

WAR AND PEACE ...AND BATTLE FATIGUE

By

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As Don McNeal would say on the “Breakfast Club”: “Let us all pray for a world united in peace.” Indeed the Christian longs for peace, where he can relax his guard and cease the struggle against sin.

But God has not promised any such thing in this present age. In fact He is at war with the evil of this world and, instead of promising peace, has promised total destruction of the world, salvaging from it only those who align themselves with Him and are faithful in the battle. The statesmen may cry “peace, peace,” but Jesus said that there will be none. The fight will continue right down to the finish line when the Lord will return.

The Christian is at war. But “we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

Here we must take care and not be deceived by the “cold war.” The warfare of the Christian is one between God and Satan. Men have a tendency to think of this only in terms of good and bad, the good being the things they like, and the bad the things they don’t like. Good and evil are certainly involved, but they are the by-products of the real issue: God and Satan. Nor is it a battle of nations. While it involves groups, organizations and even nations, the real battle line is drawn across the personal faith in and obedience to God. It is a war in which the Christian often has to fight alone, facing personal temptations and suffering unseen blows from the enemy.

Many Christians today are suffering from battle fatigue. Precarious world conditions are more difficult and more demanding than ever before, are partly responsible for this feeling of hopelessness and helplessness which renders the believer a liability to the Lord’s army. But contributing even more to battle fatigue of the Christian is the trend toward confusion as to where to find the battle line. Who are we fighting anyway?

In the first place Satan is a very real foe. Peter describes him of such fierce and evil nature that, like a lion driven mad with hunger, he roams the earth seeking whom he can slay and devour. (I Peter 5:8). In ancient times he demonstrated the reality of his power in the afflictions of Job. In the days of Christ’s earthly visit Satan proved to be a very real enemy, with realistic ideas, as modern as the last second and more clever than the highest human intelligence. It is sheer ignorance or a blunt rejection of revealed truth to think that present forces bent on destroying or remodeling the Christian faith are mere by-products

of rapid social change. The Bible makes it clear that the time was to come when Satan would marshal the forces of the world to wipe out the truth of God. It is written that Satan would deceive the nations. He has succeeded. He has convinced many who profess Christianity that they should aim their weapons everywhere but at the Evil One. Nothing is more frustrating than this constant missing the target – ammunition going off all over the place, but none of it hitting the enemy. Eventually one even begins to wonder if he should fire at all! Such frustration can be overcome only by recognizing that the evil proposals, desecrating of law and order, moral degradation and curtailment of freedom are all part of Satan's strategy.

In the second place, there is only one weapon effective against Satan. That weapon is truth. Paul wrote that the purpose of the weapons of our warfare is to cast "down imaginations and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God," and to bring "every thought in captivity." The object of God is to have men transformed "by the renewing of (your) mind(s)" (Rom. 12:2). The armor he describes in Ephesians 6 is held together with the truth, and all else connected with it, the gospel, righteousness, faith and salvation stem from the truth. The only offensive weapon he lists is the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." How can any Christian hope to remain in the present complicated warfare for the minds of men, a battle being fought on the basis of deception against truth, when he is not sure just what the truth is? And since the only weapon for the fight is the truth of the word of God, how can one possibly expect to win when he doesn't know anymore about the Word of God than the average professing Christian knows?

Yet, in spite of the very crucial nature of the war and the absolute necessity of truth, churches are accelerating the demand for relaxing doctrinal truths in order that they might unite. There seems to be an idea that what the churches lack in truth and faith they will make up for with quantity. And since they do not make much impression of growth in individual groups, they will combine forces and at least make it appear that they are bigger. But the largest organization in the world is powerless in this battle without the truth. Where the truth is not embedded in the heart of a church, **ADDING TO ITS SIZE WITH MORE MEMBERS OF THE SAME DEFICIENCY ONLY WEAKENS IT MORE!**

A part of the truth as revealed by God is the fact that a time would come when truth would be such a minority as to be almost unknown. Paul said that the time would come when the churches would not endure sound doctrine and would turn from the truth to fables (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Jesus indicated that when He returns there would be very little true faith on the earth. This is an important piece of truth for the Christian. To recognize the condition of the world is to see that God's predictions come true. Were we like some to think that the only hope lies in bringing about a peaceful utopia in our nation and in the world, we would be discouraged indeed, for every day this goal grows dimmer and dimmer. But we do not walk in darkness. God has revealed the truth to believers. The conditions as we view them only prove the integrity of the Word of God. And since we see these things coming to pass, we can rest assured that the other promises of God will be fulfilled also.

