

THE FIGHT OF OUR LIVES

Key Verse: Ephesians 6:10-18

Key Thought: We Must be Prepared for the Battle

The following story is told by Leroy Eims about the time when he was serving in the Marines in the South Pacific during World War II:

"Shortly after we hit the beach, our armored amphibious tank took two artillery shells broadside. We immediately evacuated our disabled vehicle and darted from hole to hole toward the enemy airstrip, which we were to take.

"The sergeant began to check on us to make sure that we were OK. He crawled over to me and asked, 'You all right, Eims?'

"I answered, 'Yeah, I'm OK, Sarge.'

"He looked at me and asked, 'Eims, where is your helmet?'

I felt the top of my head and answered, "Must be in the tank, Sarge."

"Where's your duty belt?" Our duty belts carried ammunition for our rifles, a canteen of water, and a bayonet.

"Must be in the tank, Sarge"

"As a matter of fact, Eims, where's your rifle?' He looked at me with disgust and pity. Because of our hasty departure from the amphibious tank, I was dressed about the same way that I would be dressed for a game of volleyball. And there I was, hopping from hole to hole, from tree to tree!

This story reveals the truth about the modern church. Most Christians have forgotten that the Christian life is not a playground, but a battlefield. As a result, very few of the Lord's people are armed, equipped and ready to wage spiritual battle. Whether we want to believe it or not, we are engaged in spiritual warfare. If we are to be successful in our work for the Lord Jesus, then we must be prepared for that battle and be ready to go to war.

In this passage, we are given insight into the battle we are engaged in and into the weapons with which we are to fight this battle.

We are in the fight of our lives! If we are to do what the Scriptures say and "*stand*", then we must know how to prepare ourselves for this battle. Here, Paul reveals some aspects of the battle in which we find ourselves this morning. I just want to remind you that we are involved in *The Fight of Our Lives*, and we must know how to prepare ourselves to be effective in the fight. Allow me to share with you the aspects of this fight revealed in this passage.

I. OUR ENEMY IN THIS FIGHT

a) **Our Enemy's Name** - the Devil! This is a word that means "*slanderer, accuser.*" We get our word diabolical from it. His name reveals his character. Since he made his first appearance upon the pages of the Bible, the devil has been in the business of lying, slandering, and accusing the people of God, **Genesis 3:1-6; Job 1, 2.**

b) **Our Enemy's Nature** - (Verse 11-12) These two verses tell us two things we need to keep in mind concerning this enemy.

1. **He Is a Shrewd Enemy** (V. 11) The word "*wiles*" in verse 11 is the same word from which we get our English word "*method*". It refers to craftiness and trickery. In **Ephesians 4:14**, it is translated "lie in wait." It gives the image of a hunter disguising himself to capture his prey. What a perfect picture of the devil! Remember what the Bible tells us about him,

“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

1 Peter 5:8 NIV

Satan will pull out all the stops to trip you up!

2. He Is a Spiritual Enemy - Too often, we are guilty of fighting the wrong foe! We will get at odds with our fellow believers when the real enemy is the devil! He is a master at sowing discord among the brethren. We need to remember that our fight this evening is a spiritual battle.

The devil might work through people at times to get to us and cause us to stumble, but the real battle is fought on a spiritual level. We must never attack other people! Our battle is with an unseen army of spiritual enemies led by the devil himself.

Since our enemy is a spiritual enemy, some might wonder how we go about knowing how to fight him. This story from WWII concerning General George C. Patton will help us see it a little more clearly.

Patton's troops and tanks were engaged in a successful counterattack of German forces under General Erwin Rommel. Patton is reported to have shouted in the thick of the battle, "I read your book, Rommel! I read your book!" And that he did. In Rommel's book *Infantry Attacks*, the famed "Desert Fox" carefully detailed his military strategy. And Patton, having read it and knowing what to expect, planned his moves accordingly.

Satan has authored no book, but God has fully exposed our enemy's tactics in His Holy Word. Study it and plan your defense. The key to defeating the devil is understanding how he works. And the secret to that is reading about him in the Word of God.

II. OUR ENERGY IN THIS FIGHT

The Bible makes it clear in these verses that our goal as Christian soldiers is to stand! This word refers to something that is firmly fixed. It speaks of people who do not waiver. If we are to stand on this day of battle, then we must not only know our enemy, but we must possess energy for the battle. **Verse 10**, gives some much needed insight into this matter of our spiritual energy.

