

**WE
ARE AT
WAR**

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Introduction

Regardless of how you may feel about being at war according to God's word Christians are at war. We are aware in some areas of the world one religious group is against some or all of the different groups in their area. We also know that there are actual battles being fought by differing religious groups. Don't you find it very sad that those who profess to be God's people are fighting with one another and are actually taking the lives of each other? I feel if we want to spend eternity with each other we must attempt to get along with each other while on God's created earth. Aren't we aware that while we are here on earth it is a proving ground for God to determine if we are fit candidates to be with Him in heaven?

But as I said in the opening sentence Christians are at war and if we are indeed to spend eternity with our Creator we must be victorious in our battle. The war that we are engaged in is not after the flesh: (2 Corinthians 10:3) *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh."* As Christians we are at war with the corrupt desires of the heart; we are at war with the powers of darkness and with sin in all forms of idolatry, corruption, profaneness and all other forms of sin that we come into contact with. Paul was inspired to write this by the Holy Spirit but he knew what he was writing about as he was confronted every day by everything Satan could throw at him because he was walking in the flesh as he penned these words. Like Paul we are confronted with everything he had to overcome in his battle against Satan and we must fight the good fight as well.

In an epistle Paul wrote to Timothy he charged Timothy to "war a good warfare". (1 Timothy 1:18-19) *"This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; ¹⁹Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck"* With these words Paul was encouraging Timothy to endeavor to seek the victory. I also read in these words that Paul believed it was a good war and worthy to seek the victory. The trials and afflictions of the disciples of Christ are often referred to as a warfare: (1 Corinthians 9:7) *"Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?"* (Isaiah 40:2) *"Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins."*

In the final chapter of this same epistle Paul instructed Timothy to "fight the good fight of faith": (1 Timothy 6:12) *"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."* Paul warns Timothy that he must fight the "the good fight of faith because his honor, his life and his soul was at stake. To "fight the good fight of faith" we must live the gospel and defend the cause of God and Christ; we must purge and build up the church. To accomplish this like Timothy we must give ourselves wholly to this work; there is no straddling the fence if we are to win our battle against Satan.

Going back to 1 Corinthians 9:7 where Paul asks "who goeth to war at any time on his own" we would most likely answer "No one" and this is certainly true of Christians; we are not at war on our own, we are instructed by our Lord through His inspired writers to "fight the good fight of faith" and to fight against our adversary the devil.

I hope that this has given you an idea of the kind of warfare that Christians are to be engaged in. But if you desire more information please turn the page.

Our Warfare is Against the Devil

As Christian our enemy is a very good opponent that will use everything in his arsenal to get us to defect to his side. Basically speaking Satan uses three methods of tempting us to join him: (1 John 2:16) *“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”* These are the same temptations he used and was successful in tempting Adam and Eve. He hasn’t changed, he is still using the same temptation to tempt you and I. These three he also used when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness; but he was unsuccessful in this attempt because Jesus said:” It is written”. Don’t ever deceive yourself into believing that Satan has given up: (1 Peter 5:8) *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”* This makes the words of Paul “fight the good fight of faith” very important.

Paul warned the Corinthians not to allow Satan to get the best of them: (2 Corinthians 2:11) *“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.”* In the context of this passage there was a man who had sinned but had given sufficient proof of his repentance and Paul urges them to receive him with love: (2 Corinthians 2:7-8) *“So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. ⁸Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.”* If they did not forgive him and receive him with love there was danger that Satan might be successful in destroying the church. Have you ever considered what the name “Satan” means? “The name Satan denotes an adversary, an accuser, an enemy. It is the usual proper name which is given to the devil, the great adversary of God and man.” [Barnes]. Paul did not want them to misunderstand who he was referring to so he used the proper name for the devil.

In his Ephesians epistle Paul did not use the proper name of Satan but the message is very clear that he does mean Satan: (Ephesians 6:12) *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”* Paul uses the term “wrestle” thinking of the ancient games of Greece where wrestling was one of the games and the people of that time would know exactly what he meant. He informed them that the battle set before them was not against “flesh and blood” rather their battle was against “principalities, against powers, against rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”. I have no doubt that Paul is alluding to evil spirits [i.e. the devil himself].

