

OUR SPIRITUAL WARFARE

I Tim. 1:18; 6:12

I. 2 INTRODUCTION:

I. 3 Christians are to be peaceful people:

Rom. 12:18: *If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*

Gal. 5:22: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

Rom. 14:19: *Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.*

Matt. 5:9: *Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.*

2. 2 Pet. 1:2 tells us the source of peace: “peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,”; “knowledge” is from “epignosis”: strengthened form of gnosis.

A. Strong: “full discernment.”

B. Vine: “implies a special participation in the object known”; “suggests advanced knowledge or special appreciation”; it is concrete, not abstract; “a knowledge that perfectly unites the subject with the object.”

3. ** But, peace is difficult when we have so many enemies:

A. Our own fleshly lusts (**1 Pet. 2:11**: “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,”).

B. People of the “world” in general (**2 Tim. 3:1-8**).

C. Those that hinder the truth (Acts 13:6-10: first journey, Cyprus/Paphos, proconsul Sergius Paulus, Elymas the sorcerer sought “to turn the proconsul away from the faith.”).

D. False teachers and their followers (**2 Pet. 2:1-2**: “But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.”).

E. False/unfaithful brethren (**2 Cor. 11:26**: “...in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren”; 2 Tim. 4:14: Alexander the coppersmith; 1 Tim. 1:19-20: Hymenaeus and Alexander; 2 Tim. 2:17-18: Hymenaeus and Philetus).

F. The devil (1 Pet. 5:8).

4. Considering we have so many enemies, it should not come as a surprise that Paul told Timothy (and us!):

A. **1 Tim. 1:18**: “wage the good warfare.”

B. **1 Tim. 6:12**: “Fight the good fight of faith...”

C. **2 Tim. 2:3**: Be “a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

5. 4 But alas, many Christians believe that peace can be obtained without warfare. Consider the following statement made in September 1938 by Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister of Great Britain: **

“My good friends, this is the second time in our history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honour. I believe it is peace for our time. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. And now I recommend you to go home and sleep quietly in your beds.” (Neville Chamberlain (1869-1940), British Prime Minister)

[This quote is from a speech that Mr. Chamberlain gave in September 1938 the day after he had returned from Munich, Germany where he had conferred with Hitler and Mussolini. In less than one year, Nazi Germany and its allies invaded Poland unleashing a firestorm of death, destruction, and misery that swept across Europe claiming more than 60 million lives, destroying thousands of towns, villages and cities; wreaking destruction on an unprecedented scale.]

6. **5** I'm not advocating warfare as a thing to be "loved," but peace has never been obtained without war! Warfare is not a thing Christians should love, but neither can it be shunned or ignored!

1 Tim. 6:12: *Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*

7. I'm fearful that some in the church are "spiritual cowards." Therefore, let us consider some important things about our spiritual warfare so that we "wage the good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18); that we may be "a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3); that we may "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:12).

II. DISCUSSION:

- I. **6 Fronts:** A military front is the battlefield where two opposing forces clash in combat. The two primary "fronts" for our warfare are...

A. ** Our own fleshly lusts:

1 Pet. 2:11: *"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,"*

Rom. 7:15: *"For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do."*

B. ** Men's minds:

2 Cor. 4:3-4: *But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

2 Cor. 10:3-5: *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,*

Eph. 6:12-13: *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

2. **7 Weapons:** every soldier facing combat needs to be equipped with proper weapons.

A. ** Not carnal (**2 Cor. 10:4:** *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds"*); but the whole armor of God (**Eph. 6:10-18**).

B. ** Only one "offensive" weapon: Word of God (**Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12-13:** *"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."*; Larry Hafley's first debate; **2 Tim. 2:15; Eph. 4:14:** *"that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,"*).

3. **8 Strategy:** order of battle (OOB): command structure, strength, disposition of personnel, and equipment of units and formations of the armed forces.

A. General strategy: **

- (1) Not a carnal war with carnal weapons (2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:17).
- (2) Must plan for heavy opposition (2 Tim. 3:12; **1 Cor. 4:13**: “being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now.”; 2 Cor. 11:23-28; 2 Tim. 4:16: Paul abandoned at first defense; see Acts 22-26; **Acts 24:5**: defense before Felix, Tertullus said: “For we have found this man a pestilent fellow (plague), and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.”).
- (3) In the face of seemingly overwhelming opposition we must be strong and courageous (**Josh. 1:9**: “Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”; **1 Cor. 16:13**: “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”; Phil. 4:13; **Eph. 1:18-23**; **Eph. 3:20**: “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,”; **Heb. 13:6**: “So we may boldly say: ‘The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’”).
- (4) Cannot measure success merely in terms of numbers (Matt. 7:13-14; 1 Pet. 3:20; Lk. 8:4-15; 1 Cor. 3:6-9; Isa. 55:11).

B. **9** Front #1 (fleshly lusts):

- (1) Buffet body (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Col. 3:5); resist temptation (**Jas. 1:12**: “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved (stood the test, NIV), he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”); seek promised way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13).
- (2) Submit to God and resist the devil (**Jas. 4:7**: “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”); make no provisions for the flesh (Rom. 13:14); draw nigh to God (**Jas. 4:8**: “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”).

C. **10** Front #2 (men’s minds):

- (1) Contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3; 1 Pet. 3:15); speak with all boldness (**Acts 4:29**: “Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, ...v. 31 ...and when they had prayed...they spoke the word of God with boldness.”; **2 Cor. 3:12** (NKJV): “Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech”; **Acts 9:29**: “...he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.”).
- (2) Rebuke false doctrine (**Gal. 2:5**: “to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”; **Eph. 5:11**: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.”). If we shun such discussions we give error an unfair advantage (**2 Tim. 2:17**: “And their message will spread like cancer.”).
- (3) Uphold those that boldly proclaim the truth (**Eph. 6:18-20**). Every soldier that contributes to the victory does not necessarily have to serve on the front lines (Ex. 17:12: Aaron & Hur).

4. **11** Results:

A. Remember what is at stake (**Matt. 16:26**: “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”).

B. One of two results:

- (1) Exaltation and salvation (**Matt. 5:11-12**: “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for

great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”; **1 Pet. 1:9**: “receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.”; 1 Tim. 6:12: “Fight the good fight, lay hold (seize) of eternal life...”; 2 Tim. 4:6-8).

- (2) Humiliation and damnation (**Rev. 21:8**: “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”; Mk. 9:42-48: describes hell as a place where “the fire...shall never be quenched—where ‘Their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’”)

III. CONCLUSION:

1. **12** Not all of us are going to make it! (292,131 U.S. soldiers, sailors and airmen were killed in WWII.) I hope you are mature enough in the faith that you are not shocked by that. **Matt. 7:13-14**
2. ** It is quite possible that many members of this congregation will fall away and only a few will “hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (**Heb. 3:6**: “...Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.”). So we...
 - A. Must stand fast and fight the good fight! (**Eph. 6:13**: “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”; **1 Cor. 16:13**: “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.”)
 - B. Must endure! (**Heb. 10:35-39**; Tears in the Darkness, story of Ben Steele who spent 41 months in Japanese captivity)
 - C. Courageous we must be! “Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” (Josh. 1:9)
3. Invitation