This is a fundamental principle necessary to understand the overarching Victory in man’s redemption and restoration that Jesus claimed, and vindicated in His resurrection.

4. **On Paul’s “thorn in the flesh”**—Paul’s discovery of the *dunamis* power of God is clearly described in his second letter to the Corinthians, noted above. Return to the notes, and review Paul’s previous comments, mentioned later, written in the second chapter of his first letter to them. Paul demonstrate God’s power. Here again are his words as we saw them above. 2 Corinthians 10: “*z*So to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger (Greek: *angelos*: angel/messenger) of Satan, to torment me.*8* Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it (him) away from me. *9*But He said to me, ‘*My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness.*’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest on me. *10*That is why, for the sake of Christ, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” Look at this closely, and ask these questions: Was Paul’s weakness the result of a disease, or from harassment from a spiritual entity? No sickness in the Bible is ever referred to as an angel. But here, at this time, Paul was being chased by enemies of the gospel from rebellious synagogues (Jesus calls them “synagogues of Satan”) and persecuted, all the way back to Jerusalem. Paul asked God for deliverance, and responded, “You have what it takes. You are equipped. But my equipment functions when all you have to rely on is me.” Paul did not need God to take satan’s emissaries down. Having the Word and the Spirit, we are armored and armed as Paul explained to the Ephesians. For the Christian, our dependence is our strength...not our disease.

For further study:

Take a moment each day this week to apply the **SOAP**... (**S**cripture—Copy the scripture. / **O**bservation—Write what you see. / **A**pplication—What is God saying? / **P**ray—What is your response?) ...method to some of the scripture we looked at this week:

Monday: Lamentations 3:19-24
Tuesday: Jeremiah 3:18-22
Wednesday: Psalm 40:1-8
Thursday: Psalm 42:1-5
Friday: Luke 4:1-13
Saturday: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10
Sunday: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Once again, some passages suggested here have more than the usual number of verses. This is not to increase the burden but to provide clarity of context. Pick the verses that speak to you most clearly, and run these through the SOAP steps.