James tells us “to resist the devil”: (James 4:7) *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”* I think it is important to point out before we can “resist the devil” we must first “submit ourselves to God. But the question remains if we resist the devil will he actually flee from us? We must look to Jesus Christ for the answer; he resisted the devil when he was tempted, what happened when Jesus resisted the devil? (Luke 4:13) *“And when the devil had ended all the*

temptation, he departed from him for a season.” Warning, don’t get too comfortable for the devil will return; he never gives up.

Anyone who believes the gospel of Jesus Christ can expect to be confronted by Satan: (Revelation 12:17) *“And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”* John uses the term “the dragon” in reference to Satan. Anyone who keeps the commandments of God can expect that the devil is out to make war with you. Satan is not too concerned with those who don’t keep the commandments of God as they are already on his side; he only uses those to influence those who are considering or have obeyed the commandments. But once you have obeyed the gospel is when you become an enemy of Satan and all I can say is; “Watch out”.

We Are At War Against The Flesh

Our war that we are engaged in is actually a spiritual battle against the “lust of the flesh” as the “lust of the flesh is contrary to the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16-17) *“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”* The “lust of the flesh will induce you to do things that you would not want to do. Paul would have us to “walk in the Spirit” to avoid yielding to the “lust of the flesh”. There is only one way to “walk in the Spirit” and that is to make the inspired word to be the rule of our behavior of our lives. The word of God must be “a lamp unto our feet: (Psalms 119:105) *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”* Please notice that Paul does not say that we will not be confronted with “lust of the flesh”; but if we “walk in the Spirit we will have the strength [faith] to overcome the “lust of the flesh”.

Even the great apostle Paul was constantly warring within his mind: (Romans 7:23) *“But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”* Paul felt the corruption of his mind always at work attempting to bring him to commit sin. When he was converted to Christianity the law of God was [in a manner of speaking] written in his mind. Like Paul we must allow the law of God to be the governing principle of our lives; however, just because the law of God is in our thoughts and minds does not mean that it has complete control over us. There is always a constant battle and we must use the word of God to guide us to be on the winning side, the side that will assure us of victory whereby we are promised a home in heaven.

Like you and I Paul struggled in his warfare against the lust of the flesh: (1 Corinthians 9:25-27) *“And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. ²⁶I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: ²⁷But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”* Paul knew that “every man that striveth for the mastery” had to be “temperate in all things”. In the context of this passage is the idea of running a race or wrestling; to master [or win the race or wrestling

match] would certainly require a struggle. The athlete places themselves on a special diet, one of my grandsons was a cross country runner, he would not drink any kind of soda pop [but he sure went through a bunch of juices]. How is your appetite for the word of God? Also required is a lot of exercise. Do you exercise godliness? (1 Timothy 4:8) *“For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”* Regardless of how many ribbons or trophies you may win it will soon be forgotten who you are and what you accomplished. But Christians are pursuing an “incorruptible crown”. To win a crown of glory also requires a struggle! The apostle presents to the Corinthians his own example [verse 26] and inserts that he has to “BRING IT INTO SUBJECTION”. Do we even imagine that we won’t have to do likewise? Let us never forget that we are at war with the lusts of the flesh.

Paul had an affliction: (2 Corinthians 12:7) *“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.”* There has been much speculation about what this “thorn in the flesh” was; but the Bible does not tell us what it was so I will just leave it at that. The one thing I do know is it greatly distressed him; he even prayed to God three times to remove it: (2 Corinthians 12:8) *“For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.”* But the Lord did not see fit to remove Paul’s “thorn in the flesh”: (2 Corinthians 12:9) *“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”* No doubt each of us may have “a thorn in the flesh” of one kind or another; do you like Paul “glory” in your “infirmities”? Even in Paul’s infirmities he was content and we must be content to do the works of the Lord in any manner or capacity that God sees fit to use us.