In the third place, Victory belongs to God. The struggle reflected in the cold war and in the crimes that blaze across the nation is a struggle to the death! Some historians, philosophers and statesmen continue to worry about the world being annihilated by nuclear war. Either they have not read the Bible or they don't believe it. (Possibly both.) The Scriptures make it clear that the war is going to end and that the Creator will be the victor. And since this world is under Satan's domain, it will go down in flames with the devil. And in this destruction will perish all who received not the love of the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

It is in knowing the enemy, having the weapon – the truth – with which to fight, and knowing the outcome that the Christian finds renewed energy and strength to carry on. To the Philippians, Paul wrote: “and in nothing affrighted by the adversaries, which is for them an evident token of perdition, but of your salvation” (Phil 1:28). The very fact of hostility to the Christian is evidence of two things: the perdition (doom) of the adversary, and the salvation of the Christian. If there were no warfare it would indicate that we had surrendered! Hence Peter writes, “If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name” (1 Peter 4:16).

Battle fatigue comes not so much from the intensity of the skirmish, nor from discouragement over losing a fight, but from the pressure and responsibility over the long haul. Many Christians have said to me that it would, not be so bad if there were just some way to combat conditions. “If I could just find a hand-hold.” A letter just received from a missionary recruit speaks of the fact that “everything seems to be bent on confusion.” It is this pressure of confusion that is bringing many believers to the point of despair.

What can we do?

Why not take Paul's advice Begin with the truth. Quit trying to dodge the enemies blows and prepare to deal a few yourself. This means, of course, that you will have to learn the truth. It means that you will have to become skilful in using the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. It means that we will have to spend less time deliberating over “unity” movements and more time digging into the one thing which unifies believers. It means we will be less interested in defending traditions and distinguishing identification dogma and more interested in presenting the purpose of God as it is demonstrated in the death and resurrection of Jesus. It means that we will become serious about finding out what God really says in the Bible.

All such knowledge is of no value, of course, unless we believe it, and apply it. The other day in San Diego Billy Graham told an audience of more than 35,000 that the climax and culmination of world history would take place when Christ returned. Not a cheer nor an “amen”, was to be heard. Then he stated that under God and with God's help we could turn the tide and save our nation from communism. Suddenly there was a tremendous applause and one could hear expressions of approval. The audience, made up mainly of church members, was unmoved over the event of Christ, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, returning to fulfill the purpose of God. But they were intensely concerned about the saving of their material wealth and preserving their personal liberty for a while longer. Of

course all 35,000 people cannot be judged on the basis of this general attitude, but it certainly indicates that the majority did not take too seriously the ultimate hope, and do not take seriously what the Bible says about the conditions of the world, and the final solution God intends.

There is no peace in this present world. Jesus said that He came not to bring peace, but a sword. The only peace available to us today is the inner peace we have with God, peace in our minds from knowing the outcome of this struggle. And this peace is only ours as we take up the sword, and get into the fight, for we can have no peace with God and no assurance of our victory unless we fight on His side.

Space does not allow us to mention all the allies we have, such as the Holy Spirit, prayer, and fellowship. But even these are ours only as we align ourselves with the truth and purpose of God and put our confidence in His being able to carry out that purpose.

In Philippians 3:20-21 and 4:1, Paul writes, “For our citizenship is in heaven: whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself. Wherefore, my brethren beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord!” God is able. He is able to fashion anew our humiliated bodies and make them like the glorified body of Christ. And He is able “even to subject all things unto himself.”

Satan may be having a field day in 1964. But His days are numbered, as the days of all who are enemies of the cross of Christ “whose end is perdition” (Phil 3:18-19). Knowing this, and the power of God; the Christian will not weary in the battle, but can “stand fast in the Lord.”

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