A) The Source of Our Energy - We are told here that the source of our energy is not within ourselves. That is good to know, because there are times when my energy runs low. We are told, however, that we are to "***be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.***" This means that we draw our strength from the "***power of His might.***" This sounds redundant on the surface, but when you understand that the word "***might***" means "***force, strength and ability***", and that the word "***power***" refers to God's "dominion and sovereign ability to exercise His power." Then it is easy to see how the Lord can strengthen and energize those who place their trust in Him.

B) The Scope of Our Energy - When a believer's faith is in God, then the Lord's power becomes the power of that believer! If the church could grasp the truth that we are as strong as that in which we trust, it would revolutionize the world!

Let me explain. I cannot fly, but when I put myself in an airplane and yield to its power, suddenly, I can soar into the air. I cannot run 65 miles per hour, but when I get into my car and yield to its power, I suddenly can achieve speeds that I could never achieve on my own. Those are poor illustrations, but when my faith is in God and in His power, then His strength becomes my strength. His power becomes my power. That is why the Bible says what it does to those who live by faith.

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us,"

Ephesians 3:20 NIV

"If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes."

Mark 9:23 NIV

C) The Strength of Our Energy - It enables us to stand, so that when the battles are all over and we go home to be with the Lord in heaven, we can leave this world like Paul did,

*“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith.”*

2 Timothy 4:7 NIV

God's power will be our power and we will be able to stand for Him in the day of battle! We all know that too many aren't standing, they are falling by the wayside! I don't want to fall; I want to stand!

"During the War Between the States," writes Gary Redding, "a Union soldier from Ohio was shot in the arm during of the battle of Shiloh. His captain saw he was wounded and barked an order: 'Gimme your gun, private, and get to the rear!'"

"The private handed over his rifle and ran toward the north, seeking safety. But after covering two or three hundred yards, he came upon another skirmish. Then he ran to the east and into another part of the battle. Then he ran west but encountered more fighting there.

"Finally, he ran back to the front lines, shouting: 'Gimme back my gun, captain. There isn't no rear to this battle!'"

When it comes to spiritual warfare, "there isn't no rear "!

The truth is that there is nowhere to run to! The battle rages all around us. The best we can do is place our faith in the awesome power of God and stand!

III. OUR EQUIPMENT IN THIS FIGHT

It has been said that a soldier is no better than his equipment. Paul has told us about our enemy and about our energy. He took the time to speak concerning our equipment. He lets us know that we know all about our enemy. We are blessed with boundless energy, and we have the best equipment that any army in history has known.

a) Equipment That is Designed to Defend –

The image that is given here would have been familiar to every person in the Ephesian church. Paul is describing the armor of the average Roman soldier. Note: This was not the armor of the super-soldier, but the common, run of the mill, everyday soldier. For these soldiers to be effective in battle, they need to be protected on the battlefield. Paul uses the image of their armor to teach us about how we need to dress up for the day of battle.

1. The Girdle of Truth - This girdle encircled the waist and served to stabilize the body, protect the mid-section, and provide the soldier with a place to restrain his garments so that his movements in the heat of battle would be unhindered.

For the believer, this refers to knowing the "truth" of the Bible. Jesus promised us that the truth had the power to make us free. Knowing the truth will stabilize us, protect us, and prevent us from being tripped up in the battles of life. This reminds us that we are to walk in the truth!

2. The Breastplate of Righteousness -This refers to the leather body armor that was worn to protect the vital, tender areas of the body. Specifically, the heart.

For the believer, this refers to the righteousness of life. We are declared righteous when we trust Jesus as Savior, but we are commanded to practice righteousness as a habit of life, **1 Peter 1:16**.

When we live holy, consecrated lives before the Lord, we are less prone to attacks from the devil. Our hearts are guarded and protected from his slings and arrows. This reminds us that we are to live in righteousness!

3. The Shoes of The Gospel - Roman soldiers wore sandals that had nails driven through the bottoms to provide the soldier with the surest of footing on the battlefield. He did not have to worry about his feet slipping in the heat of the battle, for he was always well-grounded.

For the believer this reminds us that we are to be well grounded in the things of God. We are to be sure of our own conversion and of the fundamentals of our faith. We need to know what we believe, and why, so that we will be on a sound foundation when the battle comes against us. Such a sure-footed stand would serve to give us peace in the battles of life. This also pictures the soldier being ready to march into battle. His feet were shod in preparation for service. So too, the child of God must be ready to march forward at the Commander's order, **2 Peter 3:15**

4. The Shield of Faith - This is not the little round shield, but it refers to the large, rectangular shield behind which a soldier could be safe from the fiery darts of the enemy. Often, Roman soldiers would soak these leather shields in water before battle. This enabled the shields to be more effective in quenching the flaming missiles of the enemy.