Peter exhorted those whom he loved to “abstain from fleshly lusts; (1 Peter 2:11) *“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;”* The reason Peter gave this exhortation is that “fleshly lusts war against the soul”. The exhortation I give to you is “never forget that you are at war with fleshly lusts”.

We Are At War With The World

Yes we are at war with the world; but Jesus said “be of good cheer”. Granted war is not a happy time for anyone who is involved in this battle; but we can be happy because Jesus “overcame the world”: (John 16:33) *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”* The peace that Jesus has provided for us may not necessarily refer to peace in this world as there is no absolute peace to be found in this world. We must carefully read the words of Jesus; did you notice that he said; “in this world you shall have tribulation”? The world cannot give you peace and happiness! Our peace and happiness can only come from Jesus. It is only through Jesus’ person, his blood, his sacrifice that we can successfully be found at peace in this world and be cheerful about our eternal future. If you want to be victorious in your war

against the world turn to Jesus in faith: (1 John 5:5) *“Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”* (1 John 5:4) *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”* When you sing “Faith is the victory” do you really believe it?

The god of this world [Satan] uses every means he can; such as the lusts that exist in the world, false prophets and false teachers, along with wicked men of the world, who tempt us with snares, false doctrine and false promises is to name only a few of the methods Satan uses to entice us to join his forces. Our opponent is a very worthy opponent in the world today: (1 Peter 5:8) *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”* We must not allow him to overcome us; we must fight back as if we are in a real war and our eternal life depends upon us winning the battle and it does depend on how we fight the battle.

Our War Is To Be Carried On

For the Christian there is never a time to “stand at ease”: (1 Corinthians 16:13) *“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”* A military person can only stand at ease when they are given the order; this is not the order that Paul is giving in this verse, we are not at liberty to relax in our battle. In the closing chapter of this epistle Paul gives some exhortations that will be profitable for the church to follow. The first exhortation of this verse is to be watchful. Although they were expecting Apollos this was not Paul’s exhortation; he was telling them to be watchful of their hearts, thoughts, affections, words, actions and even their every conversation [manner of life]. But in particular he wanted them to be watchful for Satan and his devices. This was not a part time watchfulness; but it was to be ongoing. This watchfulness must continue yet today, there is no time to relax our guard or to declare peace as our enemy is always at war with everyone who professes the name of Christ.

As we carry on our war we should do so with “steadfastness of faith”: (1 Peter 5:9) *“Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”* To determine who it is that we are to “resist” look to the preceding verse: (1 Peter 5:8) *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”* When it comes to our battle against Satan “steadfastness of faith” is a must! To successfully overcome Satan we must be steadfast in the doctrine of faith. This would also include being steadfast in our profession of faith that should be held fast without any wavering. Be aware that the devil is very busy attempting to keep us from daily professing Christ by the life we live.

The Hebrews writer also encourages us to “hold fast the profession of our faith”: (Hebrews 10:23) *“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)”* (Hebrews 4:14) *“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.”* Not only is Jesus called a “high priest” but he is identified as a “GREAT high priest”. Jesus was sent to this earth to be a high priest and he did the greater part of this while here; he now continues his work as a “high priest” while seated on the “right hand of God”: (Hebrews 10:12) *“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;”* Should this not be motivation to

cause us to “hold fast the profession of our faith”? The writer of the epistle Hebrews first presented that Jesus is our “high priest” in chapter three: (Hebrews 3:1) *“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;”* He then continues with this subject unto the end of Hebrews chapter ten. This is done in an effort to show that Christians have a high priest; but our “high priest” exceeds the high priests of the Jews! The words of our “high priest” are that we are to “hold fast” our profession of faith. Our enemy [the devil] is always at work in an attempt to get us to deny and forsake that profession of faith. To accomplish this we must be “earnest”: (Jude 3) *“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”* This is a verse that is often quoted to give us authority to combat false doctrines [and it does give us the authority to do so] but I wonder if we don’t miss the main thought of this verse that we are to be “earnest” [sincere] in “holding fast the profession of our faith”? So be advised that this is a constant battle and it is a battle which we must be victorious.

