

The Warrior: Call to Arms

2 Timothy 2:3-4 ESV

(4) No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

Introduction

We started some months ago looking at the mission and nature of the early church

This led us then to a discussion on the nature of the spiritual battle that we are involved in as Christians

Then we talked about how this battle manifests.

It manifests in the engagement for the souls of men and women

We are now looking at the life of the Christian Warrior and we shall conclude this series with a look at the armor of the warrior towards the end of the year

Recap

Last week we looked at the banner that flies over every Christian Warriors life – the Banner of Christ Alone

We discussed and recognized that as warriors we are called as Paul said, to not be entangled in the day to day activities/passions and pursuits of this world as a primary focus.

But the primary focus of our lives should be the pursuit of Christ, our eternal assignment, and the establishment of His kingdom.

We defined Entangled as: intertwined, knotted, tangled up, ensnared

We are in the world, but we are not called to be of the world

We made note of the fact that Paul was a man who was a scholar, a successful business man, a renowned teacher, a church planter, one of the founding fathers of the Christian church

Yet all of this was consistent with his calling
All of this was consistent with his single focus
All of this was consistent with the banner under which he lived his life
All of this was consistent with the purpose and core values that he held

We noted that the purpose of Paul is the same purpose that all that live under the Banner of Christ should go by:

Philippians 1:21 ESV
(21) For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

I made mention of the fact that I often think of how many Christians would have lived much more fruitful and fulfilling lives if they had been insistent on engaging only in that which was consistent with their calling

If they had totally given themselves to the things of God instead of fighting a conscious that was convicting them

Living single focused lives full of passion for Christ is the aim of all of us who are warriors for Christ.

Christ is our banner
Christ is our rally point
Christ is our provider
Christ is our miracle
He is our redeemer
Our Stronghold

The Call to Arms

Ephesians 6:10-12 ESV

(10) Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

(11) Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

(12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

When I read to you a statement like the one that Paul made here to the Church at Ephesus, it is the sort of statement that elicits ridicule and looks of credulity from people outside and inside the church.

People today do not in general believe in the spiritual realm. They don't believe in a devil or spiritual forces arrayed against us.

But to those of us who are Christians. These words of Paul are full of meaning and special significance.

I think more than ever we need to be aware of what we are truly facing as Christians and how we can live the *life of victory* that we are called to live.

Now I said life of victory, and some of you heard me say life of ease.

I didn't say ease
I said victory.

No war is ever won without soldiers
No ground is even taken in a war without a battle.
No battle is ever won without injuries

We need to realize that as a Christian we are called to a life of warfare, not a life of ease and retirement

We are called to play our part in the eternal struggle for the souls of men and women.

If Paul describes us as warriors, then we are engaged in a battle and a battle will have its victories and it will have its set backs.

I said setbacks, some of you heard defeats

We can never be defeated because the battle has already been won and we are on the winning side.

Let's look at the nature of the battle

We are not engaged in a full on frontal attack

We are not an invading force

We are occupying the land that is already ours and has already been won for us

We spent quite some time looking at this concept earlier on

Our captain has taken back the land that is rightfully His

We are the occupying forces

What we are dealing with are terrorists

We are dealing with a usurping defeated enemy

But we are the dominant spiritual force on the planet.

I don't think putting your head in the sand or pretending that we do not have a battle is going to help anyone.

We need to understand the condition and the nature of the battle that we are in

First be strong in the Lord

You are not just to be strong in yourself
Not just strong in your own might, power, attempts

But strong in the Lord

Here is a church facing growth.
Dealing with success and persecution

Paul doesn't say "Be strong in yourself"

He does not say "Be strong in you own might"

He doesn't say form a lobby group or a political party

He is not saying that the answer is a Positive Mental Attitude.

Do these things work?
Do they have a positive impact?
Yes.

But they only give you temporary relief

Be strong in the Lord is what Paul tells them.

Second

I need you to put it on the whole amour of God

If you put on the whole armor of God you will be able to stand against this enemy who at times seems tireless in his attack upon the saints even though he is a defeated foe

Let me just make a brief comment here....both of these aspects are vital

You have to be strong in God AND you have to put on your armor

And notice the order.

It starts with you being aware of your position in Christ

Aware of all that Christ has done for you
Aware that the victory is ours through Christ
You are not in this battle alone and you have the ability to draw strength from God

However, you still have to put on your armor
And if you don't put it on
You will not stand

Now this is important

So often people say...

All you have to do is trust God
All you have to do is believe
All you have to do is just stay strong in God

But that is not what Paul says

You have to put on *your* armor
It is *your* armor
You are responsible for its care
You are responsible for its maintenance
You are responsible for its function
You need more than just being strong; you have to put on the armor.

We can not do what God can do, and God will not do what we are supposed to do

It is a little bit like the story of David and Saul's armor.