The believer is reminded that when he goes into battle, he must have in his possession the shield. Our shield is not leather, but faith. It is a shield that can quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. It is a shield that is well soaked in the water of the Word, **Romans 10:17**. It is a shield that will never fail nor expose the carrier! Why? Because faith allows us to stand in the battle and receive victory regardless of the odds we face, **Hebrews 11:1-2**

Note its importance: We are told that we are to have this article "*above all*". Without faith we cannot serve God, nor can we please Him. Even when some of the other articles of our armor are missing or damaged, let us be sure that faith is always at hand!

5. The Helmet of Salvation - The helmet was given to the Roman soldier to protect his brain. Regardless of how well the rest of him was protected, a blow to the brain rendered the entire soldier ineffective. If we are to be effective in the battle for the glory of God, then we must first be saved. Salvation provides the helmet that is necessary to protect our minds from the attacks of the enemy. When we are saved, we are transformed! It is this transformation that allows us to think right thoughts and wage holy war. The mind must be protected! As we fight the battles, we must never forget what the Lord did for us and in us when He saved us by His grace. The fact of our conversion will be like a helmet protecting the mind from the devil!

b) Equipment That Is Designed To Defeat

Not all the armor was designed to protect the soldier. Sometimes, the soldier was required to take the battle to the enemy. Therefore, the soldier possessed two offensive weapons that allowed him to strike back when he was attacked.

1. The Sword of The Spirit - This refers to the short, straight sword carried by every Roman soldier. It was very effective in hand-to-hand combat and was essential to the survival of the soldier. Of course, we are told that our sword is the Word of God. It is the Bible that we are to use to attack the enemy and see him fall. It is the Word of God that enables us to conquer him in every battle we face. It is essential for the Christian soldier to be proficient in the use of this weapon. How? By study! By hard work! By putting it to use!

The primary Greek word for the Word is "*logos*". This refers to the totality of the Word of God. However, the word used here is the word "*rhema*". While "*logos*" refers to the entire armory of the Bible, "*rhema*" refers to just the right sword for that battle. This is seen in the life of Jesus when He faced the devil on the Mount of Temptation. Jesus strolled into the armory of the Word and entered the weapon room labeled Deuteronomy. From that room, He selected three weapons to use on the devil and defeated him!

So, it is with us, when we go into battle with the enemy, there will be just the right sword for that particular battle. Let us become so familiar with the armory that we can select the precise weapon to use in each battle we face. As the Word of God is used as the sword of the Spirit, we will see the enemy sliced to shreds in every battle we fight!

2. The Briefing Room of The Spirit - Another advantage we have is that we can be always in direct communication with our commanding officer. This has always been a problem on battlefields. However, in the spiritual realm, this problem has been forever solved. The greatest offensive weapon we have is the ability to call on the Lord our God when we are in the thick of the battle. He can communicate His orders to us on the spot and we can implement them immediately. I am convinced that it gives us a decided advantage over the devil!

Never be guilty of neglecting the awesome power of prayer! Prayer brings you into the presence of God and it allows the Lord to work through you in a remarkable way. Prayer unleashes the power of God in the life of the believer!

In Closing, I want to remind you that as believers in Jesus Christ, we are engaged in spiritual warfare with unseen wicked forces. To overcome our enemy in the power of the Holy Spirit, we must remain resolute in our confidence in God and determine never to accept defeat.

A story from the Korean war illustrates this attitude. As enemy forces advanced, Baker Company was cut off from the rest of their unit. For several hours no word was heard, even though headquarters repeatedly tried to communicate with the missing troops. Finally, a faint signal was received. Straining to hear, the corpsman asked, "Baker Company, do you read me?"

"This is Baker Company," came the reply.

"What is your situation?" asked the corpsman.

"The enemy is to the east of us, the enemy is to the north of us, the enemy is to the west of us, the enemy is to the south of us." Then after a brief pause, the sergeant from Baker Company said with determination, "The enemy is not going to get away from us now!"

Although surrounded and outnumbered, he was thinking of victory, not defeat.

Remember, we are not fighting *for* victory.

We are fighting *from* victory! That makes all the difference in the world!

Our Commander-in-chief has already won all the victory for us. All we must do is get up, dress up in the armor, stand up and line up awaiting our marching orders. He will lead us to victory. Therefore, let us avail ourselves of the tools we have been given and let us learn to stand. We are in the fight of our lives, but the victory belongs to us!

Place: FCA

Date: Sunday, December 3, 2023

Time: 10:30am

After Service: See A Victory