In This Warfare Keep Your Eyes Open

In the heat of the battle I cannot imagine a soldier taking their eyes off of the enemy. Saints must be watchful in their war also: (1 Corinthians 16:13) *“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”* Paul gives this exhortation in view of the dangers and temptations that are constantly surrounding them; “watch”, keep your eyes open. Look straight ahead, to the left, to the right and watch your back because you never know from what angle Satan will attack you. The exhortation to “stand fast in the faith” is also found here. With our eyes wide open we must be firm in holding on to our faith. The term “watch” is often found in the New Testament [Matthew 24:41,42; 25:13; Mark 13:35; Luke 21:36; Acts 20:31; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; 2 Timothy 4:5] the idea in each of these references is that they are to be watchful that the enemy does not creep in and find them when their guard is down. They were to watch with the same vigilance that is required of a sentinel who guards a camp, lest an enemy should come suddenly upon them, and surprise the camp when the army was locked in sleep. We cannot fall asleep for an instant because that is when our enemy will attack. Always remember the words of Peter: (1 Peter 5:8) *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”*

Paul gave warning not to fall asleep: (1 Thessalonians 5:6) *“Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”* Sleep is a luxury the soldier cannot afford; they must always be awake and be watchful of the enemy. Also this verse suggests sobriety. There is nothing funny about the war we are fighting, therefore it is to be taken seriously, and sober minded. We often associate the idea of being sober as not to be drunk with wine or other alcoholic beverages and this would also fit in the context.

Fight With Endurance

Endurance is essential in most activities. Several years ago my wife and I

owned a camping lot that we had not used for some time and it had grown up in brush. I had cleared us a spot for our camper trailer and her brother decided that he and his wife would like to put their camper on our lot as it was large enough for both to use and have some privacy also while yet being together. He and I were working together to clear up a spot for his camper; every few minutes he would have to stop to get some rest while I kept going. He stated that I had a lot more endurance than he had. Today it is reversed he is able to do a lot more than I. Regardless of what we are doing be capable of enduring to the end is important. In our conflict against the devil we need endurance: (2 Timothy 2:3) *“Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”* In this epistle to Timothy Paul assumes that Timothy will be confronted with hardships and he encourages Timothy to endure these hardships as a “good soldier”. Everyone who wears the name “Christian” is to consider themselves as ministers and they ought to be prepared to endure hardships.

The life of a soldier is not an easy life; they are taken away from home, faced with heat and cold, long hours, fatigue from marching and many are required to give their lives. As soldiers of Christ we are to “take up our cross and follow him”: (Matthew 16:24) *“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”* The cross that Jesus was called upon to bear was not easy; but he endured it and so must we. You simply will not read anyplace in the entire Bible where it says that being a Christian is easy; but you will find that we are to “endure hardness” [2 Timothy 2:3]. Some women and men enter into the Christian life expecting to have all the luxuries of life; we are not promised this but we are promised that we will have what we need: (Matthew 6:31-34) *“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? ³²(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. ³³But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. ³⁴Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”* We must trust and rely upon God to supply all our needs; even to carry us through hardship and to supply strength to “endure hardships”.

Paul “endured hardships” for the sake of his brethren [whom he refers to as “the elect”]: (2 Timothy 2:10) *“Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”* We should never think that it was easy for Paul or any of the apostles as they all suffered hardships and persecutions; Paul suffered when he was accused of being an “evil doer”: (2 Timothy 2:9) *“Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.”* Today, some are accused of being “evil doers” when they are actually standing for the truth; may we look to the example of Paul and “endure all things” both for our own salvation and that others might see our example and follow Paul and us for their own salvation. Your salvation does depend upon your endurance and can easily affect the salvation of others.

Fight With Confidence

The Psalmist wrote that even if war were to come upon him he would have con-

confidence: (Psalms 27:1-3) *"The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"* ² *When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.* ³ *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident."* Not only would he be "confident" in a time of war he would not be afraid [verse 3]. I have known those who were afraid to obey the gospel fearing that they were not good enough to become a Christian. Not only will fear keep one from becoming a Christian it will also be a hindrance in living a faithful life. What was it that gave David the courage not to be afraid? He asks the question in verse one "whom shall I fear?" he goes on to state that "the Lord is the strength of my life". If the Lord is the strength of your life you need not be afraid to obey the gospel; neither should you have any fears when trying to live as God would have you to live! Allow me to remind you of the words of Paul: (Romans 8:31) *"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"* I promise you that God is for you and He wants you to have confidence and to be victorious in your battle against Satan.