David could not wear another's armor
He could not put on armor that was not tried and tested

You can only go to war with that which you are intimately familiar with

That which has been tried and tested by you in training and in smaller conflicts.

It is your responsibility to put on and care for your armor

Third put on the whole amour of God

Paul says the whole armor needs to be put on

This armor is a complete suit

You can not just be proficient in the care and maintenance of one piece.

You can not just rely on one piece.

It does you no good to have a breastplate yet no sword.

Or a sword and no shield

You must become skilled in all areas, not just the ones you feel most comfortable with

Fourth; Our role in the battle

My thought on this is; I am simple, a private soldier in God's great army and that gives me great encouragement

Although the battle is great and the campaign has been running since before time, I am a private

I am responsible for looking after my armor and my area of responsibility, but the overall battle is not my responsibility.

The battle is not mine, but God's

That is what the Lord told Jehoshaphat

A great army had come against Judah

And Jehoshaphat was fearful and concerned for the people

He cried out to God and the Lord replied

2Ch 20:15

(15) And he said, "Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, 'Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's.

This does not mean that Jehoshaphat had nothing to do, but he was reminded that what he was involved in was not just a personal matter but was a concern of God.

How important that is to remember.

When ever you are up against it in ministry or business or in life – what we are engaged in is God's Battle, not ours.

Once you realize this it should transform the way you think and view your current situation.

If you find yourself hard press and think that you are alone then you will get discouraged.

But if we stop and remember that we wrestle these forces for a cause greater than ourselves, involved in an army bigger than ourselves and God is personally and intimately involved: then it changes our perspective.

This is God's battle and we just happen to have the privilege of being involved.

Now this being the case, then God's honor and his word are the issue.

He will not allow this to fail because of His Glory and His character.

This brings us back to the whole point that we are able *to be strong in the Lord*.... Because He is with us, it is His battle and we are in His army

Fifth; the nature of our armor

Now I will not spend much time on this because we will be looking at it extensively in the weeks to come, but I will just give you a small insight.

I have seen people wave banners around churches in an attempt to do spiritual warfare but it only stirs up dust mites

I have heard preachers extol us to go through the motions of putting on invisible spiritual armor to protect us from an invisible enemy.

That we are to rise each morning and pray on the armor of God

And we leave these conferences confused and bewildered because we apply all the principals and they just don't work.

They sell books but they just don't work.

The word used for the devil is an English form of a Greek word meaning slanderer, it also means opponent.

Our opponent the devil will slander our character as men and women of God in everyway that he can.

The enemy's one true weapon today is the same as it was in Eden, deception.

He lied, deceived and twisted the word of God and man's complicity caused the corruption of his character

The Greek word used here for armor is *panoply*, it denotes a full suit of armor, the complete provision of God against the weapon of deception

Simply put, the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly or carnal, but are might and are weapons to stand against deception. In other words they are aspects of our character.

Have a look at the analogy that Paul uses, the elements he highlights

Truth
Righteousness
Readiness to preach
Faith
Salvation
The word of God
Spirit of prayer

These are not ethereal things

These are not things you pray on, these are things that you live out

These are all elements of our character

That is why you never arrive

Some of you are sitting around wondering when you will reach
nirvana

Wondering when it will all become easy and you get to win the battle

You will not until glory

Because your armor, your character is constantly being perfected

Chocolate Soldier

CT Studd was a famous English sports person from a wealthy family in the 18000's who helped pioneer missions work in China, India and Africa.

In his day he was a man of controversy, totally different to the controversy that preachers seem to be fond of today.

Before the What Would Jesus Do movement, CT STUDD, in true English form would preach and put out a call to Christians to embrace a DCD attitude a Don't Care a Damn attitude towards the worldliness and worldly things.

He preached a sermon once called the Chocolate Soldier

He compared the Real Christian Soldier to the parade soldier, the show soldier, the chocolate Soldier of the church of his day

The Christian Soldier had at its heart a passion for the things of God. They would plunder hell to populate heaven

He once said:

"Some wish to live within the sound of Church or Chapel bell,
I want to run a Rescue Shop within a yard of hell."

- C.T. Studd.

The Chocolate Soldier on the other hand dissolved in water. They melted when they were put under the heat of life and circumstances, hardship or disease

Studd said that

HEROISM is the lost chord, the missing note of present-day Christianity!

In peace true soldiers are captive lions, fretting in their cages. War gives them their liberty and sends them, like boys, bounding out of school, to obtain their heart's desire or perish in the attempt.

Battle is the soldier's vital breath! Peace turns him into a stooping asthmatic. War makes him a whole man again and gives him the heart, strength, and vigor of a hero.

God meant us to be warriors, not jellyfish
God is in the business of making heroes not candy

Who does the fighting?

So with all of that said... who does the fighting?

There is a school of thought that what we should do is just hand it all over to God!

That we should just rest in Him and that all that He wants to accomplish has been predestined.

This is inaccurate, and a twisting of doctrine concerning salvation and God's foreknowledge

Many Christians have been led to believe that putting up their hand and walking down to the altar will take all their struggles away and now all they have to learn to do is 'abide in Christ' or 'rest in the Lord' and everything will be fine.

If this was truly the case why would we be told to put on armor or to stand?

Why would one be told to resist the devil so he would flee?

Why would we be told to be vigilant because our enemy seeks to devour us?

Why weren't we just told to put on a swimsuit and head for the beach?

You see the ultimate outcome of this sort of teaching is that we breed generation after generation of spiritually unprepared, ill equipped and spiritually immature Christians.

These people fall easily into sin and deception because they are not vigilant, aware or prepared.

A warrior goes to war daily for a purpose. Yes it is true that some fight for a sense of reward; glory or money, but most don't.

They fight for a sense of duty and honor.

They fight because they want to make a difference for those that will come after them.

That is how a mature Christian, a kingdom Christian, views his life.

The teaching that tells us that all we have to do is sit around and wait for God to deliver us breeds Christians that are immature and childish in the faith.

Seven characteristics of a child

1. A child is the center of their universe. Everything revolves around the child.

2. The child demands its own way.

3. The child is insensitive to other's needs.

4. If the child doesn't get their way, it will throw a very nice temper tantrum.

5. A child is irresponsible. Children are not born obedient; they have to learn to be obedient. You and I are born with a negative nature, which tends to be disobedient, and we have to learn obedience by those things which we suffer.

6. A child is unable to reason

7. A child only responds to concrete authority.

So in our life, there has to be the transition and the process of maturation.

Signs of an immature Christian.

1. A chocolate Christian is the center of their own universe,

Everything has to revolve around them
All relationship has to revolve around them

Church programs have to meet their needs
Church life and meetings

2. A chocolate Christian Demands their own way

An immature Christian is constantly demanding their own way
They do not see that they are a part of something bigger or the vision for the house

The vision for the kingdom has to take precedent over the small issues of life

They are the ones that get upset if they have to walk from the end of the block, or if they have to get to church early to get a seat they like.

If they don't get there own way they leave, they just hop in a car and drive down the street

3. A chocolate Christian is insensitive to other's needs.

They don't share their faith

They are saved, they are happy

They don't really care that the rest of the world is going to hell

They don't want to get of their cell phone to talk to a stranger

They don't want to get out of the comfort zone to talk to a neighbor or a workmate

They don't want to pray for the sick or reach out to those around them

To an immature Christian, it is all about them

Immature Christians do not contribute.

They don't want to go on the children's roster

They don't want to give financially

They don't want to assist in any areas of church life

They are victims

There is always something wrong with them

Always someone who doesn't understand them

Always someone who has hurt them

4. A chocolate Christian throws tantrums

You would not believe some of the tantrums I have had to put up with from people over simple requests

We have had people leave the church because we asked mothers to use the mother's room

We have had people leave the church because we have asked fathers not to sit in the mother's room while the mother breast feeds.

When your baby crying at home, it is a cute sound, but crying in an auditorium is a disruption to 200 people
It is not personal, it is just polite

I just can't see the problem

People would not be late to a movie, yet we think nothing of turning up 20 minutes late to worship God

We don't sit and read our email during a concert, yet we sit here and read our Face Book updates like our life depended upon it

I have kids. They are noisy, wiggly and smelly

Don't throw tantrums at church, find solutions...it is your church and I am your pastor, not the anti-Christ

Be helpful

5. A chocolate Christian is irresponsible

As a child, you are not born again or sanctified.

You have to deal with your sin nature

You have to deal with you desire to rebel

You have to discipline your mouth, your flesh and your appetites

Sanctification is a process

A chocolate Christian does not deal with their stuff

They are continually justifying the basis of their behavior

Blaming their parents, their boss, or their spouse instead of realizing the problem is theirs

They want permission to always be falling in sin

6. You can't reason with an Chocolate Christian

They won't hear you

They come ready for an argument, not a conversation

They are already right, no matter how wrong they obviously are

They have a ready defense not for their faith, but for their sin

7. Immature Christian are not self-regulating, you can not trust them.

A Christian Warrior

1. They are looking for a way to give
2. They are looking for someone to touch for Christ
3. They understand the power of submission in their life

They realize that the leadership is here to help them not hurt them

That they are part of a larger army and sometimes they can't see the whole game plan

4. They take responsibility
5. They carry themselves with grace and dignity when under fire
6. They value the reputation of the Lord, the family and of their church

They realize that when they are in the community they are representing more than just themselves

7. They discipline their own flesh