When At War Pray

We are privileged by God to go to Him in prayer. He speaks to us through His inspired word; we speak to Him in prayer. Prayer is our opportunity to glorify His name, thank Him for all our blessings and ask Him for His help. I think all will agree that we need God's help in our war against Satan. David certainly took advantage of this privilege: (Psalms 35:1-3) *"Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me."* ² *Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help.* ³ *Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation."* It appears as though David wrote this psalm when he was being at the time being persecuted by Saul and when he was charged with false accusations. I don't find it odd that he would go to God at this time and plead his cause; but we should not go to God only in times of need; let us be honest we are blessed by God every day of our lives; He blesses us with the air we breath, the sun that warms us, the rain that gives growth to our lawns, trees and other plants; how often do you thank Him for all these blessings? How often do you glorify His name? Let us be quick to give glory and thanks for our daily bread; but let us not forget to ask God to help us in our war against the devil!

Paul gives some good advice about praying: (Ephesians 6:18) *"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;"* Do you get the idea that Paul wants us to be consistent in prayer? Prayer is the most effective weapon that we have in opposing Satan. I think Paul was thinking and led by the Holy Spirit to include all sorts of prayers; prayers such as mental and vocal, public and private. Do you get the idea from this passage that Paul is telling us to pray for others? Would you be willing to pray for a brother or sister who is having trouble overcoming sin? We have witnessed some coming forward when the invitation is extended asking for the prayers of the congregation

to pray for them as they have gone astray and we have witnessed one man offering a prayer on their behalf; but do you pray for them? Aren't you a part of the congregation? Let us use the privilege that God has given us and pray for help in our war with Satan and don't forget to pray for others who are struggling.

To Be Victorious Don't Become Entangled With Earthly Entanglements

Have you ever taken a stroll in a timber where those pesky vines grow and got your feet tangled up in them; if you are lucky you can prevent them from tripping you and causing you to fall? If you think about this illustration you can have a better understanding of this verse: (2 Timothy 2:4) *"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."* The Roman soldiers of Paul's day would only be considering and attending to military exercises and obeying their orders. They would not entangle themselves in anything that would hinder their military duties. In this verse Paul is suggesting that Christ's people are his soldiers and he is urging them not to become entangled in worldly affairs. Friends, we cannot serve two masters: (Matthew 6:24-25) *"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. ²⁵Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"* Considering we are at war with Satan we need to take heed to these words of both Paul and Jesus. Keep your mind and thoughts on the business at hand.

A Mere Profession Is Not Enough

I have heard many times the phrase; "You gotta walk the walk and talk the talk!" You cannot say one thing and do the opposite; what many do not realize is that their body language will actually tell others what they really are. If you profess to be a Christian prove that you are a Christian by the life you live. Look to the word of Jeremiah: (Jeremiah 9:3) *"And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD."* Jeremiah says they bent their tongues like their bow; of course we know that a bow is bent and crooked; therefore, the tongue is bent and crooked and from it comes forth crooked lying words. The words that come from their bent tongues are like arrows that are sent forth to injure and kill the God fearing people: (Psalms 11:2) *"For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart."* (Matthew 6:24) *"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."* Let us admit that if we only profess to be a Christian and don't live the life of a Christian we are attempting to serve "two masters". Jeremiah 9:3 declares that those who bend their tongues do not know the Lord.

Anyone who is not valiant for the truth certainly cannot be “earnestly contenting for the truth: (Jude 3) *“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”* You will find many today who profess that they know God but their actions and manner of living tell a different story. Paul states that there were Gentiles in his day who did not know God: (1 Thessalonians 4:5) *“Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:”* I wonder what Paul would write about us now? You and I must make others aware of what will happen to those who don’t know God: (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9) *“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁸In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: ⁹Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;”* How many of your friends and family have you warned?

Read the words that Jesus taught concerning professing his name: (Matthew 7:21-23) *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* Those who only profess to be Christians are going to be very disappointed on the Day of Judgment.

If you only profess that you know God in reality you are actually denying Him: (Titus 1:16) *“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”* These were people who professed that there was only one true God and in all probability they even boasted of knowing Him but in their works and conversations they were denying Him. Paul told Titus that this led to “disobedience”. Those who only profess to know God seldom if at all ever do any good work; in fact they are a hindrance to those who would do good works. This may sound harsh but I must say they are unfit to do any good works.

Saints Are Engaged In This War

Whether we like it or not Paul tells us we are in a conflict: (Philippians 1:29-30) *“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; ³⁰Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.”* We are at war for Christ’s sake and for the sake of his gospel and for the glory of his name! Does this change your mind of whether you should be engaged in this conflict? As already stated it is not enough to believe in Jesus and to make that profession but as Paul tells us here we may be called to “suffer for his sake”. A friend and faithful brother one told me that he did not know whether he would have become a Christian if he had known all the trouble and heart aches that being a Christian would bring. Thankfully he did endure the trouble and heart aches right up to the time of his death. Most of us have had to wonder if it was worth it or not; but then we remember the reward of eternal life and we forge on into the battle. At the present time here in

America the war that we are in conflict with is spiritual; but I have to wonder would we march on in this conflict if it became physical. Let us be in constant memory that those who believe in Jesus Christ it is also given to them to suffer for his sake. Some suffer more than others and some suffer less than others; whatever our lot may be we must be ready to stand like true soldiers for the sake of Christ. In verse thirty Paul warns that some of them will have the same conflict which they saw in him. If you were to suffer the same things as Paul suffered would you be able to stand strong and remain faithful like Paul did?

Saints Must Stand Firm In Their Personal War

I hope that you noticed I said “personal” because it is a war that each of us must personally battle and stand firm in: (Ephesians 6:13-14) *“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;”* In verse thirteen Paul repeats what he had written in verse eleven: (Ephesians 6:11) *“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”* It sounds to me as if Paul is preparing them for the war that was sure to come their way from their enemy Satan and we should be just as prepared and ready to battle Satan. Paul exhorted his readers to put on “the whole armour of God so that they would be “able to withstand in the evil day.” What evil days are you referring to Paul? In all likelihood Paul would answer when you are tempted by Satan. Will I be tempted; will you be tempted? I answer with a positive YES! What armour do we have Paul? The armour that God has supplied us with is his word of truth. No better defensive weapon can be had to combat Satan with than the word of God; it worked for Jesus and it will work for you and me. Since God has given us His “whole armour” verse fourteen says “stand therefore”. In other words be on guard, don’t desert the church of Christ or his cause and continue your guard in your post. Brethren whatever you do stand firm in your faith and be victorious in your personal war against our enemy the devil.

God Will Help

Often times we find ourselves in such a situation that we cannot handle that with which we are faced; when you find yourself in such a situation who do you turn to? I want the best help available, don’t you? I know of no better help than God and He is willing to help: (Psalms 118:13) *“Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the LORD helped me.”* Be assured Satan is going to thrust the best he has at you in an effort to get you to throw up the white flag of surrender. This Psalms is considered to be written by David after he had established his kingdom and had brought the ark of the Lord into the city. Keep in mind what an enemy Saul was to David; David recognizes that “the Lord helped” him. Saul had cast a javelin at him, tried to get his servants to kill him, sent messengers to watch his house and slay him and pursued him from place to place. One might think that there was no hope; the only hope for David was that God might intervene and we are assured that God did indeed help.

We might also think about Jesus; one of his close friends Judas was an enemy

of Jesus as were the scribes and Pharisees. It was Judas who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver and it was the scribes and Pharisees who made many attempts at his life and finally succeeded and got him nailed to the cross. But we see that God helped Jesus and raised him from the grave so that his flesh never saw corruption: (Acts 2:23-24) *“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: ²⁴Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”*

God helps the Christian in his or her war against Satan by restricting Satan as to how he may tempt us: (1 Corinthians 10:13) *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”* We might think that our temptations are greater than any temptation that anyone else ever had to endure; but this simply is not true; as Paul assures us that any temptation we are confronted with is “common to man”. There is great comfort knowing that God is “faithful” to those who are His children and has provided “a way of escape”. If it is your desire to resist the temptation of the devil you are “able to bear it” according to the inspired apostle. With this assurance we should have a new outlook at the battle, the conflict or war that we are called upon to be a good soldier.

Paul was confident that he had fought a good fight: (2 Timothy 4:7) *“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.”* This was a time in Paul’s life when he was aware that he was nearing death and yet he was able to write “I have fought a good fight”. Paul was told by the Lord that he must now go to Rome: (Acts 23:11) *“And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.”* It was at Rome where Paul was violently put to death. But why was Paul so confident that he could write “I have fought a good fight”? He answers this question in the same verse by saying “I have kept the faith”. Never once after having his sins washed away (Acts 22:16) did Paul’s faith ever waver; he stood pat or firm in his faith. Do we have the same confidence as Paul had? We should!

Like the Psalmist God will protect us: (Psalms 140:7) *“O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.”* God is our strength in both temporal and spiritual matters; He will protect us if we place our faith in Him. David at this point was encouraged that God would deliver him and we ought to be encouraged that God will deliver us to that promise abode in heaven. God has covered our heads with the helmet of salvation; trust Him to deliver you. (Ephesians 6:17) *“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:”* (1 Thessalonians 5:8) *“But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.”* David very well might be remembering God’s protection when he fought the giant Goliath; we need to remember the many times God has rescued us from the temptations of Satan.

Conclusion

Most of us who are Christians will readily admit that we are living in troublesome times and the war that we are called upon to fight is a tough battle; but I want to suggest that you be of good cheer because the Lord comforts us: (2 Corinthians 7:5-6) *“For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. ⁶Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;”* Paul was physically fatigued from preaching, disputing, fighting with false teachers and violent persecutors; he had no rest in his body; however, in his soul he had divine support and spiritual consolation and no doubt he was encouraged seeing the growth of the church. Physically Paul was troubled from every side: (2 Corinthians 4:8) *“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;”* I know from personal experience that preachers often get discouraged; when they do they should look to the apostle Paul for strength to carry on the battle. Paul wrote in verse six that “God comforts those who are cast down”. God will revive your heart, cheer your broken spirit and fill you with comfort if you will only look to Him for His divine help.

Paul had gone to Macedonia in search for Titus because he could not find him at Troas: (2 Corinthians 2:12-13) *“Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, ¹³I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.”* There may be times that God comforts us and we don’t even recognize it; such was the case with Paul when Titus came to Paul. Paul was very close to Titus because Titus traveled with Paul and was of great assistance to Paul in spreading the gospel; so we can see how it was comforting for Paul to be reunited with Titus. Have you ever been comforted by finding a friend when you were feeling down? I won’t go so far as to say it was the providence of God but I will say that God does comfort us at times that we do not recognize it.

Friends, if the war that you are fighting gets to be too much for you; turn to Christ as this is what Paul did: (2 Corinthians 12:9) *“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”* At this time Paul was troubled with “a thorn of the flesh” and he had besought the Lord to remove his thorn of the flesh three times. This passage is God’s reply to Paul’s request. What did Paul do when the Lord told him no? He wrote that he would “glory in his infirmities”. What good would that do Paul? He knew if he were to do this that “the power of Christ” would “rest upon” him. In other words he knew that if he relied upon Christ that Christ would help him and see him through this troubled times. We too can rely upon Christ to comfort us and help us in our battle against our enemy the devil.

Let us always remember that the Lord always hears and answers our prayers sooner or later. The answer to our prayers may not always be answered in the way or manner we desire, but the Lord’s answer to our prayers will be for glory and the good of the kingdom; the church he purchased with his own blood.

The Lord’s grace is always sufficient and is beneficial to all mankind. Rely and trust in the Lord each and every day of your war with Satan; he will see you through the battle.

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